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editor’s note
All the articles in this journal are formatted in the Chicago style, even social sciences papers that would normally use APA formatting. This was done for the sake of uniformity (to make the journal as professional looking as possible by giving it one style) and readability (to make the journal easier to read by not abruptly changing styles from article to article, particularly in regards for nonacademic readers, who constitute a significant portion of the journal’s audience). We wish to make social science professionals who may read this journal aware of this fact and why this formatting was used. Aside from normal copyediting and uniform formatting, the content of these articles was not changed in any way.

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foreword

Included in the mission of the Center for the Humanities at Washington University is explicit instruction to reach out to undergraduate students, an unusual, though, in the end, fitting but challenging, directive for a Humanities Center, largely untried, and perhaps even disdained, if the activities and goals of most humanities centers around the country are any indication. Few humanities centers engage undergraduates, though this is slowly changing, most feeling that their universities provide enough services and activities for them. The centers are largely the province of faculty and graduate students. This is an understandable prejudice, if not quite, at this time, a sustainable one. Undergraduates occupy too large a portion of the population and the reality of a university to ignore them.

As the Center offers few courses and has no teaching staff, one way that this Center’s advisory board thought that we could engage students is through encouraging and supporting independent research for a select number of students who majored in any of the humanities disciplines. We were interested as well in students with social science majors who, we thought, might benefit from being around humanities students. We felt that humanities students would benefit as well from being part of a group where they had to grapple with and take seriously the work of their social science peers. In this way, it was felt that the Center might be able to contribute to the spirit of interdisciplinary exchange on the campus among the students, markedly different, though, from what they encountered in the classroom. Faculty did not often find undergraduate students very helpful as research assistants but have often thought that as professors they might be helpful in guiding undergraduates in the students’ own research projects.

The Undergraduate Honors Fellowship Program was inspired by the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Program, established at Washington University back in the early 1990s and, while open to all students, meant particularly to encourage members of underrepresented minorities to consider pursuing the Ph.D. and become university teachers. The UHF is a two-year program, which accepts a small number of its applicants at the end of their sophomore year. We pair the student with a mentor and guide the student through a long-term research project, utilizing the structure of weekly seminars devoted to the discussion and analysis of the students’ research. Undergraduate Honors Fellows are also provided with a summer stipend and support during the academic year to facilitate their research, permitting them even to travel to archives and attend conferences. Finally, Undergraduate Honors Fellows, like their peers in the Mellon Mays Program, produce annually a journal of their work, Undergraduate Honors Fellows, like their peers in the Mellon Mays Program, produce annually a journal of their work, Undergraduate Honors Fellows, like their peers in the Mellon Mays Program, produce annually a journal of their work, Undergraduate Honors Fellows, like their peers in the Mellon Mays Program, produce annually a journal of their work, Undergraduate Honors Fellows, like their peers in the Mellon Mays Program, produce annually a journal of their work.

The work featured here is what was produced by the students in the 2008-2009 seminar. Felicia Baskin, our organizational whiz and undergraduate assistant, who kept everyone informed about meetings and events, wrote about the representation of Mexican national identity at the 1900 Parisian Universal Exposition, paying considerable attention to the Mexican modernistas and to the conflicted feelings of the Mexican intellectual elite about both Mexico as a site of future development and Paris as the site of modern civilization. Alana Burman, who did her share of organizing as well, remained consistent with her essay, expanding her interest in the impact of second wave feminism on literature by analyzing two important feminist novels of the period, Joanna Russ’s The Female Man and Marge Piercy’s Woman on the Edge of Time. Zack Kimble’s work is on the economic growth in China and how it seems to call into question assumptions about the necessity of secure property rights. Michael McEvilly concluded two years of study in the meaning of authorial identification and intention in the works of Kierkegaard with a consideration of the deployment of humor in Kierkegaard’s critique of the Danish Church. Finally, Andrea Winter combined both legal and philosophical interests in her essay on the agency, the politics of motherhood, and the battered woman.

These are independent essays, polished and meant to stand alone, extracted from the students’ Honors theses. For undergraduates especially, this effort to produce a free-standing essay, meant to be read by non-specialists, culled from a larger work, can be daunting. But if they are to consider becoming college professors and high-level researchers, they must come to understand this exercise as a necessary and useful skill. Redacting, editing, revising, recasting, reshaping, re-contextualizing are all writing and thinking skills that college professors who publish must have in order to get the most mileage out of their research. Professors must master many different forms of presentation of their work, and this is one of the goals of the Honors Fellowship Program: to teach undergraduate students how this is done.

Make no mistake; while the students themselves are in charge of producing this publication, it is no amateur indulgence. These essays have been vetted by their mentors, corrected by a professional copy editor, and tested over many months in the crucible of the seminar. There is no guarantee that a student’s work will be published in the journal. If the work is found to be substandard and if the student fails to meet the deadlines of the various stages of production, the work is not published. The students are tough on each other. This effort means a great deal to them, and they want very much to be taken seriously as contributors of merit to their fields. Moreover, the cost for producing this journal is about the same as it would be for a professional academic journal of the same size. We want the students themselves, the university, and the larger community to know that we at the Center take this work seriously as we take any good scholarly work by our colleagues seriously.

I hope you enjoy reading this journal. If you have any comments about what you have read, we would love to hear from you.

Gerald Early
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(Re)Constructing Mexico: The 1900 Universal Exposition as a Testing Ground for Models of Post-Colonial Mexican Identity

Felicia Baskin

Abstract: In an age dominated by global media, it can be difficult to grasp the significance of late nineteenth-century Universal Expositions. Yet, for many Exposition visitors, such events were their only opportunity to see and experience elements of cultures from other parts of the world. Using the 1900 Parisian Universal Exposition as my focal point, I look at how proponents of two distinct post-colonial cultural movements used the Exposition to represent Mexican identity. Analyzing propaganda commissioned for the Exposition, I argue that the official Mexican pavilion distorted reality in favor of an idealized vision of Mexico that better suited the country’s elite. In contrast, newspaper articles written by Mexican modernista author Amado Nervo show us a model of Mexican culture in which all citizens could play an important role. I look at the political and social processes taking place in Mexico at the time to contextualize the Mexican exhibit and understand Nervo’s role as an author. By looking at their approaches to the 1900 Exposition, I examine how modernistas and politicians reached very different conclusions about the needs and nature of the Mexican people.

In a newspaper article dating from 1900, the Mexican author Amado Nervo talks about the first day that he set foot in Paris. After finding somewhere to store his luggage, Nervo rushed by Paris’s many monuments in a hurry to reach the Universal Exposition. Upon entering the Exposition gates, Nervo saw a pavilion bearing the Mexican flag and headed inside. His first reaction seems to show contentment for having found the pavilion of his homeland. He writes: “With a happy ‘good day!’ I enter the Mexican pavilion, a refugee in a smiling esplanade, amongst an infinity of pavilions from every country.”

In calling himself a “refugee” within the walls of the Mexican pavilion, Nervo suggests that he found comfort there and identified with the exhibit. Yet, the article ends abruptly after the line about finding refuge, and it stands out that Nervo does not mention any elements of the pavilion besides its Mexican flag. Though Nervo continued to write articles about the Exposition for the following five months, none of his writing gives any further insight into the contents of the Mexican pavilion.

Nervo’s decision to refrain from discussing the pavilion in detail indicates a sense of national awareness that went beyond the Exposition gates. The 1900 Exposition fell at an important time in the formation of Mexican identity. Following independence from Spain, Mexico struggled to separate its own traditions and character from that of its colonial rulers. As one of the country’s most influential authors, Nervo played a key role in the discussion about how to develop post-colonial Mexican identity. He belonged to a group of authors called the modernistas that sought to develop a unique, national perspective through their literature. Given his role as a spokesperson for Mexican culture, it seems odd that Nervo made no mention of the character or content of Mexico’s pavilion. Yet, though the pavilion was assumed to represent Mexican identity, the exhibit displayed a selection of topics and opinions that largely conflicted with the modernista perspective. Whereas modernistas believed in the strength of the Mexican population as a whole, the pavilion only reflected the needs and interests of the Mexicans with the greatest political and economic power. Mexican President Porfirio Diaz had handpicked his fair commissioners (collectively known as the Wizards of Progress), choosing some for expertise but others simply to honor personal relationships. The resulting vision of Mexican identity shown at the fair was therefore Mexico as seen by a very particular group: the country’s elite. This group was largely composed of científicos, politicians that shared Diaz’s ideologies. It is possible that the only part of Mexico’s exhibit that truly seemed “Mexican” to Nervo was in fact the flag hanging outside. His ambivalence towards seeking refuge in the Mexican exhibit and rejecting the version of Mexico he discovered once inside highlights the struggles that Nervo and his modernista peers faced as they worked to develop a stronger Mexican consciousness.

The efforts of both modernistas and científicos to pinpoint Mexican identity began long before the 1900 Exposition. Prior to even crossing the ocean, each group needed to
define its motivations, concerns, and philosophies. When they went abroad, their visions of Mexican identity were immediately challenged. By studying the modernista and científico approaches to the Universal Exposition, we can see that the two groups had reached very distinct conclusions about the needs and nature of the Mexican people. Yet, despite their differences, the two movements ultimately went through parallel phases as they developed their respective doctrines. As leaders of the two movements began to spread their beliefs, they soon found that Mexico’s political, social, and cultural environment necessitated a thorough evaluation before true cultural autonomy could be established. In the end, the 1900 Universal Exposition served as a laboratory for both the científicos and the modernistas by exposing their ideologies to foreign criticism and subjecting the Mexicans themselves to the scrutiny of an international community.

The Birth of Diverging Models

When the Spanish conquistadores set out on their conquest of Mexico in the sixteenth century, the native peoples of the region embarked on a bitter struggle to protect their heritage. Not only did the natives need to defend themselves physically from the Spaniards, but they also fought to preserve their cultures and their traditions. As the Spaniards continued to attack and transform new sections of the region, they massacred native populations or forced them to adapt to Spain’s imposed cultural, religious, and political standards. Finally, in 1821, the Treaty of Cordoba announced Mexico’s autonomy from the Spanish crown.

It soon became evident that those three hundred years of Spanish rule had changed the Mesoamerican region forever, despite almost 4,000 years of pre-Spanish civilization. The years that followed the Treaty of Cordoba were characterized by civil unrest, war with the United States, and a French occupation. Centuries of depending on Spain left Mexico ill-equipped to direct its own political and social institutions. To stand on its own, Mexico had to undergo a series of changes that would help the country develop a stronger political structure and a more coherent national identity.

The election of Porfirio Diaz to the presidency in 1876 marked a new chapter in Mexican history. When Diaz took control of the Mexican government, he ushered in an era of change called the Porfiriato. In *The Transformation of Liberalism in Late Nineteenth-Century Mexico*, Charles Hale seeks to show that the formation of Mexico’s post-Independence identity was intimately and necessarily tied to its reworked political system. Hale’s book demonstrates how liberalistic policies and positivist concerns meshed to form a version of scientific politics that was used to reorganize the country.

Though the term “científico” was not coined until the mid-1890s, scientific politicians multiplied in numbers throughout the 1880s and began to seriously influence Mexico’s government. Hale thoroughly examines how Mexico’s new government and its strategies impacted the development of an autonomous Mexican state. However, his work does not recognize the emergence of modernismo, which also played an important role in the formation of Mexico’s new, independent identity. As a whole, the modernistas rejected the científicos’ approach to the post-colonial period. Modernistas used their literature to show the Mexican public a different vision of modernity that was shaped by an interest in arts and national culture rather than by economic reforms and political institutions. Though Nervo and his contemporaries served as spokespeople through their writings, they wanted their work to act as stimuli for other Mexicans to begin the process of self-discovery. By contrast, the científicos believed that they alone had the right to restructure Mexican society.

The científicos sought the establishment of a new order that would prepare Mexico for modernization. In the past, religion had served to unite people from varying backgrounds and groups. Diaz’s administration saw the church as an obstacle to its own power since the church was one of Mexico’s greatest landowners, controlled the country’s educational system, and also enjoyed special legal privileges. Importantly, the man who introduced positivism to Mexico, Gabino Barreda, urged politicians to steer clear of all religious themes. While religion encouraged people to look to the fantastic, the científicos wanted to look towards what could be explained by the natural laws of science. As the Mexican physician and philosopher phrased it, “the Gospel of Science, not Jesus, [would] save Mexico.” Barreda believed that religion threatened the government’s quest to establish itself as the single, national institution within the country’s borders. The científicos concluded that a nation should be expressed through data and scientific empiricism rather than appeals to the religious, the emotional or the artistic.

Some of the consequences of scientific politics were rather straightforward, such as the large-scale push towards a new public education model that mimicked scientific studies by beginning with simple subjects and advancing to more complex topics. However, the influence of science extended far beyond its most traditional applications. Rather than focusing efforts on complex dogmas, politicians tried to implement change by utilizing processes like the scientific method, which emphasized observation and analysis. Positivists believed that science would unite Mexicans, because their shared knowledge of common “truths” would help them align their interests and move beyond class conflict. To the científicos, the adoption of scientific reasoning as the spirit of society represented Mexico’s entry into a more modern state of mind and an improved state of affairs. However, modernistas used their work to counter that point of view. As opposed to the científicos, modernistas believed that the propagation of science dehumanized society. Instead of
respecting the standardization that scientific pursuits could bring, the modernistas resented science for its emphasis on conformity and rigidity. To the modernistas, modernization required a new sensibility that could reconcile Mexico’s past with its future. Instead of discussing theories or producing data, modernistas wanted to inspire introspection. Nervo’s crónicas provide various snapshots of Mexican life, spanning subjects as varied as art exhibits and an afternoon spent at a local skating rink. According to Nervo, his crónicas are “living works, of perfect reality, palpitating works that [his] pen will try to copy.” Rather than focusing on formal ideologies like politics or concrete lessons of science, Nervo tries to recreate the elements of everyday life that help shape a person’s individual experience. Acknowledging the subjectivity of his crónicas, Nervo encourages readers to develop their own points of view and reconsider their personal connection to their homeland.

The philosophies of modernistas and of científicos show many immediate and clear contrasts. Whereas the científicos found every opportunity to increase their power and spread their political philosophies, the modernistas used a communicative medium to encourage others to form their own thoughts. In the científico model, Mexican society needed to be defined by rules, whether scientific or legal. According to the modernistas, Mexican culture needed to be defined by its quirks and by the experiences of its people. The divergences between these two models show unique ways of determining the essence of a nation. As the two movements continued to grow, the gap between them continued to widen.

Towards Literary Autonomy

Diaz and the científicos had somewhat of an advantage as they set out to reshape Mexican society. Though not all Mexicans favored the government’s policies, they risked legal consequences by ignoring them. Modernistas, on the other hand, had to establish a new infrastructure to spread their ideas before they could even hope to influence Mexican citizens. In general, Latin America did not yet have an infrastructure conducive to a robust literary culture—individual countries were poorly connected, and the general public either could not read or had little interest in doing so. Earlier Mexican civilizations had produced literature, but never on a national scale. Thus, for modernistas to accomplish their goals, they needed to create a countrywide network of literary producers and consumers. With a limited audience, lack of communication, and few resources for the actual publication of their work, Latin American authors found it difficult to increase their audience.

Whereas former literary masters like the Venezuelan Andrés Bello had assigned the artist multiple functions—for example, participation in politics and education—the authors who emerged after independence pursued art as their sole profession. In The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field, twentieth-century French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu traces the development of an autonomous literature in nineteenth-century France. Though his work treats a different time and place, the metaphor he uses to describe the process of assuming autonomy works well when applied to Mexican conditions in the post-colonial era. Bourdieu’s theory compares the liberation of authors to that of the transition from servant to free worker. When such a transition occurs, the worker can market his services freely without consideration of any other individual’s interests. Mexican literature experienced a similar era of democratization in which authors, freed from their dependence on wealthy patrons, could focus on themes such as emotions and everyday experiences rather than topics that would please a particular patron. Nervo and his modernista peers believed that this new democratization would enable them to displace literature from “the breast of the distinguished classes” to the heart of the people.

Indeed, a big part of Nervo’s role as a modernista leader consisted of demonstrating the importance of literature for people of all backgrounds. In a crónica from 1895 titled “Intellectual Drought: Its Presumed Victims,” Nervo argues that the literati are just as important to a country’s development as are mechanics or soldiers. According to Nervo, “the greatest events of humanity have come to us and moved our hearts thanks to the magic of verse” in works like the holy books of India and the virtuous poetry of San Francisco of Assisi. He attributes Mexico’s general lack of interest in literature to the fact that “Mexico is beginning to live the life of a free people— it is still a child… [and] the age of the book still hasn’t come for us.”

As Nervo noted retrospectively in 1907, newspapers were initially the most efficient and effective way to diffuse information about modernismo. From 1876 to 1903, the number of Spanish-language newspapers in the country climbed from 71 newspapers to 462. The growing significance of journalism provided modernistas with jobs, though not necessarily lucrative ones. The fact that literature had not yet saturated the national market made it difficult to grow rich from a writing career. Nervo’s crónica “Artistic Hatreds” criticizes Mexican authors for their lack of solidarity. He claims that because the current literary market does not provide many prospects for wealth and national fame, Mexican authors need to turn to one another for support. He urges Mexican...
authors to read one another’s works and engage in constructive criticism.\textsuperscript{22} Nervo’s arguments call to mind Bourdieu’s rules for the construction of autonomous literary movements. Bourdieu notes that a fledgling society of artists must be, above all else, its own market, trading in mutual recognition rather than money.\textsuperscript{23}

The Paradox of French Influence

Nervo also worried about another element of Mexican culture that threatened modernista success: a predilection for French literature and philosophy. Throughout his earlier crónicas he calls Mexicans to action, urging them to abandon their preference for French influences and to look within Latin America for inspiration. Although the modernistas considered their work to be part of a new, national, literature, modernismo in fact derived from elements of European styles, particularly Parnassianism, symbolism, and romanticism. The dependence was logical: a historic lack of national literature had necessitated the use of an academic and philosophic framework imported from another country. Accessing literature from neighboring Latin American nations was difficult, as Latin American countries often had less contact with one another than they did with European nations.\textsuperscript{24} Even Nervo’s works show signs of dependence on France’s cultural exports. He often mentions or cites French authors, and occasionally labels France his artistic “homeland.” As a student in Latin America, it is likely that Nervo’s education largely consisted of the study of French authors and philosophers. A statement by Justo Sierra, Nervo’s contemporary and a prominent liberal philosopher, concisely explains Mexico’s dependence on French cultural imports: “We learned French at the same time as Spanish . . . in French we could inform ourselves and we all did inform ourselves, here and there, of exotic literature; since it was in French and not in Spanish [that] we put ourselves in contact with the movement of human civilization, we turned directly to French [influences].”\textsuperscript{25}

Imitating French literary models came naturally, given that most of Mexico’s scholars had experienced a French-based education. Additionally, authors writing in the period after Independence in countries like Mexico tended to favor French models over those from Spain, partly as a statement against their former rulers, and partly because France produced more works that appealed to Mexican tastes.\textsuperscript{26} France (and Paris in particular) simultaneously represented a storied past, contemporary liberalism, and artistic freedoms.\textsuperscript{27} In effect, a sort of myth captured the imagination of the Mexican public and promoted the belief that Paris was the cultural capital of the world.\textsuperscript{28} Yet, as Jason Weiss notes in “All Roads Lead to Paris,” an article about the influence of France on Latin American literature, “though [the Mexicans’] language and education were European, they themselves were American.”\textsuperscript{29} What it meant to be American was unclear, and what it meant to write for an American public was no clearer. Mexicans needed to separate their formal education from their nationalistic interests.

The científicos found themselves in a position similar to that of the modernistas in that they too had to rely on foreign models to form their autonomous nation. As Bradford Burns notes in The Poverty of Progress: Latin America in the Nineteenth Century, “despite the search for deep meaning, the drive to modernize in nineteenth-century Latin America usually and simply meant an eagerness on the part of the governing elites to ape Europe.”\textsuperscript{30} Mexican politicians initially adopted the theory of positivism as formulated by the French philosopher Auguste Comte. According to Comte, a society’s success comes from its rejection of theology in favor of scientific knowledge: human experience depends entirely on natural laws.\textsuperscript{31} Mexican favor soon shifted towards a form of positivism that was more in line with Englishman Herbert Spencer’s version. Spencer’s theories appealed to the científicos for their emphasis on establishing order before taking any more steps towards building a modern society. Spenserian positivists believe that it is not possible to provide individual liberties until a society has reached its ultimate stage of development.\textsuperscript{32} Thus, the country’s overall well-being comes before that of individuals. Additionally, Diaz’s government embraced Spencer’s image of society as an ever-evolving organism. As the científicos continued to put their political needs before those of the greater population, they found it easy to justify their actions as part of an ongoing process of evolution. Someday, the country would be an ideal place for people of all backgrounds and creeds; until then, however, the científicos could only take care of the needs of a select number of people.

The científicos also embraced the idea of evolution in another form through the tenets of Social Darwinism. Social Darwinism holds that certain parts of the world’s population are inherently inferior to others and merit subordination.\textsuperscript{33} Such Social Darwinist dogmas allowed the científicos to classify who was most useful to society. Naturally, the científicos believed that they belonged at the top of the new social hierarchy, grouped with the elites that supported the Porfirián administration. To the científicos’ advantage, Mexican natives were already classified as a separate legal entity, thanks to legislation from colonial times that affirmed natives’ rights. Though it seems that such a document would protect the natives, in effect these documents served to distinguish the indigenous peoples from the rest of Mexican society, alienating them from the “normal” population.\textsuperscript{34} An article written by Francisco Bulnes, a prominent científico, demonstrates the sorts of Darwinist philosophies that dominated Mexican positivistic thought during this period. Bulnes classifies the world’s population into three groups: those who eat wheat
are superior, followed by those who eat corn and finally those who eat rice. According to Bulnes’s rules, indigenous Mexicans fall into the middle category and should thus be able to conquer people like the Chinese, but not those from nations such as France or the United States.35 Bulnes’s theory depends on the idea that the stronger classes will always dominate, and for due cause. This same reasoning was used in Mexico to justify the redistribution of native lands to the elite. The científicos believed that, though indigenous populations technically had somewhat of a right to the land their fathers had cultivated, “the fact that they [were] not currently possessors of that land [implied] that they [were] least apt…. in the fight for life the most apt wins [and] the winner has the right that others respect the fruits of his aptitudes.”36

For Mexico to modernize, the científicos believed they needed more people with European blood and culture.37 They did not simply take European models and use them to improve the Mexican nation: they wanted European people to physically complete the transformation by immigrating to Mexico. Thus, as the modernistas sought to separate themselves from the French influences they had grown up with, Diaz and his government reached out to strengthen their alliances with nations overseas. According to Diaz’s government, the country had the potential to be the richest in the world—it simply was cursed with an untalented native population.38 Documents circulated the nation that cited the laziness and ineptitudes of the indigenous population, stressing the greater productivity of people of other nationalities. Statistics comparing rates of productivity in activities such as brick-making painted the Mexican masses as unmotivated, untalented, and incapable of changing enough to help the country progress at the desired rate.39 European immigrants were favored over those from the United States largely because the United States’ growing power, coupled with its proximity, worried the Mexican government. Peoples like the Chinese were also undesirable, considering that Bulnes’s definitions labeled them as even weaker than Mexico’s own natives.40

Throughout the Porfiriato, tension remained between the native, mestizo, and Creole populations. Standards of living for Mexican rural laborers (who often worked for the prosperous elite) fell consistently throughout the Diaz period, even as prices for staples like corn continued to climb. By 1900, laborers were spending about 60% of their earnings on food—and were still underfed, plagued by malnutrition.41 An unfortunate consequence of the científico rhetoric was that “Mexican” came to be defined as “inadequate.” Ironically, the resulting interpretation of Mexican identity was so distorted that the people with the most native Mexican blood were also the most disenfranchised.

Conflicting Visions of Progress

Whereas científicos claimed that Mexican inferiority resulted from genetic traits, Nervo argued that inferiority only existed in the Mexican imagination and stemmed from a lack of national self-confidence. In an 1895 crónica titled “In This Country,” Nervo notes that “France puts its stamp on juvenile [Mexican] imaginations, and Mexico cannot rub it out.”42 After years of using French literature and culture as “the ultimate barometer of elegance,” Mexicans, as might be expected, found Paris intriguing.43 Trips to Paris thus became a common undertaking for Mexicans who could find a means to fund the travel. “In This Country” warns Mexicans of the dangers of traveling to Paris. Nervo acknowledges that Mexico does not yet have many of the elements of modernization that travelers find in Paris, such as lively boulevards and widespread electricity. Mexicans therefore return home with “germs of deep weariness for all that is not Paris, and a deep disdain for all that is Mexico,” because they believe that Paris’s more modern culture implies Mexico’s inferiority. Nervo argues that Mexico will enjoy the same level of modernization in the future; the country just needs more time to develop.44 Interestingly, the científicos also fell back on the concept that Mexico had not yet reached its full potential. However, instead of promoting Mexicans to look within for growth, the government decided to look to outside forces. Nervo’s 1896 crónica “Our Insignificance” is useful for understanding how modernistas and científicos both employed rhetoric of “progress,” but with very different goals. Nervo writes:

Everyday, at every hour and in all tones, they say that in Mexico there isn’t art, that in Mexico there isn’t literature, that in Mexico there isn’t anything… What are we but a sad planet that reflects borrowed light: the light of this artistic France, of this intellectual France, this extraordinary France, brain of Europe and of the entire world? What are we except strange sick beings brought to life by the phosphorous of Paris, the grand Paris, the prodigious Paris? Here, we don’t even have the right to think. Thoughts come to us from Paris, with a patent and elegant packaging… I think that the Latin race is the most intelligent that populates the earth… and since this is my conviction, I have asked myself many times: Why are the French worth so much? Why are we not worthy of anything?45

Nervo tries to get to the root of Mexico’s “inferiority complex” by asking why Mexico perceives itself as lacking in value. His use of hyperbole to talk about Paris’s greatness reinforces his point that Mexicans have too much faith in French superiority. He then states his own opinion: that Mexico’s people are worth just as much as the French, if not more. He mocks those who believe so wholeheartedly in France’s cultural domination, and provides two possible
A Call to Paris

In a piece from December 1899, Nervo mentions that fellow journalists are preparing to go to Paris to cover the 1900 Universal Exposition. Originally he claims to have no envy, but finally he admits to jealousy of their upcoming assignments. Shortly after Nervo wrote this crónica he received his own offer of employment at the Exposition from El Mundo Ilustrado, a weekly supplement to El Imparcial, a prominent Mexican daily. Nervo packed his bags and headed for French shores in time for the April 1900 opening of Paris's newest exposition. Given Nervo's opinions about Mexicans who make trips to Paris, it seems surprising that he too would venture overseas. Yet, a trip to France provided the ultimate challenge—a chance to prove that Mexican authors could hold their own amongst the European literary elite. Furthermore, even Nervo could not entirely ignore the allure of Paris. Regardless of his sentiment that Mexicans did not need French culture, Nervo recognized that he too owed his cultural upbringing to France. As such, the chance to visit the land of his literary role models was likely a very tempting offer.

The process of validation that Nervo sought through his time in Paris was echoed for the Mexican politicians through their trips to universal expositions. Much as Nervo and his peers used trips to Paris to confirm their legitimacy as authors, the Mexican government turned to universal expositions as a way to participate in politics and culture at an international level. Mexican politicians believed that Mexico's lack of immigrants stemmed from foreigners' misconceptions of Mexico as unsanitary and unsafe. According to Sebastian B. de Mier, who served as commissioner for the Exposition and also as Mexico's plenipotentiary in Great Britain, "the concurrence of Mexico to diverse Universal Expositions has produced... the dissipation of a multitude of preoccupations and errors in regards to [Mexico]." Attendance at expositions was thus an extended form of public relations through which Mexican officials sought to correct others' perceptions of their country. Using accounts of recent concrete improvements in areas like sanitation, the Wizards of Progress emphasized how the country had progressed in the past several decades. Naturally, an exposition in Paris was particularly significant because of Mexico's admiration for the French government and culture.

Universal expositions had not always served such complex ends. The events have their roots in the trade shows and art fairs celebrated around Europe in the eighteenth century. Such events were often regional, connecting potential buyers with merchants or displaying work from local art contests. France is credited with holding the first large-scale industrial exposition in 1797, when a post-Revolution economic depression left national manufacturers like the Sèvres porcelain...
company with an excess of merchandise. The exposition arranged to rid manufacturers of their leftover products was so successful that the French government decided to make expositions official, yearly affairs. In Paris 1900, Richard Mandell notes that coordinators aimed for a direct profit rather than long-term impact. An exposition’s power was assumed limited to the immediate advantages of financial transactions and did not encompass cultural or strategic effects. Other countries soon copied the French model of expositions, but the scope of these events remained regional or national until 1851, when England opened its Crystal Palace Exposition to exhibitors from all over the world. France followed with its own Universal Exposition in 1855. After that, France hosted an exposition every eleven years until the turn of the century. With each exposition, the event diverged farther and farther from its mercantile roots and drew closer to entertainment. Exhibition planners began to add decorative flourishes to their displays, and by the time of the 1900 event, expositions included congresses, rides, and special events in addition to their displays of mercantile goods and art. At the turn of the twentieth century, expositions were no longer a simple venue for markets: they had transformed into a venue for international marketing.

The World in Miniature

Typically, countries participating in expositions chose to erect copies of national monuments or traditional houses within exposition grounds. Mexico’s commissioners to the 1889 Exposition had followed suit, choosing an Aztec Palace as the design for their pavilion. The 1889 exhibit also included people in indigenous dress as an attempt at what Tenorio calls “autho-ethnography”—which can also be seen as capitalizing on Exposition visitors’ desires to see something new and exotic. Yet, even as Mexico used native and indigenous peoples in its exhibits, its overall image had very little to do with these peoples and traditions. The indigenous elements were presented as a part of Mexico in a historic sense, whereas the emphasis in written presentations and documents was on Mexico as a contemporary nation.

By 1900, the Wizards of Progress decided that even incorporating indigenous elements into the pavilion’s façade was detrimental to their overall goals. When planning the 1900 pavilion, Mexican officials concluded that Mexico lacked “an architectural style truly national and characteristic of Mexico.” As such, architects in charge of the project decided to build a pavilion in the Neo-Greek style rather than incorporating any elements native to Mexico. Effectively, the neoclassical style used for the pavilion spoke to European tastes more than to Mexico’s own heritage. Though friezes about Mexican history appeared on the building’s outer surfaces, from afar, the tricolor flag was really the only way to identify the building as Mexican.

While the physical building was but a facet of Mexico’s official representation at the 1900 Exposition, its architecture provides a good starting point from which to analyze the rest of the Mexican exhibit. The abandonment of Mexico’s cultural heritage in favor of more European architectural styling recalls the científicos’ preference for people and ideas of European origin. As Timothy Mitchell notes, a world exhibition “isn’t an exhibit of the world, but rather the world presented and grasped as through exhibition.” Mexican commissioners could control which elements of Mexican culture to display and which elements to leave, which meant they could represent Mexico however they saw fit. Instead of reconstructing a Mexican monument, Mexican officials sought to reconstruct Mexico’s identity. When the Wizards picked a building design, they made a conscious choice to recast Mexican realities and focus instead on an idealized vision of their country. Even if Diaz’s administration could not predict how Mexican identity would develop within the nation, it was able to control how that new identity was introduced abroad. This disregard for reality makes it clear why Mexico never hosted its own exposition; plans to hold a 1910 Mexico City Exposition met with opposition and eventually fell through. In order for the científicos to maintain the image of Mexico they had so carefully edited, they needed to reproduce it in other parts of the world. Hosting an exposition in Mexico would juxtapose their reconstruction of Mexico with its reality, exposing discrepancies and intentional oversights. In effect, expositions abroad served as an experiment for the científicos, testing the version of Mexico the government wished to implement at home.

In his book on Mexican liberalism Hale makes it very clear that science affected Mexico’s nation building. However, he does not look at how this science allowed Mexico to grow and promote its identity beyond its own borders. It was not enough for science to have arrived in Mexico: Mexico needed to share that science with the rest of the world. Science was considered “a universal—a form of knowledge that knew no national context.” The rules governing fields like geology remained constant all around the world, even if specifics like type of rock differed from nation to nation. Science thus served as a useful means to make comparisons...
between countries. By utilizing scientific discourse and statistics, Mexico attempted to show that it too could participate in the international community. Visual aides such as photographs, maps, and almanacs added to the impact of exhibits inside the Mexican pavilion.

In 1889, Mexico chose to emphasize the abundance of raw materials found within its borders. Commissioners also encouraged manufacturers of all sorts to send in their goods for display, be they of high quality or imperfect characteristics. De Mier argues that in 1889 it served the Wizards of Progress’ interests to present some poorly made goods because they would inspire foreigners to come and perfect Mexico’s industry by lowering the costs of production and raising the standards of quality. The 1889 Commissioners hoped that European audiences, enticed by the possibilities of developing Mexico’s industry, would then step in and help the country catch up to more-industrialized nations. The exhibit did not attract a large number of investors or help the country catch up to more-industrialized nations.

The exhibit did not attract a large number of investors or mercenaries, however, and by 1900 most of the world’s most powerful nations had moved on to exhibiting technology and fanciful displays of commodities rather than simply showing raw goods. In turn, Mexico shifted its exhibit’s focus from the country’s raw potential to industries that had already begun to experience some notable growth, such as textiles and metallurgy. In addition to their focus on elements of science, the Wizards of Progress established a set of standards that they thought determined whether a specific nation was modern or not. They then planned the exhibit to stress Mexico’s advancement in these particular areas, which included characteristics like political peace, workable land, good sanitation, and racial homogeneity. Institutions such as hospitals and schools were widely mentioned, as were new infrastructures like the railroad. De Mier explains that this new emphasis still encouraged foreign capital, but in a much less direct manner so as to emphasize Mexico’s progress since the last Exposition.

The Power of Propaganda

The Wizards of Progress commissioned propaganda to complement every Exposition exhibit they planned. For the 1900 Exposition, the Wizards commissioned French economist Emile Levassuer to edit a compilation of works by renowned scientists, writers, and politicians. Topics ranged from Exposition Commissioner General Alfred Picard’s discussion of Mexico’s industry, commerce and transportation to the former French Minister of Agriculture Hippolyte Gomot’s tome about Mexican agriculture. The Wizards of Progress also hired publicists to write articles for Parisian newspapers that praised Mexico and provided data about its natural resources and framework for industry. All of this propaganda made good use of the word “progress” and barely even mentioned Mexico’s history or its native culture.

In his book The Mexican United States: Their Natural Resources, Their Progress, Their Current Situation, Rafael Zayas Enriquez makes a statement about the conditions of Mexico that nicely represents the general tone of Mexican propaganda at the Exposition. According to Enriquez, “Mexico is a country completely at peace and in constant progress; it is governed by laws that are as sage and as liberal as those of the most enlightened country in the world; it offers all desirable guarantees for the life and property of its inhabitants.” Enriquez’s comments clearly contradict reports of Mexican reality at the time: thanks to the científicos’ beliefs in social hierarchy and positivism, not every Mexican citizen truly enjoyed “all desirable guarantees.” Ironically, Enriquez also comments that foreigners enjoy the same benefits as native Mexicans; in reality, foreign investors were favored by the Mexican government and often given concessions never offered to Mexican natives. Yet, comments like these made up a large portion of Mexican propaganda, and served to enhance Mexico’s appeal as an immigration destination. Official propaganda was filled with passages that stressed the ease of immigrating to Mexico, the laxity of its laws, and the ready availability of a local labor force. Another stereotypical piece of immigrant-targeted propaganda came from Gustave Gostkowski, a French-Polish-Mexican media publicist who also belonged to Mexico’s geographic and statistical societies. In his work In Mexico: Studies, Notes, and Information Useful to the Capitalist, the Immigrant, and the Tourist, Gostkowski praises Mexico not only for its natural resources and fertile lands, but also for being “a civilized country advancing rapidly on the way to progress.” The book looks at Mexico from a number of angles, including its climate, its geological composition, and its system of taxes. Gostkowski makes a point of sharing stories of immigrants who have already come to Mexico and thrived in various industries.

Books such as those written by Enriquez and Gostkowski further degraded Mexico’s native populations. Often, the only reference to native peoples concerned their suitability for manual labor. The científicos realized that their usual rhetoric about the native people’s laziness and inferiority might discourage immigrants who anticipated the need for a local work force. Thus, Exposition materials avoided the usual discussion of natives as weak, and instead depicted them as “docile and sufficiently hard-working.” Again, native culture and tradition went unexplained. Mexican officials thought that indigenous cultures were incompatible with modernity, so they focused on highlighting Mexico’s white citizens rather than its indigenous majority.

A Non-Partisan Approach to the Exposition

Nervo’s interests at the Exposition differed greatly from those of the government. The científico-sponsored propagan-
da was presented within the Exposition walls and consequently took on the role of a prop used by the government to persuade visitors as to Mexico’s greatness. As the Situationist and Marxist philosopher Guy Debord notes, “The spectacle is the ruling order’s non-stop discourse about itself, a never-ending monologue of self-praise.” Ultimately, the científicos created a spectacle, projecting an idealized version of both themselves and their country. The Mexican pavilion included posters lauding Diaz and his government’s efforts in helping improve Mexican society. The government then used these posters and other parts of the exhibits as propaganda at home by coordinating displays in large Mexican cities. Such exhibits relied heavily on references to prizes won at expositions as a means of proving to Mexicans that their country’s exhibit was well-received. However, while some of the exhibit’s contents did eventually reach Mexican audiences, they did so out of context and away from the stage of the Universal Exposition. Removed from their original context, exhibits from the Exposition became a new sort of spectacle in which the científicos tried to convince Mexicans themselves that the exhibits on display were a good representation of the nation.

Nervo’s writings were always removed from the spectacle of the Exposition, circulating back home in Mexico for a public that had for the most part never left national boundaries. Nervo owed his job in Paris to a friendship he had established with Rafael Reyes Spindola, founder of El Imparcial, a prominent Mexican daily. As mentioned earlier, in all of his reporting on the 1900 Exposition, Nervo never gives details about the inside of the Mexican pavilion. Just as he avoided political themes in his pre-Exposition crónicas, Nervo chose to present a view of the Exposition that steered clear of official doctrines and veered instead towards snapshots of other parts of the Exposition. In effect, Nervo rejected the Mexican government’s presentation of Mexican culture as an inauthentic representation of his homeland. By not discussing the Mexican pavilion, Nervo underlined his belief that the path to a strong sense of identity was not to be found through government.

Importantly, Nervo’s crónicas also typically steer clear of scientific topics. For all the scientific rhetoric and statistics presented within the official Mexican exhibit, someone learning about the Exposition by means of Nervo’s accounts would have no sense of the role that science played in Mexico’s official contribution to the Fair. In fact, Nervo’s only mention of science is to mock it. In a crónica from July of 1900, the author makes his only direct comment about positivism: “Since positivism [began] walking the Earth and we want the reason and data about everything, statistics pass us by day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute, without mercy. You cannot go anywhere without encountering them…. And you try in vain to escape. But nobody escapes from statistics.” The rest of the crónica speaks of Nervo’s experiences with a mathematician so obsessed with numbers and statistics that he goes as far as to tell Nervo how much milk it would take to make a ball of cheese the size of the moon. The crónica mocks the need of the científicos and their followers to render everything in quantifiable, comparable terms. Nervo’s choice of anecdote and tone points to his distaste for the government’s dependence on statistics and science as a means of organizing the nation.

Instead of chronicling science’s presence at the Exposition, Nervo’s crónicas embrace the thematic pavilions and other countries’ exhibits. A typical crónica from the Exposition resembles “The Combat of Flowers,” which discusses a flower competition. The majority of the piece deals with a description of the contest, its participants, and the sorts of people who attended the event. At the end, however, Nervo compares the French flower competition to one he attended while in Mexico. After asking himself whether the two are comparable, Nervo concludes: “Yes, they are, and one could even say that the contest of [1894 in Mexico]… would have thrived in Paris—it was rather stunning…. With this and with everything, Mexico does not lose in comparison except in reference to quantity, as was bound to happen.” Many of Nervo’s meditations on Mexican identity come about in a similar manner, inspired by discussion of Exposition buildings or events. In this way, Nervo relates the topic of Mexican identity to a broad array of subjects. Comparisons between the French and Mexicans are common, a habit that speaks to his goal to rid Mexicans of their steadfast belief in France’s superiority.

Nervo also notes moments of uncertainty between Mexican visitors to the Exposition and French locals. He notes that the French often seem unsure as to how to approach Mexican visitors, and find them to be a bit exotic. He comments that “[Mexicans] are not definable. A German man, a Frenchman [and] an Englishman are unmistakable. Of a Mexican, they never can affirm anything.” Conversely, Nervo also thinks that contrasts between French and Mexican culture make it difficult for Mexicans to grasp the essence of what seems to be the Parisian way of life. In a 1900 crónica called “Upside-down House,” Nervo points to the seemingly perpetual gaiety of France as a point of confusion for visiting Mexicans. He blames this cultural mismatch on the fact that Mexicans are emerging from a troubled period and “seem to have been fed by bottles of melancholy, [the] concentrated milk of anguish.” As in the crónicas that he wrote before the Exposition, Nervo points to Mexico’s shaky past as a reason for its present conditions. In the final paragraphs of this crónica, he writes of an exhibit consisting of a house turned entirely upside down, from its outside façade to its furniture. His analysis of the exhibit is such: “It is almost a symbol… of our Latin madness: countries upside
down, assumptions upside down, conquests upside down, brains upside down... And I feel calm, thinking about how Mexico, that also was upside down, has straightened itself out.” Nervo’s last words reflect his opinion that Mexicans can succeed in their quest for a more unified and stable culture. Nervo shows his faith in the Mexican people’s ability to push Mexico down a path to a brighter future.

The Human Element

Nervo’s time in Paris allowed him to test his theories about literature, about being Mexican, and about the role of France in contemporary culture. To better understand Nervo’s experiences as a Mexican in Paris, one must look beyond the crónicas that he wrote about the Exposition. Nervo developed more of a consciousness of his Mexican identity through his daily interactions on the boulevards, with other authors, and as he struggled to find his place in the Parisian cultural scene. In addition to crónicas, the corpus of materials written by Nervo during the Exposition includes letters written to personal acquaintances throughout his stay in Paris. Nervo’s crónicas are often witty, ironic, and light in tone. By contrast, his personal correspondence takes a realistic approach to analyzing the possibilities of literary success in this hallowed cultural land.

As Nervo experiences the struggles of living in Paris as a foreigner, problems he had earlier diagnosed in the relationship between France and his native homeland begin to characterize his personal life. Just as he had noted that Mexicans feared themselves inferior to French standards, Nervo finds himself doubting his ability to match Parisian expectations. Nervo’s letters to his friend Don Luis Quintanilla outline the many steps Nervo had to take to shop around a French version of El Bachiller, his first fictional work to earn critical success in Mexico. Nervo’s letter to Quintanilla shows a fear that his creative work will never be properly appreciated in France. Nervo had already achieved a level of celebrity in Mexico before his trip, thanks to El Bachiller and his regular contributions to several periodicals. Yet, as his personal letters show, in Paris he could barely manage to sell enough writing to survive, let alone to support his family back home. His earlier claim that most Mexicans traveling in Paris remained unassimilated and essentially ignored during their trip proved, to his disadvantage, to be largely true.

In a crónica written retrospectively about his life in Paris, Nervo speaks of a time when a modernista colleague tricked him into a conversation with the French poet Jean Moréas. Nervo’s friend introduces the two authors by explaining that Nervo has traveled all the way to Paris just to see Moréas. Thrilled, Moréas spends the rest of the day speaking of his work, interrupting himself frequently to belittle Nervo. For example, at one point Moréas says: “Who could have told you, when you were playing with your chicken and coyote in the grassy streets of your town, that one day... you would walk through Paris, France, on the arm of Jean Moréas?” Comments such as these imply that Nervo is below Moréas, and should feel honored to be in his presence. Nervo’s experiences typify those of Latin American authors living in Paris, who often found it difficult to gain the respect of French authors and readers. As Sylvia Molloy explains in The Diffusion of Latin American Literature in Twentieth-Century France, French literary circles were typically rather closed to writers from beyond their own borders. They did, however, show some favoritism towards Spanish authors. As French audiences often grouped Latin American authors in with the Spaniards, some modernistas gained French readers because they were mistakenly associated with Spanish literary circles.

In effect, Nervo’s attempts to show Mexicans that they too could achieve the levels of cultural greatness enjoyed by the French were challenged by his inability to conquer the Parisian literary market. As Nervo anticipated the termination of his contract with El Imparcial, set to expire in October of 1900, he became increasingly anxious about his ability to support himself in the Parisian scene. His letters describe many attempts to establish contacts and find new employment so that he won’t have to leave Paris when his contract expires. Alas, Nervo found reason to make use of his new networks a bit prematurely: a letter from August reveals that Nervo was fired because of an article he had published in La Revista Moderna, a magazine he had helped found. The loss of steady income pushed Nervo farther into professional and personal desperation, but he tried to maintain his pride and refused to beg Spindola for reconsideration. In August, with his termination still fresh, Nervo declares: “the decisive moment of the fight has arrived, and I am going to undertake it with faith.”

Nervo’s need for assimilation into Parisian society was so great that he remained in Paris despite his hardships. Though he finally found a publishing house to work with on a French edition of El Bachiller, Nervo had to resort to translations and begging friends for money to put food on his table. His challenges became a sort of battle to prove his self-worth and, consequently, to show that Mexicans shared the gift of cultural genius. Conquering Paris had become an obsession for the author. In a June 1901 letter, using an expression appropriate for a poet, Nervo begs Quintanilla to give him “an anchor to drive into the mud of the Seine, before [his] boat follows the current and moves away from [Paris’s] graceful shores”—in other words, to send him more money. Nervo did in fact collect more funds from Quintanilla and other friends, and managed to stay in Paris for a couple more years. However, in 1903, lacking a source of constant income, Nervo left Paris to take a lucrative job offer at a preparatory school in Mexico. In a crónica written right
before his departure, Nervo shows regret at having to leave his adopted home. He claims: “Never have I felt a pain so deep. Something tells me that I am losing everything… that something is ending in me, almost.”

Success in his native homeland was insufficient: Nervo had sought appreciation in his adopted home to prove to all that Mexico was on the path to greatness. His goal was not money or really even celebrity, but rather a validation of Mexican literature and the affirmation of Mexican identity.

The Reality Back Home

Nervo’s less-than-idyllic return home makes one wonder: after having committed so much time and energy to pursuing his Parisian dream, did he return home completely disillusioned? Should he have heeded his own advice and never left Mexico to begin with? Nervo spent a good part of the rest of his life traveling but never again tried to establish himself in Parisian culture. In fact, his future travels took him primarily to Spanish-speaking countries on official Mexican business: as a diplomat, Nervo lived in countries like Spain, Argentina, and Uruguay. After his time in Paris, Nervo resorted to a life away from the lettered capital.

Though Nervo had always argued that Mexicans could hold their own against the assumedly superior French, his experiences seemed to suggest otherwise. Still, to say Nervo went home empty-handed would be a gross understatement. Nervo’s reputation in Mexico skyrocketed after his return from Paris, and he went on to gain national fame. His popularity also helped modernismo garner a wider reading public. Thus, Nervo ultimately proved his own theories, but in a way that directly countered his actual goals. In effect, Nervo showed that the metaphor about Mexican tobacco and Mexican travelers still held true in his country. Regardless of his struggles, the very fact that he had traveled to Paris made him seem like a more legitimate author in the eyes of Mexican audiences. Like that Mexican tobacco, Nervo’s goods gained more value after having passed through a city reputed for its high-quality exports. Nervo also seemed to feel that his struggles abroad helped shape his future as a Mexican author. In a 1902 crónica, Nervo states: “In Paris I was alone in the arms of that monster that never will know my name…. I was no one, and I couldn’t be anyone [but] I returned [home] having found myself, I returned feeling the pure integrity of my artistic self…. Paris, which consecrates, will never consecrate me.” Thus, while Nervo admits defeat at the hands of the French, he concludes that his journey helped him establish a more personal authorial perspective. This statement proves the ultimate success of Nervo’s trip. Though he was tortured by his inability to conquer France’s reading public, his capacity to emerge from the experience with clearer goals for his writing shows that Nervo was able to overcome the hurdles of his Parisian experience.

Interestingly, the Mexican government also failed in its mission to earn money directly from time at the Exposition. Foreign immigration did not increase significantly after the fair ended, nor did Mexico experience an immediate influx of foreign investment or even interest. For the most part, French audiences regarded the Mexican pavilion “either with indifference or with an ostentatious patronalism that is so often the imitator’s reward.”

Much as Nervo found that French audiences had little interest in Mexican literature, the científicos found that most foreigners had little interest in Mexico beyond the Exposition gates. To French eyes, the fact that Mexico cared so much about its opinion validated its own self-worth: Mexico’s efforts were seen as “a great manifestation in honor of France.” Though the pavilion received almost one million visitors throughout the course of the Exposition, Mexico’s participation did not seem to bring any real, quantifiable results to the nation. Still, as propagandist Jose F. Godoy notes in his biography of Diaz, participation in international congresses and expositions gave Mexico “a standing among the progressive nations of the world, and spread within its borders the knowledge made in all the branches of sciences and arts.” The científicos valued the ability to learn from other countries’ methods through expositions and conferences. The failure to attract immigrants and investors did not stop Mexico from participating in future expositions such as that of St. Louis in 1904. Mexico’s politicians still found it important to participate in these international events, if nothing else to continue asserting Mexico’s place in the spectrum of modern nations.

Neither Nervo nor the científicos came home from Paris with a concrete definition of what it meant to be Mexican. Yet, between the two, Nervo’s modernista approach proved more beneficial in Mexico’s future. Modernismo continued to accelerate, and helped Mexico establish itself as a modern, literary nation. Meanwhile, the version of Mexico promoted by Diaz and the científicos largely contributed to the Mexican Revolution of 1910. As the modernistas gained the support of the Mexican public, that same public reshaped its understanding of the Mexican nation. Ultimately, the populations suppressed by Diaz and the científicos’ policies gained a greater consciousness and challenged the political system.

As the Diaz government crumbled before the pressures of an embattled nation, modernista authors wrote on, chronicling the nation’s struggles, triumphs, and culture for generations of readers to come.

1 “Con un alegre ¡Buenos días! entro a ese pabellón de México, refugiado en una sonriente explanada, entre la infinidad de palacios de todas las naciones.” Amado Nervo, Obras Completas: Tomo I (Madrid: Aguilar, S.A. de Ediciones, 1951), 1342.

At this moment in Latin American history, short newspaper articles called crónicas played an important role in the region's literary culture. For this paper, I will focus on Nervo’s crónicas and personal letters written between 1895 and 1903, a period that spans the years leading up to Nervo’s visit to the Exposition until his return to Mexico.

Díaz served as President from 1876-1880 and then again from 1884-1910. Mexican election laws were changed to permit Díaz to hold so many terms. Michael S. Warner, Concise Encyclopedia of Mexico (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2001), 664.

Notably, Nervo himself respected the Catholic tradition and had initially trained to become a priest, but had to abandon his studies to make money for his family. He often incorporated sentimentality for religion into his works of fiction but his crónicas do not typically reflect religious themes. Manuel Durán, Genio y figura de Amado Nervo (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1968), 58.

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1. Los franceses valen infinitamente más que nosotros, porque en Francia... la posición geográfica, la naturaleza del terreno, las tradiciones, los costumbres, el grado de prosperidad, etc., etc., influyen de una manera directa en el desarrollo de los cerebros, de las energías, de las aptitudes.

2. Los franceses valen infinitamente más que nosotros, porque a todos los latinos que no somos franceses, se nos ha ocurrido que valen mucho" Ibid.

Notably, France also used the Exposition as a sort of propaganda. Population growth and industrial developments in countries like Germany threatened France's position as one of the world's great powers. France thus used the Exposition to reaffirm its commercial and cultural importance. Richard B. Mandell, *Paris 1900: The Great World's Fair.* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), 30. France maintained its role as cultural capital in Latin American imaginations despite its current troubles, probably due to the saturation of the Parisian myth.


For details about these tentative plans, see: Antonio A. de Medina y Ormaeche, *Iniciativa para Celebrar el Primer Centenario de la Independencia de México: con una Exposición Universal* (Mexico: Oficina de la Secretaría de Fomento, 1833).

For a rather blatant attempt to improve Mexico's image, Enriquez also wrote *The United States of Mexico: Its Progress in Twenty Years of Peace 1877-1897.*

70 “Le Mexique est un pays en pleine paix et en progrès constant; il est régi par des lois aussi sages et aussi libérales que celles de la nation la plus éclairée du monde; il offre toutes les garanties désirables pour la vie et les propriétés de ses habitants.” Rafael de Zayas Enriquez, *Les Etats-Unis mexicains : leurs ressources naturelles, leur progrès, leur situation actuelle* (Mexico: Ministère de Fomento, 1899), 231.


75 “Desde que el positivismo anda por el mundo y queremos la razón y la cifra de todo, la estadística nos sale al paso día a día, hora a hora, minuto a minuto, sin misericordia. No puede usted ir a parte alguna sin topiary con ella... Y en vano pretende usted escaparse. De la estadística ya no se escapa nadie.” Nervo, *Obras Completas: Tome I*, 455.


81 “Es casi un símbolo, un acabado símbolo de nuestras locuras latinas: países al revés, presupuestos al revés, conquistados al revés... Y me siento tranquilo al pensar que México, que también estaba al revés, se ha enderezado.” Nervo, *Obras Completas: Tome I*, 1357.


87 “Dame una ancora para hincarla en los limos del Sena, antes de
“Algo íntimo me dice que todo lo pierdo… que algo… acaba en mí.” Nervo, Epistolario, 59.

“Solo estaba y perdido en el Paris inmenso y radioso. Solo, en los brazos de aquello monstruo, que jamás deletrearía mi nombre. Nada era yo, nada podía [pero] tornaba a encontrarme a mi mismo, tornaba a sentir la pura integridad de mi yo artístico” “Paris, que consaga, no me consagraría jamás.” Nervo, Obras Completas: Tomo I, 1425.

Tenorio-Trillo, Mexico at the World’s Fairs, 158.

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“We Can Only Know What We Can Truly Imagine”:
Feminist Utopian Fiction and the Utopian Social Project of the Second Wave

Alana Burman

Abstract: In the 1970s, American feminists set out to change the world they lived in into utopia. As they came together from New Left movements, radical women theorized about the manifestations of patriarchal oppression and the ideals and practices that would best guide a new feminist world. In this paper I explore the way in which the utopian fiction that grew out of this movement serves as a microcosm of the transition in feminist theories that took place over the course of the central decade of second wave feminism. Through a study of Joanna Russ’s The Female Man and Marge Piercy’s Woman on the Edge of Time the paper investigates the intersection of the theories and practices of feminism and fiction making, and the ways in which utopia, by nature, encourages advancement beyond itself.

Second Wave Feminists were utopian thinkers before they knew they were feminists. As radical women engaged in cultural rebellion in the 1950s and 60s developed a critical view of oppressive structures within the activist circles of the New Left, their burgeoning consciousness of social injustice primed them to aim for their own utopia. It was also inside these groups that radical women first began to approach pervasive sexism as a systematic abuse and an issue of power politics. Radical movements, despite their revolutionary rhetoric, proved to be hotbeds of sexism and misogyny, and increasingly, the women inside these movements turned toward a liberatory philosophy that validated their desires for how the world should be. As they arrived at a similar position from diverse beginnings in movements that fought war, class hierarchy, colonialism, and racism, radical women became feminists when they began to think critically about gender oppression and seek a new utopia—one that envisioned women’s liberation from dominance and women’s development as empowered individuals in an egalitarian social structure. American feminists in the 1970s began to passionately envision and work to construct their own vision of the good. Within small consciousness-raising groups, droves of women set out to rectify the pervasive exploitation of women in established culture. As each woman arrived at this feminist position from a different ideology of social justice, she entered the large organism of the movement, knitted together of diverse women collected in small groups and coalitions that were far from unified or completely in agreement, but all of whom sought to examine women’s places in the home, the law, the workplace, and the customs of social order. In addition to their emphasis on criticism, this collection envisioned the burgeoning feminist movement as an enterprise for creative imaginings and productive forging of their idealized world beyond current reality.

Second wave feminist authors, committed to revolutionizing the culture in which they lived, explored such alternatives for egalitarian living in the utopian-structured societies they imagined in literature. In service of the utopian endeavor, women’s writing, as Angelika Banmer observes, became “the privileged site for the articulation of utopian consciousness.” In the utopian genre, especially, the strategies employed by a novelist, storyteller, and social critic overlap. Since writing utopia necessitated careful consideration of how to shape a society, in these novels, feminist authors also invited commentary on the formulation of the narrative norms and structures of the society in which they lived. Feminist utopian literature of the 1970s took advantage of this possibility for reflexive growth, and the works produced during this upsurge of feminist writing embraced such self-examination paired with optimistic imagining as they contributed to the continuing progress of feminist theory. In this vein, black feminists and lesbian feminists, among others, cut into the mainstream voice of the movement, which was largely white and heterosexual, to remind other women that gender did not shape a woman’s life alone. Feminism could no longer ignore the need to solve for racism, as well as classism, heterosexism, and the other relationships of dominance that existed alongside sexism when shaping utopia, both literary and social-political.

Because these utopian novels, and the feminist theory with which they interlock, evolved over time with regard to the shape they suggest a feminist utopia should take,
they foreground the importance of process over product and the vision of utopia as the creation of an ideal always in flux. Just as second wave radical feminists had refused to allow previous, patriarchally informed notions of utopia to define their image of the perfect world, so too did they realize that their ideas of utopia were limited to time and context. Within feminism, utopian thinking again entered this pattern of emboldening continual progress, and the early utopian claims of second wave feminism encouraged progression to still further claims. The feminist utopian thinking of one era inspired the next, and the second wave is thus characterized by a transition from one monolithic vision of a unified feminist utopia to a multifaceted notion that incorporated the differences among women into visions of the good. Whereas an expansion in utopian thinking catalyzed the splintering of radical movements that made the feminist movement possible, so too did utopian thinking within the second wave spark a transformation from an insistence on a singular cohesive feminism to the celebration of manifold diversified feminisms.

Utopian thinking served as the basis of the social-political project feminists had taken up in the mid-1960s, and even more so for the outpouring of feminist utopian novels that had been an inherent part of the movement since its re-emergence. The utopian fiction of Joanna Russ and Marge Piercy, in works that bookend the 1970s, offers a particularly powerful framework to consider the stylistic and ideological strategies feminist utopian authors utilized to present feminist utopian alternatives to oppressive social structures. Both Russ’s *The Female Man* (1970) and *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976) offer powerful models of contemporary literary trends employed as challenges to the specific patriarchal language structures and hierarchical dominance relationships the authors sought to destabilize; Russ challenges patriarchy as it manifests through femininity, whereas Piercy takes on the widespread intersectional oppression patriarchy perpetrates. Viewed together, as two poles of a theoretical and chronological trajectory, these novels help to provide a picture of the transition of style and ideology that charted the transformation of feminist theory over the course of the 1970s.

**Utopian Thinking and Fiction**

Utopian thinking and the creation of fiction have much in common, and feminist authors in the 1970s championed the potential of their convergence. Carol Farley Kessler, an activist writing in the heart of the second wave, argues that consciously formulating a utopia is a surprisingly powerful first stride toward the achievement of that utopia. Articulating the strength of her feelings in terms of a rite of passage, she proclaims on the part of feminists and other utopian thinkers:

> When studying or imagining a utopia, a happy place, we experience a rite of passage to a better future. As we dream of the not yet known, we change our conception of the possible. As we try to imagine the unimaginable—namely, where we’re going before we’re there—we move toward new and as yet unrealized ends.

For Kessler, by actively imagining a utopia, one moves closer to realizing it. Other feminists and utopian theorists have recognized the political power of utopian thinking to enable movements to consolidate and articulate their precise ideological prescriptions for new social frontiers in the midst of periods of social upheaval. For feminist writers in particular, this power came out of the opening of a specifically gendered space for theorizing that had never been available before.

As a genre, utopian fiction had a critical role to play in the development of feminism in the 1970s. Second wave literary utopias served to raise readers’ consciousness, a process central to the feminist project to invite individuals to connect personal experience to political injustice. These novels comfortably relied on the intellectual and artistic elements of fiction writing in order to be able to do this work. Through the novels’ content, their authors’ implicit comparisons called out what was at fault with contemporary society and offered plots that suggested alternative worlds where women might live more autonomous lives within egalitarian relationships. Just as importantly, through storytelling and implicit theoretical challenges, these authors undermined the absolutist claims of the patriarchal narrative by employing novelistic fiction to identify and reconfigure social fiction.

Literary utopia, of course, was not feminism’s invention; rather, feminist utopian authors of the 1970s staked their claim in a long tradition of employing utopian literature as a mechanism for cultural critique during moments of social change and ideological upheaval. The genre first gained its title and popularization from Sir Thomas More’s early sixteenth-century narrative, *Utopia*, crafted as a commentary on the Reformation and colonization in the New World. Since that time, utopian writing has been a premier space for new explorations of the good life. Feminist women’s writing in the 1970s capitalized on the movement’s already hearty abundance of political and social theorizing about the good life and revived utopian writing. As the juncture of two major strands of feminist politics, the political utopian and the literary utopian, these novels present a particularly rich site to study feminist social analysis and theoretical development.

**Feminist Theory in Flux**

Second wave feminists, in theory as well as in literature,
embarked on a project of dissecting the cultural edifices that they thought provided the framework for dominance. They looked particularly at the system of patriarchy. In small consciousness groups, feminists contemplated early civilization’s division of labor and tandem notion of women as valued goods to be traded for their reproductive capacities. Feminist theorists ruminated on and condemned the system’s installment of men as power-holding decision-makers and the translation of this value system into contemporary life. Feminist activists argued that such patriarchal organization was not inherent but rather enforced, and they committed to the destabilization of gender norms and to ending the subordination of women. Accordingly, they sought to re-imagine social relationships without the dangerous influence of patriarchy.

Feminists’ deconstruction of hegemonic patriarchy aimed to dismantle assumptions of knowledge and narrative by disputing positivist patriarchal epistemological norms. Namely, feminist theorists undermined orthodox notions of an objective and easily definable reality where Truth was to be revealed from an independent source of knowledge through the individual perception of a (male) viewer. American feminists worked within a discourse similar to that of the French feminists, who suggested that women’s bodies and realities necessitated a different and more unified process of knowledge. In addition they echoed other post-structuralists’ challenges to the supposed objectivity of language. As they engaged in a fundamental repudiation of all patriarchal structures, feminist authors directed this rebellion toward the dismantling of patriarchal language domination kept in place through prescriptive rules of grammar and static form. Russ, for example, employs experimental literary strategies to women’s liberationist ends. The Female Man explores non-linearity and the weaving of subjectivity precisely in order to give credence to feminist ethics of validating women’s internal organization of their own experience and to support the creation of a continuous community of women. In Woman on the Edge of Time, Piercy utilizes more traditional stylistic forms: however the novel still performs an epistemological critique. By way of the destabilizing effects of time travel and an implicit uncertainty of reality, Piercy foregrounds her challenge to the foundation of the patriarchal establishment and the constructed nature of the multiple hierarchies through which intersectional oppression functions.

Feminists also expanded this epistemological interrogation to their skeptical navigation of the establishment of gender roles and whether such norms were the essential features of a given sex or if, instead, gendered expectations of thought and behavior were socially constructed and internalized. Most second wave feminists upheld the position that sex and gender were separate things; they were assured of the social constructions of femininity, and, less so, masculinity, which became ripe material for feminists’ scrutiny.

Feminists of the second wave parsed through the narratives of the patriarchy, decried notions of ‘natural’ states of being as false, and aimed to shatter the normative beliefs that limited women in their daily lives. Writing for a modern audience, Jennifer Baumgartner and Amy Richards aim to shock readers with the pervasiveness of the sexism in the culture second wave feminists were battling to change. In 1970, they remind us, as a result of claims to the natural propensities of the genders: women are wholly responsible for the care of the household and the rearing of children; women cannot enter several top-tier all-male universities; a married woman cannot obtain credit without her husband’s permission; the title Ms. does not exist; and there are only two shelters for victims of domestic violence in the entire country. Each of these customs rests on notions of the essential roles women are apt to perform in society and, as such, emerge from claims to the powerful nature of femininity. As they sought to destabilize patriarchal norms, feminists began with a critique of femininity as a cardinal pillar of the establishment. They saw femininity as a custom that subordinated women by demanding their self-sacrifice and subservience in behavior, as well as one that enforced strict rules of body regulation in appearance and reproductive function. Women activists in the Radical Left were already entrenched in movements for forward-facing, ideological, and utopian thinking. When they began to turn their commitment to social justice toward questions of sex and gender, feminists’ new consciousness of a cohesive culture of discrimination, and their rebellion against it, exploded into the beginning of a new movement for social equality.

Feminists found political weight in the daily minutiae of personal life and embraced the New Left’s ideology of living one’s ideals; they crafted the maxim “the personal is political,” which came to signify the movement and served as a founding ideology from which theoretical developments could build. They discussed the separation of spheres, women’s exclusion from the workplace and the economy, the objectification of women, the limitations on their educational development, and the devastation caused by their lack of control over their own bodies. Excited by the new possibilities of a feminist social analysis, activists and theorists considered every realm of life ripe for critique, eventually inviting an inevitable judgment of feminism itself.

As much as these matters concerned all women, to-
ward the end of the decade black and lesbian feminists, in particular, voiced more loudly the need to consider the additional burdens of oppression some women faced and the resiliency of privilege among women. Although an interrogation of hierarchy among women raised anxiety and conflict, as some feminists were reluctant to come to grips with their own entitlement, with time, the widening landscape of feminist ideology revised the conceptualizations of patriarchy it had accepted previously. Feminism began to move beyond a notion of femininity as patriarchal society’s greatest offense. Instead, feminist theory shifted toward investigating the oppression of all marginalized peoples under a systemic cultural institution comprised of myriad relationships of domination. This new ethic of intersectionality validated the exponential impact of the multiple oppressions that people faced within the matrix of intersecting social identities. The incorporation of the compounding effects of race, gender, class, sexuality, age, ability, and other characteristics into feminist critique created a space for a productive imagining of a world free of all such systems—a new utopian mode of thinking.

Women’s Writing and Feminist Aims

Though feminist utopian fiction had existed earlier, during the 1970s, feminist literature became an increasingly important part of the feminist movement, employing more exploratory and experimental strategies than it had before in order to respond to modern needs for an egalitarian society. While the plots of these novels perform one half of this enterprise—their imaginations of a feminist world re-evaluate traditional notions of power—the remainder of the undertaking is made possible by experimentation in style and narrative form, facets of a specifically feminist literary resistance. The feminist utopian writing project of the second wave thus intervened in a patriarchal literary tradition and, along with their social critiques of the detriments of patriarchy, exposed conventional assumptions about narrative, linear time, and patriarchal epistemology as profoundly biased and in need of reevaluation with regards to a changing political climate.

Two of these utopian efforts, Joanna Russ’s *The Female Man* and Marge Piercy’s *Woman on the Edge of Time*, provide unique opportunities to investigate the process of fiction making within the genre as well as to witness the way feminist utopian theories changed in their scope and ideology of oppression over the central decade of second wave feminism. While Russ focuses on deconstructing the basic features of femininity and gendered structures, Piercy questions the personal effects of multiple intersecting oppressions in one woman’s experience of freedom and reality itself. Taken together, these novels present a microcosm for examining the position of utopian fiction in the progression of feminist thought whereby imagining a productive future worth working toward in turn enabled new visions of achieving an even more progressive utopia.

“Eventually We Will All Come Together”: Joanna Russ’s *The Female Man*

One of the narrators, speaking near the beginning of Joanna Russ’s *The Female Man*, makes clear the necessity of a transcendent approach to comprehending the novel she helps to unfold. Russ’s novel demands that readers move beyond their familiar paradigms, specifically notions of gender. *The Female Man* introduces the subsequent attack on traditional expectations and assignments of gender norms when this narrator clarifies the name of one of the main characters: “Evason” is not ‘son’ but ‘daughter,’” she explains, “This is your translation” (18). Though a phrase like this might seem weightless, within a novel that pulls and twists at the connotations of gendered terms, the insight into the relative flexibility of such terms proves essential. Not only does Russ challenge our very understanding of what constitutes a “son” or a “daughter,” but she also enables this fluid narrative moment to initiate her feminist manipulation of the customs of patriarchal literary order. Through the indirect “your” Russ introduces the two audiences for whom she writes: one that espouses the antifeminist assumptions of the mainstream, and another that bears the burgeoning feminist consciousness she charges with dismantling these antifeminist assumptions. Similarly, by raising the question of translation, Russ foregrounds the subjectivity of interpretation that her novel champions in its exploration of the chasm, and possible bridges, between contemporary society and the feminist utopia she creates.

In *The Female Man* (written 1970, published 1975), Russ employs unconventional methods of nonlinearity and strategic redundancy in her manipulation of patriarchal norms of narrative. Russ’s commitment to women’s liberation prioritized the oppression of women, especially with regard to the demands of subservience made by traditional West-
ern femininity. Specifically, Russ critiques the diminishing of women’s identities within relationships with men. In her challenge to hegemonic femininity, Russ endeavors to interrogate oppressive structures through literary means; she creates an empowered community of women by interweaving subjectivity, narrative, and the experiences of her characters. Russ also undermines patriarchal expectations and social construction of androcentrism by employing redundancy through repetition and listing as a self-contained invitation to deconstruction. Through a critique of society and a visualization of utopia, which work in tandem, The Female Man establishes and furthers the ethics of gender justice paramount to the women’s liberation era of feminism in which Russ was writing.

Constructing a Community of Women

Russ concentrates the analytic and political work of her novel in second wave feminism’s ideological pillar of disrupting accepted patriarchal norms of the nature of people and the nature of language. Feminists’ disputes against norms of language that were bound to positivist notions of objectivity and singular truth proved fundamental to this deconstruction of patriarchy. The Female Man directly challenges this emphasis on singular, independent objectivity when Russ establishes a community of women who come from distant worlds, but share identical DNA patterns. These women find one another and a strong bond that inspires those most repressed among them to question the ideals of femininity to which they adhere. This community also enables Russ to experiment with nonlinear structure as she melds independent narrative voices into a fluid strand. At the same time, Russ employs this fabrication of a unified community as a site for the implicit (and at times, explicit) critique of some gender ideologies against others. Though the four female characters come together as an integrated whole, interacting in one another’s lives, each individual also stands alone as a product of her environment and the possibilities for female development in her world. Through the course of the novel, these characters—Joanna, Jeannine, Janet, and Jael—unite, crossing boundaries of time, space, and history to congregate, to comment on one another’s experiences, and sometimes to share these stories.

Russ’s creation of a transhistorical, intersubjective community of women through narrative structure establishes a collective as well as a critique. The experiences, feelings, and thoughts of the women bleed into one another, as do the commentaries they have on their own experiences, the actions of others, and the moments in which they share consciousness. Russ employs these different women and the worlds that produced them as sites for comparison between contemporary social norms and the possibilities for utopian living. Primarily, the comparison between Joanna, a disempowered single woman living in New York in the late 1960s, in the midst of the feminist consciousness-raising revolution (where she becomes the titular Female Man), and Janet, who embodies her world of Whileaway, where “plague came in P.C. 17 (Preceding Catastrophe) and ended in A.C. 03, with [the male] population dead,” and the female population runs a mostly peaceful and entirely self-sufficient society, represents the twin goals of Russ’s novel (12). Though it is rural and agricultural, the technology and philosophy of Whileaway are highly advanced, and the women there have developed androgynous levels of power, self-direction, and agency. Where New York in the late 1960’s typifies the oppression second wave feminists were seeking to end, Russ establishes the communal, woman-centered structure of Whileaway as utopia.

This complex integration of narrative subjectivity upholds Russ’s utopian beliefs in the power of a unified (and separatist) community of women to overcome oppression and domination. Early on, Joanna refers to the cohort; though she had not met the other women yet, she comments on Janet’s travels before their first interaction and links Janet’s movement to her own internal, personal travel: “When Janet Evasion returned to the New Forest … I sat in a cocktail party in mid-Manhattan. I had just changed into a man, me, Joanna. I mean a female man, of course; my body and soul were exactly the same. So there’s me also” (5). In this passage, at the very beginning of the novel, Russ foreshadows the coming integration of these women’s experiences and narratives. Russ also links such community to burgeoning feminist consciousness, specifically bonding Janet’s presence to Joanna’s empowered claim to the social entitlement appropriated by men, even as she retains her same self.

This integrated narrative serves as a safe space to introduce new characters as members of Russ’s community of women, as well as the new ideologies of gender their presence makes possible. Though the reader is not introduced to Jael by name until the end of the novel, she often speaks anonymously in these moments, explaining the biological similarity that brings the four Js together and serves as a metaphor for the bond among all women. In the midst of actual physical interaction among the other three women, Jael interrupts and introduces herself in an italicized narrative interruption. As Joanna’s voice returns, she acknowledges the shift: “Who am I? I know who I am, but what is my brand name? Me with a new face, a puffy mask… You’ll meet me later. As I have said before, I (not the one above, please) had an experience on the seventh of February last, nineteen-sixty-nine” (19). Jael speaks cryptically, perhaps referring to the (faceless) masks of femininity that the novel explores later, and Joanna again interacts with a narrative voice she has not met. The experience Joanna’s narration
refers to is her conversion to the female man at the cocktail party that she has mentioned before. As such, Russ equates the consciousness of the presence of these empowered women as a catalyst for Joanna's own empowerment. The integrated narrative, as it challenges the enforced separation and objective standards of patriarchy, effectively establishes a rebellion in the form of a supportive community of women.

Russ explores the power of this bond when the characters comment on one another's presence in the midst of their own narration, and even more poignantly when the characters actually share experiences, substituting for one another when they need strength. Jeannine, who is also young and single -- working as a librarian in New York in a reality where the Great Depression has never ended -- adheres to strictly gendered notions of herself and the governing rules of relationships, much to her disadvantage. She, in particular, takes advantage of the unification of these women, allowing the others to take over for her when having difficulty asserting herself in the company of her domineering brother:

Only the woman revealed under the light was not Jeannine. A passerby inside saw the substitution through the doorway and gaped. Nobody else seemed to notice. Janet, who has none of our notions that a good, dignified, ladylike look will recall the worst of scoundrels to a shrinking consciousness of his having insulted A Lady (that's the general idea, anyway), has gotten out of Bud Didier's hold by twisting his thumb... [Bud] passes his hands over his face—the only thing left of Janet is a raucous screech of triumph which nobody else (except the two of us) can hear. The woman in front of the door is Jeannine. (115)

The consequences of the relationship between Janet and Jeannine in this passage are quite familiar to the earlier consciousness-raising interactions between Joanna and Janet and Jael, yet also quite different. Though Jeannine does not develop a feminist consciousness directly after this event, the assurance with which Janet responds to this sexist situation, whereby she defeats expectations of subservience to chivalry with the twist of a thumb, inspires a feminist notion of empowerment. The support that is integral to this passage unifies the experiences of the women within the text, but it also reaches out to the reader, whose burgeoning feminist consciousness links her to the community of characters in the novel, as well as to the imagined community of others reading the novel. The strategy carries the establishment of an audience community forward and maintains readers' investment by creating an aesthetically and politically pleasing experience where the reader comes to prefer the kind of environment Russ creates. The structure of the novel, moreover, broken down into sections and parts, presents the fragmentation of this hall of mirrors; weaving the narrative through and across the divisions, Russ splinters and recombines the reflections of this narrative into a disjointed, but cohesive whole. 22

**Challenging Conformity by Deconstructing Redundancy**

In addition to appropriating post-structuralist methods vis-à-vis narrative form, Russ also employs deconstructive techniques in the novel's redundant moments of repetition and listing that configure the parameters of patriarchy at the same time that they imply and invite their dissolution. As Russ goes on to examine the seemingly paradoxical suffocating and yet inviting nature of repetition, her novel highlights the openness of such an echo—the possibility that the pattern could be continued indefinitely. At the same time, this sweeping image of patriarchy already fashions a conceptualization of the system that is striking in its gratuitousness, a voraciousness that necessitates feminist counterattack. This stylistic form serves as a grounding for Russ's challenges to accepted norms of patriarchal femininity; she employs the excessiveness of the structure against itself, allowing seemingly endless lists to do the work of both constructing and arguing against the establishment of patriarchal society.

Russ employs strategic redundancy through repetition and lists in order to confront her image of a patriarchy that functions as a relentless institution comprised of excessive prescriptions for “proper” feminine behavior. Though Russ was concerned with and sought to undermine the external definition of women's experiences and the shuffling of women's choices into neat, predetermined boxes, *The Female Man* does not shy away from exploiting cultural archetypes of women in order to make a point. Russ pointedly takes on, for example, what she saw as the happily self-undermining qualities that many women exhibited in their relationships with men. Russ writes of such traits as culturally imbued and damaging to women as a whole and she rejects those women who had not yet moved beyond the façade, not yet taken up the mantle of liberation. Russ mocks these women by accusing the uniformity of their “false consciousness,” the travesty of enjoying patriarchal oppression, happily wading in the mainstream—unlike their newly baptized feminist sisters.

Rather than giving these women individualized names, Russ refers to them as –issas, a familiar female diminutive that indicates nothing more than a less-important female version of an established male position. The bored redundancy in the transcription of these symbols, as well as the clear mocking in the narrator's tone, indicates Russ's point quite clearly. Joanna shares with the readers her response to the women she knows at the cocktail party where she turns into the female man:

I knew most of the women there: Spoissa, three
times divorced; Eglantissa, who thinks only of clothes; Aphrodissa, who cannot keep her eyes open because of her false eyelashes; Clarissa, who will commit suicide; Lucrissa, whose strained forehead shows that she is making more money than her husband; Wailissa, engaged in a game of ain't-it-awful with Lamentissa; Travailissa, who usually only works, but who is now sitting very still on the couch so that her smile will not spoil; and naughty Saccharissa, who is playing a round of His Little Girl across the bar with the host. Saccharissa is forty-five. So is Amiccissa, the Good Sport. I looked for Ludicrissa, but she is too plain to be invited to a party like this, and of course we never invite Amphibissa, for obvious reasons. (34)

Illustrating the absurdity of superficial structures, Russ shows no sympathy, and hardly any distinction, to her lists of those women who embrace their own oppression, mocking their characterization and their small pride as repulsive. Here, Russ capitalizes on the allegorical nature of these names and types; she explicitly denigrates these universal female kinds—the behaviors, and the literary conventions that have always encoded them. This retardation of individual growth in the scheme of femininity serves, Russ suggests, to establish women's self-worth in direct correlation to their relationships with men. Such women do not develop intellectual or emotional skills, but rather direct themselves toward a very narrow purpose, namely:

Finding The Man, Keeping The Man. Not scaring The Man, building up The Man, pleasing The Man, interesting The Man following The Man, soothing The Man, flattering The Man, deferring to The Man changing your judgment for The Man, changing your decisions for The Man, polishing floors for The Man, being perpetually conscious of your appearance for The Man, hinting to the Man, losing yourself in The Man. (66)

Russ employs this relentless repetition, like the repetition of the –issas, in order to critique the image of the female passivity paramount to her deconstruction of femininity. Though “the Man” remains a stable constant, these explicitly feminine women are established only in relation to that man, and Russ indicates that they only exhibit agency when doing work for him or trying to keep him. This passage is also particularly biting because of Russ's double meaning regarding the phrase “The Man.” Russ challenges more than the idealized relationship between a woman and a man, in which he is the subject and she is the object, as found in the marital titles of Man and Wife, for example. Russ also co-opts the term in order to call out the hypocrisy of the sexist practices of the New Left, which spurred many women social activists to feminist action. The social radicals of the 1950s and 1960s commonly referred to the social establishment as “The Man,” and by appropriating that term Russ argues that those sexist members of the Left who maintained traditional expectations of sexual availability and gendered maintenance duties were in fact no different from “The Man” against whom they claimed rebellion.

Russ's tone of discord and discomfort with the establishment comes through most clearly to the reader when stylized as a list. These lists inherently reference the unfinished nature of this cataloguing: there could always be more characters of –issas who, in addition to changing themselves to achieve the romantic affection of men, would diminish their education or ambition for the same acceptance. There are always more social positions where masculine domination goes unchallenged and women instead appear absent from the ranks of humanity. A narrator suggests:

It's very upsetting to think that women make up only one-tenth of society, but it's true. For example:

My doctor is male.
My lawyer is male.
My tax-accountant is male.
The grocery-store-owner on the corner is male.
The janitor in my apartment building is male.
The president of my bank is male.
The manager of the neighborhood supermarket is male.
My landlord is male.
Most taxi-drivers are male.
All cops are male.
All firemen are male.
Almost all my colleagues are male.
My employer is male.
The Army is male.
The Navy is male.
The government is (mostly) male.
I think most of the people in the world are male. (204)

In this passage, where the formatting and appearance of the list take over the page, Russ extends her argument about the excessiveness of redundancies to a visual metaphor. The repetition of the word “male” creates an overwhelming picture of androcentric society. The list encapsulates the affirmed customs and ideologies that establish patriarchal culture, but manages to challenge the stability of that formation at the same time. By the end of the list, the ridiculous notion that most of the people in the world are male conflicts with the reality in which such a thought would never be taken seriously. However, Russ's litany of reasons for thinking so does
hold truth. This list is also excessive, and the structure that upholds such a reality, it follows, is excessive as well. Similarly, implicit in the listing is the notion that this oppression is still further-reaching, and there remain still more examples that could be added to the list. This technique, then, has the effect of undermining the legitimacy of the list’s content: the redundancy and gratuitous picture of the list contains within itself a call for a limiting measure. As a result, each list of the assumed knowledge and accepted social norms of patriarchal society necessitates its own undermining, and Russ engages the novel in performing deconstructive theoretical, as well as empathetic, work.

Shaping Utopia

Russ employs the interaction of four female characters from four different worlds to tease out the artificial structure of society and the unfair and diminishing treatment of women in the contemporary Western tradition. As such, Russ posits Janet’s world, Whileaway, as a clear example of a feminist utopia. Embodying the ideals of women’s liberation, the women there are free to pursue self-growth and independence from a young age; they have safety, security, and an intensive kinship web that provides a sense of community, and their intellectual and emotional needs are continually fulfilled. Living eight hundred years after the start of the plague, Whileawayans have adapted to the absence of men in a comprehensive society of females that, Russ suggests to her audience, provides a clear picture of utopia.

Much like the lesbian separatists who made up a large constituency of second wave feminists, here Russ suggests that the good life necessitates the extrication of femininity and freedom from the patriarchal gender oppression of heterosexual relationships and thus, feminists should see utopia only in separatism. She seizes upon this affirmation of women’s value, apart from men, and a prediction of flourishing in such absence to underpin her claims for separation and the utopia that awaits communities comprised solely of women.

Though the novel pays careful attention to dissolving gender hierarchies, Russ does not refer to racial or cultural difference in any of the comparative worlds she employs to dissect gender. The four characters are genetic replicas, so they share the same white coloring, which in some of their worlds translates to an unspoken privilege. Whileaway does not appear to have class differences, and Jael has a highly technologically advanced home surrounded by miles of land. Both Joanna and Jeaninne are upper middle class, and even in the Depression world Jeaninne eats well and goes on vacation. Russ’s only moments of reference to cultural diversity are somewhat offensive and derogatory, conflating the oppression of women to stereotypes of Black American slaves through the distinct marker of language: “Saccharis-

sa has just said, pouting, ‘Po’ little me! I sho’ly needs to be liberated!” (42). Though Russ’s novel speaks to an ideology rooted in progressivism, both the novel and the feminist movement in the early 1970s belie a lack of cultural sensitivity or awareness. Just as the lack of a radical gender analysis invited the eruption of a feminist movement, so too does the clear absence of an analysis of the relation among different social identities, including gender, race, class, and sexuality, at this historical point, invite new theoretical development in this direction.

“If Only They Had Left Me Something!”: Marge Piercy’s Woman on the Edge of Time

In 1975, Marge Piercy was constructing her idea of utopia in an environment of feminist change; the movement was embroiled in refashioning its theories toward an ethic that incorporated consciousness of intersectionality. Piercy explored the potential manifestations of these new ideals of social justice in crafting her idea of the good life through literature. In Woman on the Edge of Time, Piercy’s protagonist Connie (Consuelo) Ramos passes between her own imprisoned life within the New York state psychiatric system and a holistic communal and egalitarian village, Mattapoisset, in Massachusetts in the year 2157.

Life in the village of Mattapoisset takes its shape from the ideologies of intersectionality and multiculturalism, voiced by black and lesbian feminists, and espoused by the greater women’s movement toward the end of the second wave.

By means of the trope of time travel, Piercy destabilizes patriarchal norms of linearity, much like Russ in The Female Man, but she still invites a project of feminist theorizing tangibly bound to the present. While the novel does employ this disrupting mechanism to explore the possibility of utopian potentials, on the whole, the novel has a more traditional narrative structure. Woman on the Edge of Time moves fairly chronologically through Connie’s experience of oppression as a single, Hispanic, poor, overweight female, and the narrative perspective maintains a more conventional form of storytelling. In one respect, this strategic move on Piercy’s part emphasizes the feminist understanding of the need for the marginalized to reclaim their voices.
and emphasize their legitimacy. Traditionally, perspectives such as Connie’s would have been silenced. Piercy takes up the strength of fiction in its capability to construct comprehensive and empathetic worlds, and makes her point less through stylistic flourish and more through the compassionate powers of personal experience, which drew so many to the feminist cause in the first place. The intricacies of an individual’s life, the pain and discrimination she experiences, the wonder and inquisitive spirit with which she approaches utopia, and the memories of a life of potential taken from her—these moments of humanity translate to literary strategies that embody the empathetic investment of the reader and combine the imaginative possibilities of fiction and the ethic of personalization of second wave feminism.

*Woman on the Edge of Time* generates a multicultural feminist consciousness, introducing these new avenues of social criticism to Connie (and readers) through painful experiences based on the relationship between her sex, her race, and her class, particularly within the acute tyranny of the conceit of the institution as patriarchy. As Piercy questions processes of normalization and outlawing, her novel analyzes the patriarchy/institution’s attempts at social regulation through mind control, and the way culturally determined definitions of madness are bound to status and power. Through a confrontation with the glaring disparity between the abuses of the oppressive culture in which she lives and the value she knows she has inside, Connie (as well as readers along with her) arrives at a multicultural feminist position that solicits the restorative potential of utopia. Piercy’s construction of utopia in Mattapoisset undermines those protocols of domination that characterize Connie’s dystopian environment, and *Woman on the Edge of Time* maintains an ethic that responds to each and every circumstance of oppression with validation and equality.

**Creating an Empathetic Intersectional Consciousness**

In order to convince the reader of the necessity of a utopia such as Mattapoisset, Piercy presents the frustration and disempowerment of Connie's life and world. Disenfranchised, at times abused in the mental institutions in which she is confined, and eventually subjected to the implantation of a brain control device without her consent, Connie’s oppressed position in her world calls out for a feminist redemption. Rather than focusing singularly on Connie’s gender, as Russ might have, Piercy interrogates the compounding discrimination brought about by the intersection of multiple subordinate identities in a hierarchical matrix.

Building off the notion of the personal as political, Piercy examines these issues through Connie’s personal life experience. Each of the painful moments of Connie’s life shares a causal relationship with her marginalized status, and is also significantly influenced by similar experiences of discrimination; Piercy employs this web to underscore and integrate the overarching environment of intersectionality. Connie tries to imagine an empowered future for herself, where she is successful and satisfied with her life. However, she cannot escape her circumstances, and she reminds herself of the challenges her social statuses present for her:

> Best if she could manage to believe it herself, that she could get a job. Herself with a police record and a psychiatric record, a fat Chicana aged thirty-seven without a man, without her own child, without the right clothes, with her plastic pocketbook cracked on the side and held together with tape. (22)

Connie is, at times, disempowered by her status as a woman within a sexist gender hierarchy, or snared by her social class as it limits her options for a steady means to support herself. However, far more often, Connie experiences the bitterest discrimination where two of these identities intersect. Noticing the distinction between her white social worker, Mrs. Polcari, and herself, Connie wonders about the influence of race and social status on gender:

> How did they [white women] stay so young? Something kept them intact years longer, the women with clean hair smelling of Arpege. The women went on through college and got the lean jobs and married professional men and lived in houses filled with machines and lapped by grass… “We wear out so early,” she said to the mirror, not really sure who the “we” was. (27)

In this passage, Piercy echoes the argument of black, lesbian, and other multicultural feminists who maintained that not all women constitute a “we.” Even within sex, Connie sees distinctions between herself and Mrs. Polcari in terms of class, race, and ethnicity, and Piercy articulates this disparity very pointedly, in terms of “them” and “us.” Rather than upholding Russ’s image of a unified sisterhood, Piercy’s model instead sees people in terms of differently plotted points in a matrix of social privilege.

As a testament to intersectionality, Connie’s status as a woman within her own heavily patriarchal ethnic culture subordinates her even within her family relationships. Her refusal to debase herself with domestic work for white women—an insulting expectation that builds from racism, classism, and sexism which, Connie acerbically notes, “sounds like someone’s bright idea for producing real cheap domestic labor without importing women from Haiti”—
disappoints Mrs. Polcari, whose negative report serves to entrap Connie within the institutional system (27). Piercy suggests that these identities co-exist and they serve to cross-inform the experience of each. For Connie, her Hispanic heritage shapes her experience of being a woman, where she is expected to subordinate herself to her male family members, while her gender shapes her experience of her class status and the work that is available to her, and so on. Piercy crafts the details of Connie’s life—the social difficulties she encounters, the loved ones she loses, and the oppressive power dynamics that inform many of her relationships—to correspond to specific planks in intersectional feminist thinking and the widespread effects of patriarchal domination.

The Realistic and Symbolic Oppression of Patriarchy as an Institution

Piercy employs Connie’s experience as a medium for highlighting the oppressive imposition of patriarchy, both in its limitations on living free, full lives, and in the regulation it maintains on those the system subordinates as racial and sexual minorities. In an extended metaphor, Piercy comments on the omnipresent influence of patriarchal dominance as it contains the whole of society, likening the patriarchy to the institution in which Connie is kept captive. By transposing a specific site of oppression that she seeks to dismantle over the more general schematic of patriarchal life, Piercy is able to confront both levels of hegemonic culture and make larger claims as to the reaches of damaging institutions. Piercy centers her focus on the mechanics of social powerlessness, emphasizing the imprisonment by the institutional system and the coping mechanisms that one might resort to in order to regain a sense of agency in one’s life.

Without even beginning her consideration of utopian recourse, Piercy highlights the imbalance between Connie’s free, though sparse life in the city and the regulation of life inside, “[Connie’s] life that had felt so threadbare now spread out like a full velvet rose,” and she imagines “how she would celebrate her release! Her dingy two rooms with the toilet in the hall shone in her mind, vast and luxurious after the hospital. Her precious freedom and privacy!” (20). This passage employs the reversal and contrast that characterize Piercy’s organization of the novel. In establishing the hospital and freedom in opposition, Piercy compares her images of Connie’s life as “threadbare” with new notions of a “full velvet rose,” employing phonetic contrast. Each of these phrases has an onomatopoetic quality that embodies the hard consonants of threadbare against the luscious lulling of “full velvet rose.” Similarly, dingy becomes shining, and two rooms become vast and luxurious. Also, here Piercy begins to introduce the spatial tropes that explore freedom and flourishing through access to space and movement. The hospital already removes Connie’s most basic rights to privacy and freedom with regards to movement; however, Piercy extends the extremity of the institutional conceit as she explores brain control as a symbolic representation of the forced internalization of patriarchal regulations. Piercy links this symbolism to feminist’s epistemological deconstruction, in this respect, of subjective definitions of normality and the attribution of madness to the disempowered who rebel against their oppression.

Piercy systematizes her critique of patriarchal social institutions through a metaphor of the white, sterilized, and oppressive world of the institution as life for the marginalized under a hierarchical system based on patriarchy. In Bellevue and Rockover State Hospitals, the white male doctors make the rules and decisions. They delegate underling responsibility to the white female nurses who run the brain control experiment and other higher level departments, and grant even less authority to the people of color who work as floor nurses and orderlies, acting in direct control over those deemed mentally ill. Regulatory, abusive, and disempowering, the mental institution rips away all shreds of self-control and personal dignity for those confined. When she is put away by her niece’s abusive pimp-boyfriend, Connie is reminded of her place within a culture in which she is entirely powerless, where the doctors, nurses, and social workers undermine her knowledge of her own body, asking “where do you believe you feel pain,” a question that doubts her ability as an expert on herself (20). Similarly, the upper ranks of the hospital casually reorganize the major events of her personal narrative, “[making her] life into a pattern of disease” (19). Robbed of agency, rights to her own subjectivity, and the power to protect her private life, Connie, broken and ignored, resolves, “[not to] try to win now, just survive” (19). Whereas Connie has previously attempted to thrive within the hospital, as a result of continued institutionalizations she now understands the power dynamics. The hospitals thrive on the fundamental undermining of her own interpretation of her own personal, embodied, lived experience—precisely those capacities for individual reflection that underpinned feminist thinking. Here, the feminist ethic of Piercy’s literary strategy emphasizes self-directed subjectivity as a crucial element of women’s empowerment, and the institutional theft of such agency as a particularly egregious patriarchal violence.

Much like the feminist criticism of the dominant culture’s theft of women’s power of self-definition, Piercy’s critical representation of the institution challenges the reigning mentality, which removes the power of the individual to organize the meaning of the events of her or his own life. By pronouncing all interpretation of one’s own experience secondary to an expert opinion, the doctors
preserve patriarchal control at the basic level of the internal self-image. As the doctors are interviewing Connie to see if she would be an adequate test subject for the implantation of a brain control device, Connie notices that not only do the doctors override her self-interpretations, but they ignore her altogether: “when what she said didn’t fit their fixed ideas, they went on as if it did. Resistance, they called that, when you didn’t agree, but this bunch didn’t seem that interested in whether she had a good therapeutic attitude” (84). Piercy explores the way this detachment impacts Connie as a ward of the doctors’ stewardship in a neglected and defensive tone that conveys Connie’s frustration with the hypocrisy of doctors who are disinterested in their patients’ responses to treatment. Similarly, it is quite significant that this behavior is termed “resistance” because in their refusal to be overtaken by patriarchal disdain for their freedom, patients who continue to claim powers of self-definition do perform a kind of rebellion.

Piercy illustrates this practice of disregarding patients’ thoughts and beliefs in order to exacerbate the hierarchical dynamic between the doctors and the patients, and to emphasize the disparities of power in relationships based on education and race. Doctors call Connie by her first name, though she is expected to refer to them by their professional titles. In diagnosing sessions they prevent her from making any analytical connections in her experience, but they feel free to rummage through Connie’s personal life, no matter how uncomfortable it may make her:

She kept her face frozen, her voice level. Inappropriate affect, they called that—as if to have strangers pawing through the rags of her life … was not painful enough to call forth every measure of control she could manage. Sill their white faces looked bored. They were white through and through, like Wonder Bread, white and full of holes. (84)

Paradoxically, Piercy suggests “inappropriate affect” as perfectly appropriate in the context of a mental assault by hostile outsiders. Connie replies with hostility in turn, responding to the racial element of their relationship. As the doctors dissect her personal history, which they deem to be too colorful, going so far as to recommend her for a brain operation to implant a device to control her emotions, Connie defends herself by critiquing their own racial markings as bland and vapid. For Piercy, Connie’s “inappropriate affect” is another form of resistance with which to protect her capabilities of autonomous thought.

Through the abuses Connie faces and the resistance she employs to protect her independence, Piercy crafts a strategic characterization of Connie wherein experiencing these tensions together, both Connie and the reader come to recognize a systemic pathologizing of womanhood and the necessity of a feminist alternative. Piercy exposes the more physically violent attacks of the patriarchy/institution that warrant feminist response: “the pressure was … to obey and work for nothing, cleaning the houses of the staff. To look away from graft and abuse. To keep quiet as you watched them beat other patients. To pretend that the rape in the linen closet was a patient’s fantasy” (186). In this passage, Piercy takes on several of the damages of the institutional system that parallel the outside world—the situations in which individuals without power were kept without it through the silencing of reports of abuse. The heritage of this mistreatment exhibits itself in discrimination, often based on gender and class, which carries over into dominance patterns that have historically categorized those who are healthy, yet rebellious or without social power, as mentally ill. This issue was of particular interest to the feminist tradition of questioning the social function of gendering madness, and its links to injury by a hierarchical system.26

Constructing a Utopia in Mattapoisset

By means of the comparison between the institution and Mattapoisset, Piercy posits a reversal of priorities that values marginalized peoples’ needs within an egalitarian society. As she argues that an individual’s disempowerment is a direct result of her culture, Piercy also implies that agency and self-fulfillment can only be found in a society that prizes equality and opportunity for supportive growth. Though the people of Mattapoisset still respect diversity in appearance, genetic make-up, cultural identity, and propensities of gender, they remove them from birth or socialization, subjecting all such elements of character to choice. While such a treatment could cause contention among feminists particularly dedicated to re-establishing pride in areas of difference, in this respect, Piercy holds true to her equal validation of all arenas of oppression, presenting the same options of flexibility and personal preference that she assigns to the challenge of gender identity to every other subordinated social identity. Woman on the Edge of Time aligns with the feminist notion of utopia as a galvanizing coping mechanism to deal with the disempowerment of regulated patriarchal life, and grounds the life-affirming responses to Connie’s problems in the ideals of freedom, independence, compassion, and egalitarianism.

Piercy begins the introduction to her utopia when she contrasts one of the patriarchal system’s most fundamental attacks on Connie, the discrediting of her mental state by the society in which she lives and her imprisonment in an institution which only exacerbates her problems, with the acceptance and support of the people of Mattapoisset who see great cognitive power in Connie’s mind. Bridging contact with her, Luciente, a self-assured resident of the village, explains to Connie that her “mind is unusual. You’re an extraordinary top catcher. In our culture you would be
much admired, which I take it isn’t true in this one” (34). As Piercy’s utopia undermines the stability of any patriarchal diagnoses of mental illness, so too does the novel subvert the creation and purpose of the establishments designed to treat such problems. Though Mattapoisset has madhouses, they are not fortresses in which to act out the dramas of social hierarchy under the guise of healing, but rather “are places where people retreat when they want to go down into themselves—to collapse, carry on, see visions, hear voices of prophecy, bang on the walls, relive infancy—get in touch with the buried self and the inner mind” (58). Much like Russ’s employment of listing to emphasize the vastness of a social structure, in this passage Piercy extends the endless feeling of the list of the uses of the madhouses to indicate the immensity of possibilities for introspection and self-determination in Mattapoisset.

The workings of life in Mattapoisset hold an ethic of individual self-direction as fundamental to the organization of society. Self-reliance informs the cycle of life. Children decide when to become independent youths in a rite of passage called a naming, where they must survive in the wilderness for a month of growth and self-reflection, returning to the community with a new, self-determined name to mark their transition. On her departure, one child animatedly explains this process to a concerned Connie: “You can’t expect me to go through life with an unearned name, stuck on me when I wasn’t conscious yet! How can I go deep into myself and develop my own strength if I don’t get to find out how I am alone as well as with others?” (109). Piercy aligns the social importance of naming with independence and self-determination, a claim that parallels feminist intellectual deconstruction of naming biases. All personal names in Mattapoisset are gender neutral, and Piercy establishes “per”—for person—as the only pronoun in the language. This prominence of personal strength characterizes Mattapoisset only to the point where the culture depends on the power it brings to a collaboration with others.

Piercy shapes life and the mechanisms of social relationships in Mattapoisset with an emphasis on equality and respect for the individual within the context of communal living. All members of the community have their own private living space, sharing communal rooms with their “core of mems,” the closest members of their self-chosen family. The community raises children cooperatively in the children’s house, and eats communally in the fooder. The government in Mattapoisset transitions regularly to prevent one person from gaining too much power and the community from relying on one person to make the most important decisions. Connie’s new friends from Mattapoisset distinguish their conception of right and wrong from those values Connie has internalized about the merit in adherence to gender roles or in the blind surrender to powerful authority. Rather, those in Mattapoisset would actually see those norms as wrong and damaging, and argue for an overhaul of the valuing of such behaviors. For Mattapoisset, and thus for Piercy’s vision of utopia, Luciente explains, “our notions of evil center around power and greed—taking from other people their food, their liberty, their health, their land, their customs, their pride” (131). The values of respect and communal appreciation, which are so desperately missing from Connie’s life due to the patriarchal culture around her, inform Piercy’s utopia so fully that both Connie and readers question the actuality of Mattapoisset.

*Woman on the Edge of Time* presents utopia as a joint personal and political formulation, an ideal world that responds to individual needs by valuing all facets of life and social identities equally so that the culture leaves no space for domination. Piercy forms Mattapoisset as a crafted response to the tangible pains of Connie’s life. Piercy beautifully articulates this drive to formulate utopia in contrast to the dystopia of oppressed life when Connie realizes, as a result of her time spent in Mattapoisset, that in her life before “she had had too little of what her body needed and too little of what her soul could imagine” (274).

During the moments when Connie has the hardest time trying to understand the consequences of life in Mattapoisset, the new opportunities opened and the old abuses dissolved, she realizes that the best way for her to reconcile this new idea with her existing mental organization is to imagine: imagine life without sexual predators or economic oppression, imagine a world where she would have the support to support herself and keep and nurture her child. The pinnacle of Piercy’s utopian experiment is the motivation for readers, especially other feminists, to envision and inaugurates their own utopian projects. Piercy echoes Carol Farley Kessler’s notion of imagining a better future as a rite of passage toward achieving that future. This process of contrasting her own world with the beauty that awaits, Piercy suggests, is Connie’s only way to come closer to seeing and feeling that reality tangibly; utopia is rooted in the productive imagining of a good life for ourselves and those around us; it connects distinctly to the hopes we have for ourselves and the notions of custom that would serve us best. “We can only know what we can truly imagine,” a resident of Mattapoisset reminds Connie, “Finally what we see comes from ourselves” (322). As such, *Woman on the Edge of Time* presents a clear vision of the galvanizing powers of utopia in Mattapoissett and attempts to ground intersectional feminist theory in a world as close to a practical ideal as possible. By re-imagining the fundamental structures that shape our lives, Piercy is able to comment on the overarching influence and imprisoning nature of patriarchy and presuppose the viability of a world beyond.
Conclusion

The possibilities that came out of feminist literary exploration of utopia in the 1970s served great purpose in furthering the utopian ideology of the second wave era of the movement. Not only did this particular modus operandi of transmission enable authors to enact many of the political ideals they aimed to convey within the form as well as the content of their work, but the employment of literature for these means brought about a proliferation of novels which expanded the size and scope of the audience of arguments for change. Subsequently, this expansion of utopian thinking in turn catalyzed an extensive broadening of feminist hopes to imagine ever more just visions of utopia.

Feminist writers and readers in the 1970s employed utopian fiction as an instrument to articulate an empowered vision of an ideal future, one that fit with their political positions and allowed for a robust internal negotiation between competing and evolving ideas for continually changing notions of the good. Joanna Russ’s The Female Man establishes a community of women who navigate through one another’s worlds and compare the different cultural structures in order to form new positions on gender and identity. Through a devastated, inquisitive and at times perplexed Connie, Marge Piercy answers questions and potential criticisms of the manifestation of the intersectional feminist theory she presents as utopia in Woman on the Edge of Time. While these novels may not stand as the historical impetus to social reform, in and of themselves, they serve as adequate symbols of the ideologies of their times. As utopia embodies an ethic of transformation, appearing at times of social remodeling and providing a framework for complete cultural refashioning, so too must each new development of utopian theorizing undergo an inevitable obsolescence as its own ideology makes possible even greater feats of imagination. As all feminists, and fiction writers in particular, worked to claim new definitions of utopia, they opened space for their own ranks to splinter in continued efforts to carve out their own images of a good life that responded to deeply felt ideals of justice. Feminism was born this way; as it grew out of the voices of individual women, it expanded as a movement in perpetual process, enabling increasingly broad groups to claim equal voice in defining the good.

1 In their work to eradicate a culture of racism, these women recognized a pervasive culture of sexism, which kept them washing floors, making coffee, and sleeping around for the revolution. Within groups like The Weathermen and underground publications like The Rat, radical women began to write and speak out against the mentality that was keeping them down in the movement. Tensions reached a hilt when Stokely Carmichael, a well-known activist, made clear the image most radical men had of their female compatriots; when asked the position of women in the movement, he responded with one word: “prone.” For those women activists already frustrated with the organizational discrimination that diminished their efforts within revolutionary movements, this moment became a breaking point, and Robin Morgan and others departed with a passionate farewell, announcing “Goodbye to All That.”—Robin Morgan, “Goodbye to All That,” in Dear Sisters: Dispatches from the Women’s Liberation Movement, eds. Rosalyn Baxandall and Linda Gordon. (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 57; Mike Miller, “Memories of Kwame Ture (Stokely Carmichael),” Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement, January 1999, http://www.crmvet.org/mem/stokely1.htm (accessed February 15, 2009).


3 Throughout the paper I will use the term “second wave feminists” to indicate the collective of different individuals and groups of women who theorized about and acted against patriarchy and sexism in America from the mid-1960s through the early 1980s. I use this term to cleave together several diverse initiatives at the point of similarity in which they cohered to present a solid social-political movement for change. Under the term, I will disambiguate the various arms, such as the Radical, Black, and Lesbian Feminist cohorts that each contributed to shaping the movement and pushing it in different directions. Similarly, though some, such as Linda Nicholson, disagree with the wave metaphor for charting feminist development, I intend on employing the “second wave” to refer to the cleavage of different strands of feminist activism and theory building from the late 1960s to the early to mid-1980s. I do this for two reasons: Primarily, I seek to place this article within a discourse that relies on this terminology. Secondarily, I find the wave metaphor appropriate given the physical circumstances of waves, where different tides come together from different directions to surge, arc, and draw back, gathering potential momentum to repeat this process again. I believe we can see this pattern in the rise in political momentum of the “second wave,” which occurred after a period of relative lull in terms of achieving change in the social status of women, built an arc of activism that gained strength in the late 1950s and early 60s, amplified momentum in the 70s, and broke sometime around the mid-1980s, before the conservative backlash of that decade.


5 See Kim Trainor, Francis Bartkowski, Ruby Rohrlich and Elaine Hoffman Baruch, Carol Farley Kessler, and Angelika Bammer.


8 Though Russ’s novel was not published on a mass scale until 1975, she wrote the piece in 1970, and I will employ The Female Man as a testament to the turn of the decade, the time in second wave history in which it was produced.

9 Carol Farley Kessler, “Fables Toward Our Future: Two Studies in Women’s Utopian Fiction,” Journal of General Education
women's rights activism in the mid-nineteenth century through the early twentieth century, and includes such works as Anne Benton Cridge's *Man's Rights: Or, How Would you Like It?* (1870) and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915) and *With Her in Ourland* (1917). Carol Farley Kessler compares the motivations and ideologies of these works with their second wave counterparts in her article "Fables Toward Our Future: Two Studies in Women’s Utopian Fiction."


21 See also works by Angela Carter, Kathy Acker, Anita Booker, A.S. Byatt.

22 Response to Bartkowski’s claim about the functioning of the four Js as a hall of mirrors, in Frances Bartkowski, *Feminist Utopias* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989).


24 It is an interesting point of contention that the novel is told in the third-person omniscient. In one respect, a reader might consider that Piercy in fact strips Connie of her subjective position by not allowing her to speak for herself. This is a legitimate concern. One might also consider, however, that Piercy validates Connie’s perspective to the point where she is universally agreed upon as the center of the novel, and that writing in the third person gives greater credence to Connie’s thoughts by allowing them to speak for themselves.


26 For some examples, see Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s investigation of patriarchally created madness in “The Yellow Wallpaper,” and Jean Rhys’s rethinking of traditional literary tropes in *Wide Sargasso Sea.*

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**Bibliography**


Secure Property:
The Role of Local Government in Chinese Economic Reform

Zack Kimble

Abstract: Chinese economic reforms succeeded in creating sustained economic growth despite the central government's lack of political and property right reform. The literature reveals that national institutions left protection of property rights up to local governments. Local governments' attitudes towards property rights were driven by their local institutions including Mao-era capital endowment and ties to overseas Chinese. Local governments that sought private sector growth developed secure property rights without granting political representation to property owners. This conclusion challenges the assumptions of institutional economics, which considers political representation a critical step in securing property rights.

Introduction

After nearly 30 years of economic regression under Mao Zedong, the People's Republic of China embarked on a mission entitled "Reform and Opening Up," that would transform its stagnant command economy into a thriving market economy. During the leadership of Deng Xiaoping (1978-1992) private ownership and market transactions were legalized, creating per capita GDP growth and paving the way for the phenomenal growth of the 1990s.1

Throughout this period the Chinese central government never clearly defined private property rights. Moreover, while limited private ownership was allowed, there was never any credible commitment from the State to refrain from expropriating private property. In theory, the State could have rolled back economic reforms and nationalized all individually held property at any point. Property owners had no power on the national level to respond politically to such a move.

Despite being exposed to potential expropriation by the State, millions of Chinese "jumped into the sea" of private business during the early reform period. The contribution of Township and Village Enterprises (TVEs) to gross industrial output leapt from 9.8 percent of the national total in 1980 to 44 percent in 1994.

Scholars have generated many theories to explain this paradox, but explaining what really happened in China is very difficult. Chinese statistics are notoriously unreliable, especially during the early reform years.2 Even when the statistics themselves are true, they may misrepresent the situation. When interviewing self-identified private entrepreneurs about their businesses, Chih-Jou Jay Chen found it difficult to discover how their businesses were registered: "Only asking specific questions such as 'Under which ownership type is this enterprise registered?' would reveal the nominal ownership category." He concludes that "in fact, the nominal category generally did not refer to any specific property rights arrangement." Thus, it is nearly impossible to determine what property rights an enterprise possessed based solely on how it was registered.

Case studies of specific localities have proven the best alternative for overcoming problematic statistical data. These studies have illustrated the primacy of local institutions in structuring the relationship between governments and entrepreneurs. While researching in Songjiang, Wuxi, and Wenzhou, Susan Whiting found Mao-era capital investment to be a strong predictor of post reform property rights schemes.4 Chih-Jou Jay Chen examined the various townships and villages of Jinjiang in Fujian and found kin networks and ties to relatives overseas to explain the region's progressive attitude towards private ownership.5

From these studies it is clear that great variation existed among localities. History and geography endowed localities with various, heterogeneous local institutions. These institutions shaped local governments' attitudes towards private
enterprise, and thus whether steps to secure property rights were pursued at all. Yet all localities worked within a similar national environment. This national policy environment explains why local institutions had such an impact on the actions of local government.

National policies put local governments at the center of property rights policy. The work of Montinola et al. suggests the pseudo-federal nature of China’s political system created hard budget constraints for local governments, producing an incentive to provide secure property rights.\(^6\) In Growing Out of the Plan, Barry Naughton demonstrates the necessity of reform within the planned economy for the growth of the market economy. Finally, according to Lau et al. the two-track nature of reform within the planned economy prevented backlashes against marketization and private enterprise.

The interaction between national and local institutions provides the key to understanding the development of Chinese property rights. Any meaningful comprehension of Chinese property rights must address both the means by which local institutions secured property rights and the national context in which these conditions prevailed. Though they worked within similar national institutions, local Chinese governments faced different local conditions and thus had different attitudes towards private enterprise. In some areas, local governments had strong incentives to encourage private enterprise; in others they had incentives to restrict private ownership.

**The Institutional Approach to Property Rights**

No theoretical model of Chinese property rights exists. The case studies examined in this article utilize an institutional model to make sense of Chinese property rights. When applied to Western economic history, the institutional approach to property rights has successfully explained many of the differences in economic growth seen amongst nations as well as the timing and nature of development. Accounts of Western development, like Rise of the Western World, provide the backbone of institutional economics.\(^7\) In this theory, how do property rights arise?

For property rights to be secure, the State must make a credible commitment to defending individuals’ property from other individuals and to abstaining from expropriating for itself.\(^8\) In this context, Weber’s definition of a State is used: a single entity with a monopoly on the use of violence within its claimed territory.\(^9\) A State thus can prevent the violent seizing of property by individuals. Property rights refers to private citizens’ control over their property’s use, income, and transfer.\(^10\) Essentially, individuals must be able to do as they like with their property without government intervention. A government is only credibly committed to an intended action when it will reliably perform that action. Two forms of credible commitment are possible: motivational and imperative. When a government always has incentive to perform an action, it is motivationally committed. In a property rights context, this occurs when the government faces strong incentives to respect private property. When a government cedes power or otherwise reduces its ability to act, it is imperatively committed. In regard to property rights, a government is imperatively bound to protect property if private citizens can block expropriation before it occurs.

Institutional accounts of property rights in the West emphasize the need for political constraints to generate credible commitment and thus protect property. This idea dates back to Montesquieu, who claimed in 1748 that “great enterprises in commerce are found not in monarchical, but republican governments.”\(^11\) Modern economic historians share this view. Bates emphasizes the role political institutions played both in early modern Europe and in an indigenous kingdom in early twentieth-century Africa.\(^12\) These political institutions arose on a national level, through bargaining between citizens and the central government.\(^13\) The bargaining power of citizens was derived from the states dependence on them for revenue.\(^14\) The concession of political power by the state implies that property holders already wielded considerable economic power over the government. Yet, in the institutional approach it is only after this bargaining power is formalized in political institutions that property is secure.

A theory explicated citizens’ need for political power to ensure credible commitment is laid out in “Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History” in which North, Wallis, and Weingast argue that any individual’s economic freedoms are tied directly to his or her political power. The authors term this framework the “double balance.” According to them, “the double balance implies that sustaining fundamental changes in either the economic or political system cannot occur without fundamental changes in the other.”\(^15\) In order to defend their economic rights, individuals need to be able to retaliate against government encroachment. In order for this retaliation to be effective, it requires mass participation. Unfortunately, “this punishment is unlikely to arise through the uncoordinated actions of individuals acting as individuals, the costs of coordinating collective action are too high.”\(^16\) Only in democratic societies can individuals overcome collective action barriers through political organizations.

While the institutional approach emphasizes the need for political institutions, it does not necessitate legally defined property rights. The literature is certainly clear that legally defined property rights reduce transaction costs between citizens and enforcement costs for the government.\(^17\) Yet, clear legal codes are a result of secure property, not a cause. A government can have very precise codes of property and
yet constantly violate them. Similarly, a democratic government can never legally define property rights and yet can be kept in check by its constituents. Property rights de jure are derived from property rights de facto. Even in Western countries, it is the voting power of citizens that upholds property rights, not the property laws themselves.

Changing the Theory

The institutional approach is inadequate to explain how property rights evolved in early reform China. Property rights were secured in China on a local level by governments and private investors who operated in institutional environments radically different from those of early modern Europe. The approaches to securing property rights taken in Wenzhou and Jinjiang illustrate that if government and property holders share similar incentives, they will work with institutions available to them to create secure property rights. The success of Wenzhou’s and Jinjiang’s private industry also challenges the necessity of representational political institutions to secure property rights.

These claims will be validated by close examination of existing literature and case studies. First, this article will examine how national institutions shaped the incentives of local governments. Then it will move on to the means local institutions provided for responding to these incentives, as well as the manner in which property holders were able to exploit these institutions. From here, it will examine the methods governments used to credibly commit to property rights and formulate two property rights models for Jinjiang and Wenzhou. Finally, it will consider how these models challenge the conventions of institutional economics and demand a change in property rights literature.

Analysis of the literature reveals the two most significant national institutions. Politically, decentralization caused economic policy decisions and fiscal responsibility to devolve to local governments. Economically, movement towards marketization was rooted within the existing planned economy. Together, these created a national framework shared by nearly all localities. Within this framework, local governments were forced to raise income from local sources and promote industrial growth outside the plan.

Case studies from Wuxi, Songjiang, Wenzhou, and Jinjiang provide evidence of the impact local institutions had on economic policy-making by officials. In Wuxi and Songjiang, an existing wealth of capital in collectivized enterprises encouraged policies hostile to private ownership. In Wenzhou, a lack of capital forced local governments to rely on private entrepreneurs for tax revenue. In Jinjiang individuals’ access to remittances and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) reinforced local government’s reliance on private capital.

As will be shown, local institutions not only encouraged governments to protect property rights, but also provided property holders with a credible threat against expropriation. In areas where the private enterprise was a significant source of revenue, guanxi networks provided the access to information required for collective action. Reduction of investment by property holders as a group posed a significant threat to tax revenue. In areas with high levels of remittances and FDI, property holders leveraged their role as gatekeepers to sources of foreign capital to threaten government.

In Jinjiang, the considerable economic power of private citizens was sufficient to keep government motivationally committed to secure property rights. In Wenzhou, the short term incentives of government sometimes led to expropriation. In order to maximize their long term tax revenues, the Wenzhou government sought to commit itself imperatively to securing property rights. By exercising its power over economic policies, the Wenzhou government was able to grant legal rights to private entrepreneurs. These legal rights enjoyed political protection despite the entrepreneurs’ lack of political representation.

These two property rights models provide strong counter examples to the claims of institutional economists. In Jinjiang, the local government was credibly committed to securing property rights despite property holders’ lack of legal rights or political means of retaliation. In Wenzhou, private enterprises’ legal rights were protected politically, but not through representational institutions. To broaden our understanding of property rights, we must accept that there are many ways that property rights can be secured. This has normative implications for developmental economics and opens new research questions.

National Institutions

Political and Economic Decentralization

Deng Xiaoping’s reform agenda worked within the existing political and economic institutions of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Chinese government. His work, however, also subtly reshaped these institutions, ensuring relative policy stability. Attempting to consolidate his leadership of the CCP during the late 1970s, Deng became a champion of economic reform. His support of reform reflected both his own belief in the need for economic growth and a tradition within the CCP of political competition through proxy issue. Throughout the 1980’s, Deng increased the number of provincial leaders in the Central Committee. This act was politically motivated; provincial cadres were more likely to support economic reforms. The move was successful in garnering support for economic reform, but it also subtly altered the structure of Chinese political institutions. Shifting power from Beijing to the party branches around the country decentralized the party. Party elites now had to work more closely with the pro-
vices of the Central Committee, reducing the ability of any small clique to radically change party policy. 

During the 1980s, the Chinese Communist Party not only adopted a reform agenda but became entrenched in reform, reducing the risk that the central government would swing back towards Maoist policies and seize the assets of private entrepreneurs. 

Deng maintained the support of local and provincial officials by granting particularistic reforms. The central government routinely created policies that allowed specific localities and provinces to experiment with new economic reforms. New ownership forms were allowed only for small-scale enterprises that operated under the control of township and village governments. Privatization in large-scale industry would occur later in the reform process.

Experiments in one locality often led to experiments in another locality, and small reforms were followed by larger reforms. This process created what Barry Naughton calls a “presumption of permissiveness.” The details and interpretation of economic reform were hashed out locally, not nationally.

The devolution of economic decision was mirrored by devolution of fiscal responsibility. The amount of money flowing from the central government to provincial and local governments steadily decreased. In effect, local governments faced hard budget constraints. In order to continue providing social services (and furnishing nice offices), local officials were forced to raise their own revenues. The actions of local governments throughout China in the early reform era were increasingly dictated by their own revenues and the need to provide social services. 

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**The Plan**

While many economic decisions devolved to lower forms of government, the central government retained control over the command economy. The plan stood squarely in the way of the creation of a market economy. It was unclear what interaction would be permitted between the market and the plan. Would the plan be abolished? Would the market be a completely separate system in which plan producers could not participate? In an attempt to maintain economic stability and reduce political backlash, reformers made two significant changes to the plan instead of abolishing the system altogether.

First, the command economy was liberalized to allow non-plan transactions. This effectively created a market within the existing planned economy. The plan went from requiring specific production to requiring specific transactions. Enterprise A no longer had to produce product A; it simply had to receive the inputs for product A at one time and deliver product A at another. Enterprises were allowed to buy and sell any goods on the market, so long as they fulfilled their output quota. With full transfer rights, enterprises were allowed to sell the inputs provided by the plan and buy the outputs required by the plan. For example, an enterprise required by the plan to produce electrical wire could sell its allotted inputs of copper and plastic on the market and then buy finished electrical wire on the market to fulfill its quota. In effect, supplied inputs became an in-kind subsidy, while quotas were an in-kind tax.

Secondly, the central government made the decision to lock plan output at 1984 levels. All plan production would remain the same as 1984 in absolute terms. This ensured China would “grow out of the plan.” With the size of the plan locked, all future growth would have to occur within the free market. Increasingly restrained budgets would force state owned enterprises (SOE) and locally owned township and village enterprises alike to begin working within the market.

These changes to the plan provided the system in which market transactions would form. This system provided the means by which plan enterprises would be converted into market enterprises. It ensured that plan enterprises would have to start engaging in market transactions to maintain revenues. Finally, it guaranteed local governments an important role in facilitating transactions between government and private sector enterprises. While plan producers were free to engage in market transactions, they often did so only with government enterprises.

**The National Environment**

During the reform era, local governments were given greater leeway in interpreting and implementing economic reforms. Towns, villages and counties found that they were able to shape the economic reform occurring within their jurisdiction. They also were granted a critical role in facilitating market transactions between government enterprises and private enterprises. At the same time, however, governments became increasingly reliant on local resources for funding their government. Governments attempted to overcome this budget constraint by exercising their powers to shape economic policy in order to maximize their returns from local resources.

**Local Institutions**

Local institutions dictated local officials’ responses to the national political and economic environment. Faced with hard budget constraints, local governments turned to the resources available to them to raise revenues. In their efforts to fully exploit local resources, local governments pursued different approaches to property rights.

Property holders’ ability to influence their local gov-
ernments’ decisions derived from the citizen’s role in the exploitation of local resources. In areas where governments were able to raise revenues without the active cooperation of private entrepreneurs, property rights were unsecured. Only when local institutions put property holders in a position to control government access to local resources did secure property rights obtain. Examining multiple case studies reveals this dual role of local institutions. Property rights were secured when there was an incentive for local governments to respect property and when property holders had the power to punish government expropriation.

To understand the differences in local institutions, we will examine case studies conducted in four localities throughout China. All four are located along the eastern coast of China, where most of the reform era’s economic growth occurred. Songjiang and Wuxi are both situated in the Yangzi River delta, near the urban center of Shanghai. Wenzhou is located along the coast of Zhejiang Province. Jinjiang lies within the Province of Fujian. Both Wenzhou and Jinjiang are on the coast of the Taiwan Straits.

Wuxi and Songjiang: Strong Collective Industry

By the beginning of the reform era, Wuxi and Songjiang already possessed significant collective industries controlled by their local governments. During China’s nationalist era, the Yangzi River delta near Shanghai developed considerably. By 1949 it was “one of the most advanced areas in China.” During the Mao era, these enterprises were collectivized, and afterward they continued to receive aid from the central government. During the mid-1970s (just before reform began), local enterprises already accounted for 40 percent of commune’s income in Wuxi. The prevalence of State and provincial industries in the Yangzi delta also benefited collective enterprises. State-owned enterprises in the area contracted out some plan production to collective enterprises in Wuxi and around Shanghai. This provided collective enterprises with access to input and output markets. At the beginning of the reform era, collective industry was well established in Wuxi and Shanghai.

Responding to their need to raise revenue, local officials in Songjiang and Wuxi looked to the collective industries within their jurisdictions. Because the government retained direct control over these enterprises, it paid low transaction costs when collecting taxes from them. Taxing private enterprises, by contrast, was relatively costly. Officials therefore labored to expand collective industry and generate profits. In their view, private enterprises would only reduce the sales revenues of collective enterprises.

This reliance on collective industry made officials in Wuxi and Songjiang openly hostile to private industry. Even in the early 1990s, officials continued to resist allowing private ownership. According to Whiting, one official “commented that the party secretary did not care about what the higher levels said about ‘private and collective wheels turning together’; he did not want any private industry in his town.”

Songyang Town in Songjiang County had the highest concentration of private enterprise in the Shanghai suburbs as of 1990. Yet even there private enterprises were licensed only in industries not represented by local collective industry. The access of private enterprises to foreign and domestic investment was strictly limited. In Wuxi and the Shanghai suburbs, local governments sought to maximize the revenue of collective industry. This policy resulted in restriction of private enterprise.

Wenzhou: Weak Collective Industry

Wenzhou entered the reform era with relatively little in terms of collective industry. Opened as a foreign port city during the nineteenth century, Wenzhou possessed a thriving handicraft and commercial industry in 1949. In 1958 these shops were collectivized or shut down. Though they returned to private hands during the early 1960s, they were soon attacked during the Cultural Revolution. Beijing’s reluctance to invest along the Taiwan straits meant little expansion of collective industry in the region. The central government worried that, should war with nationalist Taiwan resume, Wenzhou and other cities along the coast would become the battlefield. Thus Wenzhou entered the reform era with collective industrial output about half as high as the national average.

Without a strong endowment of collective industry, officials in Wenzhou pursued policies that encouraged private industry. In the words of a tax and public finance official from Yueqing (a county in Wenzhou), “We must encourage investment on the part of individuals because the county doesn’t have enough money itself." However, this local government faced tax structures similar to those of Wuxi and Songjiang, which made taxation of private industry costly. Acknowledging their dependence on private industry, officials developed a new tax system that allowed them to estimate and collect taxes at a low cost to themselves and to private industry. Officials in Wenzhou recognized that local economic growth would have to occur in the private sector.
Because they relied on private enterprise to generate revenue, officials in Wenzhou sought to provide entrepreneurs with adequate property rights. Officials broadly interpreted early reforms, allowing private enterprises to register as fake collective enterprises or exceed the restrictions on individual and cooperative enterprises. While these ownership forms created private sector growth through most of the 1980s, their shortcomings limited private investment. Fake collectives were occasionally made into real collectives by the local government, a transformation owners had no power to stop. When fake collectives had contract disputes with clients outside the locality, local officials often repudiated their support. Many cooperatives, on the other hand, were ruled illegal by the central government in 1986.45

These limitations caused private entrepreneurs to stick to short run investments and keep their total investments below one million yuan. Rather than continually reinvesting, entrepreneurs would put profits into savings or excessive personal consumption. Wenzhou officials were painfully aware of these activities. They realized that such activities reduced government revenues and were a direct result of limited property rights.46

In 1987 the Wenzhou municipal government passed an important piece of legislation aimed at securing private property rights. That year, the central government encouraged many localities (including Wenzhou) to experiment with shareholding cooperatives. The intended purpose of such cooperatives was to increase the independence of collective enterprises from local government and party officials. In reality, they were used in two ways. In areas such as Wuxi and Shanghai, local officials used shareholding cooperatives to transfer shares in successful enterprises to themselves.

After consulting with private entrepreneurs, officials in Wenzhou drafted guidelines to allow private entrepreneurs to register as shareholding cooperatives. Though investors in shareholding cooperatives had somewhat attenuated property rights they were strongly preferred by private entrepreneurs to other forms of ownership. Operating as a shareholding cooperative granted private entrepreneurs a legitimate collective license. Therefore they had legal standing to prevent expropriation and to engage in contracts with higher forms of government enterprises. Additionally, the central government was credibly committed to allowing shareholding cooperatives to exist. Their popularity amongst the political elite in other locales (such as Shanghai) ensured that any move to eliminate shareholding cooperatives would meet strong resistance.47 The security of shareholding cooperatives is evident by their popularity, and investors flocked to shareholding cooperatives. Between 1985 and 1992 more than half of the industrial output in Wenzhou came from privately funded shareholding cooperatives.48

Just as in Wuxi and Songjiang, local officials in Wenzhou responded to hard budget constraints by establishing local sources of revenue. In Wenzhou, however, a lack of collective enterprise made governments dependent on private enterprise for revenue. In response to this dependence, local officials attempted to promote private industry. When inadequate ownership forms (and their own shortsighted actions) restricted private investment, local officials proved sensitive to their loss of potential revenue. Responding to the demands of private investors for more secure forms of ownership, officials used (and interpreted) national reforms to create secure (though attenuated) property rights.

Jinjiang: The Role of Remittances

Jinjiang is similar to Wenzhou in that it received little capital investment during the Mao era due to its proximity to Taiwan. Thus, like Wenzhou, it entered the reform era with little in terms of collective industry. The unique feature of Jinjiang is its huge number of overseas connections. Of the 1.25 million residents in 1990, 70 percent were either returned overseas Chinese or dependents of overseas Chinese. Overseas Chinese hailing from Jinjiang number over 1.5 million.49

It should be no surprise then that Jinjiang receives a massive amount of revenue from remittances. While exact numbers for the region are hard to track down, remittances have long played a part in financing local government. During the 1930s, under Nationalist control, 94 percent of educational spending came from overseas remittances.50 In the early 1990s 97 percent of schools were established or funded at least partially by remittances from abroad.51

That capital from abroad fueled local economic growth is undeniable. Between 1979 and 1987, 60 percent of the enterprises in Jinjiang were run by dependents of overseas Chinese and funded by overseas investment. After 1984 foreign direct investment became prevalent. A 1993 survey found that “around 99 percent of foreign investors in Quanzhou were Hokkien speakers (the regional dialect), 88 percent were of local origin, and 86 percent still had relatives in the area.”52

Private ownership has thrived in Jinjiang. In the 1970s, before reforms even began, small, private factories and shops (registered as cooperatives or collectives) existed.53 While Beijing occasionally cracked down on these local enterprises, they continued up until 1978. When the reform era began, the region exploded with commercial and industrial activity. Shops sold imported goods from Hong Kong, while factories conducted mostly subprocessing or assembly for foreign firms.54 Jinjiang’s thriving private enterprise propelled it from a relative backwater in 1978 to an area with a per capita income nearly three times the national average in
Progressive local governments made this possible. Throughout the 1980s, private enterprises routinely registered as collective enterprises. Yet “local officials and enterprise managers [had] no doubt that the enterprises [were] privately owned...It was also unthinkable for the local government to claim any kind of property rights over these ‘collective’ enterprises.” Despite the fact that fake collectives in Jinjiang faced the same legal risk of expropriation as fake collectives in Wenzhou, investors seemed to think it would never happen. At least from Chen’s account, local governments never violated this trust.

Like Wenzhou, local governments in the Jinjiang area recognized private enterprise as their most viable revenue source. By registering private enterprises as collective, they were easily able to monitor profits and collect taxes. As private enterprises grew in size, governments also derived significant income from the sale and leasing of real estate. Yet, unlike Wenzhou investors in Jinjiang seemed to have little doubt about their property rights despite being constrained by official forms of ownership. Also, the government did not yield to temptation and expropriate fake collectives. What caused different outcomes in their property rights schemes?

Chen argues that strong kinship networks helped organize economic and political life. This “family and kin coordination” restricted the government’s actions towards property holders. Chen makes a strong case for the prevalence of kin networks, their importance in coordinating within firms, and their role in attracting foreign investment. Yet he brings no evidence to bear that kin networks actually restrained government expropriation.

Instead, the security of property in Jinjiang is a direct reflection of the bargaining power of remittances and ties to foreign capital bestowed upon individual property holders. Remittances increased the amount of capital held by individuals, making governments more eager to elicit private investment. Remittances also made individuals gatekeepers for a source of capital outside government’s control. Individuals were able to threaten to withhold future remittance payments from government by spending them on consumption rather than investment. The same logic applies to foreign investment. If property rights were not secure, individuals would not seek out foreign direct investment from abroad. Overall, individuals could deprive government of a very large amount of potential revenue in response to expropriation. The potential cost of expropriation to the government was far larger than in an area with fewer connections to overseas Chinese.

The prevalence of contracting with foreign enterprises also provided a powerful disincentive towards government expropriation. Between 1980 and 1987 more than 60 percent of local enterprises engaged in assembly or subprocessing for foreign firms. Since most of these contracts were secured through kinship networks, expropriation would most likely result in a terminated contract. Without this contract, the enterprise loses much of its value. Take for instance an enterprise that receives plastic parts and springs to assemble toy dart guns. Unless the government can find the necessary supplies and a market for the finished product domestically, there is little benefit in expropriating the business. Alternatively, the government might be able to use the physical capital of the enterprise to produce another product. This, however, might still require additional expenditures.

The incentives to protect private property were so strong for local officials that even after eighteen officials were jailed in 1985 for allowing capitalism, no retrenchment in property rights was seen. This provides proof that “local government’s interests are still tightly interwoven with local enterprises.”

In Jinjiang, private entrepreneurs enjoyed secure property rights due to their access to foreign capital. Legally, these entrepreneurs had little or no property rights, as they were registered as collective enterprises. Their bargaining power, however, made expropriation by the local government prohibitively expensive.

Local Institutions Determined Ownership Forms

From these studies it is clear that local officials sought to raise revenues as best they could based on the tools and resources available to them locally. If most production occurred in collective enterprise, they sought to maximize the profits of these enterprises. They invested time and effort managing these enterprises, paying little attention to developing private enterprise. They allowed property reform to progress at the rate stipulated by the central government. In fact, reliance on collective enterprises made local governments fearful of private competition. In both Wuxi and Shanghai officials restricted private enterprise. In Wuxi there were virtually no private enterprises, while in Shanghai officials only allowed enterprises that did not compete with government owned industry.

In areas that entered the reform era with a lack of capital investment, officials depended on private individuals to raise capital and establish enterprises. They worked within the framework of limited economic reform to license and tax private enterprises. In Jinjiang fake collective licenses were routinely issued to private enterprises for a fee. Concerned that limited ownership forms were reducing private investment and tax revenues, local officials in Wenzhou broadly interpreted directives from Beijing to allow private investors to register as shareholding cooperatives. These shareholding
cooperatives were protected because the same ownership form was used by political elites in other provinces. Private entrepreneurs thus had confidence that any move to eliminate their form of ownership would run into stiff political resistance.

Ties to overseas Chinese enhanced the ability of private entrepreneurs to secure their property in areas lacking collective enterprises. FDI and remittances from abroad put more capital in the hands of individuals. This alone increased local government’s reliance on private individuals to capitalize and provide revenue sources. More importantly, however, this source of capital lay outside the reach of any part of the Chinese government. Unlike the capital individuals held themselves, local governments could not expropriate the source of FDI and remittances, as they were abroad. As gate keepers to an otherwise unreachable source of capital, individuals with relatives abroad had considerable bargaining power vis-à-vis local governments.

As shown above, localities that lacked existing capital and had strong ties to overseas Chinese also possessed an active private sector and protection of property rights. It is tempting to claim that these two institutions created property rights. Such a claim, however, is false. Had political and economic reforms on the national level never occurred, local governments would not have faced hard budget constraints. Without this revenue imperative they would have had no incentive to protect private enterprise. Similarly, without a two-track economic system, private enterprises might have found it nearly impossible to secure input and product markets, even with protection of property rights. The fact that private property did not become prevalent in Jinjiang or Wenzhou from 1949-1978 illustrates that change in national institutions was also necessary.63

Guanxi and Collective Action

As opposed to the changes occurring in political and economic institutions, the social institution of guanxi remained relatively static throughout the period. Guanxi literally means “connection” or “relationship” but here refers to the complex system of social connections used in Chinese society. The practice of guanxi is a complicated institution, but there are several important features to consider. Many individuals possess guanxi networks that extend well beyond immediate family and friends; guanxi networks can be very broad, crossing lines of class and political hierarchy. Those with little or no political power may have close guanxi with politically powerful individuals.64

What role did guanxi play in securing property rights? Some, such as Chen, argue that guanxi networks allowed private citizens to restrain government actions. The evidence for this is lacking, and counter examples exist. In Qiaolou Sichuan, the local party secretary used guanxi connections to solidify his hold on local industry. He only appointed friends and relatives to positions of power within collective enterprises. Family ties were also used to discipline workers and prevent attempts at creating independent enterprises.65

Even if some entrepreneurs had the requisite guanxi to keep local officials at bay, most entrepreneurs would not be so lucky. Furthermore, guanxi use is relatively costly.

Instead, the role of guanxi networks was to provide information. Guanxi increases individual’s overall information. By utilizing guanxi individuals were able to transfer information more quickly, validate dubious information, and gain access to information prohibited in formal channels.66 Social networks have long been used in China as a way to transmit information quickly. Even if one’s own guanxi network is reasonably small, the overall connectivity of Chinese society ensures quick access to information.67 In this way, guanxi networks ensured that all property holders in a locality had reasonably uniform and current information about government actions.

Guanxi networks provided the means by which property holders as a whole exercised a collective threat towards local government. For the government to be threatened by property holders withholding investment, a mechanism must exist that ensures that all property holders will reduce their investment in response to government expropriation. In the cases discussed in Wenzhou and Jinjiang, this happens as a result of information sharing and self-interest. Upon hearing news of a neighbor’s expropriation, rational individuals will attempt to protect their assets from the government by reducing visible investments (such as those in enterprises the government taxes).68 The more property the government expropriates, the higher individuals perceive their own risk of expropriation and the more they will take money out of visible enterprises.

The same logic applies in the case of remittances and FDI. The more the government expropriates, the more individuals will funnel remittances towards personal consumption or assets the government has trouble expropriating (and thus taxing). The higher the risk of expropriation, the less likely relatives abroad are to invest in enterprises.

Chinese Models of Secure Property Rights

As we have seen, property rights arose in both Jinjiang and Wenzhou because national and local institutions created an environment where property holders had considerable bargaining power relative to the local government. The way property holders transformed this bargaining power into secure forms of ownership is not exactly the same, however.

In Jinjiang, the government was motivationally committed to property rights. That is, the benefits of consistently respecting property rights outweighed the benefits of even
occasional expropriation. The structure of the local economy depended so greatly on interaction with overseas Chinese (which occurred through private citizens) that the benefits of expropriation were always less than the costs. Even when faced with censure from higher forms of government (and imprisonment), local officials still found it in their interest to protect the property of local entrepreneurs. In such an environment, limited forms of formal ownership meant little. This is demonstrated by entrepreneurs' relative disregard for their nominal registration. Local officials similarly were unconcerned with nominal ownership forms.69

The Jinjiang model emerged in an institutional environment with very strong incentives for government respect of property rights. The property holder's credible threat to government revenues is so strong that the government never has an incentive to expropriate, and is thus motivationally committed to respecting property rights. In this model, legal definitions of property have little meaning.

Such was not the case in Wenzhou. While incentives existed for local officials to respect property rights, they were not as strong as in Jinjiang. At times, the benefits of expropriation exceeded the benefits of protection, evident in the sporadic collectivization of fake collectives. Furthermore, when higher forms of government imposed a cost on protecting private property, local governments refrained from enforcing fake collectives' contracts with clients outside the locality.

While local officials realized that this restraint limited long term private investment and thus tax revenues, they were unable to credibly commit to do otherwise. For any given village or township, there existed certain times when the benefit of expropriating a few private enterprises outweighed the long term costs. Similarly, at certain times it was simply too costly to risk censure defending a fake collective's contract with a non local enterprise. Local officials in Wenzhou were not motivationally committed to protecting property rights, because they did not always have the incentive to avoid expropriation.

To rectify this situation, local officials in Wenzhou experimented with a new form of ownership called a shareholding cooperative. By granting access to shareholding cooperatives, government in Wenzhou ceded some of its power to property holders in order to imperatively commit to respecting property rights. Once registered as shareholding cooperatives, private enterprises held legitimate collective licenses. These licenses gave private entrepreneurs legal standing against local governments if expropriation did occur. Shareholding cooperative licenses granted private enterprises legal rights. Local governments were unable to infringe on these rights, and were thus imperatively committed to respecting property rights.

The question of how shareholding cooperatives' legal standing was upheld remains unanswered. That is, what prevented local governments from declaring shareholding cooperatives illegitimate (or the central government from doing so)? The political representation of shareholding cooperatives as a whole ensured the legal rights of shareholding cooperatives as a whole. As said earlier the ownership form was popular amongst powerful officials in other localities (who used it for personal ends). These powerful political allies obstructed any political move (by the central government or Wenzhou) to reduce the legal standing of shareholding cooperatives.

The Wenzhou model more closely resembles Western models of development than the Jinjiang model does. In the Wenzhou model national and local institutions created an environment where local government depended on private enterprise for revenue. Government was cognizant of the long term reduction in tax revenues caused by expropriation. Short term incentives to expropriate prevented the government from credibly committing to respect property rights. To overcome this inability to credibly commit, Wenzhou's government ceded power to private enterprises by issuing shareholding cooperative licenses. These licenses gave legal standing to private enterprises which greatly restrained expropriation. In turn, the political power of elites who also held shareholding cooperative licenses ensured the legality of all shareholding cooperatives.

Impact on Institutional Economics

Theoretical

In Western economic history, secure property rights have been identified as a product of a centralized state that is kept in check through political institutions that guarantee representation of property holders. The Jinjiang and Wenzhou property rights models break this mould. Property was secured on a local level. Securing property didn’t always require the government to constrain through political means; when it did, it was not through representative democracy.

Jinjiang provides evidence that there are environments where the economic power of property holders alone is enough to constrain government actions. While this case specifically relies on private citizens' access to remittances and foreign capital, the model could be applied more broadly. Jinjiang proves that it is possible for citizens to possess a credible threat to government power without exercising it politically. In Jinjiang, government expropriation was punished “through the uncoordinated actions of individuals acting as individuals.”70

Wenzhou more closely resembles the Western model. Government ceded some power in order to restrain itself in the short run and maximize long term revenues. The Wenzhou model, however, utilizes a different mechanism than
the Western model. Recall that in the Western model government concedes political power to individuals so that they can guarantee their legal rights. In the Wenzhou model, the government concedes legal rights to private enterprises. It guarantees these legal rights not by granting political power to entrepreneurs but by making sure that some politically powerful group shares the same legal rights. This external group then protects entrepreneurs’ rights in the process of defending its own incentives.

Contrary to what is claimed by institutional economists, open, democratic political institutions are not necessary for securing property rights. In some institutional environments, the self-interested reactions of property holders to expropriation is sufficient to credibly restrain the government’s hand. Furthermore, even in situations where the government is unable to make a credible commitment to respect property rights, solutions that do not require political representation of property holders are possible.

The degree to which the two approaches studied differ from each other and the European based model advanced by institutional economics suggests that the method by which property rights are secured is highly sensitive to institutional environments. That is, secure property rights tend to emerge when governments have incentives to encourage private enterprise, but the institutional environment that governments and their citizens work within dictates the method used to secure property rights.

If it can no longer be said that only the European approach to property rights is successful, then what does lead to secure property rights. At the most abstract level, it seems property rights require some form of government. In all cases, the government prevents individuals from seizing the property of other individuals. Above this, property holders must be able to threaten to retaliate against government expropriation. This threat alone may credibly commit some governments to respect property (as in Jinjiang). If, however, the threat of property holders is not strong enough to prevent government extortion at all times, then the government must search for an institutional method to constrain its actions (and thus imperatively commit to property rights).

**Normative Implications**

If property rights in a locality are secured through a mechanism specific to that institutional environment, then universal policy recommendations from organizations like the IMF or World Bank have considerably less relevance than previously thought. Dani Rodrik echoes this idea in *One Economics, Many Recipes*: “Effective institutional outcomes do not map into unique institutional designs. And since there is no unique mapping from function to form, it is futile to look for uncontingent empirical regularities that link specific legal rules to economic outcomes. What works will depend on local constraints and opportunities.” His point is that the economic outcome of adding any specific institution to a random institutional environment will have unpredictable results. If this is the case, it seems applied developmental economics would be better off studying how developing economies’ rules work rather than how they should work. Fixing the rules of a game requires first knowing how the game works.

**Conclusion and Further Research**

Property rights in Jinjiang and Wenzhou were secured in a fashion markedly different from that of early modern Europe. By focusing solely on Western development, the institutional approach to property rights has developed a limited model. Individuals are able to collectively threaten the government without access to political representation. Property rights can be obtained without political reform.

The models constructed in this paper are relatively simplistic and based on limited information. More research on Wenzhou and Jinjiang could certainly yield more information. For instance, was there disagreement between officials about how to raise revenues? Within Wenzhou, were certain enterprises more likely to be expropriated? Did certain towns or villages have more threatening governments? More work could be done to elucidate why Wenzhou occasionally engaged in expropriation, even when such action reduced tax revenues.

The significance of these models is that they cast doubt upon the conclusion that the institutions of property rights developed in the West are the only successful way to secure property. Therefore, a great deal of work needs to be done to understand property rights systems around the world. Even within reform era China, there were undoubtedly other approaches (successful or otherwise) to securing property.

5 Chen, “Local Institutions.”
13 North and Thomas, *Rise of the Western World*.
16 Ibid., 42.
17 North, Institutions, Institutional Change; see also, Bates, *Prosperity and Violence*.
20 Shirk, *Political Logic*.
21 The Central Committee is technically the highest authority within the CCP. While its approximately 300 members do not directly control party policy, they act as the selectorate for party leaders. Therefore, the opinions of its members may strongly influence party policy.
23 Ibid.
24 Naughton, *Growing Out of the Plan*.
25 Ibid.
26 Montinola, Qian, and Weingast, “Federalism, Chinese Style.”
28 Naughton, *Growing Out of the Plan*.
29 Whiting, *Power and Wealth*.
30 The administrative boundaries in this area were redrawn and renamed several times during the 1980s. Jinjiang refers to today's region of Jinjiang City and Shishi City.
32 Here “communes” refers to an administrative unit that existed between 1958 and 1982. Communes were replaced with townships.
34 Ibid., 144-145.
35 Ibid., 145-146.
36 Ibid., 146.
37 Ibid., 147.
38 Ibid., 148-149.
39 The Cultural Revolution was a period of upheaval incited by Mao Zedong. It is generally considered to have lasted from 1966 until Mao's death in 1976.
41 Ibid., 128.
42 Ibid., 63.
43 Ibid., 64.
44 Ibid., 55.
45 Ibid., 56, 64.
46 Ibid., 51.
47 Ibid., 57.
48 Ibid., 58-57, 67.
49 Ibid., 70.
50 Ibid., 64.
51 Ibid., 66-67.
52 Ibid., 67.
53 Ibid., 68.
54 Ibid., 56.
55 Ibid., 56, 64.
56 Ibid., 51.
57 Ibid., 57.
58 Ibid., 56-57, 67.
59 Ibid., 70.
60 Ibid., 64.
61 Ibid., 66-67.
62 Whiting, *Power and Wealth*.
63 Chen, “Local Institutions,” Remittances in Qianzhuan during the Mao era were either used for personal consumption or pooled for public works.
65 Gregory Ruf, “Collective Enterprise and Property Rights in a Sichuan Village: The Rise and Decline of Managerial...


67 While I was in China, I found it amazing how quickly my Chinese friends and teachers discovered information. I even heard news about a murder in town the day it happened, whereas the local news took at least a day to officially report it.

68 Avinash Dixit, Lawlessness and Economics.

69 As private ownership became more acceptable nationally during the early 1990s, some enterprises began to switch from fake collective licenses to legitimate private licenses. When higher ups demanded that 60 percent of enterprises register as collective and 40 percent as private, the Chendai (a township in Jinhjang) officials simply declared the larger enterprises as collective and the smaller ones individual or private.


72 Of course many economists do this, but it is still often done within the context of understanding how this differs from successfully developed economies.

Bibliography


“Push, or the World Will Be Deceived”:
Imagistic Thinking Through Humor as a Means to Maintain Indirect Communication in Kierkegaard’s Attack on Danish Christendom

Michael McEvilly

Abstract: Søren Kierkegaard, the “melancholy Dane,” attacked the Danish National Church over the last year of his life. Many scholars have classified this body of work either as the most direct in the corpus or as altogether inconsistent with Kierkegaard’s early, indirect authorship, given that the newspaper articles were written under his own name. This paper argues that the task throughout the early (1843-46) and late authorships (1854-55) is fundamentally the same and that, through an appeal to Kierkegaard’s theory of humor and its impact on self-deceptive beliefs, one can consistently place these final writings within his philosophical and theological methodology.

Introduction

On January 30, 1854, the Bishop of the Danish Lutheran state Church, Jakob Peter Mynster, died. At his funeral, Professor Hans Lassen Martensen, soon-to-be-appointed Bishop, referred to Mynster as a “witness to the truth” [Sandhedsvidne]. On a February night, a relatively popular philosopher by the name of Søren Kierkegaard hunched over a piece of paper, penning what would become the first article published in Fædrelandet [‘The Fatherland’], “Was Bishop Mynster a ‘Truth-Witness,’ One of ‘the Authentic Truth-Witnesses’—Is This the Truth?” Kierkegaard’s answer, as one might suspect, is no. The article is not published until December 18, 1854, after the appointment of Martensen as the new Bishop. (Kierkegaard did not want to influence the appointment.)

And thus begins the final chapter of the melancholy Dane’s life. Until his death on November 11, 1855, Kierkegaard would publish twenty-one articles in Fædrelandet, two separate, longer tracts, and nine installments of Øiblikket [‘The Moment’]. I label this body of late work or attack the “late authorship” (1854-55), in distinction to the “early authorship” (1843-46), comprised of most of Kierkegaard’s famous works, and the “second authorship” (1848-51). A good deal of respectable scholarship has substantiated the consistency of Kierkegaard’s writings from the early authorship to the second authorship to the attack.

Aside from two dissertations written in the early 1970s, both attempting to demonstrate the connection between the two authorships, recent work by literary and theological scholars supports the view of continuity from earlier work to the attack: Michael Strawser maintains that all of Kierkegaard’s works, though some are grammatically direct (i.e., signed by Kierkegaard himself), have the deep indirectness of irony; Michael Plekon’s article “Before the Storm: Kierkegaard’s Theological Experimentation and Preparation before the Attack on the Church” evidences the consistency of the theological content from the second authorship to the attack.

Nevertheless, there is a feature of the attack that is often displaced, over-looked, or even neglected by both scholars and casual readers of Kierkegaard. The question I intend to address is that of authorial consistency of the attack with respect to Kierkegaard’s earlier Socratic method (the maieutic, from the Greek maievtikos, meaning midwifery). Through-
out the early authorship, Kierkegaard emphasizes a communicative form that is fundamentally indirect, often writing under pseudonyms in conjunction with an ironic distance to the texts he produces. I will look at motivations for such a method in the second section of this paper. But because the attack abandons many of these formal characteristics, readers of Kierkegaard think it is an outlier in the authorship. I hope to demonstrate otherwise.

After examination of Kierkegaard’s communicative, Socratic task, as well as the tools he uses to distance himself from the reader to efficaciously bring about self-knowledge and self-change, I will look at philosophical underpinnings to this method, centering on imagistic thinking through humor. Kierkegaard’s theory and practice of humor allows his readers to observe themselves, becoming aware of self-deceptive attitudes otherwise hidden. In the third section I will look at what it is specifically about humor that makes it apropos for his theory of indirect communication. Finally, I will examine specific examples in the articles of the attack that demonstrate the comic. Kierkegaard, from Either/Or (1843) to The Moment and Late Writings (1855), writes to effect autonomously-chosen change in his readers. Through his use of the comic, Kierkegaard maintains authorial consistency through indirection even in the abandonment of the dress of pseudonymity.

**Indirect Communication**

From February 1843 to May 1849, Kierkegaard published nine works under pseudonyms and ten signed works, often one of each on the same day. Both in the secondary, scholarly literature, as well as in the common teaching of Kierkegaard’s method, the former are often labeled aesthetic and indirect, while the latter have been methodologically pigeonholed as religious and direct. For the purpose of my argument, I think it useful to disambiguate what is meant by direct communication and indirect communication in two ways. First, works signed by Kierkegaard himself are grammatically direct, while works signed by a pseudonym are grammatically indirect. Secondly, there is a more involved use of indirect communication related to the Socratic practice of midwifery. This practice is not identified exactly with Socrates’ method of question asking, but with a general strategy of helping people discover the truth for themselves. Indirect communication of this maieutic form relies on artful literary devices to undermine authorial authority, represent various points of view to the reader, and deceive into the truth. This second form of indirect communication includes pseudonymity (or polynomity), as well as irony and humor.

In a rhetorically ironic way, discussion of Kierkegaard’s indirect communication often intimidates, confuses, and puts off. It need not. In the first place, philosophy can be coercing or intimidating, especially for the uninitiated.

Poetic pseudonyms, as well as fictional anecdotes, are used by Kierkegaard to appeal to the reader’s interpretive sensibilities. Just as metaphor engages a reader’s subjectivity, spawning an abundance of thought, feeling and imagery, and just as philosophy becomes more accessible through imaginative example, the pseudonyms function to engage the reader in his or her subjectivity. If this is Kierkegaard’s purpose, he must partially veil or disguise his seriousness since authorities, though they can inspire, can also intimidate or overpower the individual point of view. While many authors might be more than happy to sell books on name alone, Kierkegaard’s task was one that demanded an absence of authority, insofar as it was possible. Pragmatically, this was because, as is argued in Plato’s Meno, if one thinks he knows something, there is no motivation to further inquire into it; ethically, Kierkegaard’s form induces one to reflect: the individual, the recipient of the communication, must be free to shape the world as she pleases. The individual must at least believe the decision is made by him or herself.

Thus, there are two major motivations to publish works under pseudonyms and to detach oneself from his texts: to remove unnecessary authority from his arguments and to use imagistic thinking to promote autonomous choosing, appropriation, and endorsement of different worldviews. (Lay aside your anxiety over the second point. I will more fully develop an account of imagistic thinking and its relation to autonomy in section three.) Following the publication of Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments (1846), in which he claimed but distanced himself from his pseudonyms, Kierkegaard began to think more thoroughly about his theory of communication. In his journals, one finds a series of undelivered lectures he prepared in 1847 entitled “The Dialectic of Ethical and Ethical-Religious Communication.” Articles written on these lectures help correct the misunderstanding of Kierkegaard’s communicative method as strictly (or even predominantly) one in terms of pseudonymous versus signed. The lectures also portray indirect and direct communication on a continuum determined by the intentions of the individual work.

Within the lectures, Kierkegaard outlines the features of direct and indirect communication. Direct communication is appropriate if three relational properties obtain: the idea being communicated is definite (there is no mystery occluding the idea being conveyed); the communicator has a direct understanding of the idea conveyed; and the recipient understands the idea with the same ease that the communicator transmits it. Direct communication is synonymous with a communication of knowledge wherein the communicator forces the information into the recipient, so to speak. (Contrariwise, the truth is pulled out of the recipient in indirect communication, though, of course, no actual direct communication assumes that the communicator knows
Fully and the recipient knows nothing at all.)^2 Full-fledged direct communication might be appropriate, e.g., when one knowledgeable chef is teaching a recipe to another knowledgeable chef.

Indirect communication takes two basic forms depending on the relationship between the communicator and the communicatee: ethical and ethical-religious. In ethical indirect communication, which emphasizes the learner over the teacher, the communicator assists the recipient in the birth of self-knowledge. Think again of Socratic questioning and answer. As Kierkegaard argues in *The Point of View*, the art of indirect communication is the art of taking away: people live in self-deception and must have the deception removed before ethical change can occur. Anomalous forms of communication—as such as those introduced through the various pseudonyms—can provide necessary tension that one must overcome to choose a more authentic mode of existence. Ethical-religious communication is not unconditionally indirect, as it requires some first knowledge to be directly communicated before indirectness is possible. This is intuitive, although it undermines the Socratic method of recollection: in approaching a group of persons who have never heard about the doctrinal aspects of a specific religion, one must first provide them with foundational knowledge.

Epistemologically, direct communication is the sharing of some knowable fact. Indirect communication is deception into the truth and encapsulates more than truth-apt propositions (e.g., it can also be used in the alteration of attitudes). It was soon hereafter that Kierkegaard began to more fully articulate his views on the relation between deception and communication.

In *The Point of View* (1848; published posthumously in 1859), Søren Kierkegaard attempted to disembroil himself and his authorship for the first time directly.^3 Despite his popularity, only one book, *Either/Or*, sold out by 1849, and demands from his publisher to reprint the book led Kierkegaard to consider his authorship and task. As aforementioned, Kierkegaard often released two books on the same day, one signed by himself (more religious in nature and edifying in tone) and one under a pseudonym (more aesthetic in nature). If he was to maintain balance between the aesthetic and the religious, he must print some new work under his own name in conjunction with the highly aesthetic *Either/Or*, else “everything [written] … would be dragged down mainly into the esthetic.”^4 This would conflict with his understanding of himself as a religious poet, one whose task, undergone both directly and indirectly, was to bring others into Christianity. Thus, on May 14, 1849, he published *The Lily of the Field, The Bird of the Air* alongside the second edition of *Either/Or*.

Within *The Point of View*, Kierkegaard claims the entire authorship pertains to Christianity and the issue of becoming a Christian by means of direct and indirect polemic against the illusion of Christendom. (One must recognize the significance of the time in which he is writing: this is after his first authorship but before his “late authorship,” so he is already considering the imminent attack on the established church, which informs his discussion of his task). The aesthetic in the works is the incognito and the deception in the service of Christianity; the religious in the works, evident from the beginning, is constructed in order to edify and upbuild the readers. Moreover, he comments on the illusion of Christendom and the means by which it must be approached in order to be corrected. If the corrective occurs by a religious author, no one will read the book: those who listen are not the people spoken to and those with ears half-cocked will be infuriated, grounded more into their self-deceptions. If it occurs by an aesthetic author, no one will take the religious works seriously. Therefore, Kierkegaard contents, his task has been first to portray the aesthetic with passion, establishing rapport with readers, and only then to put into practice and call attention to the necessity for the religious in the works. This is a psychological point about the art of helping: one must understand more than the person in need about the things the person in need understands. Otherwise, one merely preaches to the reader and accomplishes nothing.

The thesis of *The Point of View*, namely, that the aesthetic works hand-in-hand with the religious, contributes to a blurring between the two spheres of existence. Recent Kierkegaardian scholarship evidences this overlay between the aesthetic and religious in his methodology, but little to no attention has been paid to extending this project to the attack on Christendom. Moreover, far too little work has been done to validate Kierkegaard’s use of humor (in distinction to irony), a tool I argue he uses throughout the attack to promote imagistic thinking and, consequently, autonomous decision-making. In the next section, I will examine three interrelated philosophical topics: self-deception, imagistic thinking and its relationship to autonomous decision-making, and humor.

**Self-Deception, Imagination, and Humor: Kierkegaardian and Contemporary**

Self-deception sheds some light on the motivation for the attack and the mechanisms by which it takes place. Generally, self-deception is the “acquisition and maintenance of a belief (or, at least, the avowal of that belief) in the face of strong evidence to the contrary motivated by desires or emotions favoring the acquisition and retention of that belief.”^5 Due to the controversy surrounding intentional self-deception, I adopt a non-intentionalist paradigm for self-deception, in which false belief is not accidental but motivated by desire, anxiety, or some other emotion regard-
ing or related to the belief. An example Ian Deweese-Boyd uses is a woman who, against the preponderance of evidence available to her that her daughter is having learning difficulties, believes that she is not, due to such feelings as desire that her daughter not have learning difficulties, her fear that she has such difficulties, and anxiety over the possibility. A belief that her daughter is not having learning difficulties fulfills her desires and reduces her anxiety. Her false belief is a consequence of her motivational states. Throughout The Moment and Late Writings, Kierkegaard preoccupies himself with the idea of knowledge and motivation, self-deception, and making those who are under delusions aware of their epistemological state. I will examine his claims concerning self-deception first in the articles of Fædrelandet and then in Øiblikket.

In Denmark in the 1840s, there was a frequently performed drama by Augustin E. Scribe by the name of Puf, eller veden vil bedrages ['Push, or the world will be deceived'], an allusion to Sebastian Brandt’s famous mundus vault decipi ['the world wants to be deceived'], often attributed to Pope Paul IV. Kierkegaard wanted to “[throw] light on this Christian criminal case” instead of necessarily reforming the Church. In other words, as long as Christians and the officials of the Church kept acting as if nothing had happened, as if everything were all right and what was called Christianity was the Christianity of the New Testament, as long as there were tricks being used to conceal the differences, tricks to maintain the appearance of the Christianity of the New Testament, then someone needed to make the public aware of such discrepancies. The Christianization of Danish culture, Kierkegaard argued, had led to a socialized, self-deceptive understanding of what constituted Christianity. He was forced to push.

Some theorists of religion have argued that belief in another world can help one to deal with suffering, to cope with the uncertainty of life, and, generally speaking, can allow one to have a higher sense of psychological well-being. Christianity, especially in a Christian culture, can help one to enjoy life more and connect with other, similarly-minded people. Kierkegaard thinks this form of lenient Christianity is damaging to the individual, writing:

But what use is it—and even if it were ever so pious and well-intentioned—what use is it to want (lovingly?) to strengthen you in the delusion that you are a Christian, or to want to change the conception of being a Christian, presumably so that you are able to enjoy this life all the more securely; what use is it, or more correctly, must this not simply damage you, since it will help you to allow temporality to be unused Christianly—until you stand in eternity, where you are not a Christian if you were not one, and where it is impossible to become one.

Christendom Christians, motivated by desires for enjoyment, not only delude themselves into believing that they are Christians, but also threaten the very goodness of their souls. If they stand before God qua judge, having been motivated toward Christianity because it was the easy way, what will become of their eternal existence? In order to demonstrate the extent to which this delusion is true in Denmark, Kierkegaard questions any nation in which everything is Christian and all are Christians, “even the atheists,” since calling oneself a Christian is the means “by which one protects oneself against all sorts of troubles and inconvenience in life, and the means by which one secures for oneself earthly goods, conveniences, profit, etc. etc.” Why would anyone not be a Christian in such a place?

Therefore, Kierkegaard, at least in the articles in Fædrelandet, calls for the direct communication of Christian truths, so as to make people aware:

Was I not right and am I not right, that first and foremost everything must be done to have it definitely determined what is required in the New Testament for being a Christian, that first and foremost everything must be done so that we are at least able to become aware.

As mentioned in the second section of this paper, ethical-religious communication is direct and then indirect. Recipients of Christian truths, unless by revelation directly from God, must know the nature of Christianity before it can be appropriated (that is, endorsed in one’s life). Despite this, Kierkegaard explicitly avoids theological discussions about doctrine, and denies a direct request for writing an understanding of the New Testament. (See article III, “A Challenge to Me from Pastor Paludan-Müller.” Here, Kierkegaard warns himself aloud that if he entered into such a debate, it would “turn the whole issue and the position of the issue into something altogether different from what it is.”) Making one aware, then, means something more than giving another person religious truth-apt propositions. Making aware is, in and of itself, a stripping away of deception and the awareness of this awareness. Kierkegaard wants to make his readers responsible for their own decision to continue living in the way they are already living or to change and live according to a different, more rigorous understanding of Christianity.

Concluding “This Must Be Said; So Let It Be Said,” Kierkegaard reiterates, rather unpoetically, the issue:

The road on which you are going toward eternity’s accounting is a road full of dangers—“the pastor” says somewhat the same thing. But there is one danger he forgets to speak about and to warn against, the danger that you are letting yourself be trapped or that you are trapped in the enormous illusion that the state and the pastor have brought...
about, making people think that this is Christianity. Wake up, take care that you do not think that you are securing the eternal for yourself by taking part in what is only a new sin. Wake up, watch out; whoever you are, this much you can perceive, that the person who is speaking here is not speaking in order to make money, since instead it has cost him money, or to gain honor and esteem, since he has voluntarily exposed himself to the opposite. But if this is the case, you are also able to understand that this means that you ought to become aware.\(^\text{17}\)

Later the same month, he publishes the first issue of Øiblikket. The discussion of self-deception and awareness continues, but Kierkegaard begins to color his exposition with literary playfulness. If the task of the first articles was to make one aware, the task of this second set of articles is to do something with that awareness, to endorse the knowledge that makes up said awareness. In the first issue, Kierkegaard writes the following in a piece entitled “Take an Emetic!” continuing the long tradition of seeing sin as a medical condition to be fixed:

> No doubt there are some people upon whom my articles in Fædrelandet have made an impression. Then perhaps their situation is something like this: they have become aware, or at least they have begun to think about whether the whole religious situation is in an extremely wretched condition. But, on the other hand, there is so much that makes them disinclined to devote themselves to such thoughts; they love the usual order of things, which they relinquish very reluctantly. Therefore, their condition is somewhat like that of a person who walks around with a bad taste in his mouth, a coated tongue, and the shivers—and so the physician says to him: Take an emetic. Likewise, I, too, say: Take an emetic. Come out of this vacillating condition.\(^\text{18}\)

The emetic takes the form of knowledge: “think for a moment about what Christianity is....”\(^\text{19}\) This apt metaphor inclines the reader to give up something, to expel, e.g., knowledge from the body. When one becomes aware of some disparity between belief and action, there is often an accompanying feeling of discomfort. Kierkegaard’s medical opinion is to relinquish that discomfort and take up the discomfort of living Christianly, even if that is against the “usual order of things.” In a later issue of Øiblikket, Kierkegaard will offer another medical opinion, which I will look at with respect to humor in the fourth section.

The language of self-deception dwindles as the articles continue, not because it is unimportant, but because the task of these later articles is to change the self-deceptive attitudes, not merely to create an awareness of them. In Øiblikket 4, Kierkegaard maintains that what Christianity calls for is against our inclination, but pastors present Christianity to millions, duping them into the “cheap and appealing way.”\(^\text{20}\) New Testament Christianity is “precisely what the natural man is most opposed to, is to him an offense, is either what he in wild passion and defiance must rebel against or what he must slyly try to get rid of at any price, for example, by means of skullduggery.”\(^\text{21}\) Ruminating on comfort in Øiblikket 2, he philosophizes that the comfortable “cannot be brought into any relation at all to an eternal happiness.”\(^\text{22}\) The eternal is obtained only in the difficult way, not indifferently. When one wants water, it can be obtained by a pump (easily) or be brought up the stairs every time (difficultly). We obviously choose the former. But once we speak of the eternal, i.e., timelessness, it is absurd to speak of something taking more time than something else, making the idea of the comfortable, at least with respect to time, meaningless. Moreover, there are numerous Bible verses that speak of taking the less comfortable way, the narrow path, etc.

While a few moments complicate this model, the general argument behind the necessity of the attack owes to each individual Christian’s desire for the easier way, for the title of Christian despite taking the comfortable way, and, generally, for the satisfaction of certain motivating desires despite the incongruity between knowledge and practice or knowledge and knowledge. But there is clearly resistance to Kierkegaard’s methodology, as evidenced by the responses directed at him. The issue thus far has, despite his intentions, been intellectual and not affective. When one argues a point directly with someone trapped not only intellectually, but also motivationally, in his or her own position, the chance of successful attitudinal alteration is quite low. It is not until the articles of Øiblikket that Kierkegaard (effectively) uses humor to accomplish what direct argumentation cannot. It is not until here that a modified indirect communication is put in place.

Kierkegaard, the self-proclaimed religious poet, ever literary, ever playful, flourishes on the imaginative. Moreover, given his own views of indirect communication, he writes in a form that pushes his readership to autonomously reflect, deliberate, and endorse various points of view. I argue here, in two stages, that humor is an imaginative mechanism useful for such a project. First, I will discuss recent work on imaginative visualizing (what Richard Wollheim calls iconic imagination) and the means by which internal observation allows for both affective and cognitive reflection upon habitual modes of understanding ourselves and our relations with others. Secondly, I will examine work on humor that underpins Kierkegaard’s theory of the comic and its capacity to alter attitudes. Taken together, these two arguments
for representational imagining through humor support the assertion that humor can function as an ethical tool for autonomous agents.

Catriona Mackenzie defines imaginative visualizing as the process of imagining “ourselves, either as ourselves or as someone else, doing what we want or hope to be doing or being the kind of person we might want to be.” Mental imaging of this sort has affective force. The activity of visualizing the past often reactives some of the emotions we originally experienced. In previsagement, we can find ourselves smiling with joy in anticipation of a future encounter or near tears when thinking about, e.g., one’s child dying. Another feature of mental imaging is its cognitive power. (For these two conjunctive properties, I will hereafter refer to imaginative visualization as “imagistic thinking,” after Richard Wollheim.)

Think of someone receiving an Academy Award. In doing so, you can imagine yourself watching someone receive it, the particular auditorium and the color of its seats, the faces in the crowd, etc., or you can imagine being the person receiving the award. Often, imagining yourself as someone other than the real, empirical you requires the abandonment of particular characteristics, dispositions, ideals, and a specific body. As internal actor in imagistic thinking, the imaginer represents to herself the actions, lines, thoughts, feelings, and experiences of the protagonist as though they were her own. The response of the audience, Wollheim notes, is empathic, based on “affect, rather than judgment, and in particular on an affective response toward a particular character, whom it selects as protagonist and with whom it emotionally identifies.” Notably, one can identify emotionally with a protagonist whom one may judge to be despicable. But the mental activity of representing to oneself the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of the protagonist will leave one in the condition that one would be in were one actually to have the mental states one imagines. Imagistic thinking has, in short, cogency.

As an internal observer—that is, as one who is outside the imaginative project—a person can reflect on and react to with emotions and judgments that may be quite different from those aroused by the imagining. Imagine, for example, you have an erotic daydream. You may be sexually aroused by the imagining but, on reflection, may react in a whole range of ways (e.g., surprise, embarrassment, disgust, more arousal). To exhibit this feature of imagistic thinking, Mackenzie looks at experiential memory. Experiential memories are representations of experiences we have lived through and, as such, can allow us to understand and reshape ourselves by enabling us to understand the ways in which our present point of view, self-conceptions, and values have been shaped by the past. We respond to our past emotions with new emotions that have developed within the temporal interval from then until now. These reactive emotions prompt evaluative judgments; we can understand the significance of these experiences and gain some measure of control over the psychic force of those experiences. By virtue of the re-arousal or simulation of emotion, imaginative mental activity initiates “self-reflection by prompting an emotional response and, through that, an evaluative judgment.”

In contemporary literature on identity, a person’s point of view is a network of interrelated emotions, beliefs, desires, and mental and bodily traits and dispositions, shaped by the past and directed by self-concern for the future. If indirect communication is efficacious insofar as it presents various points of view to the reader, Wollheim’s internal observer is a plausible position for agents to take in imagistic thinking: she stands outside the imaginative project, but can react to it emotionally in many different ways. The disparity between this distanced affective response and one’s own point of view provides space for cognitive interpretation of one’s point of view and its relation to the point of view presented. That single individual—the ideal reader—reflects on and evaluates the desires, emotions, and beliefs represented or manifested in the imagining. Consequently, she makes judgments about whether she wishes to appropriate or disassociate herself from certain aspects of herself in a process that also involves engaging in a reflective assessment of her values, ideals, and cares. In short, we reflect on whether what we care about is worth caring about or worth caring about in the way or to the extent that we do.

Imagistic thinking removes us from the habitual, opens spaces to try out different possibilities for ourselves (possibilities of action, desire, emotion, and belief), and allows us to hold certain features of ourselves stable while playing around with others. As internal observer, we then respond, emotionally and evaluatively, to these alternative representations of ourselves. This is a simple concept. Imagine that you are a graduating senior with two separate job opportunities. You imagine yourself in different cities, living different lives, with different concomitant limitations. Humor, especially humor found within artful imaginative examples, expands upon this model by positioning two incongruous points of view against each other.

Within humor-theoretical traditions, the most widely held theory is that of incongruity: the comic inheres in “the relation of incongruity between two entities.” (The other two theories are based upon superiority and the release of nervous energy.) This form of humor seems particularly apposite for discussing Kierkegaard. Not only does his pseudonym Johannes Climacus claim that “where there is life there is contradiction, and wherever there is contradiction, the comic is present,” but most, if not all, of Kierkegaard’s works rely on said contradictions, paradoxes, and absurd-
Within the incongruity theory of humor, Marie Collins Swabey distinguishes four types of “factual incongruities” (in contradistinction to logical incongruities – e.g., “Lincoln was born in a cabin which he built with his own hands”): equivocation or ambiguity, fallacies of irrelevance (or non sequitur), disparities in subject matter or modes of operation, and, finally, humor arising from striking contrasting qualities. The third of these factual incongruities is the one most apt for a discussion of Kierkegaard.

It is startling to what extent Kierkegaard anticipates modern humor theory based on incongruity; Climacus writes, “I find nothing ludicrous in this. There is no contradiction here, and the comic always consists in a contradiction.” In a footnote to his text on humor as “painless contradiction,” he provides a handful of examples to demonstrate that the comic is present where there is contradiction and where one disregards the pain as nonessential. Mistakes can be comic. Gaps in speech can be comic (depending on who is doing the speaking). Caricature can be comic. The non-intrinsically ludicrous can become ludicrous by way of contradiction, as in the case of the man who, ordinarily oddly dressed, shows up properly dressed in one specific instance. As a relational concept, humor can arise from a single person (e.g., between what one says and what one does), between two people, or between any two ideas, propositions, or actions. What one laughs at has content-flexibility.

According to most humor theories, to “get” a joke in a substantial way (i.e., to find it funny), the recipient of the humor shares in a certain attitude of the humorist. In many cases, one can intellectually assent to the point of view of the joke-teller without laughing, but this seems quite different from understanding the joke and finding it humorous. John Lippitt writes of this phenomenon as “aspect-dawning” while Robert C. Roberts subsumes the sharing of a perspective and the ability to share in that perspective (or “vision”) under his property of perspectivity. He succinctly writes, “When someone tells a joke, we are not amused by the same thing the teller is amused by unless we construe the object in the same way. To do this we must share his or her perspective.”

Genuine humor is, in this respect, attitudinally-dependent. It is clearly true that amusement is not in and of itself fully attitudinally-dependent and that many jokes either do not operate on attitudes or operate against attitudes. Take the following example: Jack tells a sexist joke and Joe finds it funny, while Jane does not. This implies one of two things: Joe and Jack both have an attitude underlying one of the joke’s presuppositions (e.g., “women are inferior to men with respect to R”), or Joe is taking what William James calls a “moral holiday” (Joe is finding a joke funny that goes against a well-held attitude). It is this latter possibility—that humor can be belief-independent—that will tie into the final property of humor I will examine. Suppose, for the sake of argument, you are a Republican, who nevertheless found Jon Stewart’s treatment of John McCain to be funny in the 2008 election. In a sense, you are seeing the world through that set of propositions, much in the way that a person can entertain an interpretation of a text that one does not believe to be the correct interpretation. In the entertainment of a racist joke, we enter into the world, albeit shallowly, of the racist. Many humor theorists argue that amusement, more than standard emotions, has this belief-independence and attitudinal-dependence about it.

I should be careful here in presenting humor in this primarily intellectual way. While humor appreciation does seem to depend on a shared perspective, on “being there” vis-à-vis experience, mood, language, et cetera, the way in which one entertains the perspective is not always through explicit reflection. Instead, Lippitt suggests an imaginative identification with the perspective, a means to dramatically share a point of view with the humorist. And part of humor’s pull is that it is structurally designed to accommodate this imaginative task. Not only is the comic often enjoyable, but a talented humorist can make the same joke fresh through its presentation; both of these properties facilitate the sharing of a perspective or “aspect-dawning.”

In this way, vicious humor [Kierkegaard: demonic humor] can be enjoyed by those who are not vicious, though it is unlikely to originate in them. Similarly, virtuous humor can be enjoyed by those who are not virtuous, though it is unlikely to originate among them. Laughter, as (qualifiedly) attitudinally-dependent and (qualifiedly) belief-independent can thus be a means of moral reform, as Roberts relates:

It is because people are not locked, by virtue of their beliefs, in a particular humor perspective, that it can function as a bridge from virtue to vice and from vice to virtue…. And if a virtues-humorist like Socrates (or we ourselves, if we have undertaken a project of moral growth) can get us much involved in seeing the incongruities in vice, then the enjoyment of that humor which at first nudges us toward virtue, may come at last to express it in us.

The idea here is that just as people can, by controlling their emotions, habituate themselves in a way that changes their character, so too can humor be a means of adopting a new perspective. As a corollary, if he indulges “regularly and gleefully” in the sexist humor of Jack, there is a danger that Joe may indirectly change his attitudes towards women and alter his own character.

If we accept that humor can (and need not always) depend upon shared attitudes, we can begin to describe the humorist and humoree in greater philosophical detail. Roberts does just this, somewhat arbitrarily (but usefully)
distinguishing between “adopting” a perspective, “having” a perspective, and “owning” a perspective. To “adopt” a perspective is to make or allow it to be operative in one’s perception. To “have” a perspective is to be capable of adopting it. To “own” a perspective is to have it be natural and habitual (i.e., there is a strong tendency to “adopt” it). In our discussion of Kierkegaard’s attack, in order for indirect communication to be possible, Christians in Denmark must have been capable of adopting (i.e., “having”) Kierkegaard’s perspective. If something fundamental was missing from the Christians as persons qua being Christian, then that means that there was no possibility of “having” the same Christian perspective as Kierkegaard. If one laughs, it indicates that one can “adopt” that perspective.

If, as is assumed here, humor requires some type of attitudinal-dependency, we have a starting point for ethical critique through humor. The possibility of moral reform occasioned by humor depends on the possibility of what I term the ethical underpinning of the comic. (This move allows us to speak not merely of attitudes generally, but of moral attitudes.) In the small amount of literature available, there seem to be four positions concerning the ethics of humor: the moralist (i.e., if an utterer manifests ethically bad attitudes in the production of a joke, then the joke is not funny); the ethicist (i.e., if an utterer manifests ethically bad attitudes in the production of a joke, then that counts against the humor of the joke); the amoralist (i.e., the ethical and humorous do not interact at all); and the immoralist (i.e., if an utterer manifests ethically bad attitudes in the production of a joke, then this counts toward the funniness of the joke). The position of the moralist seems to best represent the relations between ethical attitudes and joke-telling most apt for a discussion of Kierkegaard, as I will now attempt to demonstrate.

For Kierkegaard, humor presupposes certain constraining ethical and religious facts. Johannes Climacus, the pseudonymous author of *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, remarks on the ethics of the comic, writing that the humorist “does not teach immorality—far from it. He honors the moral and for his part does everything as best he can,” and offers an extended metaphor about the carefulness of the comic, which cares deeply for the immediacy it cuts down and lays aside (Translation: Carl Hughes and Michael McEvilly, 2008).

But this comic is not hot-headed or wild, its laughter not shrill, it is, on the contrary, careful in relation to the immediacy it lays aside. The Reaper’s scythe is in this way equipped with wooden slats, which run parallel to the sharp blade, and, while the scythe cuts the grain, the grain holds almost sensually on the supporting cradle, to be laid beautifully and neatly in a swath. The legitimizing comic is in relation to the ripe immediacy in this way. The act of cutting down is a solemn deed, the one who chops not a cheerless harvester, but still it is this comic’s sharpness and biting blade before which the immediacy falls, not unbeautifully, the fall supported by the chopping down. This comic is essentially humor. If the comic is cold and comfortless, then this is a sign that no new immediacy is sprouting, that there is no harvest, but the empty passion of a sterile wind, which comes to rage over bare fields.

* Lee [Danish]: scythe (n.); to laugh (vb.)

Though Lippitt denies Robert’s assertion that humor depends on compassion and hope in all cases, this metaphor offers evidence of compassion within the legitimized comic. The comic is sharp and biting, but is also comforting, and assists its target in the growth of new immediacy. Humor, if ethical, cares for the objects of its attack. In his journals, Kierkegaard remarks that he has often misused humor and has “repented of having laughed at the wrong place.” The idea may strike one as strange at first, but certainly there are many jokes that are too vulgar to laugh at, or else, each of us has certainly laughed at a friend when it was inappropriate. (This is one possibility for Kierkegaard’s claim that the tragic is “suffering contradiction” and the comic is “painless contradiction.” The comic interpretation produces the contradiction or allows it to become apparent by having in mind the way out—the normative element of the joke that disemburden the joke teller from ethical responsibility for removing the contradiction. This is the fourth criteria for the legitimate use of the comic according to Lee Barrett.)

Along these lines, Kierkegaard writes proudly that he has:

> scarcely misused [his] pen along the lines of the comic, … [has] never applied the comic interpretation to anything or anyone without first seeing, by comparing the categories, from which sphere the comic came and how it was related to the same thing or to the same person interpreted with pathos.

Shrill laughter is antithetical to the “quiet transparency of the comic.” As the scythe metaphor propounds, the comic purifies the pathos-filled emotions, and the pathos-filled emotions give substance to the comic. One must earnestly, be it ethically or religiously, care for the contradiction that makes up the comic aspect of humor. This is more or less the third condition of the legitimate use of the comic, as proposed by Lee Barrett. He argues that (i) the comic contradictions must contain something momentous in tension with something trivial, (ii) the comic must include the polemical as a necessary element, (iii) the comic contradic-
tion must not be painful, and (iv) the comic interpretation must have in mind the way out of the ludicrous situation. It would be immoral, at least for Kierkegaard’s view of humor, to laugh at that which is uncorrectable.

According to my thesis, humor is attitudinally-dependent, presupposes certain ethical facts that are included in the joke’s normative grounding, and is partially belief-independent, to allow people to slide from one humor perspective to another. Therefore, there is a strong epistemological and practical connection with humor: the more you know about $X$, the more you can adopt a perspective that is related to $X$. Kierkegaard substantiates this claim, writing through Johannes Climacus:

I consider the power in the comic a vitally necessary legitimation for anyone who is to be regarded as authorized in the world of spirit in our day. When an age is as thoroughly reflective as ours and as ours is said to be, then if this is true the comic must have been discovered by everyone and have been discovered primitively by everyone who wants to speak.\textsuperscript{52}

If one takes these claims of Kierkegaard seriously, it appears as if all theological and religious authorities must have an understanding of the power in the comic. Furthermore, anyone who is reflective on these issues must discover the comic: the contradictions that are inherent in Christianity\textsuperscript{53} and the ways in which people relate to Christianity. If one uses humor properly, whether or not people can find something funny is an indication of a shared perspective. Laughter itself becomes the external occasion for the suspicion that one has thought about a set of facts.

**Humor in The Moment and Late Writings**

On May 24, 1855, Søren Kierkegaard published the first issue of Øiblikket,\textsuperscript{54} composed of four articles. He begins with “Exordium,” a meditation on Plato’s view of just rulers and, by extension, his own task in the articles that will follow:

Plato, as is well-known, states somewhere in his Republic that the state will not amount to anything until it has rulers who have no desire to rule. He presumably means that, given the presupposition that there is competence, the disinclination to rule is an excellent guarantee that the ruling will be true and competent, whereas the power-seeker too often easily becomes one who misuses his power in order to tyrannize, or one whom the desire to rule brings into a concealed relation of dependency on those whom he is supposed to rule, so that his ruling actually becomes an optical illusion.

This observation can also be applied to other relations where the situation calls for something to become downright earnest: given the presupposition that there is competence, it is best that the persons involved not have the desire. It certainly is the case, as the proverb says, that willing hands make light work; but true earnestness does not actually emerge until a person of competence is compelled against his desire by something higher to undertake the work, that is, a person of competence against his desire.

Understood in this way, I can say that I have the proper relation to the task: to work in the moment God knows there is nothing I dislike more.\textsuperscript{55} I include the first third of this text because of its importance for what will follow, both in the articles found in Øiblikket and in my own analysis here. Kierkegaard introduces several cogent points of discussion with this imaginative opening move. Hidden beneath the first two paragraphs and their motivating argument, that Plato held that a disinclination to rule was a guarantee that the ruling would be “true and competent,” is a critique of the officials of the state Church. They, who are motivated by wealth, comfort, and respect, have strong inclination to rule which clouds their judgments. One who is earnest must be “compelled against his desire by something higher to undertake the work.” The ascetic Christian life Kierkegaard has and will continue to propose satisfies this criteria: one who wishes to be an earnest Christian must suffer for the truth, give up wealth, and act against the worldly, all for something higher – the kingdom to come.

But the second paragraph is turning on a related issue. It covers two sets of footsteps: his critique of the Church officials and his own corrective task. Kierkegaard, a reflective and self-distancing author, is now forced to work in the moment, the very thing he hates most. Literally, he must write articles and publish them right now, in the present moment; figuratively, he must present the moment of decision for other Christians to choose within. Why, then, does he make this his task? An informed answer to this question would take some work to be marked out, but the short answer is that he would “eternally regret not doing it,” eternally regret not upsetting the calm belief in the delusion of being Christians, the delusion that “the pastors’ play-Christianity is Christianity.”\textsuperscript{56}

No, this is not necessarily a moment of the comic for Kierkegaard. But this exordium does focus the discussion to follow in several ways. First, it sets a structural precedent for many of the articles to follow, which will first introduce a fairy tale, other story, analogy, or metaphor for the present and then explicate the significance of the example. Second, it is one example (of many), of the reflection Kierkegaard
has on his own task in this final attack. Throughout *Fædrelandet*, Kierkegaard often announced his task in direct, unapologetic terms. From this point on, he lays out his understanding of his work through metaphor (he is, e.g., the physician telling Christians to take an emetic, the vulgar fire chief who is ringing the bell, and, finally, the Socrates for Christianity). There also seems to be a changing self-understanding that becomes evident through the tone and structure of these articles that I hope to make clear. Finally, I am interested in the idea of being compelled against one’s desires as criteria for doing something in earnest. This ascetic principle, I argue, becomes a central point of the attack. Kierkegaard holds that Christians are living in states of non-intentional self-deception; these mistaken beliefs become the target of his humor. Through an examination of certain newspaper articles, I hope to clarify the way in which humor operates to provide ethical (self-) critique for the nineteenth century Danish Christians in a way consistent with the indirect authorship.

Even though the content of Kierkegaard’s attack is religious in nature, the humor he presents takes place within both the ironic and comic standpoints. The ironic mode of existence is especially lurking in the transition and interfaces between aesthetic and ethical existence. It reveals by indirect communication the incongruence between the universal ethical requirement and the uncertainties of finitude. The comic standpoint is present in the transition points between the ethical and the religious. Humor in this latter standpoint has a deeper pathos at work, one which understands the implications of sin, suffering, and guilt. Irony reveals the problems in human existence; the comic attempts resolution. Both irony and the comic are reactions to a world in which conventional values have been dismissed. I will demonstrate the ironic standpoint through Example 1 below. Example 2, a fairy tale, will help clarify the comic standpoint. The remaining examples (3, 4.a-e, and 5) are further representatives of different types of humor found within these late writings.

Example 1 addresses, through analogy, the non-intentionally self-deceptive motivational states of those who learn the abject truth of some institution and yet forget to give it up.

**Example 1**

There is a man whose wife is unfaithful to him, but he does not know it. Then one of his friends enlightens him about it—a dubious act of friendship, many will perhaps say. The man replies: It is with intense interest that I have listened to you speak; I admire the keenness with which you have known how to track down such carefully concealed unfaithfulness, of which I have really had no inkling. But that I should therefore, now that I know it so, divorce her—no, that I cannot decide to do. After all, I am accustomed to this domestic routine; I cannot do without it. Moreover, she has money; I cannot do without that either. On the other hand, I do not deny that I will listen with the most intense interest to what you can tell me further about this affair, because—I do not say this to pay you a compliment—but because it is extremely interesting.

In this example, the seriousness of the offense against marriage (the resolution to marry is often used in Kierkegaard as the prototype of ethical decision-making) is placed against the husband’s lack of ethical seriousness. For Kierkegaard, the aesthetic is focused on immediacy, on avoiding pain and seeking gratification. The man is essentially motivated by the aesthetic: he enjoys the domestic routine and enjoys the fact that his wife has money. An ethical person not only would find the knowledge of his wife’s infidelity interesting, but would act on the knowledge. The motivating features of the marriage are trivial when compared to the earnestness of the decision of marriage.

This example represents well the ironic standpoint of humor. One may not laugh at the example (due to its seriousness! after all, we probably all know a person in a relationship motivated by comfort, routine, or even money), but it demonstrates incongruence between aesthetic desires and ethical commitments. The example extends to Kierkegaard’s insistence on both the pastor’s comfort within Christianity (which is at odds with ethical and religious commitments to New Testament Christianity) and the comfort of those readers who have heard about the state of the Church from Kierkegaard and have not acted. If readers find this example ludicrous, they should also find their own intellectual and motivational state, in which they know the Church is corrupt but are still at ease with the Christian routine and its accompanying comforts, ludicrous. The ironic form of humor exhibited demands the transition to the ethical from the aesthetic. Moreover, this transition is accomplished through analogy.

Besides analogy, Kierkegaard uses fairy tales as a form of storytelling to exhibit the comic standpoint. Kierkegaard read E.T.A. Hoffmann’s (1776–1822) fairy tales in the middle of the 1830s. These stories were based on the presupposition that the present time had lost a sense of naturally inherent meaning in the material world. This loss leads to a melancholic longing insofar as the subject can no longer find true meaning anywhere but in his or her own inner life (specifically, in the absolute freedom of the productive imagination). While irony separates the rich and lively internal world from the utterly dull and meaningless external world, humor strives for a synthesis of the two. Hoffmann, Stefan Egenberger argues, endeavors to reestablish a rela-
tion between empirical reality and the creative imagination, where meaning has come to reside. Humor, in the service of fairy tales, demonstrates an empirically graspable utopia, an empirically understandable world that runs counter to our accustomed reality.

Within these fairy tales, the idea of the eternal is often used to undermine temporal attempts to protect or promote Christianity. In one such example, a king dresses as an ordinary man and lives in a town. The mayor wants to protect this citizen. But when an emissary arrives and addresses the king as Your Majesty, the mayor realizes that it was silly to attempt to guard the king, who was protected all along by his own power.

**Example 2**

The situation of Christianity protected by the state is like that in a fairy tale or story. A king, dressed in the clothes of an ordinary man, lives in a provincial town, and the mayor is so kind as to want to protect this citizen—then suddenly an emissary arrives, who with a deep bow and finally a bended knee addresses this ordinary citizen: Your Majesty. If the mayor is a reasonable man, he sees that he, well-intentioned, has been a little too high-flown in protecting the citizen.

... In its exalted divine earnestness, Christianity has always allowed the king’s existence its earnestness. It is only the detestable play-Christianity, traitorous to the New Testament, that was traitorous also to the king and placed him in a light that was confusing for the dignity and earnestness of his royal existence.

Therefore the moment will certainly come when a king suddenly stands up and says: “Now I see it. These scoundrel pastors, so it was to this that I have been brought, to what I have least of all deserved to become, to be made ludicrous. By our royal honor I know, if anyone does, what the king’s majesty signifies. I also know what I have in my power, gold and property and rank and dignity and all the symbols of prestige; yes I can give away kingdoms and countries, I who, above other kings, even have crowns to bestow. But what, then, is Christianity? Christianity is renunciation of all this.... How in all the world did I get into this folly: to protect with gold and property, with titles and dignities and stars and badges of honor—that which shuns all such things more than the plague! I am indeed ludicrous!”

This story, along with its moral—true Christianity needs no protection from the state—is an example of the comic standpoint. The humorist realizes the ludicrousness of attempting to protect the eternal in time. Moreover, this protection, at least in Christendom, comes in the form of “gold and property... titles and dignities and stars and badges of honor”—all earthly things. Such things make the king ludicrous, who himself could “give away kingdoms and countries.” One imagines an infinitely wealthy king who accepts gifts from his subjects, one at a time: pieces of bread, small coins, and so forth. Such gifts can demonstrate faith if they cost the subject much, but to Christianize a state to stabilize Christianity is unnecessary for an omniscient, all-powerful God.

In his attack, Kierkegaard exhibits a certain sense of religious presumption. Notice that, when he extends the metaphor of the king to a Christian framework, Kierkegaard is speaking on behalf of God, as he does elsewhere in the attack. The humorist, as Brian Söderquist notes from study of Kierkegaard’s early journal entries on irony and humor, understands that Christianity provides the conditions for judging the world to be hollow and understands that reconciliation within the finite world is impossible. Similarly, the humorist, especially one who is incognito for the religious, can judge the world and its (religious) officials to be hollow to the point of ludicrousness [from the Latin *ludicrum*, meaning ‘stage-play’].

“Permit me to tell a story.” In Øieblåkket 8 Kierkegaard tells another story that further relates the humorist’s concern for the eternal and its relation to the temporal. In the East there lived a poor elderly couple who had an increasing concern for their poverty as they grew older. One morning the wife came out to the fireplace and found lying on the earth a large, precious stone, which she showed her husband. What joy!—the stone was clearly worth enough to sustain them. But they were God-fearing and decided they would not sell the stone on that day, waiting until the next day. That night, the wife dreamed of being taken to paradise. An angel showed her around in all the glory her imagination could muster, taking her to a large room where a row of chairs stood embellished with precious stones and pearls, which the angel explained were intended for the pious. Her chair had the large, precious stone in the back of it. The stone on the hearth, the angel explained, was received in advance and could not be replaced. In the morning the woman told her husband of the dream and they agreed it was better to endure the few years of life they had left rather than lack the stone throughout all eternity. In the morning, the stone was gone.

After telling this story, Kierkegaard asks his readers to remember it well. One can sagaciously dodge the suffering and adversity akin to Christianity, but only to one’s own corruption. One can be fooled by sagacity and think herself on the right road since she is gaining things of the world, but, eternally, these objects are worth nothing. Therefore,
do not deceive yourself; of all deceivers, fear most yourself! Even if it were possible for a person in relation to the eternal to take something in advance, you would deceive yourself by: something in advance—and then an eternity for repenting?63

The first half of the article is pure storytelling; the second half is calm instruction, like that found in other signed works. Whereas Kierkegaard may have, had he written under a pseudonym, stopped halfway through, this text is structurally similar to many I have spoken of: indirect, then direct.64 Not only is this story representative of views already covered – for example, the choosing of worldly gains over the eternal – but it also demonstrates an acute understanding of suffering, which is for something. Love of God—acting Christianly—implies the meaningfulness of moments of suffering, adversity, and weakness. This is the perspective of the humorist, even if the story is not laughably funny.

In “First the Kingdom of God: A Kind of Short Story,” Kierkegaard tells a brilliant account of the theological graduate Ludvig From (an imaginary character) who is seeking the kingdom of God, which, one must seek first.65 But Ludvig is also seeking a royal livelihood as a pastor, which requires some preliminary work.

Example 3

First he attended high school, from which he graduated to the university. Thereupon he first passed two examinations, and after four years of study he first passed the degree examination. So then he is a theological graduate, and one would perhaps think that after having first put all that behind him, he finally can get a chance to work for Christianity. Yes, one would think so. No, first he must attend the pastoral seminary for a half year; and when that is finished, nothing can be said about having been able to seek during the first eight years, which had to be put behind him first.

And now we stand at the beginning of the story: the eight years are over, he is seeking.

... Three years go on in this way [that is, filing officially stamped papers, recommending himself to the minister of ecclesiastical affairs, etc.]. After such enormously strenuous activity, our theological graduate really needs a rest, needs to have a respite from activity or to come to rest in an official position and be looked after a little by his future wife—for in the meantime he has first become engaged.

... He is ordained—and the Sunday arrives when he is to be presented to the congregation.

... Now the young man himself mounts the pulpit—and the Gospel for the day (strangely enough!) is: Seek first the kingdom of God.

He delivers his sermon. “A very good sermon,” says the bishop, who himself was present, “a very good sermon; and it made the proper impression, the whole part about ‘first’ the kingdom of God, the manner in which he emphasized the first.”

“But, your Reverence, do you believe that there was here the desirable agreement between the discourse and the life? On me this first made almost a satirical impression.”

“How absurd! He is called, after all, to proclaim the doctrine, the sound unadulterated doctrine about seeking first the kingdom of God, and he did it very well.”66

Kierkegaard considers stories of this sort, and their underlying truth in Christendom, to be a horrible insult to God. He writes that “[whoever] you are, just think of this Word of God, “first the kingdom of God,” and then think about this story, which is so true, so true, so true, and you will not need more to make you realize that the whole official Christendom is an abyss of untruth and optical illusion.”67 The pastor in Christendom first seeks out the earthly, the pleasing of the government and the majority, “first money, and then virtue, and then the kingdom of God.”68

In the previous issue of Øieblikket 6 (the above example is from 7), Kierkegaard includes this same story in compressed form. There he merely presents two or three sentences of a pastor seeking first this, then first that, then first that as well, who then preaches on seeking first the kingdom of God. This article is more typical. Kierkegaard presents the story as found above and then offers a page of critique of the position (notice, too, the end of the story above: he seems to insert himself and his judgment that there is a disagreement between the discourse and the life). The first part presents the comic from a short distance and then directly addresses the issue at hand. Many discourses of this form exist in the Øieblikket articles. Kierkegaard opens up the imagination of his readers, expecting them to discern the intuitive response to such incongruities, and then makes them more directly aware of how that intuition maps onto something closer to home, so to speak.

Before the final example of Kierkegaard’s use of humor, I turn my attention to a series of aphoristic, fragmentary examples found under the title of “Brief and to the Point” [Danish: Kort og Spidst (literally: ‘short’/‘brief’ and ‘pointed’/‘sharp’)]. Published in Øieblikket 6 (August 23, 1855), these were first written under the pseudonym Johannes de Silento (author of Fear and Trembling) in 1851 under the title of “Reflections.” All nine of the sections are poetic and evocative, striking and cutting literary moments.
Irony fails to understand its own contradictions. The world is poor because it suffers for the truth, the world says, “Poor human being”—poor man; —When it pleases God in the form of a lowly servant to suffer in this world, the world says, “Poor human being”; —When a man’s wife is unfaithful to him, the world says, “Poor man”; when a man has a toothache, the world says, “Poor man”; when one “is financially embarrassed,” the appropriate (congruous) response is to think or say, “Poor man.” But after the dash, the response—“Poor human being”—becomes inappropriate to the rigorous demands of being Christian. Lowly servants suffering in the world and apostles (“with a divine commission”) suffering for the truth should not be pitied. For the humorist, the world itself, and its want of comfort, becomes the butt of the joke. The world is poor because it fails to understand its own contradictions.

This particular aphorism is also a silent form of Socratic irony (εἰρονεία) that is often applied to understatement in the nature of incongruity. Whereas Socrates would empty each one of these statements of meaning by examining each individually, demonstrating that one cannot be committed to the position if one is in fact a Christian, Kierkegaard allows two small words to enclose all of the “poor” statements. He unsettles the assumption of the entire world with one deeply ironic statement.

Example 4.a

In the splendid cathedral the Honorable Right Reverend Geheimer General-Ober-Hof-Predikant [Private Chief Royal Chaplain] comes forward, the chosen favorite of the elite world; he comes forward before a chosen circle of the chosen ones and, deeply moved, preaches on the text he has himself chosen, “God has chosen the lowly and the despised in the world”—and there is no one who laughs.

I am particularly fond of this one, which relates to Example 3 above. Whereas the previous account centered on first seeking the kingdom of God, this one pivots on the use of choose. The ridiculously titled Reverend comes before the chosen elites and “preaches on the text he has himself chosen,” i.e., that “God has chosen the lowly and the despised in the world,” and no one laughs. The appropriate response, Kierkegaard implies, is laughter: laughter at the incongruity between the existence of the pastor and the existence of Christians implied by the verse.

Example 4.b

When a man has a toothache, the world says, “Poor man”; when a man’s wife is unfaithful to him, the world says, “Poor man”; when a man is financially embarrassed, the world says, “Poor man”; —When it pleases God in the form of a lowly servant to suffer in this world, the world says, “Poor human being”; when an apostle with a divine commission has the honor to suffer for the truth, the world says, “Poor human being”—poor world!

The dash does the pivoting work for this joke. When one “has a toothache,” when one’s “wife is unfaithful to him,” when one “is financially embarrassed,” the appropriate (congruous) response is to think or say, “Poor man.” But after the dash, the response—“Poor human being”—becomes inappropriate to the rigorous demands of being Christian. Lowly servants suffering in the world and apostles (“with a divine commission”) suffering for the truth should not be pitied. For the humorist, the world itself, and its want of comfort becomes the butt of the joke. The world is poor because it fails to understand its own contradictions.

Example 4.c

“Did the Apostle Paul have any official position?” No, Paul had no official position. “Did he, then, earn a lot of money in another way?” No, he did not earn money in any way. “Was he, then, at least married?” No, he was not married. “But then Paul is certainly not an earnest man!” No, Paul is not an earnest man.

Kierkegaard tentatively entitled this piece “A Flower Respectfully Planted on the Grave of Established Christendom.” This dialogical aphorism functions as a reductio ad absurdum: Kierkegaard adopts the position of his opponents and demonstrates the consistent conclusion of their thought (i.e., that Paul was not earnest, which is an absurd statement if one is a Christian). Through the direct presentation of what Kierkegaard calls the “consequent,” the text speaks for itself; there is no need for his commentary on the text since it is constructed to damn its own position.

While this example may be fallacious (e.g., Paul did have an official position, though not in the sense that Danish parsons did in the nineteenth century), it calls into question the definition of earnestness through appeal to an exemplary of Christian faith. The joke says nothing. It merely ends. But it is quite evident that Kierkegaard objects to a definition of earnestness that depends on official position, money, and marriage, instead of fear before God, working toward the truth, and the Pauline virtues.

Example 4.d

A Swedish pastor, shaken by the sight of the effect his discourse had on the listeners, who were swimming in tears, is reported to have said reassuringly: Do not weep, children, it may all be a lie. Why does the pastor no longer say that? It is unnecessary, we know that—we are all pastors. But we can very well weep, since both his and our tears are not at all hypocritical but well meant, genuine—just as in the theater.

Here again Kierkegaard compares the theatricality of “genuine” worship to the theater. The emotions of the pastor are falsified by the assertion that “it may all be a lie.”

Example 4.e

One cannot live on nothing. One hears this so often, especially from pastors. And the pastors are the very ones who perform this feat: Christianity does not exist at all—yet they live on it.

I chose this fragment, the last in the sequence, to demonstrate the precision of Kierkegaard’s attack. Elsewhere he compares the pastors to cannibals: they live on Christianity, marry on Christianity, and beget children who are fed on
Christianity. Moreover, (i) the cannibal is a savage, while the pastor is cultured and educated, making the abomination more shocking; (ii) the cannibal eats his enemies, but the pastor gives the appearance of being devoted to those whom he eats; (iii) the cannibal makes it “brief and to the point,”75 while the pastor lives an entire life, year and after year, growing fat on his salt-meat barrels. These descriptions are shockingly cruel and poignant. True Christianity does not exist. Yet pastors live on it.

The constituent examples of “Brief and to the Point” are evocative of the Diapsalmata from Either/Or, fragments from the aesthete that disrupt, surprise, and inspire imagination. In the Kierkegaardian sense of the term, they are literally indirect. They are also jokes to be laughed at, even if it hurts. (In fact, it should hurt to laugh at some of these. We should sympathize with that which we find comic.)

In the final example I present, Kierkegaard qua moral physician gives “The Medical Opinion” on the state of institutionalized Christianity. In the first part of this article, Kierkegaard reiterates that the persons living in Christendom are not Christians and are operating under an illusion. Despite this, people want to be left undisturbed in their delusions (that is, they are aware of their self-deceptions and are intentionally believing p despite knowing p to be false or abjectly motivationally-determined). Then Kierkegaard presents this metaphor:

Example 5

Imagine a hospital. The patients are dying like flies. The treatment is changed in one way and another—it does not help. To what, then, is it due? It is due to the building; there is toxin in the whole building. That the patients are listed as dead, the one from this sickness, the other from another, is actually not true, because they are all dead from the toxin that is in the building.

It is the same in the religious sphere. That the religious condition is wretched, that people are in a pitiable condition religiously is undeniable. So one person thinks that it would help if we had a new hymnbook, another a new altar book, a third a musical worship service, etc. etc.

It is futile—because it is due to the building. This whole junk heap of a state church, where from time immemorial there has been, in the spiritual sense, no airing out—the air confined in this old junk heap has become toxic.76

His response? Tear the building down. Get rid of the entire Church state. Christianity needs fresh air. The state smothers true Christianity. More than a sharp metaphor, this example demonstrates that the humorist must have in mind the way out, the solution to the contradiction he presents.

When one considers this example, coupled with other statements made throughout these articles, it becomes clear that Kierkegaard views himself as a humorist incognito for the religious, since he has the authority here to condemn the Christian institution and present a better way for Christianity to exist. Finally, “The Medical Opinion” demonstrates the limited reach of Kierkegaard’s approach. His authorship, supported by ironic detachment and a comic perspective, can address and undress only the individual readers, those trapped in their delusions that they are Christians. But the solution must be bigger than this. The entire Church must fall in order to provide the condition for the survival of true Christianity. This is something that Kierkegaard has no control over as an author, even one in the moment.

Conclusion

The comic is a technical term for Kierkegaard, a category that appears in his writings from 1842 onwards. I have focused on the operation of humor and its dialectical content based on a theory of incongruity. But I have also alluded to the accompanying kind of feeling that attaches to said incongruity, a feeling of laughter, but also of suffering. In the third section, I presented the metaphor of the reaper’s scythe, revealing the care that goes into the comic’s cutting away of immediacy. As Kierkegaard writes in Stages on Life’s Way, the comic purifies the pathos-filled emotions, and the pathos-filled emotions give substance to the comic; comic power is the most responsible weapon and is only present in the hands of someone who has fully equivalent pathos.

In the final section I have presented examples from throughout the attack, demonstrating the structural norm found therein. On a basic literary level, there is the indirect presentation of the ironic or humorous through example, followed by a direct commentary on its relation to Christendom. The use of humor in this way allows for a deeper indirectness insofar as humor allows for the development, through imagination, of autonomous self-awareness and decision-making. As I argued in section three, humor, as attitudinally-dependent and belief-independent, provides the condition for those who laugh to adopt a new perspective and become aware of non-intentional self-deceptions based on various preference-based motivations of the acting agent.

Kierkegaard’s pseudonym Constantin Constantius tells the following joke in Repetition:

When the queen had finished telling a story at a court function and all the court officials, including a deaf minister, laughed at it, the latter stood up, asked to be granted the favor of also being allowed to tell a story, and then told the same story.77

Hopefully I am not that deaf minister, telling a story that everyone has heard (or even telling a story to be laughed
Kierkegaard's attack has been systematically ignored and misinterpreted in the secondary literature. Often seen as anomalous or uncharacteristic, it fits, I have argued, into a schema developed many years before (as early as 1842, developed heavily in 1846, and found in articles from 1849 onwards) by Kierkegaard for the sake of indirectly presenting truths to those who are in an epistemological position to understand, but are self-deceived. Humor is not the only tool Kierkegaard uses in the attack, but I believe it to be the most relevant for the consistency of his earlier authorship and late authorship, and also the most fruitful.

1. Kierkegaard died before the tenth installment could be published.
2. Vance Sherwood, Jr., devotes a chapter to the shared characteristics between the attack on Hegelianism in the early authorship and the attack on Christendom in the late authorship, while J. C. Saxbee holds that the vacuous character of Christendom forced Kierkegaard to become more direct in his statement of the Christian requirement, but he never deviated from his crucial role as an apostle of subjectivity. See, respectively: Vance Sherwood, Jr., "Kierkegaard's Attack on the Church: Images of Ministry to the Church" (DD diss., Vanderbilt University, 1972); J. C. Saxbee, "The Place and Significance of Søren Kierkegaard’s ‘Attack upon Christendom’ in the Development of his Authorship" (PhD diss, British Thesis Service, 1974); Michael Strawser, Both/And: Reading Kierkegaard from Irony to Edification (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997); Michael Plekon, “Before the Storm: Kierkegaard’s Theological Experimentation and Preparation before the Attack on the Church,” Faith and Philosophy 21, no. 1 (January 2004): 45-64.

3. For an extensive account of this, see: Jamie Lorentzen, Kierkegaard’s Metaphors (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2001). Also, a note on Kierkegaardian “subjectivity”: Louis Mackey explains that while truth remains objective, humans must appropriate such truths (trulige: to make it your own) by passionately reduplicating the content of one’s thought in one’s own existence. To make an idea come to life in a person is the basis for "subjective truth."


5. See Benjamin Daise, Kierkegaard’s Socratic Art (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1999), for a lengthy consideration of the aim of indirect communication, which, he claims, is to "elicit the realization of an ability" (20). See, also, Noel S. Adams, “Kierkegaard’s Conception of Indirect Communication in ‘The Dialectic of Ethical and Ethical Religious Communication’ of 1847,” Søren Kierkegaard Newsletter 50 (2006). Adams notes that either form of indirect communication is closer to a kind of art than a science, as they serve realization rather than an object. Whereas direct communication is a communication of knowledge, indirect communication is a communication of capability, the rendering of the possibility for acquiring an ability. All communication, Kierkegaard argues, consists in four elements: the object [Gjenstanden], the communicator [Meddeleren], the receiver [Modtageren], and the communication [Meddelelsen]. Distinguishing the communication of knowledge from the communication of capability can take place in three ways: reflecting upon the object, reflecting upon the communication, and the way the communicator and receiver are related. The third seems most useful. Equal emphasis on the communicator and recipient is aesthetic, more focus on the recipient is ethical, and more emphasis on the communicator is religious. But all indirect communication is one of capability, which is to say: all humans are intrinsically capable of becoming a person or taking on a personality. For indirect communication to be efficacious, every human being must be assumed to possess essentially what belongs essentially to being a human being.


“A point has been reached in my authorship where it is feasible, where I feel a need and therefore regard it now as my duty: once and for all to explain as directly and openly and specifically as possible what is what, what I say I am as an author.”

8. Ibid., x.


10. Another useful way of thinking about self-deception for Kierkegaard’s project is to think of the deceived person as a psychologically partitioned individual in which one part plays the role of the deceiver and one plays the deceived. In the former case, one needs only to make the motivational state aware to the self-deceived. In the latter, one needs only to allow the person to take on two different points of view. Either can be, theoretically, quieted by an incongruity theory of humor, since it makes two points of view aware to the listener.

Inquiry

arises from the rejection of becoming something contempt-
used as the reason against it. The comic in the second case
first case appears because the reason for the application is
even though the want-to-be prostitute is. The comic in the
and had been rejected straight out, this would not be comic,
the want-to-be innkeeper had just applied to be an innkeeper
58 McEvilly

12 Ibid., 29.
13 Ibid., 32.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid., 29.
16 Ibid., 17.
17 Ibid., 74.
18 Ibid., 99.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid., 171.
21 Ibid., 169.
22 Ibid., 110.
24 Ibid., 128.
25 Ibid.
26 Said cogency is dependent on the repertoire of the protagon-
ist. Imagining oneself might be more cogent than imagin-
ing another, since there are more characteristics, dispositions, and tendencies at hand.
27 Mackenzie, "Imagining Oneself Otherwise," 136.
28 Ibid., 135.
32 Søren Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, 353.
33 Ibid., 514.
34 For example: A man applies for a permit to go into business as an innkeeper and the application is turned down because there are so few innkeepers. Also, it is comic when a girl ap-
plies for a permit to go into business as a public prostitute. If the want-to-be innkeeper had just applied to be an innkeeper and had been rejected straight out, this would not be comic, even though the want-to-be prostitute is. The comic in the first case appears because the reason for the application is used as the reason against it. The comic in the second case arises from the rejection of becoming something contempt-
36 Ibid., 137.
37 Ibid., 134.
38 Ibid., 138.
39 Ibid., 137.
41 Berys Gaut, “Just Joking: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Humor,” Philosophy and Literature 22, no. 1 (1998): 51-68. The amoralist argues that attitudes are never actually possessed by the joke-teller, they are merely entertained in the context of joke-telling. As mentioned above, joke-telling is a creative act executed in fictional contexts, allowing people to “possess” attitudes they may not own. Imagination, Gaut argues on behalf of the amoralist, involves the non-doxastic representa-
tion of the attitudes concerned. In fact, I hold that one can entertain attitudes instead of possessing them, and this is an important part of humor, since it allows for people to adopt a new perspective temporarily that can, through habituation, cultivate virtues. But amoralism is too strong. It is clear that real attitudes are often manifested in jokes: a racist can tell a racist joke. (Not only is this true, but when it occurs it seems to “count against” the funniness of the joke.) Imagine a child-

molester telling a dead-baby joke. Not only is this not funny, but it is offensive. In this way, attitudes manifested in jokes can greatly affect our response to them. The immoralist claim is that the badness of attitudes manifested in jokes enhances the humor therein. This claim may be consistent with much of our experience, but jokes of this type can misfire if they are inappropriate to their target or if they are altogether too vicious. Moreover, there is a distinction between the object of laughter and what people find funny; as Gaut remarks, the notion of the funny is normative: “it is not simply what causes humorous reactions that make it funny, it is what merits or makes appropriate such reactions” (60). Within views that the ethical acts upon the humorous, there are (similarly) two distinct views. The moralist holds the

strong thesis that a joke is not funny if the utterer manifests ethically bad attitudes. Not only is this view psychologi-
cally implausible (e.g., we often delight in the suffering of others), but it ignores the distinction between the intellectual and the affective in joke-telling. A joke told in bad taste may affectively disgust us, but its presentation and form, its cleverness and punning, and its deconstruction of assump-
tions (in other words, its intellectual construction) can be compelling enough to make us still laugh. Moreover, while a joke told at someone else’s expense can be morally indifferent if that person takes no offense, the same joke may be deemed immoral if the butt of the joke has a weak ego and is hurt by its telling. Rejecting the stronger claims of the moralist is the ethicist, who holds that an ethically bad attitude manifested by the utterer “counts against the humor of the joke” (63).
42 Søren Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, 271.
43 Ibid., 282. The Hong translation:

"But this comic power is not impetuous or reckless, its laugh-
ter is not shrill; on the contrary, it is careful with the imme-
diacy it lays aside. Similarly, the reaper's scythe is equipped
with wooden slats that run parallel to the sharp blade, and
while the scythe cuts the grain, the grain sinks down almost
voluptuously upon the supporting cradle, thereupon to be laid
diately it lays aside. Similarly, the reaper's scythe is equipped
with wooden slats that run parallel to the sharp blade, and
while the scythe cuts the grain, the grain sinks down almost
voluptuously upon the supporting cradle, thereupon to be laid
neatly and beautifully in a swath. So it is with the legiti-
mized comic power in relation to matured immediacy. The

task of cutting down is a solemn act; the one who cuts
down is not a dreary reaper, but nevertheless it is the sharpness
and the biting blade of the comic before which the immediacy
sinks, not unbeautifully, supported by the cutting down even
in the falling. This comic power is essentially humor. If the
comic power is cold and bleak, it is a sign that there is no new immediacy sprouting; then there is no harvest, only the empty passion of a sterile wind storming over bare fields.


Kierkegaard characterizes this type of humor as produced only in flippancy and excessive mirth. In response, he writes “Remember, you are ethically responsible for your use of the comic.” See JP II 1746 (Pap. VI B 70:14) n.d., 1845.

Sören Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, 513-514. The tragic and the comic are the same inasmuch as both are contradiction, but the tragic is suffering contradiction, and the comic is painless contradiction.

Ibid., 516. The comic interpretation produces the contradiction or allows it to become apparent by having in mente [in mind] the way out; therefore the contradiction is painless.


Sören Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, 519.

Ibid.

Ibid., 281.

Doris Donnelly, “Divine Folly: Being Religious and the Exercise of Humor,” Theology Today 48, no. 4 (January 1992): 385-398. Doris Donnelly has a wonderful list of contradictions that make up or contribute to facts in Christianity: the weak will inherit the earth; the foolish teach wisdom; the lame are restored; death leads to life; a virgin gives birth; giving is a prelude to receiving, etc.

For Kierkegaard, “the moment” has two meanings: the moment of decision and newness when time and eternity meet and the ordinary meaning of actual present time.

Sören Kierkegaard, The Moment and Late Writings, 91.

Ibid., 92.


Sören Kierkegaard, The Moment and Late Writings, 259.

The two major figures in Either/Or represent the transition from aesthetic to ethical consciousness. The Young Man, “A,” is the aesthetic archetype and Judge William is the ethical prototype. The key to the transition from the aesthetic to the ethical is seen in the decision of marriage. Within marriage, the erotic love is transformed into a covenantal fidelity. The erotic is assumed within the ethical, enduring commitment and the erotic is assumed within the ethical, enduring commitment to love one another.

Sören Kierkegaard, The Moment and Late Writings, 112-114.


Sören Kierkegaard, The Moment and Late Writings, 296.

Ibid., 297.

It is worth noting that there exist exceptions. In “Fishing for People,” found in Øieblikket 7, Kierkegaard imaginatively reinterprets Matthew 4.19 for the present age, meditating on the practicality of fishing, what Christ meant through language analogies, and fisheries. There is nothing directly instructive about the article, but it plays on the idea that modern Christians are, after all, fishermen. That is: they make a profit from the number of people they convert. But this is all accomplished with literary indirection.

Matthew 6.33: “But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (American Standard Version).

Sören Kierkegaard, The Moment and Late Writings, 233-235.

Ibid., 235.

Ibid., 236.

Ibid., 203.

70 Ibid.

Ibid., 204.

Ibid.

Ibid., 205.

Ibid., 353.

Notably, the final Diapsalmata relates to the project at hand; Sören Kierkegaard, Either/Or (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 42-43: “Something marvelous has happened to me. I was transported to the seventh heaven. There sat all the gods assembled. As a special dispensation, I was granted the favor of making a wish. ‘What do you want,’ asked Mercury. ‘Do you want youth, or beauty, or power, or a long life, or the most beautiful girl, or any one of the other glorious things we have in the treasure chest? Choose— but only one thing.’ For a moment I was bewildered; then I addressed the gods, saying: My esteemed contemporaries, I choose one thing—that I may always have the laughter on my side. Not one of the gods said a word; instead, all of them began to laugh. From that I concluded that my wish was granted and decided that the gods knew how to express themselves with good taste, for it would indeed have been inappropriate to reply solemnly: It is granted to you.”

Sören Kierkegaard, The Moment and Late Writings, 157-158.


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Coercion and Battered Mothers: Not Entirely Helpless nor Entirely Empowered

Andrea Winter

Abstract: Battered women are often more severely penalized for failing to protect their children from violence than are their batterers for actually committing the abuse. In recent years, many lawyers and social workers have critiqued the application of failure to protect laws, but they have neglected to pinpoint the extent to which battered women are responsible for the abuse their children experience at the hands of the abuser. The two prevalent theories of Battered Women Syndrome and the Empowerment Model complicate this question because these theories offer distinctly different views of battered women either as non-autonomous victims or as super-autonomous agents. Moreover, many traditional moral philosophers who work on coercion, such as R. Jay Wallace, ignore the type of long-term, psychologically damaging, intimate coercion experienced by battered women who fail to protect their children from violence. Wallace's framework of excuses and exemptions fails to account for the nuance and complexity associated with these cases. This paper proposes a third category of "mitigations," in between excuses and exemptions, which more accurately reflects the culpability of battered women who fail to protect, allows these women to retain partial accountability when applicable, and better situates them for future moral deliberation and action.

In some cases there is no praise, but there is pardon, whenever someone does a wrong action because of conditions of a sort that overstrain human nature, and that no one would endure. —Aristotle

The rhetoric used to describe battered women has the tendency to quickly flip-flop. The theories of “Battered Women's Syndrome” and “Learned Helplessness” feed into a conceptualization of battered women as non-autonomous victims. When battered women are charged for failing to protect their children from violence committed by another person, however, they are often viewed as entirely competent and in control. In these cases, battered mothers who allegedly fail to protect are scrutinized for every single thing they could have possibly done to protect their children. In many cases, battered women are more severely punished for their failure to protect their children than are their batterers who actually commit the violence. This paper considers the extent to which abused women should be held accountable for the abuse their children experience at the hands of their abuser.

The battered woman who fails to protect her children from violence raises a host of philosophical questions concerning what she deserves as a compromised individual. Even if we were to agree that she should be pardoned, we still have our philosophical work cutout for us. Is she a morally accountable agent? Do her circumstances merit an excuse or an exemption? According to R. Jay Wallace, “excuses” block moral responsibility for particular actions and they apply only to agents who are morally accountable in general. On the contrary, “exemptions” block moral responsibility in general and are appropriate when an agent lacks overall moral accountability. The battered mother’s situation does not easily fall into the categories of the excuse or the exemption. Moreover, traditional moral philosophers have neglected sufficiently to evaluate the complexity and nuance associated with cases involving coercion that takes place in intimate settings.

One of the most common examples of a coercive situation cited by moral philosophers in which the agent should be excused from moral responsibility is the bank teller who gives money to an armed robber. The bank teller appears to be acting intentionally when he gives money to the robber, because he fears that if he does not abide by the robbers' demands, the robber will kill him. Likewise, it seems that many battered women also exercise at least some degree of agency by choosing not to make ordinary help-seeking efforts such as reporting abuse to social services or the police because they too fear that by doing so a greater harm will result. However, there are differences between the situations of the battered mother and that of the bank teller, for example: the duration of the coercion they experience, the moral weight of the duties they violate, and the relationship they share with their coercer.

Unlike the battered mother, the bank teller is coerced for a short period of time. The bank teller has not already sustained significant mental, psychological, or moral damage from the episode of coercion when he gives the bank's money to the robber. By contrast, battered women have most likely already been affected by ongoing abuse at the time when they allegedly fail to protect their children. How do we take long term coercion into account? The inevitable psychological impact of past abuse on battered women suggests that they should be exempt from moral responsibility altogether. However, the examples of exempting conditions cited by
moral philosophers such as mental illness or “extreme youth” do not reflect a battered woman’s situation very accurately. An exemption requires that a battered woman is not a morally accountable agent, which contradicts the limited degree of agency she does enact. As a result, neither excuses nor exemptions seem like viable choices.

My argument will be about both legal responsibility and moral responsibility. More precisely, the works of feminist philosophers working on the ethics of oppression have encouraged me to consider not only what a battered woman deserves, but also how our method of excusing or exempting her affects her personally. More precisely, I will take into account whether excuses or exemptions stimulate or hinder her sense of moral agency. In the first two sections, I will depict the legal charge of “failure to protect” and introduce the concerns of feminist philosophers in regards to excusing oppressed persons. I will then outline reasons why neither of R. Jay Wallace’s categories, neither excuses nor exemptions, sufficiently accounts for the culpability of battered women who fail to protect. Lastly, I will propose a third category in between an excuse and an exemption, which I call “mitigation,” that more accurately reflects the accountability and fault of battered mothers who fail to protect.

Realities of Failure to Protect

While Casey Campbell was at work on June 27, 1995, she left her four-year-old daughter, HC, with her live-in boyfriend, Floid Boyer.2 Campbell arrived home from work that evening to find that HC had experienced second and third degree burns while under Boyer’s care. Campbell did not take HC to the hospital until much later that night at 2 a.m. Before doing so, she left HC with a sitter and then accompanied Boyer to play darts at a local bar. In March of 2000, Campbell was convicted of a felony for child endangerment and was sentenced to prison for her actions.3

Although the defendant, Campbell, did not physically abuse her child, she was held responsible for failing to protect her child from the abuse of another person, Boyer, and for neglecting her child’s needs following the incident of abuse. Given the information above, this conviction might appear as a suitable response to Campbell’s actions, because the question naturally arises: How could a mother choose to play darts when her child needed medical attention? Testimonies at Campbell’s trial, however, demonstrate that her prison sentence is unjust because Campbell did not freely and willingly chose to endanger and neglect her daughter. Campbell testified that she had been abused by Boyer for years and that he had “violently assaulted her with knives and guns” (Campbell v. State, 2000). Campbell said that she did not immediately take HC to the hospital because she suspected that refusing to play darts with Boyer would have resulted in greater harm for both her and HC. In fact, Campbell’s abuser, Boyer, actually corroborated her accusations of physical abuse and testified that “he believed that Campbell played darts that night to avoid angering him” (Campbell v. State, 2000).

Campbell’s case does not constitute an anomaly. In fact, the details of Campbell’s case are less horrific than many others. When Edna Engle “neglected” to take her son Chris to the hospital after her husband John had scalded Chris in the bathroom tub, Engle was “indicted on counts, including aggravated battery with a death-penalty specification and child endangerment” (Kopels and Sheridan 14). Evidence was presented at her trial that when she pleaded with John to take Chris to the hospital, John brutally beat her unconscious with a pair of pliers.4

Aside from Campbell’s and Engle’s experiences, there is evidence that the number of battered women charged with failure to protect is on the rise. After researching appellate court decisions from 1990–1999, Sandra Kopels and Marcie Chesnut Sheridan concluded as follows: “it appears that there is a disturbing development in the law that holds women responsible for failing to protect their children rather than focusing on the persons who actually commit the abuse” (Kopels and Sheridan 13).5 Campbell’s and Engle’s cases reflect the dynamics existing in a large portion of homes in which domestic violence is present: when a woman with children is abused by a male, the abuser physically abuses the children roughly 50 percent of the time.6 Further, her parental capacities are scrutinized more closely than those of the abusive male who actually commits the abuse.7 The outcome of Campbell’s case follows the trend that women’s actions are more severely penalized than those of abusive males: while Campbell received a felony conviction for her actions, Boyer the actual abuser, merely received a misdemeanor.8

According to legal theorist Jeanne Fugate, in many cases in which wife battering and child abuse simultaneously occur, battered women are automatically accused of failure to protect because it is believed that their experience of abuse should have served as a warning that their batterer could be violent with the children as well.9 Liability for failure to protect typically involves the following four requirements: “(1) the defendant had a legal duty to protect the child, (2) the defendant had actual or constructive notice of the foreseeability of abuse, (3) the child was exposed to such abuse, and (4) the defendant failed to prevent such abuse” (Fugate 279). Statutes of failure to protect differ from state to state, and in some states the crime is subsumed under neglect or child endangerment. Many cases involve accusations that battered mothers should have been able to prevent the abuse. In other cases, battered women are convicted due to their failure to report the abuse to resources such as the police or social services.
Much is at stake when battered women are unfairly incriminated for failure to protect. Legally, women found guilty of this crime risk imprisonment or temporary loss of the custody of their children. Even worse, such a conviction could result in the permanent termination of their parental ties to their children. In addition, the criminalization of battered women for failure to protect could be keeping children in violent situations. Researchers Ellen R. DeVoe and Erica L. Smith reported that many women said that they did not seek social services immediately because they feared that their children would be removed from their custody, which they understood to be absolutely devastating to the child’s well being.

A variety of reasons have been proposed to explain the tendency to judge battered mothers so harshly. Most often, it is noted that society tends to place unrealistic expectations on battered mothers. Legal theorist Dorothy Roberts points out that “judges assume that a woman’s maternal instinct to protect her children from harm overcomes any barriers to escape” (Roberts 107). Society tends to assume that nothing could stop a good mother from protecting her children, and that we should expect mothers to act heroically by risking their lives for the sake of their children. Even Child Protective Services has been criticized for holding battered women up against an unrealistic standard. After researching the case notes of Child Protective Services workers, Carolyn H. Hartley concluded that many of these workers have deeply ingrained biases against battered women.

**Not Entirely Helpless Nor Empowered**

In addition to society’s tendency to expect mothers to overcome any barrier placed between them and their children, part of the problem lies in our struggle over the best way to conceptualize the actions of battered women. Within the last thirty years, two models pertaining to battered women have emerged: Battered Women Syndrome and the Empowerment Model. Yet, neither model fully reflects these women’s circumstances.

Psychologist Lenore Walker coined the term “Battered Woman Syndrome” (BWS) in her groundbreaking work *The Battered Woman*, which was released in 1979. Walker presented this psychological syndrome in an attempt to account for the reason why battered women tend to stay in abusive relationships. According to the BWS theory, experiencing the brunt of constant abuse causes women to change psychologically: battered women lose their self-esteem as well as their will and their ability to leave abusive relationships. Walker’s theory of Battered Woman Syndrome relies heavily upon the theory of “Learned Helplessness,” a theory developed from experiments using dogs as subjects. Learned helplessness is a psychological condition in which persons become passive and inactive in the face of abuse due to their belief that their current situation is entirely out of their control.

The Empowerment Model most likely emerged as a response to the concept of Battered Woman’s Syndrome. The origins of this model are less clear-cut because it is not typically referred to as a specific model. One work that espouses these ideas is Gondolf and Fischer’s *Battered Women as Survivors: An Alternative to Treating Learned Helplessness*, in which the two authors argue that their research indicates that battered women are not passive, inactive, and helpless:

“In our research, shelter women do not appear to display the ‘victim’ characteristics commonly ascribed to those who are battered. They appear instead as ‘survivors’, acting assertively and logically in response to the abuse” (Gondolf and Fischer 3). Contrary to the Battered Woman Syndrome model, they tend to turn toward a variety of helpseeking sources such as friends, relatives, healthcare resources, the police, the legal system, and shelters, constantly making choices that measure costs and benefits of any action available to them as a choice.

This approach often involves a reinterpretation of the seemingly passive choices of battered women as strategic actions. For instance, if a battered woman decides to abide by her batterer’s demands and not take her sick child to the hospital, on face value, her actions might initially appear despicable. However, if her reason for not going to the hospital is that her batterer threatened her that a greater harm would ensue for her child if she defied his wishes, her actions might appear as her best available option in terms of both her and her children’s safety.

Both models are perhaps equally problematic. On the one hand, Battered Women Syndrome is based upon questionable data. Political scientist and author of *More Than Victims: Battered Women, the Syndrome Society, and the Law*, Donald Downs, concludes that Learned Helplessness “is a notion, however, that appears to be rooted in assumptions and observations rather than hard fact” (Downs 3). Fugate points out that, “many advocates now believe that BWS reinforces negative stereotypes about women’s passivity and weakness” (Fugate 280). Moreover, in many cases, although their choices might be coerced, battered women do act and do make choices. Consequently, it is difficult to reconcile the choices and actions they do make with their supposed passivity and inactivity. For instance, considering the fact that Campbell left her child with a sitter, went to play darts, and then took her child to the hospital when she returned demonstrates at least some degree of activity.

On the other hand, by stressing battered women’s autonomy, activity, and assertiveness, the Empowerment Model could be used against battered women by encouraging society to hold these women up to an unrealistic standard. Even though many battered women do tend to make help-seeking efforts, a danger lies in regarding them as *entirely*
empowered. For instance, if this were the case, there would be no reason why they should be held to a less stringent standard than non-battered women. As a result, if we do not pay any attention to the struggles and barriers battered women are up against, they could risk being unfairly incriminated for failure to protect.

**Feminist Philosophers**

Feminist ethicists such as Sarah Lucia Hoagland, Claudia Card, Barbara Houston, and Lisa Tessman, who work on the topic of oppression, have argued that we should be concerned with finding “ways to reclaim and augment women’s moral agency” (Houston 128). These philosophers have been interested in whether or not our practices of excusing or exempting people from moral responsibility or blaming them for their actions further moralizes or demoralizes oppressed persons. According to Hoagland, the term “moralization” involves two components: strengthening an agent’s ability to make choices and encouraging her to view herself as someone who can make choices, even in trying circumstances (Hoagland 213). By contrast, she notes that “demoralization” involves three components: (1) undermining one’s ability to make choices, (2) undermining one’s ability to perceive herself as capable of making choices, and (3) being put in positions which involve betraying one’s self.

These feminist philosophers have also questioned how moral responsibility can survive in oppressive circumstances. Claudia Card captures these sorts of concerns in the following passage: “I am interested, from the agent’s forward looking perspective, in the implications for taking responsibility for oneself of a history of bad moral luck, such as comes with a history of child abuse or a heritage of oppression” (Card 128). Although all of the authors mentioned above deal with the ethics of oppression, Hoagland’s critique of the concept of an excuse is most relevant to my project.

The problem with simply granting an excuse, according to Hoagland, is that it excludes the choices oppressed persons do make from the realm of “proper moral choices.” By excusing the actions of oppressed persons, we let them off the hook in the sense that we do not further consider the choices they have made. In doing so, we seem to suggest that if a person is oppressed, it does not matter what limited choices she did make in the situation because she is nevertheless excused. We thereby imply that the choices made by oppressed persons do not matter at all. Consequently, we fail to prepare them for future situations in which they may have to make choices under coercion. Hence, Hoagland asserts that simply granting an excuse inadequately accounts for the needs of oppressed persons and that it further contributes to their demoralization.

Hoagland’s account of what constitutes demoralization can be seen as a set of criteria which can be used to judge theories of excuses and exemptions. When we judge the actions of oppressed persons, we should be concerned with how we can (1) encourage these persons to view themselves as moral agents in the future, (2) strengthen their ability to make choices in the future, and (3) acknowledge moments when oppression puts them in a position where they have no choice but to abandon or forfeit their commitments. In addition, I agree with Hoagland’s point that we have the tendency to view the moral accountability of oppressed persons with an all-or-nothing attitude. On the one hand, society often sees oppressed persons as entirely responsible agents who are responsible for everything that they encounter. For instance, the dress or mannerisms of rape victims are often seen as indications that they invited the rape. On the other hand, we often view some oppressed persons as total victims in which we do not evaluate any of the actions these persons do make. Hoagland is right to argue that there needs to be a middle ground in which oppressed persons are not held responsible for their entire fate, yet can still claim a certain degree of accountability. I will reconsider Hoagland’s insightful points when I consider whether an excuse or exemption is more reflective of a battered woman’s situation.

**Analysis of Wallace’s Accounts of Excuses and Exemptions**

In his work *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments*, R. Jay Wallace writes, “whereas excuses block responsibility for particular acts an agent has performed, exemptions make it inappropriate to hold the agent accountable more generally,” (Wallace 154). Wallace writes that there are conditions of responsibility that make it fair to hold people accountable for their actions in general and conditions of responsibility which make it fair to blame people for particular actions. Wallace explicitly explains who should be accountable in general by introducing two requirements which he calls the “Reflective Powers of Self Control.” An agent must have the abilities both to (1) “grasp and apply moral reasons” and (2) “control or regulate his behavior by the light of such reasons” (Wallace 157). Persons who possess these powers can still be excused from responsibility for particular actions, whereas those who lack them are eligible for being exempted from moral responsibility for their behavior more generally.
I will begin my analysis of Wallace's account of excuses and exemptions by first comparing his examples in which an agent should be excused for his actions because coercion is present, to the circumstances of battered mothers who fail to protect their children while threatened by an abusive partner. In particular, I will address three key differences between Wallace's examples of coercion and the battered mother's situation: (1) the relationship between the coercer and the coerced, (2) the seriousness of the wrongdoing, and (3) the duration of the abuse. I believe that the third difference poses the greatest problem for Wallace's account. I will then compare Wallace's examples of exempting conditions to the experience of battered women. Finally, I will consider whether an excuse or exemption is more appropriate for battered mothers who fail to protect their children from abuse.

Wallace's Examples of Coercion

When Wallace addresses coercion, he makes references to two classic examples of coercion considered by moral theorists: Aristotle's merchant sailor caught in a storm at sea who throws cargo overboard in order to save his life, and a bank teller held at gunpoint who hands over the bank's funds to a robber. In addition, Wallace also mentions two more examples: first, a starving victim of a plane crash who steals from a nearby village; and second, an agent who is threatened that his family will be harmed if he does not disclose industrial secrets. Initially, these examples may appear to represent a wide spectrum of coercive situations. As soon as they are compared to the plight of battered mothers who fail to protect, however, they prove to be quite limited in scope.

The first difference I will consider between Wallace's examples of coercion and the circumstances faced by battered women is the relationship between the coercer and the coerced. All of Wallace's examples involve coerencers who are strangers to the coerced. This characteristic of the coercive situations has the effect of making the coercion appear entirely random and unlucky. Consequently, this detail makes it seem obvious that the victim is not responsible for the coercion he experiences since he has no meaningful connection to his coercer. Hence, there is no further questioning of the victim's responsibility for being coerced.

By contrast, domestic violence by definition involves coercion not at the hands of a stranger, but rather at the hands of an intimate partner. Since a battered woman (1) chooses to engage in a relationship with her batterer, and (2) has not left the abusive situation, many people see battered women as responsible for the abuse they endure. If battered women are responsible for the coercion they experience, this seems to suggest that they are responsible for the actions they engage in while they are coerced. Consequently, this detail suggests that the type of coercion experienced by battered women might not be as good of an excuse as it is in the case of the bank teller who is threatened by an armed robber.

We would be ill-advised to think that a battered woman is responsible for the abuse she endures. The reasons are twofold: (1) a battered woman does not choose abuse, and (2) we cannot expect a battered woman can easily disentangle herself from an abusive situation. First, although a battered woman does engage in a relationship with her abuser, she does not choose abuse. Abuse often does not begin until some time has passed in a relationship. In addition, many of the early warning signs of a batterer are indistinguishable from the signs our society associates with men who are in love, for example, extreme jealousy. Many battered women who are still in abusive relationships have tried to leave or are in the process of leaving. Second, we must acknowledge that leaving an abusive relationship can be difficult for a multitude of reasons. Often, it is safer for an abused woman to remain in the relationship than leave. Roughly 75 percent of the visits to emergency rooms by battered women occur after they have left their batterer.11 Many women have nowhere to go because either they do not have family or friends who will take them in, or they do not want to put their family or friends at risk, or they cannot afford their own housing, or domestic violence shelters do not have any extra beds. For instance, in the state of Missouri in 2006, 5,625 persons were turned away from domestic violence shelters. In addition, many battered women stay with their batterers because they are economically dependent upon them. These women sometimes have no income of their own or the batterer finds a way to take control of their income. Financial dependence is a particularly compelling reason when there are children to support.

Even though we cannot conclude that battered women choose abuse or that it is easy for them to leave, their circumstances are still different from those described by Wallace in his examples of coercion. These women do exercise some degree of autonomy when they engaged themselves in these relationships. By refraining from including examples of coercion in which a relationship exists between the coercer and the coerced, Wallace offers no guidance regarding those sorts of cases. Hence, we are left with the following question: Could a situation in which the coerced engages in a relationship with her coercer count as a case in which the coerced person should be excused from responsibility for her wrongdoing because of coercion? Wallace's account lacks the nuance and complexity to answer this question.

The second difference between Wallace's examples of coercion and the experience of battered women who fail to protect is the seriousness of the offense. More specifically, the duties outlined by Wallace's examples appear a bit trivial when compared to a woman's failure to protect her children. For most of us, although we would never dream of just giving away our employer's money, if we were held at gunpoint...
While on the clock, deciding whether or not we should abide by the robber’s demand would not constitute a serious moral dilemma. For one thing, both the bank example and Aristotle’s sailor caught in a storm at sea involve protecting money or goods. Most of us would agree that the duty to protect money or goods is less important than the duty to protect our own children from harm. Hence, it is relatively easy to conclude that someone should be excused from responsibility for breaking an obligation to a business in order to avoid being shot or avoiding drowning. The same is not true of the duties one has to one’s children that are present in failure to protect cases. Wallace’s examples of coercion are limited to relatively less important obligations. Wallace does not comment on cases which include the violation of more serious duties such as protecting one’s children from abuse.

Although Wallace fails to include examples involving more serious offenses, his theory can be expanded to cover this concern. Wallace does admit that determining the weight of our moral obligations will not always be an easy task. Wallace writes that we must balance the moral weight of the wrongdoing and the threat at hand. His theory does allow for serious wrongdoings to count as excuses, as long as they are committed in order that a more serious threat can be avoided. Even though Wallace’s account is meant to have practical application, he fails to guide us through cases in which we have to determine whether the coercion merits an excuse for very serious wrongdoing. Hence, we are left with little guidance about determining whether a battered woman’s failure to protect her children from violence should be excused from moral responsibility.

Third, and most importantly, the greatest difference and the most difficult to reconcile with Wallace’s examples is the duration of the coercion experienced by battered women who fail to protect their children from violence by the batterer. The bank teller, the starving plane crash victim, and the sailor at sea all experience coercion over a relatively short period of time, often only few minutes or few hours. On the contrary, the battered mothers who fail to protect their children under duress were abused for some number of months or years. When the coerced persons in Wallace’s examples make choices, it is unlikely that they have sustained serious mental, emotional, psychological, or moral damage. Judith Herman depicts the nature of longer term coercion experienced by battered women:

The methods of establishing control over another person are based upon the systematic, repetitive infliction of psychological trauma. They are the organized techniques of disempowerment and disconnection. Methods of psychological control are designed to instill terror and helplessness to destroy the victim’s sense of self in relation to others. (Herman 77)

Consequently, when evaluating the actions of battered women who fail to protect, we must take into consideration the effects that past abuse has on the victim’s perception of both herself and her ability to make choices. These characteristics suggest that the coercion associated with domestic violence might be more than a good excuse. In fact, they suggest that this type of coercion might instead exempt the battered woman from moral responsibility altogether.

I am extending Wallace’s theory to consider whether domestic abuse is a type of coercion that excuses the wrongdoings of the abuse victim. The first two differences, (1) the relationship with the coercer and (2) the seriousness of the offense, both suggest that the coercion experienced by battered women might not fit with Wallace’s examples of coercion. These points raise the question of whether or not the coercion experienced by battered woman excuses her from responsibility for failing to protect her children from the abuser. On the contrary, the third difference, regarding the duration of the coercion, suggests that the coercive situation faced by battered women might actually exempt her from moral responsibility entirely.

**Wallace’s Examples of Exemptions**

Wallace differentiates between two classes of exempting conditions based upon the degree of longevity. There are short term excusing conditions on the one hand, and long term ones on the other. I will propose a different distinction between types of exemptions. For this paper, it is most helpful to differentiate between persons who entirely or almost entirely lack the reflective powers of self-control and ones who have merely compromised powers.

The first class of conditions that warrant exemptions from moral responsibility altogether are those which almost entirely debilitate a person’s ability to reason morally and act in light of moral reasons. Examples include persistent mental illnesses and forms of insanity as well as the effects of certain drugs. In addition, I would also add Wallace’s examples of behaviorally conditioned persons as well as hypnotized persons in which there is a sense of automatism in that the controlled persons are entirely controlled. In all of the examples Wallace mentions that fit under this class, it would not be appropriate to hold these agents accountable for their actions since they clearly do not possess the reflective powers at all, or to a very limited degree.

The second class of exemptions I would like to propose is more relevant to my project. They involve cases in which it does seem that the agent possesses the reflective powers to a significant degree. Children could fall into this class when they have developed their reflective powers of self-control to a significant degree. Other persons in this group may have already developed their powers, but these powers have since been at least partially impaired. Aside from children,
I would add Wallace’s example of concentration camp inmates during the Holocaust. In addition, this category also can involve persons who have experienced extreme stress, hunger, sleep deprivation, etc. Undoubtedly a wide spectrum of such cases exit; however, it seem that these experiences diminish a person’s reflective powers of self-control but do not entirely impair them.

When commenting about the second class of exemptions, Wallace rightly acknowledges that there might be some overlap with the excusing conditions. He specifies that what distinguishes excuses from exemptions is “whether we see them as affecting the powers of reflective self-control” (Wallace 79). However, Wallace does not offer much guidance concerning how to recognize the degree to which someone’s powers of reflective self-control are impaired. Wallace fails to develop what this category between exemptions and excuses might look like or the degree to which an agent whose situation falls into this category is morally accountable.

**Excused or Exempted?**

Determining how exactly we should take into account the mental, moral, or psychological damage a battered woman has experienced as a result of long-term coercion poses a challenge to any account of excuses or exemptions. Wallace seems to imply that the circumstances faced by battered women fit exempting conditions because the dynamics of domestic abuse more closely resemble his exemption examples than his excuse examples. I believe that these concerns regarding whether battered women ought be exempted or excused relate to the difficulties involved in understanding battered woman who fail to protect. On the one hand, the Battered Women’s Syndrome stresses passivity, inactivity, and the emotional, psychological, and moral damage a battered woman has sustained, whereas the Empowerment Model stresses her strength, activity, and essentially her accountability. The problem is that in most cases, battered mothers are neither entirely helpless nor entirely empowered.

The distinction Wallace draws between excuses and exemptions does not adequately account for the complexities and nuances involved in human relationships involving long term manipulation and coercion. Certainly, whether or not an abused woman should be excused or exempted is primarily an empirical, case-by-case matter which will be determined by the details of her situation. Nevertheless, the situations of many abused women who fail to protect appear to fall somewhere between an excuse and an exemption.

According to Wallace, the key to determining whether or not an agent is accountable and thus someone whom we would excuse rather than exempt depends on whether that person possesses the reflective powers of self-control. To repeat, these powers include the ability to understand and apply moral reasons and the ability to act in accordance with moral reasoning. If an agent does possess such powers, then she is considered accountable in general. The next question would be about whether her decision to commit a wrongdoing in order to avoid something potentially more harmful from happening violates our expectations. On the other hand, if it is determined that the person does not possess the reflective powers of self-control, then she is exempt in general from moral accountability.

**Exempting for Failure to Protect**

The problem concerning battered women who fail to protect is that long-term manipulation and abuse can affect an agent’s reflective powers of self-control. Psychiatrist Judith Herman writes that all persons who experience long-term abuse are affected psychologically: “While it is clear that ordinary, healthy people may become entrapped in prolonged abusive situations, it is equally clear that after their escape they are no longer ordinary or healthy. Chronic abuse causes serious psychological harm.” (Herman 116). The first reflective power of self-control, the ability to both grasp and apply moral reasons, might be hindered as a result of mental, verbal, and emotional abuse and manipulation. If a battered woman feels that her situation is hopeless, she might feel that it is pointless for her to reason morally, and so her ability to do so might gradually become impaired. More importantly, constant abuse would most likely affect her second power of reflective self-control, which is the ability to control and regulate one’s behavior in accordance with moral reasoning. This is because persistent abuse undermines a victim’s agency and is also associated with passivity. Inactivity is the psychological response of many persons who endure chronic abuse. These reasons do make an exemption for moral accountability a relevant idea.

Given the above reasons, an exemption does seem to apply to abused mothers who fail to protect their children from the abuser. However, there are a variety of problems associated with taking this route. First, Hoagland argues that the problem with exempting oppressed persons is that it sends the message that they do not have proper moral choices and that the choices they did make do not matter. Although Hoagland uses the word “excuse,” she actually is describing what Wallace would call an exemption. Her concern is that by exempting oppressed persons, we no longer treat them as morally accountable agents. Consequently, we fail to acknowledge the choices they do make even within the constraints of their trying circumstances. This affects those women’s view of themselves. Therefore, by exempting women who fail to protect, we do not stimulate their reflective powers of self-control or offer a route to regain them.

Second, exempting women for failure to protect implies that these women are not morally accountable agents during...
the period in which they failed to protect. Stressing the fact that these women are not morally responsible for their actions could backfire when they are entangled in custody disputes because this logic seems to suggest that they would not make capable parents. Before we grant these women an exemption, we need to consider what exactly is entailed by claiming that they are not morally accountable agents.

Third of all, and most importantly, the exemption does not seem adequately to reflect the dynamics of cases in which battered women fail to protect. In many cases, although the options open to battered women are limited due to coercion, many battered women still remain steadfast to what they believe is right. For instance, Campbell did not take her child to the hospital when she was threatened by “guns and knives” by her batterer. However, she did take her child to the hospital a few hours later. Further, as many feminists such as Gondolf and Fischer have pointed out, even if a battered woman might not be able to protect her children completely from the batterer (and oftentimes it might not be safe to attempt to do so), many battered women act to minimize the danger to which their children are exposed.

Excusing for Failure to Protect

Although I mention some facts about the nature of domestic abuse that seem to suggest that battered women should be exempted for their actions, in other ways, their situations seem to be more like the cases in which Wallace would use his concept of the excuse. First, I will refer to Hoagland’s concerns in order to show how Wallace’s concept of the excuse alleviates her worries. I will then turn my attention to a problem associated with Wallace’s concept of the excuse: the risk of holding battered mothers to too stringent a standard.

When Hoagland considers the pardoning of oppressed persons, she notes her concern that simply granting excuses does too little. More precisely, she believes that by excusing oppressed persons for their wrongdoing, we fail to present them with a notion of how to exercise moral agency within constraints. Wallace’s account of the excuse successfully fulfills this criterion put forth by Hoagland. On Wallace’s account, before excusing someone from moral responsibility, we must first delineate an agent’s duties and determine whether or not she was warranted in committing a particular wrongdoing in order to avoid a greater harm. In other words, applying Wallace’s account of the excuse requires careful consideration of the limited degree of agency an agent expressed as well as an understanding of her constraints. Contrary to Hoagland’s critique of the excuse, Wallace’s account of excuses require that we evaluate specific details about the coercive situation. Thus, Hoagland cannot criticize Wallace’s concept of the excuse for denying the moral agency of oppressed persons or for doing too little, because it proves to be informative and meaningful.

Second, and most importantly, according to Wallace’s account of the excuse, we excuse someone only if we think she did not violate our moral expectations. We often do not expect people to avoid wrongdoing at all costs, such as risking their lives or physical safety. This element of his account should alleviate Hoagland’s concern that excuses do not strengthen the oppressed person’s ability to make choices in the future. By acknowledging that an oppressed person who commits a wrongdoing has not violated our expectations, we acknowledge that a battered woman did exercise a limited degree of agency. Moreover, rather than disregard her actions altogether, we acknowledge that she was in a coercive situation and we affirm that she did not violate our expectations, because she committed a wrong in order to prevent something worse from happening.

Although applying excuses rather than exemptions to battered mothers for their failure to protect their children more successfully contributes to their moralization, this approach is associated with problems of its own. If it is determined that abused mothers are morally accountable agents who are eligible for excuses, the possibility remains that they will not be excused from moral responsibility for violating their duty to their children. If this were to be the case, they would thereby be held fully responsible for their failure to protect. In particular, I am concerned that these women could still be unfairly convicted of committing the crime of negligence. Taking the route of the excuse leaves open the possibility that a battered woman could be judged against an unrealistic standard, especially since many jurors and judges have inaccurate conceptions of the dynamics of domestic violence and society has the tendency to expect that no barrier could keep a battered mother from protecting her children.

“Mitigations”: Extending Wallace’s Account

Wallace needs to develop a third category at the boundary between excuses and exemptions so that his theory can sufficiently account for cases involving agents who retain some of the powers of reflective self-control while experiencing the chronic coercion characteristic of domestic abuse. I will now begin the process of developing this category of overlap between the excuse and the exemption, which I refer to as a “mitigation.”

Wallace’s distinction between excuses and exemptions reflects an all-or-nothing game since, when we exempt persons, we refrain entirely from seeing them as morally accountable agents. Since exemptions are associated with persons having no moral accountability, this category has little flexibility. What is needed is an intermediate category of
withholding moral responsibility that assumes some impairment of moral agency, but not completely so. This category would function like an excuse because it would require that agents have a limited degree of moral accountability. However, it would reflect an exception because it would involve our changing our expectations of persons who experience long-term psychologically damaging coercion.

This category would take into account the partial impairment of the reflective powers of battered mothers. These women should be held to a less stringent standard than women who are not experiencing any long-term coercion, yet still fail to protect their children from violence. Given the psychological damage caused by chronic abuse, we could lower the bar of our expectations a bit in regards to battered women who fail to protect. “Lowering the bar” in this sense would ensure that battered women are not unfairly incriminated for failure to protect. Our expectations would be less stringent, but we would not eliminate all standards in these cases. Even battered women would be expected to protect their children from severe harm when it was fairly easy to do so.

My suggestion that we “lower the bar” of our expectations involves two components. On the one hand, we would expect that non-battered women would be able to overcome greater obstacles than battered women. Secondly, in cases in which we do believe a battered woman is at fault for failure to protect, we would lessen the degree of fault ascribed to her wrongdoing.

I would like to clarify briefly what lowering our expectations of battered women might look like. Based upon their past experiences of ongoing abuse, it would be reasonable for many battered women to feel threatened by their batterers in situations where there is no weapon presented, or when the threat is less overt. Consequently, when we take into account the trying circumstances of a battered woman, we should be more lenient and we should take a more holistic approach when determining the legitimacy of her feeling threatened or coerced. In addition, the notion of time will come into play. While we should reasonably expect a non-coerced mother promptly to seek resources for help when her child is in need, we cannot expect battered women to access these resources quite as quickly. I have already addressed reasons why this is the case. Most importantly, I have mentioned that denial and some passivity are natural responses to long-term coercion, so we can reasonably expect some delay in a battered woman’s actions.

According to this third category of mitigations, there will be some cases when battered mothers lack good reason for not overcoming relatively easy obstacles; in these cases, these women will be at fault. Nevertheless, they should be regarded as less blameworthy than a non-coerced mother who commits the same crime. Given that the chronic abuse they are facing will undeniably have some effect on their reflective powers of self-control, we must lessen the degree of fault ascribed to their wrongdoings.

**Legal Implication of Mitigations**

Currently, failure to protect tends to be applied in a way that often holds battered women to unrealistic standards. Although many battered women do exercise some degree of agency, they most certainly should not be held fully accountable for the abuse their children experience. The legal sphere tends to judge an agent’s actions based upon what a “reasonable person”[1] would do in the given situation. In order to apply the third category of mitigations, we would need to develop a “reasonable chronically coerced person standard.” This would provide a standard against which a battered woman’s actions could be evaluated. To ensure that the actions of battered mothers are judged fairly, this standard would need to be informed by current psychiatric and psychological research on the effects of chronic coercion and trauma.

**Concluding Remarks**

Traumatic events are extraordinary, not because they occur rarely, but rather because they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life. –Judith Herman

The legal system was never designed to adjudicate crimes committed by women who are experiencing long-term intimate violence. Moreover, I have demonstrated that one set of the traditional categories of the excuse and the exemption in moral philosophy does not adequately account for the culpability of battered mothers who fail to protect. I have analyzed Wallace’s account of excuses and exemptions, in particular, alongside a synthesis of current research on the dynamics of domestic violence in order to demonstrate the insufficiencies of Wallace’s two categories. In addition, by depicting the theories of The Battered Women’s Syndrome and Learned Helplessness I have demonstrated that our difficulty in conceptualizing the actions of battered women has been longstanding. Lastly, I defend a third category, which I call “mitigations,” and which (1) more accurately reflects the culpability of battered women, (2) would allow them to retain some degree of accountability when applicable, and (3) would thereby encourage them to take partial responsibility for the choices they do make under coercion. This third category ought to be further developed as we continue to enrich our understanding of the psychological and moral effects of chronic coercion.

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1 I use the term “pardon” to mean a release from legal penalty and moral blame. In this sense, both exempting and excusing would fall under the more general category of pardoning.

5 Murray A. Strauss, Richard J. Gelles, and Christine Smith, Physical Violence in American Families: Risk Factors and Adaptations to Violence in 8,145 Families (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1990). “In a national survey of more than 6,000 American families, 50 percent of the men who frequently assaulted their wives also frequently abused their children.”
7 Ibid., 650.
8 Fugate, “Who’s Failing Whom?” 279. “Many times the woman is abused herself, and courts may determine that a battered woman is guilty of failure to protect because her abuse at the batterer’s hands ought to have alerted her to the batterer’s tendency to violence.”
9 I will include any revisions to the concept of the Battered Woman Syndrome that focus on the strength, activity, and the rationality of battered women as part of this model.
11 Professor Jamie Ake first suggested the idea of creating a special standard for judging oppressed persons.

### Bibliography


De Voe, Ellen R., and Erica L. Smith. “Don’t Take My Kids: Barriers to Service Delivery for Battered Mothers and Their Young Children.”


**Biographies for the Authors of Slideshow**

**Felicia Baskin's** lifelong passion for languages and studying other cultures led her to double major in French and Spanish. Her UHF topic was inspired by curiosity about how different cultures collide and connect. As the project evolved over time, Felicia happened upon primary sources from the 1900 Universal Exposition and decided that the Exposition would provide an intriguing backdrop for a study of cultural identity. Her UHF project has increased her interest in Universal Expositions to the point that she would now label herself a bona fide World’s Fair nerd. In addition to the Fellowship, Felicia leads the University’s French club, performs as a majorette at sporting events, and has served as an editor for the school newspaper.

**Alana Burman**, from Park City, Utah, is a double major in Women and Gender Studies and History. Inspired by her first reading of *Egalia’s Daughters: A Satire of the Sexes*, Gerd Brantenberg’s 1977 feminist utopian novel that she has analyzed in past articles for the fellowship, she knew she wanted to explore the partnership of utopian literature and the specific historical moment of second wave feminism. She has enjoyed investigating the fiction of this revolutionary social movement within her intellectual passion for women’s history and feminist theoretical development. Alana looks forward to having some adventures before entering a graduate program in sociology.

**Zack Kimble** majors in Political Science. He has also spent three years studying Mandarin Chinese. He originally chose to study Mandarin because of its one billion native speakers, but he quickly became interested in the dynamism of modern China. From coursework, he developed an interest in the impact of political institutions on economics. Combining these interests, he embarked on a project to understand China’s economic development. In this effort, he has explored both the development of property rights in China and theories of institutional change. During his four years at the university he has been an active member of the Model United Nations club. In his spare time he is an avid gamer and bicyclist. Next year he plans to teach English in Shenzhen, China.

**Michael McEvilly** is majoring in Philosophy and Religious Studies. He has been involved with *Spires*, a literary and arts magazine on campus, since freshman year, writes poetry when he has the time, and is sympathetic with the aims of the NWF. His project arose from a love of Kierkegaard as religious thinker and poet, but he realized over time that it was Kierkegaard’s psychological insights into human nature that most interested him. He intends to study moral psychology and action theory in a philosophy doctoral program come next fall.

**Andrea Winter** is a senior at Washington University majoring in Philosophy. She is a member of Delta Gamma Sorority and a former News Editor of *Student Life*. Her project began with an interest in violence against women which evolved into a focus on the criminalization and blaming of battered women who are charged with failing to protect their children from violence. First and foremost, she is grateful to her mentor, Professor Marilyn Friedman, for her feedback, support, and guidance over the last two years. She also credits Professor Jami Ake for sharing her expertise on domestic violence, Dr. Early and her brother Ryan Winter for serving as devil’s advocates, and the fellows for providing an intellectually stimulating environment. Andrea plans to attend medical school and then pursue a career supporting women as an Obstetrician/Gynecologist.
foreword

Every year, the Mellon Mays Fellows at Washington University in St. Louis choose a guest speaker to come to campus and give a lecture. During our weekly seminar, the Fellows share the names of scholars and intellectuals who have influenced their own research, and after several weeks of deliberation, they come to a consensus as to whom they wish to extend an invitation. The speaker for 2009-2010 was Mr. Albert White Hat, an elder of the Lakota people and a tireless advocate of the Lakota language and culture. Mr. White Hat barely made it to St. Louis, as an early spring snowstorm cancelled his original flight, but he was eventually able to get to campus in time for his scheduled lecture. Fortunately, he showed no wear from this ordeal and managed to give an engaging presentation in which he shared many stories about the attempts of Christian missionaries to “civilize” his people through formal education, pressuring Lakota youngsters to adopt Christianity and to conform to European American social norms. His stories illustrated the lack of respect for his people’s language and ways. Mr. White Hat has dedicated his adult life to sorting out the clash of cultures that he so poignantly experienced as a Lakota child educated in Christian schools.

Many of the articles you will read in this year’s issue of The Inquiry discuss situations in which groups of people clash with one another. In some instances, the conflict is quiet and subtle. In others, the struggle becomes violent. In her research, Ashley Williams has analyzed the massive bloodshed in Darfur, arguing that international efforts to protect human rights must often compete with ever present concerns about state sovereignty; governments are reluctant to open themselves up to potential interference from other nations, even in the furtherance of a good cause. Though violence is not a major aspect of Bobbie Bigby’s research site, she too studies the competing interests of various populations. In particular, she has striven to record how the Dongbas, or priests, of the indigenous Naxi religion of Lijiang, China, have used the rituals they perform for tourists as a vehicle to quietly assert their own ethnic identity and economic agency in the face of the Chinese government. Luis-Michael Zayas has focused his research efforts on studying la cueca, the Chilean national dance, which has a long and complicated history, having been used both by the general public and by the authoritarian Pinochet regime as an expression of Chilean identity.

The articles presented by Kimberly Short and Mimi Li explore struggles of a somewhat different sort - the contestation over images in the public sphere. Kimberly Short examines the popular television series Living Single and explains how the show both shaped and reflected ideas about African American womanhood as well as about the steadily growing African American professional class. Mimi Li has delved into magazine images of men over the past twenty to thirty years in order to analyze the ways in which concepts of heterosexual masculinity have broadened, potentially allowing men to employ a greater repertoire of poses and postures to express their identities.

The Fellows have worked tirelessly on their research projects over the past couple of years, under the guidance of their faculty mentors. To the Fellows, I say congratulations on completing your articles and on a job well done these last two years!

To everyone else, welcome to The Inquiry!

Joseph D. Thompson, Ph.D.
Academic Coordinator of African & African American Studies
Educational Archivist for Film and Media
Washington University in St. Louis
Tourism, Ritual Authenticity, and Agency among Naxi Dongba Priests in Lijiang, China

Bobbie Bigby

Abstract: This study investigates how ethnic tourism restructures cultural meanings, as well as economic and ethnic agency, for the ethnic Naxi inhabitants of Lijiang, southwestern China. Through in-depth interviews, field observations, and textual research, I examine the social processes involved as Dongbas, or priests, of the indigenous Naxi religion place their rituals on display for both domestic Chinese and foreign tourists who visit Lijiang. The first segment of the study is focused on Dongbas’ own understandings of “authenticity” with regard to these commoditized ritual displays. Just as the priest’s role as a service provider allows him to adapt his ritual services to both his traditional Naxi community and the tourist context, it similarly bestows authority on Dongbas to redefine, represent, and legitimize ethnic culture. In the second section of the research, Dongbas articulate that performing these ritual displays allows them to represent and preserve Naxi identity and Dongba culture within the politically restrictive Chinese nation-state. Simultaneously Dongbas can depend on performing ritual displays and can earn a dependable income. Tourist-geared ritual presentations thus come to represent not only an arena for contesting authority over cultural authenticity and meanings, but also a platform upon which ethnic and economic agency can be negotiated.

Introduction

Authenticity is a struggle…. –Edward Bruner

On a summer day at the foothills of the Himalayan range in southwestern China, three Dongba priests convened to hold a traditional ritual. Armed with a young chicken, worn leather drums, handfuls of lit incense, and tattered religious scriptures, these priests solemnly began to chant and dance. The American tourist crowd encircling them fell silent and motionless, resting their gaze on the haggard chicken struggling to free itself from the tree it had been tied to. These visitors viewed the priests with mixed attitudes of curiosity and respect, all the while adjusting their camera lenses in order to capture enough of this colorful indigenous spiritual experience to be shared with people back home. All of the women observers gasped as the eldest Dongba priest, decked in his silk robe and five-pointed ceremonial headdress, approached the chicken. This was about to be it—a primitive animal sacrifice that only a privileged few are allowed to glimpse and document. But after a few more minutes of dancing around the squawking chicken and offering roasted barley flour to the spirits, the Dongbas quickly concluded their presentation. No gruesome sacrifice would transpire today. The visitors took pictures of themselves next to the priests, gathered their belongings, and re-boarded their bus as the Dongbas looked on and waved goodbye.

Hours later, I was placed in charge of immersing the now slaughtered “ritual” chicken in a scalding water bath. While the eldest Dongba’s wife prepared the ingredients the bird would be cooked with, I plucked its feathers, thinking about the irony of eating a chicken used to appease tourists’ fascination with indigenous rituals and spirituality. The Dongbas chided us to hurry as the afternoon’s performance had made them work up an appetite that their rice wine could not quell. We all sat down around a communal pot in which the stewed chicken’s remains floated on top. I was honored as a guest when the Dongba to my right quickly fished through the pot and placed a tender piece of breast meat and a chicken foot in my rice bowl. He then looked at me and pleaded that I explain to everyone what disease causes American tourists to be so grossly overweight. From his request, it appeared that the Dongbas were not the only ones being observed today, but were also gazing back at their audience.

These Dongba ritual displays raise questions about the place of traditional culture in the tourist market. They moreover force readers to think critically about notions of “authenticity” and agency. As ethnic people display their culture for foreign audiences, the culture is inevitably modified, rendering diverse and fluid understandings of “authenticity” the most helpful in approaching the interaction between culture and the tourist market. The potential for economic and cultural empowerment made possible by the tourism industry casts ethnic participants as conscious agents who can profit by earning money while representing
and recasting their ethnic identities.

For domestic Chinese and foreign tourists to Lijiang, China, Dongba ritual performances serve as an important lens for glimpsing the spiritual heritage of the local ethnic minority known as Naxi. The Naxi people have unique cultural and religious traditions that distinguish them from the Han Chinese, China’s ethnic majority population, particularly their traditional adherence to an animistic religion called Dongba. The priests of this tradition, referred to as Dongbas, occupy a prestigious position among the Naxi community not only as ritual healers and counselors, but also as literate scholars who preserve and transmit local history, folklore, and the pictographic writing system.

Equipped with all of his necessary ritual materials, a Dongba priest waits to perform a ritual for a tourist crowd in Lijiang, China. Courtesy of Bobbie Bigby.

The Naxi are but one of China’s fifty-five different ethnic minority groups who generally occupy unfavorable economic and political positions compared with the dominant Han Chinese population. During the 1960s and 1970s in China, traditional culture was attacked, threatening to completely obliterate Naxi traditions such as Dongba. However, with Chinese economic and political reforms of the late twentieth century accompanying tourism development, ethnic peoples have been granted a limited space in which to revive their traditions.

Tourism in Lijiang and surrounding areas of southwestern China has grown exponentially in recent years due largely to the allure of indigenous cultures. For Naxi, the practices, beliefs, and arts associated with Dongba culture are salient in representing their identity and heritage to outsiders through the tourist market. In response to tourists’ demands of and curiosity about the Dongba tradition, Naxis and non-Naxis alike market various aspects of Dongba culture. For example, tourists are charged a fee for taking pictures next to Dongba priests or having Dongbas write out pictographs of their choosing.

Although a fair amount of scholarly work has been undertaken documenting the economic and cultural impacts tourism has had on the city of Lijiang and the Naxi people, including works by McKhann, Rees, Sofield, and Chao, few scholars have investigated locals’ perceptions of cultural commoditization for the tourist market. Fewer still have studied the responses of Dongba priests, the paramount representatives of Naxi culture, to this phenomenon. This study seeks to explore how local Dongbas understand and respond to the commoditization of Dongba culture for tourist audiences.

In this analysis, I focus my research exclusively on Dongbas’ understandings of ritual presentations geared towards tourists. Whereas Dongba rituals traditionally last for two days or more and comprise one or more of the following activities: chanting, dance, exorcisms, and animal sacrifice, tourist-geared rituals today are shortened to presentations of around thirty minutes and often display the more lively ritual aspects, particularly dance, sacrifice, and/or chanting. Tourists are frequently charged a fee or expected to contribute a donation to watch these rituals. Such displays remove Dongba traditions (partly or entirely) from their indigenous context, in addition to involving the participation of non-traditional (and often non-Naxi) actors such as businessmen, entrepreneurs and tourists.

This paper uses the voices of Dongbas actively involved in the tourist industry to discuss how Naxi people actively reshape and legitimize cultural meanings and presentations in response to the tourist market. I examine how Dongbas apply notions of authenticity to the ritual presentations that they perform for tourists. These discourses on ritual authenticity demonstrate that Dongbas bring diverse lenses to understanding authenticity. Moreover, the Dongba’s role as a service provider is articulated as a key factor in approaching ritual authenticity since a ritual performed according to a client’s wishes is agreed by Dongbas to constitute authenticity. Dongbas’ concerns with authenticity embody a larger project of reshaping culture to fit current needs, as well as reclaiming authority over those new cultural displays. This study furthermore emphasizes that Dongbas, although often employed by non-Naxi superiors, are active agents who use ritual displays to assert their own economic and cultural agendas. Displaying rituals to tourists allows Dongbas to harness their traditional skills in order to earn a living, an expedient practice that has historical precedent among Dongbas dating back to the 1760s. Alongside its economic opportunities, the tourist context represents a safe space amid the strictly controlled Chinese political climate where Dongbas can assert their Naxi identities first, allowing Dongbas to claim, preserve, legitimize, and inform others about Naxi identity and traditions.

Discourses on Authenticity
The tourism industry enables many people to venture to different destinations and glimpse “exotic” peoples and cultures. Embedded in some tourists’ desire to travel is an expectation that they will take part in experiences which reflect, and thus bring them closer to the cultural essences, values, and identities of the local people they visit. For Greenwood authenticity embodies a culture’s true meanings, and is thus something sought after by tourists who are curious about local culture. MacCannell draws an explicit connection between tourism and “authenticity”: “The motive behind a pilgrimage is similar to that behind a tour—both are quests for authentic experiences.” As both authors argue, however, the economic transactions underpinning tourism cancel out the meanings and values behind cultural actions. In fact, as locals attempt to capitalize on these economic exchanges, they in turn become performers and directors of “staged authenticity” by providing tourists with ready-made products that nominally reflect local culture and can be engaged with on a superficial level. Greenwood elaborates on the influence tourism has in restructuring authenticity by concluding,

Culture in its very essence is something that people believe in implicitly. By making it part of the tourism package, it is turned into an explicit and paid performance and no longer can be believed in the way it was before. Thus, commoditization of culture in effect robs people of the very meanings by which they organize their lives. Regardless of whether “staged authenticity” radically alters meanings for locals, the resultant product of this discourse is a notion of “authenticity” that represents singular, static, and reified cultural essences. As such, “authenticity” can be easily manipulated in the context of tourism to assign credibility and authority (or lack thereof) to cultural meanings and the people that control them.

In deconstructing the Western world’s fascination with and reliance on the notion of “authenticity,” scholars have looked to European ideas about modernity and individualism for answers. Individual-oriented Western societies have distanced individuals from their societies. As such, “authenticity” sought by peoples of modern, Western communities is understood by some scholars as “a quest for unity between the self and societal institutions, which endowed pre-modern existence with ‘reality.’” As Notar further elaborates, most scholars’ quests for the roots of “authenticity” are grounded in the idea that, “a ‘civilized man,’ ‘modern man,’ or ‘Westerner,’ alienated in his own existence, searches for an authentic self among the imagined nonmodern, ‘authentic’ cultures and objects of ‘savage’ or ‘exotic Others.’” This assumption does not simply justify Westerners’ obsessions with “authenticity”; it further implies that non-Western, “non-modern” primitives inherently embody “authenticity.” Notar challenges these simplistic assumptions, illustrating through her own study of an ethnic Bai community in China’s Yunnan province that local indigenous people are concerned with the “authenticity” of cultural products they buy and sell. Notar’s study disentangles indigenous locals from their traditional “Other” status by demonstrating how and why they challenge notions of authenticity. Notar asserts that while engaging in commoditization propels locals and tourists alike to actively question ideas about “authenticity,” commoditization is not necessarily a threat to cultural authenticity.

Although scholars such as Greenwood, MacCannell, and Notar paint a complex picture of tourism, of the various actors involved, and of the debates surrounding “authenticity,” Cohen further expands the discussion on tourism and “authenticity” by re-evaluating static, homogenous notions of “authenticity.” Cohen argues against the essentialist idea that tourist encounters undermine what is understood to be authentic; he moreover asserts that notions of authenticity fall along a wide continuum. Notions of “authenticity” are not simply diverse; in fact, understandings of “authenticity” are capable of self-reinvention in what the author terms a process of “emergent authenticity.” Varied understandings of “authenticity” are possible since, according to Cohen, it is a concept with fluid, negotiable connotations. As people adapt to different environments, their cultures and the ways in which they are perceived by others inevitably change as well. The tourism industry’s influence in restructuring social relationships and cultural environments undoubtedly serves as a stimulus for locals and tourists alike to question their own notions about the authenticity of cultural behaviors and products. In this respect, Cohen departs from previous theories of authenticity by emphasizing the role of tourism and economic transactions in reshaping the authenticity of cultural displays and the way they are perceived.

While endorsing Cohen’s criticisms, Olsen goes a step further in developing the concept of authenticity. Building off of Cohen’s idea that, “authenticity and falseness are not a dichotomous pair of concepts,” Olsen argues that authenticity should not be understood as a quality attributed to an object but as a cultural value that is negotiated among people of differential power and status. By applying a strict binary to classify objects as either “authentic” or “inauthentic,” scholars observing tourism interactions are often prevented from viewingwhat discourses of “authenticity” have the potential to represent: a negotiation of cultural meanings between actors, often of differential power status. Therefore, locals discussing the authenticity of a ritual or a piece of traditional clothing are no longer simply embroiled in a subjective debate. They are instead active participants in determining whose voice predominates to affect cultural change and legitimacy.
Bruner's succinct assertion that, “authenticity is a struggle” embodies the complex process that Olsen describes, as well as the implications this process bears. Understanding authenticity as a process of evolving meanings and power, as opposed to a subjective attribute, is critical in approaching Meethan's idea that authenticity is important when considering the uses to which it is employed in tourism and who benefits from it. Given Meethan's understanding of how authenticity functions as a tool in tourism, I intend to explore Dongbas' views of authenticity as applied to ritual presentations. Exploring discourses on authenticity can serve as a first step in understanding how locals respond to changing economic environments through culture.

**Paths to Ethnic and Economic Agency**

As a result of the tourism industry, an unprecedented sense of interconnectedness and cultural exchange has transpired across the globe. Despite all of the positive aspects associated with tourism development, disadvantages include negative effects on the social and ecological environments of host communities. Tourism also has a significant impact on local culture and behavior by reshaping and interweaving the economic and cultural activities of locals. Scholars have long weighed the economic growth experienced by local communities from tourism development against “social costs.” Examples of these social costs include crime, drug use, sexual promiscuity, and traffic. Although different opinions towards tourism's cost versus benefit equation emerge, several scholars have sought the perceptions of locals, those most intimately affected, regarding the influence of tourism. King, Pizam, and Milman's research is an example of a study that challenges homogenizing views of tourism development painted as either completely positive or completely negative. In presenting local Fijian opinions about tourism development and associated changes on their island, King et al. demonstrate the complex interactions that locals can have with tourism. The authors suggest that local residents are cognizant that tourism's negative social costs often accompany positive economic impacts. Furthermore, the increase in negative social behavior does not necessarily result in complete antagonism toward future tourism development. Focusing on local perceptions paves the way for a broader exploration of how locals adapt their cultural and economic patterns to accommodate tourism. Locals' discernment of the impacts of tourism implies that locals can harness tourism to strengthen their cultural and economic bases.

Although China is known for its strict monitoring of its ethnic peoples, the reality of everyday existence in ethnic communities, particularly in tourist contexts, often contradicts officially proscribed behaviors and attitudes. Cultural festivals and presentations in particular can yield safe arenas where ethnic consciousness and pride can be revived in ways that do not always attract suspicion from the Chinese state. Thowsen presents Tibetan horse races as a key example of an ethnic tradition “reinterpreted within the current political setting.” At the same time, the races still act as safe settings for Tibetan cultural pride and even ethnic agency. Although often cloaked in politically neutral garb, cultural presentations and products demanded daily by ethnic tourism can thus serve as important sites for individuals to exert agency in reshaping and reclaiming their ethnic identities. Through these cultural products or events, ethnic people are able to proudly assume an ethnic identity often to the exclusion of their Chinese national identity, a privilege rarely enjoyed by Chinese citizens, especially ethnic minorities.

In touching on the interplay between cultural authenticity and agency, Oakes asserts that locals can engage with, rather than reject, outside influences in attempting to redefine, represent, and embody their local "authentic" culture. He points to ethnic tourism development in China as an example of how cultural identities are restructured and "localized" by incorporating outside cultural influences. Similarly, cultural customs are re-evaluated and reinvigorated when forced to respond to structures of the political economy. As locals create, display, perform, and sell their cultural items to others in the tourist setting, they are rendered agents in representing and identifying with a local culture that they have helped to create.

At the same time that tourism enables ethnic peoples the opportunity to reshape local authenticity and assume stronger ethnic identities, it also provides many with economically viable careers. Locals are able to directly employ their cultural knowledge and practices in crafting unique products and displays for the tourist market. In many cases, this process is extremely rewarding as locals are able to rely on their culture to achieve prosperity and economic empowerment. In today's tourist-dominated market of Lijiang, for example, large numbers of ethnic Naxi, and Dongba priests in particular, take advantage of the employment opportunities offered by tourism. Yet the economic agency exhibited by Dongbas should not be understood as an exclusively modern phenomenon. In fact, Jackson's study of the Dongba tradition points to the 1760s when, due to increased Han Chinese influence over traditional Naxi marriage patterns and a subsequent spike in Naxi female suicides, Dongbas developed more specialized ritual repertoires to earn money while serving families whose daughters had died. This precedent speaks to the fact that some Dongba priests have traditionally used their rituals in both spiritual and economically expedient ways. It moreover emphasizes that commoditization has been linked to Dongba rituals previously and thus complicates discourses that isolate authentic-
ity from commercial or economic activities.

Tourist cash can additionally encourage ethnic populations to preserve and revive cultural traditions that are practiced infrequently or have been abandoned. In a different article, Oakes notes the emergence of Chinese ethnic groups with the support of the Chinese government, have revived their cultural traditions in response to the tourist economy. While acknowledging the economically expedient incentives for bringing back cultural traditions, Oakes points to the broader spectrum of influences at hand, namely the power of local ethnic consciousness and agency. In evaluating the reemergence of ethnic culture among populations that are catering to tourists, it is important not only to keep the concepts of ethnic and economic agency in mind, but to note their interdependence. Economic and ethnic agency certainly represents original influences in jumpstarting an ethnic group’s participation in the tourism industry and is strengthened as a result of the group’s interaction with tourism. Oakes elaborates on the notion that economic agency and ethnic agency influence one another:

The extent to which local groups can maintain sufficient agency to influence the nature of these [economic] interactions to their benefit will determine whether a changing political economy can be effectively appropriated in constructing meaningful, localized ‘space of autonomy.’

Although local populations are by no means homogenous in their responses to interactions with tourism, most people certainly do negotiate both ethnic and economic agency to an extent. As illustrated by scholars such as Sofield, the Naxi of Lijiang, China, serve as a paradigmatic example of this process since they have strengthened themselves economically and ethnically as a people through a conscious reinvestment in their cultural heritage. Sofield’s research points to the conclusion that engaging with tourism has caused more Naxi people to value their ethnic heritage and identity. Naxi people involved in the tourism industry not only gain a better appreciation for their traditional culture, but also learn that they can reap both economic and social advantages through tourism. Implicit in Sofield’s assertion is that the “benefits” accorded to the community are not solely economic; they further include a renewed sense of ethnic agency and identity.

From these preliminary discussions about negotiations of cultural authenticity and legitimacy, as well as ideas of economic and ethnic agency in the tourism context, one can begin to see their interconnectedness in an abstract sense. However, only the voices of locals engaged with tourism on a daily basis are capable of providing a concrete way of understanding, challenging, and refining these complex responses that scholars have pondered largely on a theoretical level. Members of the Naxi ethnic group in Lijiang, China, represent just one of those diverse voices. Before turning to the voices of Dongbas, however, I will first provide the ethnographic and historical backdrops against which Dongba priests and practices have developed over time.

Ethnicity in China

China takes immense pride in its self-appellation as a “unified, multinational socialist country” composed of fifty-six distinct ethnic or nationality groups. Han Chinese constitute the nation’s ethnic majority, comprising nearly 92 percent of the population, whereas the remaining fifty-five nationalities are regarded as ethnic minorities. The ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity among these nationality groups is astounding, ranging from the animist Mon-Khmer speaking Wa of Yunnan’s tropical forests to the Muslim Uighurs of ethnically Turkic Xinjiang. With the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, Chairman Mao Zedong turned to the Soviet model of ethnic classification to categorize and control China’s ethnic groups. Based on the social evolutionist ideas of Lewis Henry Morgan, Frederick Engels, and Joseph Stalin, the proposed classification scheme identified indigenous communities according to “a common language, a common territory, a common economic life, and a common psychological make-up manifested in common specific features of national culture.” Beyond “objectively” identifying Chinese ethnic populations, this categorization scheme allowed Chinese scholars to compare the social and economic development of different groups along a linear evolutionary model in which Han Chinese culture and norms represented the apex of civilization.

Embedded in this ethnic classification scheme is a larger project whose nationalist objectives extend most notably into the Qing dynasty (1644-1911). According to Harrell, various Chinese governments have used “civilizing missions” as a central tactic in dealing with ethnic populations throughout the centuries. In attempts to unify a large nation and simultaneously steer China onto the socialist path, Chairman Mao Zedong (1893-1976) understood the necessity of establishing cooperation among diverse populations falling within China’s borders. Although the Chinese state permits ethnic groups to maintain their distinct identities, scholars such as Grunfeld insist that the pursuit of national unity continues to underlie all of China’s ethnic policies. Hsieh further notes that the assimilationist tendencies are not just characteristic of China’s nationalist agenda, but can be linked to the Marxist idea that successful development along socialist lines will eventually force notions of ethnicity to disappear. In the resulting environment, expressions of ethnic minority culture are strictly controlled, with the assumption that minority populations will eventually assimilate to Han Chinese culture and language.
The power imbalance between Han Chinese and ethnic minority populations permeates not only the political sphere but also the Han Chinese-dominated arts and media, as well as affecting Han Chinese attitudes toward their fellow non-Han countrymen. For instance, Gladney explores how particular ethnic groups are feminized and even “exoticized as sexual or primitive” by Han Chinese who represent them in painting, films, and other media. In addition to the sensual, erotic images often attached to minorities, other motifs include representations of minorities as childlike, nature-loving, violent, or brave. These projections of ethnic peoples as designed by Han Chinese function as key images influencing the way minority peoples are represented and perceived in China’s ethnic tourism industry today.

Who are the Naxi?

With a population of around 308,839 scattered throughout Yunnan, Sichuan and TAR provinces, the Naxi nationality represents a medium-sized ethnicity in China, although their numbers are miniscule compared to China’s total population of 1.3 billion. Naxi populate Yunnan’s northwestern region and the large majority are concentrated in Lijiang County.

Even as Chinese and Tibetan schools of Buddhism exert strong religious influences for the Naxi, underlying the Naxi spiritual and cultural spheres is adherence to the traditional Dongba religion. An animistic faith that advocates propitiation of spirits found in nature, Dongba shares its roots with the pre-Buddhist tradition of the Tibetan plateau. At the center of this tradition are Naxi priests, known as Dongbas. These men serve as ritual specialists and healers for their villages while simultaneously supporting their families through agricultural production. More than intermediaries between the worlds of humans and spirits, Dongbas also are the storehouses of Naxi history, folklore, and religious philosophy through their knowledge of pictographs, the traditional script for the Naxi language.

Naxi are believed to be descendents of the “Qiang,” a western population that migrated south to Yunnan province during the Han dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE). During the Ming dynasty (1368-1644 CE), the “native official system” prevailed whereby Naxi men of authority were appointed by the Chinese courts to serve as local ruling magistrates. Under the subsequent Qing (1644-1911 CE) dynasty, however, centralized political control was enforced in Lijiang in 1723 with the introduction of court-appointed Han Chinese magistrates. In addition to politically integrating Lijiang more closely with the Chinese empire, Qing rulers sought to assimilate Naxi and other ethnic populations to Han Chinese norms through educational institutions as well as edicts on cultural behavior and intermarriage. Following the disintegration of dynastic rule in 1911, the central government’s efforts to exert control over ethnic areas in Yunnan during the Republican Period (1912-1949) were hampered by civil wars and disunity.

Heightened state control over China’s ethnic populations resurfaced with the ascension of China’s Communist Party and the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949. The Naxi were recognized as an official ethnic group in 1954. In spite of the state’s supposed liberal approaches to ethnicity laid out in the constitution, the majority of Chinese citizens, including all ethnic minorities, were denied their political and cultural rights under Chairman Mao’s turbulent reign. The height of political chaos was witnessed during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) when the eradication of old traditions and histories was encouraged by Mao’s leftist policies. Under the Cultural Revolution, Naxi traditions such as Dongba were banned, temporarily threatening the Naxi with the loss of their religious beliefs, rituals, folklore and language. Since Mao’s passing and the Economic Reform Era, China’s grip on ethnic policies has loosened, leaving the Naxi limited spaces in which to embrace their cultural heritage.
Tourism in China

Since the Economic Reforms of the late 1970s and early 1980s, tourism throughout China has steadily grown. Although domestic Chinese tourists dominated most travel sites throughout the country in both the 1980s and 1990s, foreign tourists have increasingly chosen China as a travel destination. Gormsen’s study of Chinese tourism development in the 1990s reflects the fact that local communities throughout China were impacted by the increase in revenue and opportunities as a result of tourism. According to Gormsen, local communities are often active participants, rather than passive pawns, in ensuring that the development of local tourism fits their economic, social, and political needs.

However, tourism’s potential for ensuring socio-economic and cultural empowerment should be reconsidered when tourism development is focused on an ethnic minority population within a larger nation-state. This holds true especially in the context of authoritarian states such as China. Since China’s majority population, the Han Chinese, dominate the most powerful political ranks, ethnic minority populations are often economically, politically, and culturally disempowered. Diverse ethnic communities throughout China have been obliged to comply with economic and cultural policies often at odds with their identities and rights as ethnic peoples. Consequently, Wood argues that tourism development potentially thrusts nation-states closer to their ethnic populations in the logistical spheres of economic and political planning. While these roles enable China to help boost a community’s economic prosperity, the Chinese state simultaneously can assume greater authority over the ethnic culture it allows minority peoples to practice and market to outsiders. Wood notes, “Any culture can be the object of [ethnic/cultural] tourism, but the nature of tourism development in any given area tends to relegate specific cultures and ethnic groups to one dominant role.” In general, Chinese ethnic populations are cast as objects of tourism whereas Han Chinese fill the majority of politically and economically influential roles.

China’s southwestern Yunnan province, one of the country’s most popular tourist destinations, represents a kaleidoscope of ethnic, as well as ecological diversity. Unlike other ethnic areas of China that often fall under the banner of autonomous regions, Yunnan is a patchwork of twenty-six distinct ethnic communities. Attractions throughout Yunnan encompass not only scenic landscapes, but also the allure of glimpsing “exotic” natives, a phenomenon termed by scholars as “ethnic tourism,” or the marketing of indigenous peoples’ exotic and colorful customs. Tourism brochures advertise photographs of dancing, jubilant ethnic peoples not as a backdrop for one’s vacation, but as a key feature of the tourist itinerary. Although much of the tourism industry in Yunnan is controlled by Han Chinese, local ethnic populations inevitably participate and even control some aspects of it. Swain thus asserts, “For indigenous groups in China, ethnic tourism reinforces their separateness from the majority while integrating them into the state economy.” In its approach to tourism, much like its position on ethnic affairs, China ultimately adopts an ambivalent role in binding ethnic minorities to the Chinese state while permitting limited independent enterprises and nominal self-representation. Swain further observes that, within China, ethnic tourism is a tool used for economic growth and not ethnic group sustainability. Although China demonstrates commitment to improving the economic welfare and development of its ethnic regions, it clearly employs ethnic culture to serve tourism while often discouraging and even denying ethnic peoples the freedom to practice their cultures.

Tourism in Lijiang

Lijiang attracts thousands of tourists a day. However, the large tourist waves inundating Lijiang’s old city streets are a relatively recent phenomenon. As with other backpacker hotspots throughout Yunnan province, domestic tourism in Lijiang caught on following the economic reforms of the early 1980s. In 1985 Lijiang County was first opened to foreign tourists. Following an earthquake in 1996, the Chinese government took special efforts to restore Lijiang and have its historic old city and Dongba pictographs named UNESCO World Heritage markers in 1997 and 2003 respectively. These decisions caused both Chinese and the world to want to gaze at the Naxi ethnic group in unprecedented numbers, igniting increased scholarly and popular interest in the Naxi Dongba tradition.

In response to the tourism boom, institutions established originally to preserve Dongba traditions, including the Dongba Culture Research Institute, began to display aspects of the Dongba tradition to tourists, most notably Dongba rituals and pictograph writing. Additionally, increasing numbers of primarily non-Naxi Chinese entrepreneurs began earning incomes by displaying different Dongba traditions to tourists. Examples of these tourist-gearered Dongba products include, but are not limited to, pictograph writing, traditional paper-making, dances, and rituals. Visitors to Lijiang need only to wander a few old back alleys to encounter how local entrepreneurs are continually inventing and marketing products that appeal to the exotic image of Dongbas. Unlike pictograph writing and rituals, however, items such as “Dongba meat kabobs” and Dongba cigarettes reflect little of the original Dongba tradition. They in fact only underscore the market appeal of associating products with the exotic Dongba culture that tourists have travelled to see.
Naxi incorporation into the post-1949 Chinese state and participation in the tourism industry have been the two most salient factors in molding how others understand Dongba priests and Dongba culture in the present. An important example of how the Chinese state actively participates in redefining Naxi and Dongba culture is embodied in Chao’s study of the Dongba religion. As an officially socialist and atheist state, China maintains a limited degree of tolerance for religious practice. According to Chao, the Chinese state recast Dongba traditions as sanitized, scholarly pursuits, rather than a religious tradition with superstitious and primitive associations. China accomplished this transformation by coining the expression “Dongba culture,” an official term that refers to all Dongba traditions while distancing them from their religious background. This invention of “Dongba Culture” moreover allows Naxi people to be represented as progressive, intelligent ethnics, as Chao writes,

> The dismantling and restructuring of images of the past occur in concert with the creation of ethnic identity in the present…. a depiction of the Naxi past in terms of Dongba culture, “one of the few early written sources of knowledge,” supports a re-presentation in the present of the Naxi people as a “civilized” and “advanced” minority.”32

Here Chao alludes to the fact that Dongba culture is perceived as nearly synonymous with Dongba pictographs. The close link between the pictographs and the Naxi certainly strengthens a vision of the Naxi as a civilized, intelligent, and even scholarly ethnic group since the pictographic writing was exclusively created by Naxi Dongba priests. China’s re-articulation of Dongba culture and representation of Naxi people is thus a crucial step in ensuring that Dongba priests, as well as all Naxi people and culture, conform to what China believes is acceptable, yet exotic ethnic difference.

For a fee, a Dongba writes out pictographs as Han Chinese tourists watch.

*Courtesy of Bobbie Bigby.*

In spite of China’s attempts to disassociate Naxi and Dongba traditions from their “primitive” background, certain images of Dongba priests and culture have been difficult to erase from both Han Chinese and foreign minds. This is partly due to the fact that recent tourist activity is not the first instance when the outside world has shown interest in the Naxi and Dongba. Aside from Han Chinese magistrates, merchants, and migrants whose presence in Lijiang increased during the Ming and Qing dynasties, Western explorers also ventured into the area and documented Naxi culture. Impressions of early to mid-twentieth century Lijiang in Russian Peter Goullart’s *Forgotten Kingdom* and American Joseph Rock’s *The Ancient Na-Khi Kingdom of Southwest China* form the limited backbone of early Western knowledge and ideas about the Naxi people. The titles of these accounts help reinforce in Western minds an idea of Naxi people and their Dongba practices as exotic primitives overlooked by time.

Dongba priests and practices continue to be painted in tourist literature and film of the present day as ancient, esoteric cultural remnants. On the one hand, the Dongba tradition is famed for its promotion of harmony between humans and nature, “mysterious hieroglyphs and religion,” as well as its “omniscient guru” priests.33 One Dongba quoted by a journalist for *The New York Times* states that “the Dongba religion was once like an encyclopedia that taught you everything.”34 At the same time, the Dongba tradition’s reputation as a “living fossil” is always undermined by the threat of extinction. One journalist warns that Dongba rituals are no longer practiced and only a few elders are able to decipher the pictographs.35 An article from the *Tibet Geographic* magazine attests simply, “Like many other ethnic minority cultures, Dongba culture is facing imminent extinction.”36

These homogenous, antiquated images of Dongba priests, coupled with the marketing of the tradition, lead McKhann to anticipate that the ethnic tourism economy has prompted debates over what “authentic” Naxi tradition really is. In accordance with McKhann’s hypothesis, various Western reports on the Dongba tradition conclude that Dongba culture exists today only as a popular fad that can be bought or watched at tourist-paced vaudeville shows.37 Naxis themselves raise similar concerns as evidenced by the words of Zhao Shihong, director of the Dongba Culture Research Center. Zhao states, “Lijiang and Dongba culture are very much in vogue… there’s a risk that commerce and tourism will turn Dongba culture into just a performance, or a bit of packaging.”38 Yet while Westerners and Naxi alike articulate skepticism toward the place of the Dongba tradition within the tourist context, it is important to leave room and consideration for the voices of Dongbas, some of the most visible actors in negotiating commoditization, cultural
Dongba Voices on Ritual Authenticity and Paths to Agency

As much as domestic Chinese and foreign tourists express curiosity about Lijiang’s ethnic traditions, Naxis (including Dongba priests) observe their visitors just as closely as they themselves are watched. Dongbas take note of visitors’ behaviors and perceptions of the ritual presentations that they perform for tourists. During one ritual presentation where I served as an interpreter for a group of American tourists, for example, the performing Dongbas later questioned me about the visitors’ racial backgrounds and interests in Naxi culture. These perceptions on the part of Dongbas ignited my interest in exploring their own approaches to ideas about authenticity, commoditization, and the intersection of their traditional rituals in the tourist context.

The information for this research project was culled during two separate visits to Lijiang, China, in June 2006 and July 2008. During June 2006 I interned as a Chinese-English interpreter and studied Dongba pictographs at the Dongba Culture Research Institute located in Lijiang’s Black Dragon Pool Park. That year, I witnessed and documented several Dongba rituals that were performed for tourists and local Naxi communities alike. Returning to Lijiang this past July 2008, I conducted fieldwork for a period of three weeks. Research techniques included participant observation as well as in-depth, semi-structured interviews. I interviewed a total of eleven informants, including both Dongbas who had experience with tourists and scholars who had researched the Dongba tradition and pictographs. Some interviews took place on site at the Dongba’s specific work venue while others were held in private homes. I conducted interviews entirely in Mandarin Chinese, with the exception of a few Dongbas who used Naxi language to express certain ideas or ask questions for clarification. My key informant, a Dongba who is fluent in both Chinese and Naxi languages and with whom I have worked since 2006, served as an interpreter during interviews where translation was necessary. Informants were selected with the assistance of my key informant, using snowball sampling. Selections were based on previous contacts that I had come to know while living in Lijiang in 2006. Immediately after interviewing, I translated and transcribed all interviews.

Given the fact that Dongbas have performed their rituals for visitors for several years now, I asked Dongbas whether or not they applied notions of authenticity to these commoditized rituals. While many Dongbas I interviewed stated that they perceived a ritual’s authenticity to be an important part of the way in which the tradition is performed and preserved, few could articulate what authenticity means in this context. In fact, several Dongbas noted that it is hard to identify what a “correct” or “authentic” ritual is since the Dongba tradition has never been united under a supreme leader or a governing body. Dongba Li asserts,

I think that [authenticity] is important. But since the spread of our Dongba tradition has been so vast, each place practices various aspects of Dongba Culture very differently. For example, each place writes their pictographs differently. Nothing is unified or the same … my home village’s rituals have differences [compared with rituals from other Naxi communities].

Dongba Li’s statement suggests that discourses on the relationship between meanings of “authenticity” and Dongba ritual performances are not new to the Naxi community in light of the area’s tourism boom. Instead, since Dongba priests in the past served people in their own, often remote villages, each Naxi community was traditionally free to develop distinctive, yet recognizable Dongba practices. From this perspective, recognition of Dongbas’ diverse understandings of rituals and “authenticity” allows both Dongba priests and outsiders to move beyond viewing cultural presentations and meanings through a true-false dichotomy.

For a better understanding of how some Dongbas interpret authenticity within the context of tourist-geared ritual performances, the role of the Dongba both historically and in the modern, tourist-geared economy must also be re-evaluated. Throughout most interviews, Dongbas described their traditional position in Naxi communities as a provider for people in need of a spiritual or counselor service. Dongba Wu articulates the variety of services Dongbas are capable of offering to their community by stating:

At my old home, in the big mountains, those people still really believe in Dongba and they will hire the Dongbas to do rituals. If they are sick they might still go to the Dongba … to initiate a house or pick a name for a child, they will go to a Dongba. Now, for example, if a man and woman want to get married and want to know if there is luck between them, or if people want to pick an auspicious date to do something, they will ask the Dongba.

In this interview excerpt, it is clear that although Dongbas have many different skills to offer their village members, it is people other than Dongbas who are responsible for inviting a Dongba to help solve a problem through ritual propitiation, divination, or exorcism. In fact, most informants agreed that aside from the responsibility of transmitting Dongba traditions to younger generations, Dongbas are entrusted with meeting the requests of those in need. The ways in which Dongbas’ traditional responsibilities are met and
perceived, rather than their purpose or audience, function as important factors in understanding the “authenticity” of their ritual services in both the past and present.

Viewed from the context of service-providers, Dongbas who are employed by businesses, theatres, or museums to perform rituals can be seen to fulfill their historical roles to deliver requested rituals, albeit for radically different audiences and purposes. Likewise, present-day tourists, government officials, and business owners who hire Dongbas to perform for their businesses or cultural parks can easily fit the role of people who request a service in the form of a ritual performance. When I asked Dongbas to compare rituals conducted for a Naxi audience versus a non-Naxi, predominantly tourist audience, most informants admitted that tourists often requested rituals to be performed in an hour or less. Additionally, rituals for Heaven Propitiation or Nature Spirits were performed most frequently since they were believed to be the most popular for tourist audiences. However, even though many Dongbas transformed ritual content or presentation, most still agreed that these modified presentations did not render rituals “inauthentic.” An excerpt from my interview with Dongba Tian illustrates this point:

D: If a tourist comes and asks to see a ritual that originally takes about 7-8 hours to complete, but wants it done in one hour, we have to respect their wishes. If we do not have it done in an hour, then no one is going to stay and watch it.
B: If you shorten this ritual and even alter its original flavor, do you think that this ritual you present to tourists is no longer “real” or “authentic”?
D: It is definitely real. You cannot have a fake ritual. It has just been shortened. This is not cheating people. We Dongbas just comply with what they want, whether that means one hour or two hours.
B: But if the ritual has been changed from its original form, do you personally feel any contradictions toward this ritual presentation?
D: I do not feel any contradictions because we [Dongbas] perform the ritual sincerely, in the correct way. We just have to adjust the speed since we normally do it very slowly.

These responses reflect the connection between the role of a Dongba and his responsibility above all to meet the requests of a client. Dongbas who alter the content or presentation of rituals according to spectators’ wishes are adhering to their traditional responsibility to respect clients’ wishes. Embedded in these assertions is the notion that Dongbas base their understanding of ritual authenticity around the ability to deliver a service to a client. This idea not only appears true within the present tourist economy, but also extends back to Jackson’s study of the catering of Dongba rituals to specific needs and families in the 1760s. Dongbas are made the authorities of these ritual traditions since they define ritual authenticity in addition to serving as the key actors in producing rituals that are authentic or that comply with the wants of their clients.

The power of Dongba priests to define and exhibit the authenticity of traditions such as rituals is important when considering that the Dongba tradition represents the Naxi ethnic group both inside China and to the larger world. Nearly all Dongbas, with the exception of a few dissenters, held that Dongba and Naxi cultures are closely intertwined. In the words of Dongba Yan, “Without the Naxi people, there would be no Dongba religion.” Dongba Li demonstrates the extent to which Dongba traditions and philosophy permeate Naxi culture in stating:

The Naxi group is very intelligent and creative. For example, it invented this [special handmade] type of paper in order to be able to write its own script. Dongba is just a type of culture... [Dongba] influenced Naxi people’s conceptions of protecting the environment... so Dongba is just a part of Naxi culture.

These Dongba practices associated with the Naxi ethnic group enable the Naxi to stand apart in the eyes of the Chinese state as a unique, yet civilized and talented ethnic population. But Dongba priests are not influential simply because they actively claim their ethnic identity in both local and tourist contexts. Additionally, Dongbas fill the crucial role of ensuring the preservation and adaptation of Naxi culture, language, religion, and identity in the modern day.
When I asked Dongba priests about their traditional responsibilities, most expressed that, in addition to meeting a client’s requests for a particular ritual or activity, all Dongbas are expected to pass their knowledge of rituals, pictographs, etc. on to succeeding generations. This responsibility subsequently allows Dongba priests to stand alone in the local community as authorities capable of preserving, representing, reshaping, and legitimizing Naxi ethnic identity.

While ritual commoditization permits many Dongbas a platform upon which to act as ethnic agents, it simultaneously raises the issue that Dongbas, whether through direct or indirect means, receive payment for performing rituals. Although the commoditization involved with tourists’ wishes to pay for viewing a ritual performance would seem to conflict with the inherently spiritual, non-materialistic nature of Dongba rituals, most Dongbas agreed that this was not the case. In fact, nearly all Dongbas stated that receiving payment for a ritual poses no threat to ritual authenticity. Informants explained that as people, they also must seek out viable ways to make an income in order to survive, or literally, “eat rice.” For most of these Dongbas who need a reliable income, marketing their ritual performances at a museum, shop, or performance hall is a practical solution. This is especially true for rural elderly Dongbas who, after retiring from physically strenuous agricultural work, are left with few options for earning money. Dongba Chen confesses candidly, “At this old age, we need a place to work. And these places need us. The owners, they see us and see that we’re pretty old, we’re not that cultured, and it seems that tourists believe that we are Dongbas…our appearance certainly attracts customers.” Chen’s assessment points to important dynamics at the root of most interactions between Dongbas, business owners/entrepreneurs, and tourists. Several Dongbas first noted that, upon being hired, their (mostly non-Naxi, non-Dongba) bosses placed the priests in servient positions by delegating tasks to them without looking to Dongbas for input or knowledge on how to display Dongba traditions. In the words of Dongba Wu, “You cannot say that it’s cooperation. If it were cooperation, Dongbas and owners would be eating at the same time. Right now, the owners eat before we do. It really is mutual dependence.” Wu’s statement raises a second critical element to the relationship that Dongbas maintain with their superiors. The inequalities faced by hired Dongbas are balanced by an acknowledgement among most informants that they use their bosses for a space to both represent their ethnic culture and identity while earning a stable income; in return, their bosses rely on Dongba priests just as much to attract tourists and make a profit. All in all, even as conducting rituals for tourists places Dongbas, at least on the surface, in a less powerful role opposite their bosses and the tourists that come to gaze, Dongbas themselves counter this argument. In addition to controlling the ways in which cultural authenticity is understood and displayed, Dongbas furthermore take advantage of the tourism context by acting as both ethnic and economic agents.

Conclusion

A review of most recent literature on Lijiang, Naxis, Dongba culture, and the impact that tourism has exerted on local traditions would tempt the conclusion that the Dongba religion today is “nothing more than a fad” and that the visitors who come to observe this culture “bring different values that are a threat to traditional Naxi lifestyles.” The prevalent commoditization of rituals and arts such as pictograph writing would certainly appear to corroborate these assertions, especially since Dongba products and performances are ubiquitous throughout Lijiang and extremely popular among tourists. However, these understandings of Dongba authenticity as threatened and hampereby tourism, especially with regard to Dongba rituals, operate on the assumption articulated by Greenwood and MacCannell that authenticity is of a singular essence that does not adapt with the peoples, cultures, and environments in which it is embedded, but instead remains static.

From dialogues with different Dongbas who present their ritual traditions to outsiders on a daily basis, several points become clear. First, many Dongba priests and Naxi people are conscious of and concerned with various understandings of authenticity as they relate to Dongba rituals. Dongbas’ ideas about the diversity of ritual practices and ritual authenticity over space and time mirror Cohen’s own discussion of multiple authenticities. Yet examining the role of the Dongba priest both historically and in the present day more directly pinpoints how authenticity is conceived of by most Dongbas I interviewed. Many informants articulated that their understanding of ritual authenticity is inextricably linked to their role as a service provider, or their ability to deliver exactly what a customer requests. In the present day tourism-driven economy, Dongbas who perform rituals for a crowd of tourist spectators or at the request of a business employer can be understood to be complying with the wishes of a client, and thus fulfilling the traditional responsibilities inherent in the role of a Dongba. Yet even though the content and length of time associated with commoditized rituals differs from the rituals held for local Naxi audiences, most Dongbas interviewed maintain that the authenticity of “commoditized” rituals is not challenged or even considered problematic, demonstrating the roles that tourism plays in restructuring, rather than robbing, Dongba rituals of their authenticity. These diverse notions of authenticity as applied to ritual performances appeal to ideas raised by Olsen, Bruner, and Meethan that discourses on authenticity in themselves are insignificant. Moreover,
it is critical to view the negotiation of authenticities among Dongbas as a social process whereby different actors compete for authority to influence culture and the way it is represented, perceived, and legitimized. Non-ethnic entrepreneurs and tourists exert great control in removing Dongba rituals from their traditional contexts and displaying them. Yet Dongba priests ultimately remain the authorities over the meanings of these cultural presentations by placing the rituals into a historical narrative that has emphasized the need above all for Dongbas to meet their roles as service providers.

For many Dongbas, participating in ritual commoditization not only has thrown them into a struggle whereby they participate as active, authoritative negotiators of cultural meanings, but moreover has provided a space in which Dongbas can claim a degree of ethnic and economic agency. Paralleling Wood’s description of tourism development in Southeast Asia, the Chinese state has admittedly thrust itself closer to the Naxi ethnic group by supporting Lijiang’s tourism industry on an economic level and actively recasting the meanings of cultural emblems such as “Dongba culture.” Yet since ethnic tourism necessitates the presentation of indigenous cultures and identities, Dongba priests encounter through ritual commoditization a benign space in which they might represent and preserve their distinct heritages without facing dire consequences from the Chinese state. While presenting rituals to tourists, these Dongbas are being allowed to assume first a Naxi identity, rather than a Chinese one, since that is what spectators have paid to view.

At the same time that Dongbas are indirectly allowed to embrace their ethnic heritages, they also are provided a significant degree of economic empowerment by relying on traditional knowledge, skills, and crafts to earn an income. This is especially true for elderly priests who have little experience outside their rural mountainous villages and agricultural backgrounds. Although the phenomenon of Dongbas profiting from ritual performances would appear to cheapen these traditions and again beg questions related to ritual authenticity, Jackson’s historical evidence points to a long history of economic capitalization on Dongba rituals. Sixteenth-century cases whereby Dongbas charged money for performing rituals to appease the spirits of suicide victims demonstrate economic agency and further challenge the authentic-inauthentic binary so often applied to cultural meanings and displays. Dongbas’ complex relationships with the rituals that they perform for tourists lend credence to the evaluations of Oakes and Sofield that economic and ethnic empowerment not only go hand in hand but strengthen one another.

Viewing Dongba ritual presentations as the doorway to an otherworldly spiritual experience or simply as a tourist trap are only two limited lenses through which to understand one aspect of an ever-evolving Dongba tradition and the Naxi people it represents. Fielding the voice of Dongbas and their own perceptions of tourist-geared ritual presentations is critical in understanding how Dongbas are authoritative players in preserving, reinterpretting, and legitimizing their ethnic culture. Although in China populations such as the Naxi are often denied the liberty to express their distinct identities outwardly, the intersection of the tourism industry and indigenous cultures often yields a creative space in which ethnic peoples can exert both ethnic and economic agency. Although sharing unequal positions with the employers who oversee their ritual performances, most Dongbas nevertheless admit that their work allows them to take advantage of the opportunity to earn a stable income while preserving and transmitting the Dongba tradition to a larger audience. Dongba priests thus stand at the forefront of establishing a positive, salient image of Naxi people who are simultaneously autonomous agents and amenable subjects of the Chinese state.

13 Ibid., 15.
20 TAR, also known as the Tibetan Autonomous Region.
22 Charles F. McKhann, “Fleshing out the Bones: Kinship and Cosmology in Naqxi Religion” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1992), 4. I employ the word “priest” in following McKhann’s identification of the three ritual practitioners traditionally found in Naxi society, including: dongba (priests), sainisi (shamans), and paq (diviners).
23 Dongba pictographs, similar to Egyptian hieroglyphs in form and function, have served Dongba priests as the script in which religious manuscripts are recorded and other written aspects of the Dongba tradition have been preserved for over 1,000 years. To this day, the Naxi people are the only group in the world that continues the tradition of their written pictographs, albeit in extremely small numbers since knowledge of the 1,400 pictographs has historically been the exclusive domain of Dongba priests.
27 Autonomous regions are areas in China where ethnic populations constitute or have traditionally inhabited or constituted a majority population. China has five autonomous regions, including: the Tibet Autonomous Region, Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, and Inner Mongolian Mongol Autonomous Region.
30 UNESCO, also known as the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, is a special branch of the United Nations that attempts to further the commitment to international human rights and freedom through promotion of science, culture, and education.
31 These Dongba cigarettes are actually rolled tobacco beedis smuggled in from Myanmar.
37 Ibid., 2.
39 Snowball Sampling is a research technique where current informants recruit future interviewees from a pool of people they already know.
40 In this dialogue, the Dongba informant is abbreviated by using ‘D’ while my own name is abbreviated by ‘B.’
41 China Tibet Tour, “Tibet Geographic,” 3.

**Bibliography**


Sexuality, Class, and Race: Reconfiguring Masculinities in Contemporary Men’s Fashion Advertisements

Mimi Li

Abstract: The field of feminist critique has yielded a fair amount of work addressing representations of women, femininity, and the female body in advertising images. However, feminist critics such as Susan Bordo and Naomi Wolf have thus far failed to offer an adequate analysis for masculinities and men in advertising images. Increasingly portrayed as an object of beauty in fashion and lifestyle advertisements aimed at a male viewership, the male body is less often conceived in utilitarian terms and is increasingly a site of negotiations about class, race, and sexuality. In the process of changing the way of approaching the male body, advertising images such as the ones I examine as case studies complicate and challenge the traditional heteronormative gender-sexuality paradigm established by language and convention. What ultimately emerges is a possible new way of conceiving of masculinities, one that substitutes the triad of race, class, and sexuality for the old heteronormative regime of gender and sexuality.

A group of tanned young men jog along a boardwalk toward their waiting yacht, their eyes focused on the middle distance. A full-lipped young couple dressed in head-to-toe Burberry nuzzle in a black and white forest. Black steel-rimmed eyeglasses from Perry Ellis frame the steel blue eyes of another young man who stares intently at the viewer, seemingly close enough for every shaft of his meticulously groomed stubble to be visible. Other ads featuring similarly sensuous advertising images crowd the pages of the annual fall fashion issues of men’s lifestyle magazines *GQ* and *Details*. The fall issue, a mainstay of contemporary lifestyle and fashion magazines, tends to be the thickest issue, not necessarily due to the augmented content but because the mass submissions of advertisements as tastemakers in fashion and lifestyle products take advantage of the timing to promote their newest offerings. Given the smaller field of men’s fashion and lifestyle products relative to the market for women, the fall fashion and style issues of men’s magazines exemplify a more representative swath of the products jostling for consumers’ attention than counterparts aimed at a predominantly female readership.

With targeted male magazine readership, major advertisers market not only their lifestyle and fashion products, but also masculinities associated with a brand and its offerings. Indeed, advertisers make great efforts to fuse their advertised products with their advertised masculinities, and it is worthwhile to examine the types of masculinities advertisers hawk to prospective consumers and the effects on readers. The majority of readers of magazines like *GQ* and *Details* cannot easily afford the products advertised on their pages, but all readers see the same images and receive more or less the same messages of fantasy worlds of well-dressed, well-groomed men embodying the Hugo Boss style, the look of the “Armani man” or the “Prada man.” Applying existing theory and existing criticism about advertising and gender to a few selected images from the fall fashion style issues of *GQ* and *Details*, I will demonstrate that feminist critiques of advertising images, with their focus on feminine codes of beauty and their relative dearth of analyses pertaining to men, do not sufficiently explain the representations of men in fashion and lifestyle advertising. I will argue that by promoting masculinities that focus on the fetishization of the self—a sort of cultivation of the self as an erotic object—and the associated products, advertising images targeted at men in publications such as the fall fashion issues of *GQ* and *Details* help to create a new mode of masculinity for men that is centered on consumerism, class, and “taste”—all displayed on the body of the consumer. This ongoing phenomenon is quite possibly the beginning of a new kind of strong, if not hegemonic, masculinity, one that centers around physical displays of consumer objects of the highest “class” and the most refined “taste” that money can buy.

Feminist Theories on the Male Body: Inroads and Difficulties

The relative dearth of feminist theory addressing men’s roles in visual culture and advertising, and the inadequacy of existing theories of representations of the body in advertising, pose additional challenges to an analysis of masculinities represented in major fashion and lifestyle ad-
vertisements aimed at men. Critical literature on aesthetics, advertising, and men/masculinities already exists, albeit in relatively segregated spheres. Some of the best work on the male body—and indeed, on the body—in advertising and other cultural images comes from Naomi Wolf and Susan Bordo, two feminist theorists best known for their work on the female body in cultural images. That Wolf and Bordo are two of the foremost contributors to the study of men in advertising images is at once a boon and a hindrance. Having written extensively on the female body in popular culture, both women are experienced in questions about the body. However, applying the same framework so well-suited to cultural images of women to men in similar cultural contexts can be problematic.

Among the most prominent and compelling of feminist writers, Naomi Wolf has applied feminist criticism to the culture and economics of beauty and examined the effects on women. Her now-classic feminist text, *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women,* articulates a theory of oppression of women predicated on their objectification in the larger culture and the maintenance of their status as objects of consumption. Such a theory helps explain the proliferation of media images including, but not limited to, fashion and lifestyle advertisements featuring models with seemingly perfect features dictating the rules of femininity and acceptable appearance to women. According to Wolf, images also have the power to set sexual agendas and to dictate their own versions of desire. She cites historian Susan G. Cole, who writes of images that “the way to instill social values ... is to eroticize them.” Thus, images designed to titillate, at least somewhat, have more of an agenda behind them than simply one of beauty or simply straightforward excitement. In the context of *The Beauty Myth,* Wolf uses Cole’s statement to support her contention that women’s subordinate position in society is due in part to the influence of images depicting women as subordinate to men and always well-coiffed and well-dressed. Wolf notes that advertisers themselves are immersed in this particular cultural environment, so it is not surprising that their advertisements would tend to follow this gender script. At the same time, the tremendous incentive for advertisers to capitalize on ingrained cultural values makes “easy” commercial images of conventional beauty hard to resist, thus contributing to their continued proliferation. Wolf’s analysis becomes less readily applicable when one considers that men’s value is not traditionally measured with respect to sometimes seemingly arbitrary codes of beauty. More so than women, men are traditionally perceived as individuals of action and economic agents.

In the context of consumer culture, Wolf characterizes advertisements as “consumer striptease[s]” designed to seduce viewers into buying the advertised product, or at least to associating that product with pleasurable feelings so that they may be more likely to purchase the product in the future. This intersection of eroticism and consumerism is especially effective in the context of advertising because it teaches the viewer to eroticize the product as well as the comely spokesmodel. At the same time, the consumption of women as visual objects and as substitutes for their advertised products serves to dehumanize and objectify the models featured in advertisements and further “feminize” them through emphasis on their beauty. This enhanced feminization of women in advertising images further reinforces the prevailing gender regime, encouraging the internalization of gendered standards of appearance and behavior, hence reproducing political and personal gender divisions. With women already longtime participants as subordinates in traditional gendered structures, the reinforcement of gendered, “feminizing” standards in cultural images is nothing out of the ordinary, especially for advertisers hungry to capitalize on such imagery. However, gendered and gendering practices do not apply so readily to advertising images of men. Simply beautiful images of men provoke questions where beautiful images of women do not. Why does he put himself on display when he does not have to? Although it is enough for a beautiful woman to be on display, the same does not apply to a man. The woman is occupying her rightful place in the existing gender structure as a creature on display, while a man in the same position is questionable, a person seemingly rebuffing his own privilege as one who has cultural permission to look without being looked at.

Where Wolf conceives of female bodies in contemporary visual culture as most often passive objects to be viewed and acted upon, masculinities scholar Michael Messner points out the predominantly utilitarian characterization of the male body in contemporary culture. Characterizing the male body as a machine, Messner observes that while men are allotted more active roles in society than women are, such roles cause them to view their bodies as machines, tools to be used, built, maintained, and disciplined—instead of as an extension of themselves. Within Messner’s framework as well as theories forwarded by thinkers in masculinities studies such as Michael Kimmel, the male body is most often understood as one of action, which justifies its construction as a functional unit above all else. While the exclusive construction of the male body as a machine is an objectification of the male body that imposes limits on men and their representations, men can and do use their toolbodies to enforce order in the gender regime by punishing and intimidating those who would step outside proscribed boundaries of gender. Women, on the other hand, have no such option. They cannot use their bodies, or much of anything else, to enforce order in a male-dominated gendered hierarchy. Women simply *are.*
Another difficulty in conceiving of the male body as a visual object is the barrier of language. As it exists, contemporary language in all its permutations is inadequate to describe masculinities and men in visual terms. The same lexical set used to describe women, especially beautiful women like the ones most often featured in advertisements, does not fit male subjects nearly as well when we attempt to describe men using the best linguistic tools available. Men are seldom, if ever, described as “sultry” or “stunning” or “statuesque.” However, a whole lexical set is in use, but not closed, he gives off a sultry, moody, reserved look that is classic signals, both in the “natural” and the “cultural” world, of willing subordination.

This man is presented as an object of beauty to be consumed by the eyes, and the effect is a feminizing one, which is not necessarily negative in this case. Although the downward gazing Calvin Klein model is stripped of some of the privilege usually afforded men by offering himself as a target of visual consumption and implicit evaluation, Cole's idea of legitimization through eroticization saves him. Following Cole's logic, if eroticization leads to increased acceptability, exposure of eroticized images such as the Calvin Klein advertisement in question would gain acceptance over time. Because the model is conventionally attractive and is presented in the photograph in an eroticized manner, Calvin Klein sows the seeds for acceptance and even valorization of men as beautiful objects of consumption. Bordo, who editorializes liberally throughout the book about the effect images have on her, says of the Calvin Klein ad's projected message: “Oh my.” Still, the fact remains that one effect of presenting men and male bodies as objects of beauty, as contemporary ads do, is to feminize them.

Bordo also contributes to the existing conversation about the role of gay aesthetics in men's fashion and lifestyle advertisements. She discerningly interprets the proliferation of ads featuring “men as sex objects” as an outgrowth of the burgeoning male vanity and beauty culture, which provided a profit-making opportunity for retailers and designers to latch on to men's newfound comfort with vanity, beauty, and male “femininity.” Consumerism, the rise of male vanity culture, and the increasingly prominent gay aesthetic united to help break taboos against (semi)erotic display of the male body. If we accept Cole's eroticization as legitimization of the model, the display of the male body and its increased acceptance are mutually self-perpetuating. That theoretical underpinning, coupled with the very real economic rise of the homosexual male population, makes it too economically risky not to cater to the tastes of the gay male population. It is conventional knowledge that women's bodies are a readily exploitable resource for advertisers to make a product more appealing to heterosexual men. The same can be done with men's bodies to appeal to the gay dollar.

Gay Consumerist Clones

Daniel Harris, a prolific independent scholar and self-styled gay cultural anthropologist, also isolates the role of gay aesthetics in consumer culture. Like Bordo, he attributes the rise of the gay aesthetic in commercial images of men to consumerism. Unlike Bordo, Harris's argument for the cause of the rise of the gay aesthetic is explicitly economic and almost harsh: “[gay men] had become so financially useful to the business world that our integration as respect-
able Americans was inevitable." Thus, partly to cater to this particular segment of the consumer population, it became advantageous for businesses to normalize the gay aesthetic of youthful men possessed with bourgeois bodies: finely muscled but not overly aggressive in their virility, a moderated version of the hairy "gay clone." However, as Harris endlessly stresses, it is due to the middle class gay population’s consumerism that gay aesthetics began to take hold in men’s advertising images. With the bourgeois willingness to spend also came the rise of what Harris calls the bourgeois body, the toned piece of muscle and sinew that is perhaps the most important component of the aestheticized male body, reshaped to wink simultaneously at consumerist and gay tastes with its fine accoutrements and cultivated form.

That consumerism should have a firm hold on the message presented by advertising images is a foregone conclusion. The purpose of advertising images is to help sell a product and an implied accompanying lifestyle. To that end, African American scholar Dwight McBride, who happens to be a gay man himself, highlights the racism and classism in men’s lifestyle and fashion advertisements, the most egregious offender of which he considers to be Abercrombie & Fitch, whose advertisements feature endless parades of lily white youth looking for all the world as if they are living the life of well-heeled East Coast teenagers. McBride observes that Abercrombie & Fitch’s ads, which feature predominantly muscular young white men photographed in monochrome, enjoy a sizeable following in the gay community. McBride seems personally and intellectually frustrated by white men’s domination of almost every part of gay life, including clothing consumption and dominant body aesthetics presented in advertisements subtly and not-so-subtly aimed at gay men. It is not with the stylized content of Abercrombie & Fitch’ ads that McBride takes issue, but with the men and types of masculinities represented in those ads. All the young men featured in Abercrombie & Fitch ads are athletic, white, and seemingly upper-middle class with a certain “all-American” look. The combination of racial solipsism and classism is problematic, as it narrows the possibilities of choice for the consumer contemplating and invited to desire Abercrombie & Fitch products. In that way, some of the company’s most bankable consumers are excluded from the kind of “happiness” that Abercrombie & Fitch’s products, like all products, supposedly bring. Consumers who do not fit into Abercrombie & Fitch’s prescribed form of masculinity are excluded from the lifestyle the company sells, but they might be able to buy their way into this coveted life by using the company’s products. However, the degree of inclusion into the Abercrombie & Fitch universe is still dependent on individual consumers’ socioeconomic status and race, creating a sort of Sisyphean task in which consumers engage in a continual retail arms race against static images they see in the advertisements in an effort to attain a level of worthiness an Abercrombie & Fitch man must have.

Beautiful Men in Advertisements: Case Studies from GQ and Details

Existing literature on gendered bodies in advertising images focuses on the requisite beauty of the photographed subjects; the conventional wisdom is that the surge in advertisements featuring “beautiful” men is the result of the economic power of the gay male population, and that advertising targeting men, like all advertising, is designed to persuade viewers to want to purchase the associated products. Given such a background, I will conduct a few case studies of contemporary men’s fashion and lifestyle advertisements to illuminate their constructions of masculinity, consumerism, and aesthetics in relationship to existing theory in the area. Gentleman’s Quarterly magazine,
better known as *GQ*, proclaims “Look Sharp, Live Smart” as its motto, advertising its attention to helping its readers to attain a certain “sharp” appearance. On the inside cover of the magazine’s “Big Style Issue” of September 2008 is a fold-out spread for Polo Ralph Lauren featuring four models, each in a separate frame. The first model sports gleaming dark blonde hair that seems still wet. His gaze is steady and direct; he wears a striped shirt, a tie, a grey vest, and a blazer with a seemingly stiff knit scarf. Another wears more or less the same expression and ensemble; the only differences are his darker brown hair and the stem of a pair of vintage eyeglasses hanging out of his breast pocket. The third is the oldest subject in the series of photographs and the only one with gray hair, even though his face remains unlined. A newsboy hat covers most of his hair and he wears a pinstripe suit with a long coat. The fourth subject in the Polo Ralph Lauren ad is located on the inner flap of the front foldout page. He is the only black model of the group and the only one looking away from the camera. Like the others, his expression is impassive, and like the others, he stands with his arms akimbo, his hands tucked into his pockets. Like the others, his features are small and smooth; the curve of his jawbone juts out enough to hint at the underlying bone structure, but not enough to overwhelm the viewer, and like the others, his entire body is groomed to near perfection. Apparently, the Ralph Lauren man is ageless, even with silvery white hair, intellectual enough to wear glasses, but not when he is posing for pictures, and a solid member of the patrician class.

The main differences between the model on the inside of the front foldout page and the others are that he is black whereas the others are white, and he is the only one of the group looking away from the camera. His body language is a departure from what Susan Bordo terms the “rock” posture assumed by many male models of color in fashion advertisements from the 1980s and 1990s. According to Bordo, the “rock” posture is one of defensiveness bordering on confrontation. “Many models stare coldly at the viewer, defying the observer to view them in any way other than how they have chosen to present themselves: as powerful, armored, emotionally impenetrable,” opines Bordo. In the Polo Ralph Lauren ad the Caucasian models are “rocks,” whereas in Bordo’s analysis, the “rock” posture is more commonly associated with African American models. So why the departure from the “rock” posture for this particular African American model?

In the book *Scripting the Black Masculine Body*, Ronald Jackson concludes from his analysis of various media that in presentations of racialized bodies, the black male body is violent while the white body is its diametrical opposite. Presented with his gaze turned to the side, the black Polo Ralph Lauren model is divested of any quality that could possibly be perceived as threatening. His body language is not aggressive or martial. His gaze, turned away from the viewer, injects a bit of softness into the ensemble of images otherwise portraying hard-eyed white men who are not traditionally scripted as intimidating, threatening, or even potentially criminal. Even dressed in Ralph Lauren’s finest, the black model must be scripted to look away so as to remove any suspicion of a threat. Although most likely a member of the economic upper class in the story the advertisement tells, the black model is still singled out. The finery on his back does not completely cover the cultural meaning of his racialized body although it sanitizes him and makes him more acceptable to a mainstream viewership. However, the darker social and cultural meanings of his racially “different” body can be whitewashed with his obvious wealth and class. He is a Ralph Lauren man, after all.

Later in the same issue of *Gentleman’s Quarterly* appears a four-page ad for Sean John, the brand captained by music producer and sometime rapper Sean Combs, better known as Diddy. On the first page, Diddy lends his image to the campaign by appearing in a trench coat, suit, and tie, his eyes obscured by large aviator sunglasses, his face unsmiling as his diamond stud earrings glint coldly. On the following pages, the viewer is treated to views of Diddy’s palatial loft in which he lounges on a white couch while two women dressed in not much more than silk underwear and leather jackets patrol the premises. Diddy himself is fully dressed in black jeans and casual shirts and jackets, his arms slung across the back of the couch, his aviator sunglasses still hiding his face. Finally, on the last page of the ad, rapper Nelly stands in a pair of gray Sean John boxers and dark jeans, his arms at his sides, showing off his muscles and numerous tattoos to maximum effect. His eyes, downcast, but not out of shyness, combine with his tattoos and muscular physique to form a portrait of street-wise masculinity. Of the ads represented in the fall fashion issues of the magazine’s “Big Style Issue” of September 2008, “Nelly: Sean John Spokesmodel 2008,” http://straight-fromthea.com/2008/07/28/nelly-is-sean-johns-new-spokesmodel/
of *GQ* and *Details*, the ad for Sean John is the only one that uses women as a device to set off the masculinity of the men in the ads. The use of scantily clad women calls to mind the set of a hip hop music video, which is almost indistinguishable from the setup pictured in the Sean John ad, with its combination of luxury goods, designer clothing, and nearly naked women. The men contrast with the women, who help assert the “heterosexuality” of the image and of the men featured. The page projects unapologetic male-centered heterosexuality; the men are pictured consuming the company and images of the exposed women.

Interestingly, rapper Nelly is featured alone on the last page of the ad. He is alone because he is the sole subject and because his photo is separated from the rest of the spread by a page. Unlike Diddy, Nelly does not have the benefit of women to demonstrate his heterosexual masculinity. However, his tattoos, muscles, and posture, though slightly exaggerated, are simultaneously posed and nonchalant enough to be credible, a good piece of strategic theatre of masculine detachment. Diddy supposedly handpicked Nelly to be a spokesmodel for his clothing line for his “swagger” and “attitude” as well as the requisite physique. That the Sean John brand is using the visual language of hip hop to communicate its message and signal to its consumers the brand of masculinity it supports is striking. Not only is the Sean John ad the only ad in the September issue of *GQ* featuring exclusively black models, but its hip hop–influenced visual language signals to consumers a specific brand of black masculinity modeled by Diddy and Nelly. Randall Jackson sees such images as par for the course for a brand of black *GQ* of only is the Sean John ad the only ad in the September issue consumers the brand of masculinity it supports is striking. Not only is the Sean John ad the only ad in the September issue of *GQ* featuring exclusively black models, but its hip hop–influenced visual language signals to consumers a specific brand of black masculinity modeled by Diddy and Nelly. Randall Jackson sees such images as par for the course for a brand of black *GQ* of only is the Sean John ad the only ad in the September issue

...consumerist hedonism that seems to accompany the media portrayal of the life of the moneyed black man.

A different kind of advertisement lies elsewhere in *GQ*. While the Sean John ad spread emphasized male heterosexuality and men as consumers, not as the consumed, this Perry Ellis ad is directly seductive. The ad features an unabashedly coquettish model draped across the hull of a boat, one arm slung over his head as his head dips slightly toward the water. His gaze is velvety and betrays no self-consciousness about his open shirt revealing his chest. In the incarnation of the Perry Ellis spokesmodel, the Perry Ellis man is unafraid of his own sensuality. He does not have the self-admiring Narcissus ethos that Acqua Di Gio’s models flirt with, but engages directly with the viewer. He flirts with the viewer, regardless of the audience. If spokesmodels are constructed as stand-ins for the eventual consumer, then the Perry Ellis man is more than comfortable being the object of a gaze. In fact, he welcomes it. To echo Bordo’s statement about the 1995 Calvin Klein image, there is something “feminine” about the model’s pose. He is definitely not in a confrontational “rock” posture. He isn’t even upright. Instead, his posture is one of relaxed utter submission, his body language open. The arm slung over his head opens his body to more scrutiny and softens his body language. This pose is more often associated with images of women than with men. At the same time, the man in the advertisement is aware that he is being looked at, and he looks back at the viewer with no apprehension. Just as with the ads for Acqua Di Gio, the main hook utilized by the Perry Ellis image is the model’s compelling posture and expression. Unlike the ads for Acqua Di Gio, there is no doubt that the model is gazing out at the viewer; this is not a possibly Narcissus-inspired scenario in which he is enjoying a view of himself. Of all the ads in the September 2008 fashion and style issues of *GQ* and *Details*, the Perry Ellis ad is the most open in its acknowledgement of its use of its spokesmodel as an object to be visually consumed. He is posed as if ready for the taking, a hybrid between a masculine subject and a “feminine” message. This masculine subject, however, is lounging on his own boat. It is important to remember that class is almost never out of the frame in fashion and lifestyle advertisements. With the entrance of this rich and pretty man-boy, it becomes possible to trade class for masculinity, and vice versa. Consistent with Daniel Harris’s views on the superior “masculinity” of working...
class men, the man of the leisure class has more freedom to widen the boundaries of acceptable masculinity. Masculinity is not only racialized, it is classed.

**Men as Objects**

Compelling advertising images may deploy any number of devices to hold the gaze of the viewer. Increasingly in men’s fashion and lifestyle advertisements, men are taking on the role of objects for visual consumption, even when the intended audience is male and most likely predominantly heterosexual. Sometimes the attempt to attract and hold the consumer’s attention with a stirring image is blatant, as in the case of the advertisements for Acqua Di Gio and Perry Ellis men’s fragrances. The models featured in those ads possess a delicate beauty that does not fit neatly into the more conventional box of macho physical charm. Men who are offered up as objects to be gazed at become easily feminized through the gaze. In the case of the Perry Ellis model and Susan Bordo’s Calvin Klein model, it is their postures and “prettiness” that mark them as somehow “feminized.”

Still, the notion of any man as an object for visual consumption disturbs the traditional gender regime in which men are more often associated with action and *women* are the ones to be submitted to the gaze. Under the traditional heteronormative framework, the assumption that to be gazed upon means to be feminized works and makes sense because women are the objects of the gaze in that scenario. For instance, Naomi Wolf has no problems describing the women she sees in advertisements using language that puts the appropriate emphasis on their femininity and beauty. The same language applied to men, on the other hand, is incongruous and feminizing precisely because it is most often used to describe *women*. However, the notion of revoking some amount of “masculinity” from a male object of the gaze is potentially problematic partly because of the fluidity of gender roles and partly because any discourse about “feminizing” men risks an interrogation of beauty, gender, and sexuality. So perhaps it is not surprising that images of “feminized” men, men who are hybrid creatures characterized by ethereal beauty formerly only culturally allowed for women, are available only through the fantasy world of advertisements. Advertising is a creative medium as well as a capitalist medium, so it would follow that advertisements have the freedom to negotiate boundaries of class, sexuality, and gender in ways that would be questionable and possibly even punished if openly flouted. However, it is also important to note that the triumvirate boundaries of class, sexuality, and gender cannot all be transgressed at once. Rather, they exist in a sort of barter system where everything much be balanced against some abstract absolute value. A male subject may assume a feminine pose, but he might be rich. An Abercrombie boy might wrestle homoerotically with a teammate, but he is a son of the upper class possessed of a flesh and blood version of the body as a tool, and so on and so forth. In the advertisements studied, the lone African American character in an otherwise white Ralph Lauren world may be disadvantaged by his race according to Jackson’s analysis, but racial difference is washed away, albeit imperfectly, with class. The Perry Ellis man may be oddly “feminine” in his submission to the gaze, but he does own his own boat. Only the heterosexual upper class Caucasian man of Banana Republic seems to be beyond reproach.

Given that the abstract omnipresent cultural gaze, which visual theorist Laura Mulvey conceptualizes as male, feminizes whomever it gazes upon, then a woman being gazed upon is “right” and “normal” in a cultural context of patriarchal heteronormativity. Given such a paradigm, the scenario in which a man is gazed upon and actually fashioned as an object of the gaze, such as in the case of men’s fashion advertisements, becomes problematic because it theoretically compromises the existing gender paradigm and might subvert the commercial intent of the advertising geared toward a mainstream patriarchal heteronormative consumer population. As theorists on images in advertising such as Naomi Wolf and Jean Kilbourne have noted, the effect of the cultural gaze on women as visual objects is that the objects who are gazed upon are compelled to preen for the gaze. The same phenomenon seems to apply to men. The rise of Calvin Klein and the enormous success of his advertising campaigns featuring beautiful men coincided with the rapid growth of the men’s vanity industry, including men’s fashion, cosmetic surgery, and fitness. In a microcosm, the models featured in advertisements for men, the ones who are supposed to be examples to other men, are always meticulously groomed. Thus men are selected for the gaze of the camera and for the public gaze. The man modeled by fashion advertisements is one who preens, thanks to what Wolf calls the “pornography of beauty.”

**Problematic Masculinities: Remaining Questions**

Recent advertisements have increasingly offered models of masculinity focused on preening for the gaze, men offering themselves as objects for the gaze, an activity almost universally acknowledged by theorists and laypersons as “feminine.” Under such conditions, questions of gender and sexuality arise. The attributes of gender and sexuality are almost always twinned in existing discourse with the designation that a “feminine” man is most likely homosexual and a traditionally “masculine” one is probably heterosexual. However, no one has yet written with an eye toward separating the two variables. Even Daniel Harris, who offers a relatively nuanced view about masculinity and gay men, writes of gay magazines that it is always the straight
man's masculinity that is considered the standard bearer in the “right” and “natural” form of masculinity.\(^\text{19}\) After explaining all the ways in which gay men's masculinity and their imitations of straight masculinity are insufficient, Harris never specifies what kind of masculinity would be “valid.” It seems that even the gay cultural anthropologist has trouble unbundling men's gender from their sexuality.

With much of the focus on increasingly prettified young white men in men's fashion advertisements, examples of black masculinity are remarkably similar to traditional conceptions of masculinity. If the pages of men's fashion and lifestyle advertisements have moved the default masculinity of the Caucasian, young, and toned variety further to the side of prettiness and submission to the gaze, black advertising masculinity is still overwhelmingly ghettoized and exoticized, in the case of Sean John, relying on conventions of hip hop to portray the ultra-virile streetwise masculinity best encapsulated by Nelly with his intimidating tattoos. Even when a black model is included in an advertisement and dressed in the same threads as his white counterparts, his body language has to be tamed to render him completely non-threatening and sterile. Clearly, black masculinities have not yet been included in the movement toward modes of masculinity that put increased emphasis on men's beauty without washing away the men's ethnicity. The world of men's advertising images is still largely segregated.

Beyond the questions of race, gender, beauty, and sexuality, at the heart of men's fashion and lifestyle advertising—any advertising—is the drive toward consumerism. All the case studies in this paper address advertisements for products of premium quality at premium prices, featured in aspirational magazines. Given the price levels of the products advertised in the fall fashion issues of \textit{GQ} and \textit{Details}, the masculinities modeled in their advertisements are overwhelmingly upper-middle class and white, the default face of aspirational consumerism. Advertisers such as the ones for Banana Republic and Polo Ralph Lauren construct scenarios in which well-heeled young men live the good life represented by the clothing they wear. In virtually all the advertisements, the models featured are proxies for the actual consumer. The model exists to set an aspirational goal for the viewer and also to show the viewer how his life could be if he were living, say, the Ralph Lauren lifestyle or the Banana Republic lifestyle, with people of lower socioeconomic positions excluded completely from the picture. When the images cross over from aspirational modeling for the consumers to seducing the consumers, seductive advertising images teach consumers to fetishize themselves through their well-built proxies while transferring a portion of the fetishization to the products the images promote. Any kind of desire is good desire, even relatively unacknowledged homoerotic desire.

For all the earlier fretting about blurring mainstream lines of gender and desire, perhaps in advertising, it is more permissible to cross such boundaries than it is in other fields. After all, as long as the images are compelling, the faces and bodies of male models can continue to seduce male audiences, showcasing myriad products. Interestingly, men's fashion and lifestyle advertisements are offering alternative masculinities of more “feminized” men, giving permission to viewers to aspire to be more stunning, more of a clotheshorse, and more like the handsome fellows in advertisements. One of the obstacles in the way of acceptance of such ideals is the lack of language that can describe and articulate such masculinities without necessarily comparing them to existing models of femininity. Reductive terms like “metrosexual,” “bi-curious,” or even “straight-gay” will no longer suffice. More adequate terms would address the specific characteristics of these masculinities without immediately linking them to speculated sexuality or its placement on a two-dimensional masculine-feminine continuum. However, such terms have yet to come into use.

**Conclusion**

With existing theories on the gendered body in advertising as support, a case study of advertisements from the fall fashion issues of \textit{Gentleman’s Quarterly} and \textit{Details} magazines have yielded a picture of the idealized masculinity of upper class consumerism dressed up in the body of the aspirational bourgeois. However, it is a masculinity that excludes black bodies and black subjects and fails to include them in any meaningful way even when minority masculinities are acknowledged. At the same time, this masculinity is one that fetishizes consumption objects as well as the spokesmodels for those objects. The model aids in cultivating the desire for the consumption good, acting as a false mirror to the viewer: “If you can have this, you can be like me. You may even have me.” Given that encouragement, men are now free to preen and consume fashion and lifestyle products in the way women have been traditionally allowed to do, altering the face of masculinity and the matrix of permissible desires.

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2. Ibid., 149.
3. In her book \textit{Face Value: The Politics of Beauty}, Robin Tolmach Lakoff also touches on the traditional conception of the emphasis on someone's outward appearance as an act of feminization. She interprets the myth of Narcissus as an example of a man who transgresses gender norms by being overly preening and obsessive about his appearance. His punishment is to be transformed into the eponymous flower. See Bibliography.
The late feminist theorist Andrea Dworkin corroborates the observation of the passive female body in culture, adding that men and women are also differentiated in power levels in society through men's right to touch women seemingly at will without according such rights to women.

Michael A. Messner, “The Triad of Violence in Men's Sports,” in Transforming a Rape Culture, ed. Emilie Buchwald, Pamela Fletcher, and Martha Roth (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2005), 36.


Ibid., 179.

I have previously written about the gay aesthetic and have worked to come to an operational definition for the term. The gay aesthetic generally consists of a bodily idea characterized by a youthful white man in middle class to upper-middle class surroundings.


Bordo, The Male Body, 186.


Jackson, Scripting the Black Masculine Body, 107.


Wolf, The Beauty Myth, 150.

Harris, The Rise and Fall, 106.

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In a 90’s Kinda World, I’m Glad I Got My Girls: An Examination of *Living Single’s* Portrayal of African American Affluence in the 1990s

Kimberly Short

**Abstract:** The following paper presents the interplay between society and television sitcoms and the resulting social implications from television’s messaging. A close analysis of the show *Living Single* will demonstrate the social implications of narrowcasting to a specific audience in the 1990s; depict discourse between the show and the social context of African American female upward mobility during this era; and largely explain the social implications of this form of unique messaging as *Living Single* worked to standardize the progress that it depicted and demanded that African Americans maintain the progress that should be implemented as reality.

Regine: All I want is the best. I mean I want a man that knows that fine wine doesn’t come with a twist off cap.

Khadijah: You know, I don’t know how you got to be so snooty. You ain’t but one generation out the projects your damn self.

Regine: So what. I’m not supposed to want more?

Maxine: Of course. You can get it on your own. You can do anything. You’re a woman.

Synclair: Hear you roar!


Regine: You’re absolutely right Khadijah…

This bit of dialogue from the closing scene of the pilot episode of *Living Single* provides a snapshot of the storylines, humor, and dialogue of the sitcom which debuted in August 1993. Its attention to unbreakable friendships, relationship struggles, the rise to success of African American females, and its capacity to maintain humor and positivity kept young African American females at the core of its audience. But its inimitable attraction as a television show lay in its intimate engagement with its specifically targeted audience; the show connected with African American female viewers in a way that television had rarely done previously.

Representations of African American females were rare in early American television. Even rarer were African American female lead characters. These few programs during television’s American inception, like *Beulah*, negatively represented African American female characters as one-dimensional stereotypes. *Beulah* depicted the everyday life of an African American housekeeper who worked for the Henderson family. To satisfy the stereotype, the show, while we saw a few glimpses of Beulah’s personal life, depicted her mostly in a “mammy” role within the white household. She was a heavy-set African American woman who spoke in broken English and was rarely shown outside of her housekeeper role. Other stereotypes included Jezebels and Sapphires; there were also stereotypes associated with male African Americans including the Uncle Tom or the Coon, seen on *Amos ‘n’ Andy* (1951-1953) in particular. While these stereotypes are often assumed to have been strongest during the early age of television, scholars, critics and audiences still speculated on the continued presence of these stereotypes within modern television forms.

The history of African American female lead characters is limited in itself. After *Beulah*, another African American female lead did not occur until the late 1960s. By 1968, Diahann Carol was playing Julia, a single mother-of-one who worked as a nurse in the sitcom *Julia* (1968-1971). While seeking to appeal to audiences as socially relevant and progressive, the show maintained racial and gender hierarchies as Julia worked for a white male doctor and as she was depicted in her domestic role through her position as a mother. While there were some dramas in the 1960s with significant African American female characters such as *East Side/ West Side* (1963-1964) and *Star Trek* (1966-1969), these characters tended to be supporting members of teams led by white men. This was a pattern that persisted through the 1970s and 1980s. Thus it would be situation comedy that would offer prominent depictions of African American women on television. In addition, my analysis focuses on
the situation comedy format because it has historically been a dominant and popular form and has proved successful for prime-time programming since the 1950s.

Nevertheless, there were few other sitcoms that maintained a black female at the core of its cast until shows like Living Single aired in 1993 and Girlfriends, in 2000. This is not to say that African American females were not present in sitcoms, however. The 1970s’ Good Times (1974-1979) featured Florida Evans, a mother of a family of five living in the harsh Chicago ghetto where every episode is about surviving another day with the family in one piece. Also, with strong supporting African American leads was The Jeffersons (1975-1985) where Louise was George Jefferson’s wife in a family that famously “moved on up” to a higher socioeconomic status, thanks to George’s cleaners business. Nell was an African American female housekeeper for a police officer in Gimme a Break! (1981-1987). Shirley was a key source of comedy in What’s Happening! (1976-1979) and What’s Happening Now! (1985-1987) where she worked in a restaurant that the young locals frequented. Each of these shows of the 1970s, however, suggested a “mammy” sentiment with heavy-set African American females in domestic roles. The 1980s began to do work to re-imagine the African American female outside of the home, but women’s domestic roles were still the core of their characterizations. The character Claire Huxtable of The Cosby Show (1984-1992) was a lawyer married to an obstetrician, both of whom were the parents of five children. While Claire was a professional woman, depicting African American affluence, her character’s main setting was the home, and there were few scenes that took the viewer into the law firm where she worked. Mary was also a stay-at-home mom on 227 (1985-1990), which depicted Mary living with her family in Washington D.C and her adventures with the other tenants in their apartment complex. A Different World (1987-1993), a spinoff from The Cosby Show, presented a unique perspective of African American females who were students at Hillman College, a historically black college, as they developed socially, academically, and personally. However, its focus was on African American youth in higher education rather than on a specific gendered or status role. Finally, the 1990s offered an influx of far more representations of African American females, but again very few women were at the core of these shows.

Furthermore, at this point in the 1990s, there were still few situation comedies with a predominantly female cast. Designing Women (1986-1993) depicted professional women who worked and lived together. They were largely middle aged women, and some had been previously married but now lived independently. Similarly, the Golden Girls (1985-1992) depicted four female senior citizens living together during their time as retirees. These shows were particularly outnumbered in comparison to the influx of unwed female lead characters in the 1970s. Laverne and Shirley (1976-1983) was a spin-off of two comedic female characters from Happy Days (1974-1984). The Mary Tyler Moore Show (1970-1977) featured Mary Tyler Moore and her experiences in a television broadcasting station as a news reporter. Various other top sitcoms of the 1970s with female leads included Alice (1976-1985), Phyllis (1975-1977), and Rhoda (1974-1978). It is notable that none of these shows featured African American female lead characters.

Although the 1980s did not see significant representations of single black women, overall African American affluence was depicted much more often in the 1980s and 1990s on television sitcoms. The Cosby Show, which debuted on NBC in September 1984 depicted the Huxtable family of seven. Another popular show from this period that depicted African American affluence was The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air. In this sitcom, which debuted on NBC in September 1990, the upper class Banks family of five houses their troubled teenage nephew to keep him from being influenced by the rougher crowds in his hometown of West Philadelphia. Both The Cosby Show and The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air presented an encouraging and multidimensional representation of African American females particularly in comparison to the stereotyped characters of the early 1950s. Living Single was yet another show of the 1990s depicting upwardly mobile African Americans; four best female friends work to climb the social ladder and struggle through relationship issues. Living Single not only represented the progress possible for African American females in the 1990s just as shows like The Cosby Show and The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air did, but more significantly spoke directly to its African American viewers and encouraged them to uphold the expectation of progress as defined in terms of socioeconomic status.

The television show Living Single presented themes, characters, and story lines that drew from political and social discourse of the time. Simultaneously, the show made a statement concerning 1990s American race relations on a significant level and also identified affluence within the African American demographic. Thus, Living Single targeted an African American female audience in an effort to communicate and standardize – that is to affirmatively put forth a standard – upward mobility in African American society during the 1990s. The show asserted upward mobility as a new standard, not aspiration or fantasy, therefore encouraging black America to pursue this path that enters into higher status. In the following article, I will explain Living Single as a cultural artifact arising from a specific historical context and then feeding back into cultural understanding. That is, Living Single works to describe the early 1990s as an era of the rising African American, particularly the
African American female, into corporate USA and largely middle to upper middle class status. While African Americans had been a part of the middle class for quite some time, the 1990s mark a time in which television sitcoms comfortably depicted this little discussed demographic. I will then examine how Living Single’s participation in this 1990s discourse and its work as a program whose target audience was largely African American, therefore, functioned not only to dissipate stereotypes for a majority white audience, but to relate to black America, standardize the concurrent progression, and demand that African Americans maintain the progress that should be implemented as a reality.

Such scholarship is not uncommon and has been addressed in analyses of other television shows as well. Herman Gray and Michael Real examine the methods in which television has the power to “recode” understandings of culture within society. Gray’s article “Recodings: Possibilities and Limitations in Commercial Television Representations of African American Culture” analyzes the show Frank’s Place and the way it “pushes the limits of existing television discourses about blacks.” Furthermore, Michael Real’s analysis of The Cosby Show in “Structuralist Anlaysis 1: Bill Cosby and Recoding Ethnicity” shows how positive and negative portrayals, in Real’s case specifically those of African American males, can define and depict understandings of culture. Largely, he explains how a sitcom like The Cosby Show had the ability to “serve to ‘resolve’ America’s racial failures by powerfully recoding Black and effectively countering generations of negative stereotypes.” This paper will apply similar success to the unique case of Living Single and its success in recoding an understanding of African American affluence for African American females.

My analysis of Living Single addresses the show from three major perspectives. These three perspectives include first analyzing the show in terms of television’s industrial and economic context, then analyzing the show as it works to represent its social context, and finally analyzing the show’s impact as it participates in social discourse and implications. These three major perspectives of analyzing representations within television are a useful means of gathering an analysis of television and its relationship with viewers, society, and the industry. Alone, they provide insight into television shows and their effects. However, together, they complement one another and develop a complete analysis of the show from multiple angles, helping to better articulate the work of the show as an industry, as a means of depicting our understandings of social realities, and as a medium that comments on our society.

In the following sections, I will first note the effect of Living Single in its industrial and economic context through a discussion of the show’s target audience and its participation in media history of the 1990s. I will then focus on understanding how Living Single operated as a representation of reality through its depiction of African American progression in the 1990s. Finally, these two methodologies will work together to articulate the social ideological implementations of the show as it encouraged the maintenance of black America in the middle to upper middle class.

My model of television analysis encourages the understanding of television within its multiple contexts. Television as a medium does not occur within a vacuum, but instead operates in complex interaction with elements of its environment. Scholars John Fiske, Paul Hirsch and Horace Newcomb, and Stuart Hall, whose scholarship will be described more specifically later in the paper, support the endeavor of analyzing television within its multiple contexts as my model shows. These scholars additionally emphasize that analyzing a show from the three methodologies mentioned prior is important, but ensuring that these operate in collaborative discourse is more important. Together, Fiske, Newcomb, and Hirsch argue that television is a part of the never ending interplay of major events, political changes, societal changes, and cultural understandings that develop history.

Close analysis of the program demonstrates that Living Single represented African American female upward mobility in the early to mid-1990s and did so in a manner that spoke directly to an African American female audience segment. This project is specifically based on an examination of the first season with particular attention paid to character traits, costuming and set design, episode plots, dialogue, and use of humor. Linking an analysis of the sitcom with the show’s social and industrial context assists in investigating the social implications and ideological meanings of Living Single.

**Living Single: The Television Program in Context**

Living Single, a FOX network sitcom, premiered in 1993. Living Single featured four African American twenty-something females living in a Brooklyn Brownstone as they climbed the social ladder. This show, created by Yvette Lee Bowser, was one of the first successful sitcoms produced by an African American woman. The show, originally titled My Girls (but changed prior to its premiere), featured these four independent women, each with a distinct personality. Regine was a wig-wearing, self-centered woman seeking a man who could provide financial security. Khadijah was the passionate entrepreneur enduring the highs and lows of creating her own magazine, Flavor. Synclaire was Khadijah’s dimwitted cousin whose compassion comforted many of the women while her foolish antics annoyed them all the same. Maxine, whose
gluttonous behavior provided constant comedic relief, was a lawyer who did not live with the ladies, but was always in the brownstone. Kyle and Overton were neighbors of the ladies who offered friendship and, at times, love interests.11

*Living Single* was the creation of an equally independent black woman. Yvette Lee Bowser is recognized as the first African American woman to produce a show on prime-time television. She completed her undergraduate studies at Stanford University and then worked as an apprentice to writers for *A Different World*, a show featuring a predominantly black cast at Hillman College, a fictional historically black college. Bowser worked her way up in the field and soon became a producer. After working on *A Different World*, Bowser began creating *Living Single* with the goal of depicting the kinds of black women that she had as friends. Furthermore, the varying character personalities in the show revealed what she considered to be parts of her own diverse personality and demeanor. She was partially inspired by Terri McMillan’s *Waiting to Exhale*, a novel portraying the lives of black female friends and their bouts with marriage, money, jobs, and sisterhood, which later became a movie.12

Yvette Lee Bowser created the sitcom as a way to illustrate the lifestyle with which she was most familiar. In an interview, Bowser explains, “It was important enough to me that I felt that the camaraderie these people have was worth putting on paper. I thought there must be someone else out there who feels the way I do about their friends.”13 She particularly worked to emphasize African American bonding and relationships as she felt that these images were underrepresented on television. She notes, “*Living Single* has a goal to portray African-American life, whereas many shows with African-American cast members do not have that goal… I think there’s a reason why *Living Single* is number one with African Americans.”14

**Narrowcasting Representations of African American Females**

*Living Single* was a part of FOX programming that aimed to attract the oftentimes overlooked, and likely ignored, young urban audience. In particular, *Living Single* targeted the female segment of this young urban audience.15 FOX was new to the broadcasting business as it became the fourth network in an industry dominated by the major three networks, ABC, CBS, and NBC.

The economic and industrial perspective of analyzing representations in television focuses on how television operates as a medium aspiring to market itself, to gain a large viewership, and therefore, to earn profits. The industry focuses on maintaining viewers and catering to their preferences in order to increase ratings, advertising sales and other means of profit and recognition. While a television program may contain elements of social commentary or meaningful content for viewers, the television industry oftentimes focuses on the profits of a program as the greatest priority. Much critical work on television argues that progress hinges on understanding and analyzing television as a profit maximizing business. Herman Gray’s article, “Television and the New Black Man: Black Male Images in Prime Time Situational Comedy,”16 is typical in its analysis of the link between industrial structure and televisial representation, arguing “analysis of content and consumption remains connected to the economic and political organization of the television industry as a means to account for where images come from, the form they take, and why they persist.”17 Here, Gray analyzes the presence and role of the African American male in 1980s television sitcoms, paying special attention to *Webster* (1983-1989), *Benson* (1979-1986), *Diff’rent Strokes* (1978-1986) and *The Jeffersons* (1975-1985). The content, plot, character development, and other elements of these shows are dependent upon the perceptions of the production studios, writers, etc.:

> the processes that shape the representation of blacks and the issue of race relations are constrained by producer-supplier perceptions of public mood, existing treatments of social issues (gender or age rather than race), and guesses about what the majority audience will tolerate.18

This was significant to *Living Single*’s representational choices because during the late 1980s and early 1990s, television began to change, especially in the way it attempted to appeal to audiences. Among the many causes of this change was the popularization of cable television. The option of more than three major networks (ABC, NBC, and CBS) offered viewers a larger variety of viewing opportunities, making niche audiences the industry’s new objective. Instead of offering programming catering to a mass audience, the television industry increasingly targeted more specific, segmented audiences. Examples include television geared towards demographics such as young viewers who enjoy music, like Music Television (MTV), or television for varying psychographics, for example people who enjoy watching movies, like American Movie Classics (AMC). Beyond cable, new broadcast television networks outside of cable also started to value these niche audiences.19 According to Kristal Brent Zook’s *Color by FOX*, in 1987, “black audiences watched 44% more network television than nonblacks, what’s more, they clearly preferred black television shows.”20 New broadcast networks attempted to appeal to these niche audiences like cable television was doing.21

FOX was one such network. It hoped that this young urban audience waiting to be entertained by the networks would receive its satisfaction through their FOX televi-
ion network. It targeted various niches within the young demographic including the young urban audience targeted for *Living Single.*[22] FOX began broadcasting in 1986 and by the early 1990s catered much of its programming to the large “urban audience.” Network television programming catering to African Americans was nothing new, especially with the burst of successful black programming by NBC, which had aired the sitcoms *The Cosby Show, A Different World,* and *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air* by the early 1990s. However, FOX developed a profitable network brand with a more edgy and urban style. FOX did not simply notice the need for African American programming and address it in a few places, but truly created a center for a particular kind of black audience and ensured that those images were broadcasted. This specific market is further explained by Zook who notes:

By ‘narrowcasting’ or targeting a specific black viewership (what Pam Veasey referred to cynically as the ‘Nike and Doritos audience’), and ‘counter-programming’ against other shows to suit that audience’s taste, FOX was able to capture large numbers of young, urban viewers.[21]

And thus, television programming catering to this audience became popular on the FOX television network. Programs included *Martin* (1992-1997), a sitcom starring Martin Lawrence, a popular comedian, who played a radio personality and multiple other characters as he lived in New York with his girlfriend and friends; *New York Undercover* (1994-1998), a drama depicting black undercover police officers and other characters as they addressed issues within the city of New York and their own lives; and *In Living Color* (1990-1994), a sketch comedy show featuring parodies performed by a predominantly black and Latino cast, and Hip Hop musical and dance performances, hosted by Keenan Ivory Wayans, a popular black comedian and producer.[24]

FOX aired each of these shows on a Thursday night television block. By 1995, Thursday nights began with *Martin* at 8:00 p.m., followed by *Living Single* at 8:30 p.m. and *New York Undercover,* an hour long show, at 9:00 p.m. Not only did FOX broadcast many shows catering to the black urban audience, but they allowed for more creative control by blacks as well. While an appeal to black urban audiences appeared to be at the forefront of FOX’s vision, it is also important to note that this was not the only audience that they catered to. For example, other white sitcoms like *Married…With Children* (1987-1997) and *The Simpsons* (1989–present) were just as popular, if not more so, than the black sitcoms on the network. In fact, white television shows still outnumbered the black shows on FOX,[25] just as they did on other network stations. However, even these shows appealed to more specific niche audiences than the traditional networks’ appeal to mass audiences.

As Zook states, African Americans became a larger and more profitable audience as African Americans became a growing demographic within television viewership. Most shows focused on targeting the white majority as it was assumed that they represented the mass audience. However, the popularization of niche marketing within the television industry prompted the pursuit of other more specific regular viewers. An article entitled “Is it Our Time for Our Prime Time” by Allen Bonnie from a January 1990 issue of *Emerge,* argues for more targeting of black audiences given the profitability of this segment.[26] Tim Reid, a popular African American actor who was interviewed in the article, said, “Suddenly the black viewer is becoming a commodity in this fragmented market.” To reflect Reid’s sentiment, Topper Carew, an ABC executive producer said, “In the 90s we’re going to enjoy more success because we’re becoming increasingly instrumental to the economic viability of Hollywood.”[27] Furthermore, the article noted the emerging profitability of African Americans for network television during the 1990s. Bonnie explained, “When blacks turn on the television, we choose traditional network programming more often than whites do, so retaining black viewership may be a key factor in the networks’ continuing viability in the coming decade.”[28]

Another article from the April 26, 1993, issue of *JET* magazine entitled “How Blacks’ TV Habits Differ from Whites”[29] explained that African Americans were more likely to watch television programming with black casts than those with white casts. In the late 1980s, “about 15 of the top 20 shows in Black households were also among the top 20 shows in overall White households.”[30] However, annual reports on black viewing habits explain that by 1993, “eight of the top 10 shows among Blacks feature[d] a Black cast that [was] a direct appeal to Black audiences.”[31] Only four of these top shows for blacks made the top 20 listing for total American households. Such shows included *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air* (1990-1996), *Roseanne* (1988-1997), and *Monday Night Football* (1970–present).

The new industry standard of niche marketing coupled with the newly profitable African American audience greatly increased the number of African American television shows. By 1993 shows like *Living Single* and other African American programming responded directly to the demands of the profitable African American segment that Tim Reid discussed in the article “Is it Our Time for Our Prime Time.” Furthermore, additional black programming directly appealed to African American audiences’ desires to watch television shows featuring black casts as FOX had discovered and as the 1993 *JET* magazine article explained.

*Living Single* had the ability to cater to such a niche audience and appeal to African American desires to view shows
with black casts. As Yvette Lee Bowser intended, FOX targeted the show towards African American female audiences. Depicting independent African American women climbing the class ladder, Living Single provided a perspective of one type of African American woman in the 1990s. Although the show did not offer a wide representation of working class or other lower class African Americans, the characters' working class roots allowed their target audience to better relate to the lifestyles of the women in Living Single.

With this specific target audience, Living Single was unique among shows depicting African American progression in the 1990s. Programs like The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air and The Cosby Show, though also presenting African American affluence, appealed to a mass audience rather than to a specific niche audience like Living Single. Gray's "Television and the New Black Man" finds earlier shows that depict African American affluence for a mass audience present characteristics of blacks "in ways that soften elements of the character's personality, history and world-view which define them as Black Americans living in a multi-racial society." That is, shows offer a different message depending on the intended audience. Furthermore, "what remains (and the reasons the shows are successful) are preferred and acceptable white, middle-class definitions of racial interaction." Here, Gray asserts further that a mass audience will demand a message that the dominant white culture is comfortable with hearing, disregarding the desires of potential minority viewers. Living Single, with its targeted minority audience was not primarily driven by catering to this dominant mass audience.

In the 1990s, the network that a show aired on significantly influenced the program's target audience. Because FOX television network appealed to many niche audiences and African American audiences in particular, there is a clear distinction between the types of programs FOX aired compared to those that other networks aired. In 1993, FOX was most successful with appealing to African American audiences as "five of the top ten favorite television programs in Black households, including Roc, In Living Color, In Living Color (reruns), [and] Martin..." aired on this network. Although NBC also featured programming with African American casts including The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air and The Cosby Show, the company’s positioning as one of the original big three networks encouraged it to regularly use its programming to appeal to a mass audience.

Nuances in target audiences determine the marketing of the program, but more importantly, the content and meanings drawn from the program. Living Single as a show about African American females aimed towards African American female audiences presented topics and issues pertinent to and relatable to that same segment. Because it depicted the same audience that it addressed, the show focused far less on explaining the cultural perspectives and more on relating to the perspective of the audience.

For example, Will Smith’s character in The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air oftentimes served as a liaison between the urban black American and white America. Through his fish-out-of-water story, he, in essence, taught his family and, often, white friends from his prep school, an aspect of urban blackness. Instances included altering his school uniform to develop a more hip-hop style, teaching slang terms, or teaching cool handshakes. While much of the humor of the show was derived from Will’s over-the-top teachings, it is still notable that he was teaching his audience a perspective of being black in America. The show was designed with the consciousness that Smith’s character, in particular, would have to explain aspects of blackness to members of the audience that may have been unfamiliar with the varying cultural lifestyle.

Living Single on the other hand, maintained an understanding of black culture, but placed less emphasis on teaching about it. Instead, Living Single assumed an understanding of black culture. The show’s characters all converged in a common living space where they shared the same experience as upwardly mobile African American women. Even in the workplace, which generally focused on Khadijah’s magazine company, the majority of the employees were black, therefore placing them, yet again, amongst characters sharing their same experience. In the company of many other African American characters, Living Single did not need to explicitly state an explanation of “Blackness” as in The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air. The show’s set up therefore allowed for a targeted audience that already understood the perspective of the key characters. In fact, Herman Gray’s “Recodings” supports this notion as he notes that, “since the televisual reality is dominated by 'normative' representations of white middle class subjectivities and sensibilities, blacks and other communities of color have had to create and fill in the televisual spaces where African American representations might otherwise fit.” Both methods of addressing the audience, as illustrated by The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air and Living Single, were effective in developing social implications for the work of the programming. Living Single was unique in its ability to intimately relate to its specific audience and “fill in the televisual spaces where African American representations might otherwise fit.”

Representing 1990s African American Female Affluence

Although television’s representations of life are always shaped by institutional and ideological pressures, television realism is certainly invested in cultural understandings of reality. Much television programming lays
claim to reality as audiences, producers, and other forces within the development of television programming value texts that they can relate to, and they also have a stronger ability to depict the reality that they are most familiar with. Yvette Lee Bowser's desire to depict the women in *Living Single* stemmed not only from her intentions of representing the reality of upwardly mobile African American women, but also from her familiarity with this lifestyle and her attachment to this lifestyle that she had a personal connection with. Her familiarity and attachment strengthened her commitment and ability to represent these experiences. It is important to note that television realism is a construct. Thus, representing realities through the television medium always results in some skewed and distorted depictions. However, television realism allows audiences not only to relate to the text but also to form understandings of the world around them. Supporting this claim, Michael Real's article, "Structuralist Analysis 1: Bill Cosby and Recoding Ethnicity" notes that television programs depict myths that are not of truth but mimic realistic notions so that they still cause people to contemplate the world around them. In *Media Matters*, John Fiske argues that media take part in a recognition since this medium operates as a "cultural interpreter." In "Television as a Cultural Forum," Paul Hirsch and Horace Newcomb argue the importance of incorporating an understanding of society into any analysis of television since this medium operates as a "cultural interpreter." Television is a form of expression and a representation of cultural rituals, and yet also a product of our culture and society. Hirsch and Newcomb largely encourage researchers to analyze a show within the context of its society and the culture it builds upon. These perspectives of analysis are key in that they explain that the raising of questions is just as important as the ideologies and conclusions made. As a result, we understand television as a representation of reality that allows for discourse to occur between producers and writers behind the show, within the content of the show, and among audiences viewing and interpreting the show. As *Living Single* worked to represent the reality of upwardly mobile African American females in the 1990s, we are able to see its intersections with concurrent texts like magazines and newspapers and the discourse that takes place among these sources and popular culture. The implications and results of these discourses will be further explored in the conclusions section of this paper.

### Depicting Affluence in African American Female Work Life

As a depiction of a moment when African American affluence started to become socially familiar, *Living Single* provided insight into the intersections of social discourse in the form of the television sitcom. By the early 1990s, news reports collectively articulated the story of African American upward mobility. In particular, many African Americans were breaking through the glass ceiling and preparing to enter the corporate and professional world. The U.S. census report showed that the median income for African American females in values adjusted for inflation increased from $12,454 in 1990 to $18,594 in 2000. Between 1990 and 2000, the number of bachelor's degrees earned by blacks increased from 61,046 to 108,013, nearly doubling, and master's degrees increased from 15,336 to 35,874. Not only were there measurable changes in income and education level, but mainstream media and print consistently presented accounts of class rise for African American females. For example, an article from *The New York Times* on May 11, 1995, reported that Ms. Ann M. Fudge, an African American woman, had recently become the President of Maxwell House Coffee. While such a lofty executive status was not often achieved by a woman, even more unexpected was her position as an African American woman. The article discussed the greater number of women in these high positions and the prospect of their upward mobility into CEO positions. The article stated: “In the last few years, companies have faced increasing pressure to provide equal opportunity to women and minorities in their board rooms and executive suites.” Articles like this were not rare. *JET*, a black weekly magazine focusing on African American news in politics, the headlines, entertainment, and sports, also reported on the affluence of blacks during this time period. Cover stories included “New VIP in Black Politics,” from the November 22, 1993, issue; “Congressional Caucus Brings about Coalition of Black Leadership,” from an October 11, 1993, issue; and “Two Black Agents Help Rookie Basketball Star Sign for $68 Million,” from the November 1, 1993, issue. As their titles suggest, these articles were common depictions of African Americans in middle to upper middle class roles.

*Living Single* took up these discourses of class rise through characters that represented the greater presence of African Americans within white collar work environments. In particular, Maxine was a lawyer and Khadijah started her own magazine, *Flavor*, as an entrepreneur. Synclaire, who was completing her education, worked as Khadijah’s secretary, and Regine was a buyer for a boutique. While the jobs varied, each woman worked in a position that placed her in a white collar corporate environment. Furthermore, their jobs were not assumed based on preconceived stereotypical perceptions of African Americans (as they might have been pre-1990s). Instead, each career matched the unique characteristics and passions that each woman possessed. The individualization of each woman’s profes-
sion symbolically articulated the variety of opportunities available to women during this state of affluence. While the show presented only a few careers, its diversity of career options symbolized the variety of actual existing opportunities in the 1990s.

*Living Single* strategically linked career and character through costume and dialogue. For example, Maxine was very outspoken and independent minded. In most scenes in and out of the office, she was wearing professional business pant suits signifying her control and ability to “wear the pants” in most of her everyday endeavors. This independent and forthright demeanor matched closely with her respected position as a lawyer. Khadijah on the other hand, was much more casual and close to her African American roots in her costuming. Outside of the office, she oftentimes wore jeans and t-shirts depicting African American culture and, in particular, promotions of historically black colleges and universities. Her close ties with African American culture through her wardrobe paralleled the goal of her magazine, *Flavor*, to target young African Americans. Within the office she conveyed an independent, determined, and professional demeanor in the workplace through her business suits.

Khadijah’s entrepreneurial, independent attitude was also evident in her actions. In the “Great Expectations” episode, the ladies tried to raise money to contribute to Khadijah’s incurred debt with *Flavor* magazine.44 However, Khadijah demonstrated her strong will and independence by refusing to accept hand outs. Likewise, Regine’s work as a buyer for a boutique closely related to her love of fashion and vain characterization. Naturally, her wardrobe was always extravagant and trendy.

Aside from costume and actions, one episode, in particular, depicted through its plot line and dialogue a plethora of occupational choices available to African American women in the 1990s. In the “Quittin’ Time”45 episode, the women discussed this very sentiment. After Khadijah promoted a fellow employee, Synclaire became upset that she had not been considered for a promotion. Frustrated by Khadijah’s implication that Synclaire was hired solely because she was family, Synclaire quit on the spot. Her unemployment caused her to reflect on her aspirations in life and her professional goals. In this reflection scene, Maxine, Regine, and Overton explained, “It’s simple, you pick something you enjoy then turn that into a career.”46 This scene, though highly simplified, presented the opportunity of choice for African Americans in the 1990s, particularly pertaining to choices that had not been readily available in decades prior. Synclaire’s deep thought and reflection on the many options of her professional life represented such an increase in opportunities. Synclaire ultimately decides that she wants more responsibilities with *Flavor* magazine, a position that would be a natural promotion from her current position. Largely, the sitcom utilized wardrobe constructions, plot and dialogue to communicate the ability to match careers with personal interests and to describe new opportunities of choice.

The career variety and choices available to the women of *Living Single* were significant because they directly contrasted with the career limitations of African American females just a few decades earlier, especially in the workplace. Moreover, the occupations of the women of *Living Single* were much different from the accepted portrayal of African American females on television sitcoms decades previously. The 1950s’ Beulah as a house maid and mammy figure; the 1970s’ Florida Evans as a stay at home mom and later part time bus driver; and even the 1960s’ Julia as a single parent and nurse—each woman was placed at a significantly lower socioeconomic level than the women characters of *Living Single*. For some of these moments in history such as the 1950s, African Americans were not allowed to pursue jobs like those held by the women in *Living Single*. In later decades, even when some of these careers were possible options, television would not recognize these possibilities in its programming. The occupational variety of *Living Single* demonstrated the diversity and multi-dimensionality of the early 1990s black female—though a somewhat limited multi-dimensionality as it only pertained to women who pursued careers that would place them in an upwardly mobile category. However, the increase in career opportunities for African American females pursuing this socioeconomic level was made evident through the work of *Living Single*.

Along with the pursuit of more career options came the growing pains in doing so. News reports of the 1990s described a corporate environment constantly addressing workplace issues that arose due to the increased multi-culturalism present and changing attitudes toward diversity. As more African Americans and women entered the white collar job environment, those in this work environment encountered issues of sexism, racism and sexual harrassment. In a *New York Times* article from October 4, 1990, Peter Kilborn reported that companies were adjusting to create a more diverse work place as they got more African American and female candidates for jobs.47 With affirmative action in place, companies sought out more minority candidates and implemented programs to ease the transition and to address “silent” forms of racism and micro-aggressions within the workplace. Issues like racism and sexism in the workplace, whether blatant or hidden, were a reality for African Americans climbing the corporate ladder.

Moreover, the 1991 Clarence Thomas Senate Hearings and Anita Hill matter brought these workplace tensions into American living rooms via television. Clarence Thomas, who was in the midst of completing Senate hearings to
be appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court, was accused of sexual harassment and sexually indecent discussions with Anita Hill and other past female co-workers and assistants. The United States Senate still appointed Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court. However, the matter exemplified new tensions present in the workplace with an intersection of race and gender issues. Anita Hill went on to speak out against sexual harassment and for women’s rights within the workplace. Concerning race issues, however, some felt that Clarence Thomas was being tried on the basis of his position as a black male within society. In the opinion of some, Clarence Thomas would not have received the same negative attention had he been a white male in the same position. The hearings highlighted the kinds of issues that could arise concerning two marginalized groups, females and African Americans, in the workplace and demonstrated how years of social baggage intensified components of this case. Largely, the Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill case brought to light issues of sexism and racism within the increasingly diverse workplace environment.48

_Living Single_ addressed some of these workplace issues head on. The show focused primarily on Khadijah’s work environment, so Flavor magazine was one of the main depictions of work life for African American women on the program. While issues did not reach the gravity of the Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill case, the women still endured everyday micro-aggressions, causing them to defend their gender and their race. For example, during the “In the Black is Beautiful” episode of the first season, Khadijah faced a male representative of the printing press that she used for her magazine. He spoke down to her as he told her that she owed his company money if she planned on continuing the magazine. He attempted to tease her, told her that she owed his company money if she planned to further articulate and emulate the realities that existed in the workplace during this time. These two examples were typical of the ways in which Khadijah dealt with male/female tensions between co-workers and unfair treatment towards women on a regular basis. Moreover, they demonstrated the ways in which this fictional program took up cultural concerns such as those exemplified in the Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill matter and worked both to raise awareness and to critically intervene. While Khadijah prevailed and always maintained her dignity and morals, the mere fact that she had to address such concerns speaks to the additional adjustments that women endured when entering a predominantly male environment.

**Depicting Affluence in African American Female Social Life**

_Living Single_ articulated upward mobility and affluence within African American society through the women’s social lives as well. Dating and relationships were a key component of the women’s social lives on the show. While their work lives centered on success and climbing the corporate ladder, their personal lives largely focused on seeking romantic relationships. Almost every episode of the first season of the program concerned a romantic relationship. Additionally almost every episode concluded with the failure of the relationship and the women coming back to the supportive environment of their best friends. The opening
of this paper begins with such a scene. After Regine fell in love with a wealthy man, she later learned that he was married. Disappointed yet again by her romantic misfortune, she turned to her friends, who reaffirmed her independence and strengthened her confidence. On one hand, the dating scene for these women conveyed their independence and their ability to continuously seek men. On the other hand, this constant dating depicted a continuous dissatisfaction that was never fulfilled as the women kept searching yet never found a soul mate. Certainly some female viewers may have appreciated this depiction of romantic frustration as it offered yet another opportunity for them to relate to the text. However, this version of bonding between viewers and text, which always concerned the characters’ troublesome love lives, demonstrated the limitations of the show’s conception of female independence.

Understanding Other African Americans of the 1990s

As I have explained, Living Single depicted the black experience as one of upward mobility during the early to mid-1990s and portrayed such a lifestyle of affluence through its characters, plot, dialogue and other key components. However, this was only one perspective of African American life in the 1990s. While Living Single portrayed African Americans entering political positions, working for corporate America, and moving to suburban towns, other African Americans were experiencing poverty, gun violence, and even police brutality. The Rodney King beating of 1991 and the LA riots of 1993 were only the most high-profile examples of this police brutality and consequent violence. Along with the reality of the riots and the continued replay of the King beating, Living Single represented women in positions of affluence. However, Living Single did not completely turn a blind eye to these other realities. Although the program did not maintain key characters that represented the lower class members of the African American community, there were aspects of Living Single that commented on its consciousness of other realities in addition to African American affluence.

Overton, for example, the neighboring handyman, was a member of the working class. The women were largely first-generation middle-class citizens. In the episode, “Quittin’ Time” Overton discussed how he inherited the handyman occupation. His father assured him at a young age, that he too would become a handyman. He talked about how he tried to rebel against his handyman destiny through jobs like carpentry. However, he finally found his way back to the handyman business. Overton’s autobiographical account was a humorous part of the show, particularly as his rebellions were not that far away from his final job decision. However, despite the humor, his story explained his position in the show as a character not engaging in upward mobility, yet still pursuing a profession that he was passionate about. Living Single therefore opened discussion about the intersections of status within the black community. It caused the characters to question how class rise and affluence within the black community affected the relationships that existed across status lines. Clearly, since Overton served as a key character in the cast, Living Single argued that though class rise may take place, status should not cause separation within an already strong black community. Despite the questions of status, the characters of Living Single all pursued careers that captured their passions and interests. I will note, however, Living Single’s not so subtle preference for higher class occupations available through higher education. While Overton did pursue a career he was passionate about, his character was consistently shown to be dimwitted and mindless. His dull characterization translated as humor within the show, but also implied that lack of education and lack of intelligence ultimately meant a lack of worth. Because Overton was laughed at by the other characters, the show demonstrated a hierarchy between his lower class status and the other characters’ upward mobility.

Overton was the only character working a blue collar job, but the other characters were still first generation middle class and came from more humble beginnings. They each had a clear understanding of the working class that they had come from. For example, in episode four of the first season, Regine helped cook a dinner, and one of the guests complimented the beignets that she prepared. Khadijah agreed and said, “It’s one of your best recipes from Le Projects.” Here, Regine bore markers of affluence as she was knowledgeable about sophisticated pastries like beignets. However, Khadijah’s quick comedic reply reminded Regine that she had not always lived a life of affluence, but had come from more humble beginnings. This scene assisted Living Single in explaining African American female mobility into a higher class. However, it was careful to not forget the environments that many African Americans experienced prior to their class rise. Living Single’s focus on progression but ability to reflect on its more humble background offered a means of relating to the sitcom’s audience. Not only could the show relate to other African American females also participating in upward mobility, but it could also relate to those who were still a part of the lower class and encourage their rise as well. This did not necessarily mean that all African American females would relate to the show or would want to relate to the sitcom. Living Single’s depictions could be seen as a limited view of African American female life, and this, coupled with its negativity towards Overton’s working class position, could make some viewers less likely to relate and connect with the message.
of the show. While the show suggested that the women came from blue collar socioeconomic levels and had an understanding of humble beginnings, they had still already arrived in their positions of affluence. *Living Single* did not offer instructions for how to transition from one class to another; it just asserted that such a transition was possible.

**Conclusions**

Placing *Living Single* in its industrial and cultural contexts allows the show’s social implications to become much clearer. Representations presented on television develop messages about society that viewers can then implement in some fashion in their daily lives, thereby affecting the culture at large. With *Living Single*, these representations were largely working to alter and counteract existing patterns rooted in stereotypes and prior entertainments.

As discussed earlier, Michael Real argues for the importance of social implications of representations as they work to recode our understandings of society. Ultimately, Real asserts that the “conflicting” ways in which blacks are portrayed on television “become differently refracting prisms through which current cultural struggles are expressed.” Furthermore, and more specifically relating to a cultural understanding of race, Stuart Hall’s lecture, “Race, the Floating Signifier,” argues that continual discourse in society and changing history make race an always sliding and changing entity. To Hall, race is not a definitive categorization but instead, a floating and ever changing signifier that develops as times and culture vary, keeping its meaning never fixed, but always sliding. Because television is a component that is present within our society and is a vehicle for transmitting messages and influencing meaning, its constructs could definitely have an effect not only on the history that transpires, but specifically, on understandings of race.

*Living Single* was a particularly good fit with the theories of both Michael Real and Stuart Hall. It recoded the understanding of African American females within society, while it also captured this continual shifting definition of race and attempted to rearticulate African American affluence in order to relate to 1990s black America. Most of the program’s work dealt specifically with its targeted niche audience, allowing it to recode expectations for African American females, but it also had the ability to recode understandings for all of society through its unique depiction of African Americans and its presence on a nationally available television network.

Nevertheless, *Living Single’s* ideological significance relied on this ability to connect with the targeted audience. Programs that previously worked to represent African American progress oftentimes engaged in a dialogue with a mass audience. More focus was placed on counteracting stereotypes and teaching the majority about the “other.” In these past shows’ efforts to relieve negative stereotypes, the messages made upward mobility in black America appear more distant and less realistic, particularly for African American viewers. This was largely due to the fact that the audiences in these cases were not intended to relate intimately with the characters of the show. *Living Single*, however, addressed the audience so directly and intimately that it assisted in normalizing upward mobility for African Americans in the 1990s.

The diversity of *Living Single’s* characters suggested that there were multiple avenues for arriving at the desired status of middle to upper middle class. The women’s varying occupations and backgrounds implied that drive and education were the keys to arrival. Their diverse perspectives, some from humble beginnings and others from middle class families, helped the characters to relate to the spectrum of audience perspectives. *Living Single* allowed viewers to look to one show to see the meeting ground of progress from many different perspectives, whether it was an African American female pursuing law, like Maxine, or pursuing a passion for journalism, like Khadijah. Representing the African American female in diverse positions allowed the viewer to re-imagine the image of upward mobility and success for African Americans. The variety allowed each viewer to relate to at least one element of the characters presented. The prospect of representing four African American females in one show made *Living Single* quite different from other sitcoms of the time.

Most shows featured just one dominant African American female representation. Furthermore, the women’s social lives, which centered primarily on relationships, assisted the characters in relating to the mostly female audience. The cultural work that *Living Single* did allowed for a dialogue to exist between the show and its viewers. Surely, not all African American women would share the same lifestyle of these women, but the characters’ understanding of black culture, their relationships, and their humble beginnings made them just as relatable to the viewers. Additionally, the women of *Living Single* did not exemplify perfection. They may have had top jobs and may have entered into a higher socioeconomic level, but they still dealt with breakups, friendship issues, and even unemployment. The show’s comments on the increasing affluence of African American females in the 1990s was unique and exemplified television representations which could help society normalize the surrounding social developments. Largely, *The Cosby Show* made African American affluence on television a possibility; *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* made it young; and *Living Single* made affluence for women a representation both realistic and normal.

*Living Single* explained African American females like
no other African American centered television show had. Other scholars have celebrated the very necessary work done by programs such as *Frank’s Place* or *The Cosby Show* to dispel stereotypes while addressing a largely white audience. *Living Single*, however, addressed an audience that it could speak to intimately and personally. It spoke to its audience in the same language, wearing the same clothes and listening to the same music while it raised the expectations of African Americans and helped viewers re-imagine the new standard for people like themselves.

3. Mammy was a derogatory reference to an African American female that generally worked within a White household and served as a housemaid. The mammy name is derived from the stereotypically heavy set African American female serving in a surrogate mother role. See Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Ma- midies, and Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films* (Continuum International Publishing Group, 2001).
4. Ibid.
7. Ibid., 118.
9. Ibid., 130.
13. Ibid., 228.
17. Ibid., 226.
18. Ibid.
23. Ibid., 4.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
30. Ibid., 37.
31. Ibid., 36.
32. Erich Leon Harris, “Yvette Lee Bowser.”
34. Ibid., 229.
35. Ibid.
37. Herman Gray, “Recodings,”
38. Michael Real, “Structuralist Analysis 1.”
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State Sovereignty and Human Rights: 
An Examination of Genocide in International Law

Ashley Williams

Abstract: This article explores the balance between maintaining state sovereignty and creating effective human rights legislation in international law. This balance is demonstrated through two case studies: the drafting of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and application of current international legislation to the genocide in Darfur. The analysis of the UN Genocide Convention focuses on the debate surrounding the inclusion of political groups under those protected by the Convention, and on the debate surrounding the legitimacy of an international tribunal. The analysis of how international powers have used human rights legislation in responding to the genocide in Darfur centers on the way in which the UN applied the Genocide Convention to the case of Darfur, and the way in which the creation of the International Criminal Court expands on the UN Genocide Convention’s capability in responding to genocide. The purpose of these studies is to demonstrate that a preoccupation with a preservation of state sovereignty has affected the preventative and enforcement measures provided by the UN Genocide Convention and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

The struggle to create effective human rights law has been a concern in the international law community for decades. Although the international community has made great strides concerning the creation of legislation on human rights abuse, a strong tendency toward preserving state sovereignty still exists. This tendency inhibits the creation of international legislation that could potentially be effective in preventing and responding to human rights abuses. In order to illustrate the tension between preserving state sovereignty and creating legal institutions that can effectively prevent and respond to human rights abuses, I will examine two cases where this tension has been particularly conspicuous: the drafting of the UN Genocide Convention and the international response to the genocide in Sudan. About fifty years apart, these cases represent the ongoing struggle for an answer to the problems that this tension between sovereign states and international protection of human rights creates.

Immediately after it was ratified, the UN Genocide Convention inspired debate over whether it had the potential to be an effective piece of international law. Many believed that the drafters had created a convention that would have little hope for enforcement, and that the Convention did not provide a proper tool for preventing, or even punishing, the perpetrators of genocide. In order to show why these concerns arose, I will examine two specific instances of state agency: the concept of international court jurisdiction and the debate surrounding the protection of political groups in the Convention. In essence, I subscribe to the same view as the one William A. Schabas provides in the concluding statement of Genocide in International Law that “if a choice must be made, it would be better to engage the States in a commitment to intervene, with force if necessary, in order to prevent the crime of genocide, rather than to expand the definition or suggest its borders are uncertain.”

A Note on Terminology

This paper constitutes an examination of the nature of the engagement of states in preventing and responding to human rights abuses. In this article, I choose to refer to the present conflict in Sudan as an example of genocide. Though this article does not concern itself with the terminology surrounding the conflict in Sudan, it is necessary that I justify my use of the term “genocide” in reference to the conflict in Sudan. There is much debate surrounding the definition of genocide. Some scholars argue for a more expansive view of the term; others contest the list of groups included under the protection of the UN Genocide Convention; and still others believe that genocide has certain cultural aspects that are not accounted for in the Convention.

My own definition of genocide is based on my interpretation of the original definition of the term provided by Raphael Lemkin. Lemkin coined the term “genocide” as such:

By “genocide” we mean the destruction of a nation or of an ethnic group...Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of es-
sential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. The objectives of such a plan would be disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups. Genocide is directed against the national group as an entity, and the actions involved are directed against individuals, not in their individual capacity, but as members of the national group.22

Conflicts of over water and land resources in Sudan precipitated a clash between the government and the people inhabiting Darfur, a large area in the western part of Sudan. A large group of people living in Darfur believed that they were not being treated equally with those who lived in the Eastern region of Sudan, as they were being taxed by the Government of Sudan (GoS) located in Khartoum, but not seeing the development of schools, roads and health institutions in the Darfur region. In 2003 they formed a rebellion force that attacked government and military institutions as an expression of their discontent. In response, Omar al-Bashir, president of the GoS, hired and supported a militia known as the janjaweed (literally translated as the devil on horseback). The government adopted a tactic that did not discriminate between the rebel army and the civilian population. Al-Bashir implemented a scorched earth policy, aiding and directing the janjaweed in plundering and burning down villages and killing and raping the inhabitants. As of mid-2007, at least two million people from Darfur were displaced either to internal camps or to refugee camps in Chad, and about 400,000 died as a result of the attacks by the janjaweed.3

Several aspects of the conflict in Darfur lead me to conclude that the conflict is an example of genocide. First, I would consider the group that the GoS targets a national group as treated by Lemkin in his definition of genocide. They are united in political opposition to the Government, and the Government targets them for that reason. This political differentiation is compounded by the use of identity ideologies in the conflict. Janjaweed often exhibit the use of a legitimizing ideology (that black Africans are inferior to Arabs), and a lack of moral obligation to the victims on the part of the perpetrators (as there has been documentation that the Arabs committing the crime see black Africans as less than human).4 The political aspect combined with the legitimizing ideology used by the perpetrators provides a large amount of cohesion that leads me to conclude that the group being targeted is seen as a separate and consistent group, nationally-minded in its concerns.

Second, the GoS systematically targets civilian populations. Government helicopters have been seen bombing villages to alert janjaweed militias as to which civilian areas to target next. Third, the conflict in Sudan exhibits the majority of indiscretions Lemkin lists as being possible components of genocide. The GoS attacks the “essential foundations of the life”5 of this group by razing villages, burning crops and poisoning water supplies, and even attacking internally displaced camps consisting of populations that had been driven out of their former homes by the janjaweed. The janjaweed targets community centers and whole communities, so that many are forced to separate, in essence destroying “the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups.”6

The justification for my use of the term ‘genocide’ in reference to the conflict in Sudan relies on a more liberal interpretation of Lemkin’s original definition of the term. However, the ambiguity, not the terminology, surrounding the conflict is the actual concern of the paper. The reasons that the United Nations maintain that the conflict in Darfur is not genocide, but rather crimes against humanity, will contribute to an understanding of how the maintenance of state sovereignty in international law factors into the creation of legislation that deals with human rights abuses.

The Convention’s Greatest Advocate: Raphael Lemkin

Raphael Lemkin was born in Poland in June 1900.7 He eventually pursued a law degree at the University of Lvov and graduated in 1926.8 He practiced privately in Poland, joining the international law circuit yearly and presenting papers to colleagues in Western Europe and Egypt.9 Lemkin left Poland after accepting a lectureship at Duke University, and arrived in the United States in April 1941.10 After gaining some notoriety teaching international law, he was offered the opportunity to serve as chief consultant on the Board of Economic Warfare in Washington DC.11 While there, he was troubled by the lack of knowledge that his colleagues had about the genocidal intentions of the Nazis, and when he tried to persuade them of the serious threat to Jews that was mounting in Poland, he was often met with apathy or rejected on ground of having no “real” evidence.12 In order to garner attention for the dire situation of Jews in Eastern Europe, he began drafting a manuscript highlighting the ways in which Germany was ignoring the customs of international law, and the way it was subverting the system in order to reorganize populations and oppress its own people.13 His experiences writing this manuscript, combined with his discovery of the Einsatzgruppen and its mass executions in the Soviet Union led Lemkin to coin and begin defining a term that could
sufficiently express what was happening overseas.

In 1944, Raphael Lemkin coined the term “genocide” in order to give a name to the atrocities committed by Germany during World War II, seeing a need to expand on the current provisions in international law for addressing human rights abuses, the Hague Regulations. In Lemkin’s definitive work on his definition of genocide, the *The Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, his primary aim is not only to define the new term, but also to point out the areas in which the current law surrounding this new phenomenon is insufficient to address it:

*De lege ferenda*, the definition of genocide in the Hague Regulations thus amended should consist of two essential parts, in the first should be included every action infringing upon the life, liberty, health, corporal integrity, economic existence, and the honor of the inhabitants when committed because they belong to a national, religious, or racial group; and in the second, every policy aiming at the destruction or the aggrandizement of one of such groups to the prejudice or detriment of another.14

In his explanation of where the idea of “genocide” fit into existing international law relating to human rights abuses, Lemkin provided his own definition of what actions genocide consisted of, against what groups genocide could be perpetrated, as well as an aspect of the dynamics of genocide. Not only did genocide consist of the infringement on the freedom of a national, racial or religious group, but it could include policy. Lemkin suggested that governments, institutions that made policy, were especially capable of perpetrating genocide. The idea that leaders of government are in a position to begin perpetrating genocide presents a unique problem: how could a piece of international law hold a government accountable for human rights abuses, let alone genocide?

Lemkin believed that The Hague Regulations, the international treaty at the forefront of addressing human rights abuses, did not provide an answer to this problem, and also argued that genocide was not a new phenomenon, just one that had not yet been addressed in international law. His critique of The Hague Regulations centered on his belief that they contained no provision for intervention on the behalf of victims of crimes against humanity. He expressed the opinion that “the Regulations of The Hague Convention should be modified to include an international controlling agency vested with specific powers, such as visiting the occupied countries and making inquiries as to the manner in which the occupant treats nations in prison.”15 Otherwise, Lemkin saw no protection for victims of genocide: “in the situation as it exists at present there is no means of providing for alleviation of the treatment of populations under occupation until the actual moment of liberation.”16

Thus, he started a campaign to create a treaty that would hold nations responsible for investigating and intervening in future perpetrations of genocide. This campaign for a piece of international law that could hold perpetrators of genocide accountable for their actions would present a challenge to sovereign nations that were interested in preventing human rights abuses because it could potentially issue a threat to the independence of sovereign nations on an international stage.

**International Law in the 1940s: A Tradition of State Sovereignty**

In order to understand the implications of a piece of international legislation like the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, as well as problems that could arise during the drafting process, one must first understand a little about how the state functions in international law. The state is in essence a sovereign entity. States are supposed to advocate the interests of the people they represent, while acting independently on the international stage. The drafters of the UN Genocide Convention subscribed to this logic.

Since the seventeenth century, the character of international treaties has shaped international law. International treaties have maintained an important role in addressing human rights issues and/or war crimes. William Schabas states that “international law’s role in the protection of national, racial, ethnic and religious groups from persecution can be traced from the Peace of Westphalia of 1648.”17 Additionally, since Westphalia, international treaties have been preoccupied with upholding the sovereignty of the state as the highest and most powerful governing body of the people. The Peace of Westphalia and the international law that followed through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are essentially a series of “agreements by states, and [this tradition’s] first principle was always to uphold state sovereignty.”18 Even the Charter of the UN expresses that the importance of the state is having a preserved sphere of jurisdiction:

> Nothing contained in the present charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter.... 19

This excerpt from the UN Charter represents just one of the ways in which international law asserted the sovereignty of an individual state. Adam Jones highlights the United Nations’ “foundation on Westphalian norms of state sovereignty, and the desire of most member states to avoid shining a spotlight on their own atrocities, past or present.”20
Scholar David Hirsch asserts that the UN Genocide Convention is couched within a historical narrative in international law that is focused on maintaining individual state sovereignty. He points to an underlying tension between protecting human rights and national self-determination. He argues that these two concepts generally work in cooperation with each other: the nation-state works to protect the human rights of its citizens by attempting to faithfully represent its people, and then by asserting its power, on behalf of the people, domestically and internationally. However, in instances like genocide and ethnic cleansing, the relationship becomes more complex. For example, the Nazi perversion of the concept of citizenship (particularly the pseudoscientific theory that German-ness is in the “blood” of the citizen, and that those who do not conform to an ideal must be annihilated to preserve the nation-state) couples together a breach of human rights and the sovereign power of a state to determine whom it represents. The fact that one cannot separate these two concepts requires a rethinking of the traditional idea of state sovereignty being the highest governing power possible. When there is an obvious infringement of human rights, and this infringement is central to the core idea of the nation-state for those in power, at what point is it acceptable for international law to override national sovereignty in order to protect people as fellow members of the human race? It becomes apparent that privileging either one of these concepts must be at the expense of the other in the historical context of international law in the mid-twentieth century. This is a crucial question that the drafters of the UN Genocide Convention had to address, and one of the questions at the center of this inquiry.

It was within this tradition that Raphael Lemkin began fighting for a genocide convention. Lemkin was continuing another theme in international law that had been established by The Hague regulations: a concern with protecting and gaining justice for victims of genocide. However, his campaign for a genocide convention that could prevent genocide and punish those who perpetrated it would provide a more direct affront to the tradition of maintaining state sovereignty in international law. It is my argument that, ultimately, the challenge of countries who fought to maintain state sovereignty during the drafting of the Convention transformed the UN Genocide Convention into a piece of legislation that could not effectively provide a framework for how nations needed to respond to the threat of genocide. Although the UN Genocide Convention may not have been as effective a tool as Lemkin fought for it to be, it did signal a growing commitment to protecting human rights in international law, with the creation of International Tribunals and the Rome Statute of the International Court.

The Drafting of the UN Genocide Convention

There were many ways in which individual states fought for their own particular agendas during the drafting of the convention. Arguments ensued about the reach and nature of jurisdiction as we have seen above, as well as about the idea of “cultural” genocide and the definition of acts of genocide. However, one of the most lengthy and heated debates during the many drafting stages of the UN Genocide Convention was whether political groups should be accepted in the list of groups that the Convention would protect. I will use this debate as an instructive example of how the individual agency of the involved states directly affected the final draft of the Convention to be ratified, and how a preoccupation with preserving state sovereignty contributed to a weak spot in the Convention. The nation I will examine is the Soviet Union, the major opponent to the inclusion of political groups in the Convention during the drafting and ratification process, from mid-1947 to late 1948.

The beginnings of the definition of genocide on an international level can be found in the UN General Assembly Resolution 96(I). Lemkin lobbied the UN Legal Committee, providing them with materials he had prepared on genocide. The Cuban and Indian delegates on the Legal Committee co-sponsored the resolution, and eventually the delegates agreed on establishing a sub-committee to prepare the resolution. There was some discussion as to whether to replace the term “genocide” with “extermination,” which was ultimately decided against, and debate about which groups the resolution should include. On December 11th, 1946, the General Assembly adopted the resolution, which affirmed that genocide was a crime under international law, and stated that “instances of such crimes of genocide have occurred when racial, religious, political, and other groups have been destroyed, entirely or in part.” Lemkin viewed this resolution as laying the groundwork for a convention that could provide guidelines for responding to genocide as a crime under international law, and continued his campaign for a genocide convention.

In the summer of 1947, Lemkin secured the backing of the American Jewish Committee (AJC) in his campaign for a genocide convention, and he worked closely with a liaison from the World Jewish Congress. The first draft of an actual convention, drafted in the late summer of 1947, also included political groups, despite opposition from the Soviet bloc of representatives. Lemkin presented a draft that he had written with colleagues to the US State Department, who decided to include political groups as one of those protected with the condition that the crime was restricted to “physical destruction.” Despite opposition from the Soviet Bloc, the United States supported the inclusion of political groups due to pressure from American “religious and labour organizations.”
In the spring of 1948, an *Ad Hoc* Committee on Genocide met at the UN with the goal of producing a new draft of the Convention. When the debate over the inclusion of political groups again surfaced, the Soviet Union again opposed it, but the political groups were included in a vote of four to three by the participating representatives. In April 1948 the Committee voted on whether to accept the convention as it was, and the Soviet Union again voted in the negative (against the majority). With the inclusion of political groups as one of those protected, the (Sixth) UN Legal Committee evaluated the draft provided by the *Ad Hoc* Committee. On October 15, the representatives voted again on whether to include political groups, and in a vote of 29 to 13 (with 9 abstentions), political groups were included in the draft. The core opposition was the Soviet bloc, and to a lesser extent certain Latin American countries.

In November 1948, just before the vote on the ratification of the Convention, specific concerns arose pertaining to a possible block of the two-thirds majority needed to ratify the Convention. A State Department official predicted that the Soviet Union bloc, combined with a number of Latin American countries, would stop the ratification. Lemkin urged the president of the UN General Assembly, H.V. Evatt, to assist him in ensuring that the ratification was not overturned. As a result, the US lobbied for a reconsideration of the October 15th vote in the interest of preserving the convention. In this subsequent vote, the inclusion of political groups was overturned.

Despite the reasons the Soviet Union provided for its opposition, various scholars provide their own interpretation of the motivations behind the insistence that political groups not be included. For example, Beth Van Schaack posits that “perhaps the leading motivating factor in this regard was the imperative to avoid having the Convention inculpate Stalin’s politically motivated purges of the kulaks (the petty bourgeois) during the forced collectivization of agriculture in the late 1920s and early 1930s.” Cooper attributes the Soviet Union’s wariness of including political groups in the Convention to the 1941 to 1944 deportations of about 1,500,000 people of minority nationalities from the Crimea and the Northern Caucasus. The rationale behind these deportations was perceived collaboration with the Germans. About a third of those deported died during the first year due to their new environments. Martin points out the xenophobia that was central to the ideology of Russian nationalism that caused the Soviet government to see certain national minorities as a threat to the state because of their opposition to the government in previous conflicts.

All three of these scholars assert that the Soviet Union was trying to protect its interactions with groups that might be considered political from being scrutinized by external parties through the avenue of this new tool of international law. As Leo Kuper puts it, ‘One must acknowledge that there was cause for anxiety that the inclusion of political groups in the Convention would expose nations to external interference in their internal affairs: this, after all, was the purpose of the Convention, to prevent and punish genocide.’ Thus, the insistence of the Soviet Union on blocking the inclusion of political groups among those protected can be seen as a way of avoiding the scrutiny of an external legal force. Since the Soviet Union would conceivably be under the jurisdiction of the clauses of the Convention once ratified, the state saw a need for ensuring that their own practices of targeting politically opposed groups to be
The Soviet Union serves as an illustrative example here; it was by no means the only party that tried to manipulate the Convention to protect its own sovereignty. The United States worked to ensure segregation and hate crimes (such as lynching) against African-Americans were not open to international scrutiny under the Convention. Multiple Latin American countries worked with the Soviet Union to exclude political groups from the list of groups protected. Britain thought the Convention should have been relegated to a resolution altogether, and made no aims to hide this opinion by abstaining from votes and trying to create delays in ratification that might end the entire process. States responded to threats to their individual sovereignty by affecting the drafting process of the Convention, and the very definition of genocide. In doing so, they contributed to a piece of legislation that contained no framework for enforcement and that required no real consequences for states that chose not to intervene in instances of genocide.

The Genocide Convention: Provisions for an International Tribunal

Another example of the tension between the protection of state sovereignty and the creation of a tool that could respond effectively to human rights abuses is the debate surrounding the jurisdiction of an international tribunal. During an Ad Hoc Committee debate of Article VII of the Convention,34 committee members deliberated the jurisdiction of cases involving the international crime of genocide. The article stated those charged with genocide or genocidal acts will be tried either by a State tribunal of the territory in which the crime is committed, or by a “competent international tribunal.”35 The idea of an international tribunal raised concerns within the committee. Those parties for this idea stated that there would be no way to punish the perpetrators if they were closely tied to the state.36 It was true that the Convention contained no other means of enforcing the Convention, or for holding states responsible for intervening in genocide. Without this provision, there would be no way to ensure that the Convention had any actual bearing on situations where genocide was likely to occur, or where genocide was already taking place. Those against the idea of including this provision of judgment by a tribunal argued that it would cross the boundary of state sovereignty.37 They feared that this provision would strip nations of too much independence, and questioned the jurisdiction of a State tribunal or an international tribunal. These were also valid concerns; the article outlined no procedure by which a state would issue a tribunal, and no comparable international tribunal at the time by which representatives could judge whether the creation of one for this issue would be satisfactory.

Ultimately, the representatives voted for the idea that there needed to be some type of universal jurisdiction. However, they chose to excise the original wording in favor of: “such international penal tribunal as may have jurisdiction with respect to those Contracting Parties which shall have accepted its jurisdiction.”38 This amendment puts the issue of being subject to jurisdiction into a state’s hands, reaffirming the importance of state sovereignty. It implies that the only states which can be tried by an international tribunal are those that comply with the terms of the tribunal of their own free will. The amendment qualifies the jurisdiction of the legal reach of the criminalization of genocide, ensuring that it will not be a threat to state sovereignty. However, it also ensures that the subjection of a government to the judgment of an international tribunal is highly unlikely. The odds of a state that would likely be found guilty on the international stage accepting the jurisdiction of a penal tribunal were slim, and there was no “competent international tribunal” in existence that could resolve these issues. As far as Article VII is concerned, representatives’ fears of infringement on state sovereignty resulted in a provision that could hardly be enforced.

The article was rather unusable as a tool to bring perpetrators of genocide to justice. The goal of creating a Convention that could provide tools, a framework or culpability for the countries that ratified it was hardly helped by the outcome of the debate surrounding this article. The Convention’s full title was the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. It is reasonable to believe that there was potential for the creation of a more efficient way to punish perpetrators, but it did not come to fruition. However, this call for the need of some sort of international governing body created a precedent for the later creation the International Criminal Court. Though protocol for judgment by international tribunals in the UN Genocide Convention was largely defunct, it voiced a need for an international tribunal. This alone signified a major shift in the way that states viewed their responsibility to protect human rights on an international scale.

Conclusions on the Convention

The plethora of actions of individual states throughout the drafting of the Convention drastically altered the character of the UN Genocide Convention in favor of individual state sovereignty on multiple levels. The idea of an international court jurisdiction is one example. The disagreements surrounding the jurisdiction of some type of international court led to a compromise that had little, if any, actual relevance in enforcing of the convention. The
possibility that some international body could intervene to prevent genocide and supersede the sovereignty of the state was too threatening for representatives to accept, especially so since the tradition in international law is to reaffirm the sovereignty of the state. As Luper explains, “States were therefore being asked to accept the creation, at a future date, of an international tribunal, the period of existence and competence of which were left entirely vague.” States acted in favor of state sovereignty, over the possibility of effective punitive measures for perpetrators of genocide.

The agency of individual states, particularly exemplified in the case of the Soviet Union’s mission to exclude political groups from being protected by the Convention, acted largely in their own self interest while drafting the Convention. Individual states, through their preoccupations with their own individual agendas as state actors, chose to preserve state sovereignty rather than create a tool that could possibly override state jurisdiction, even if it meant that the effectiveness of the ability to protect victims of genocide was diminished. A compromise had to be made between human rights and the sovereignty of the state in the case of genocide, and the drafters leaned toward the latter.

The practical implications of the preferential treatment of state sovereignty over actual binding clauses that necessitate the intervention of member States are far-reaching. The UN Genocide Convention has become incapable of serving the purpose it was drafted to realize. In the conclusion to Genocide in International Law, William Schabas states that he thinks it necessary to “engage States in a commitment to intervene, with force if necessary, in order to prevent the crime of genocide.” Thomas Simon, in his book The Laws of Genocide: Prescriptions for a Just World, urges that “whatever else international law does, it should have the wherewithal to bring legal proceedings against the perpetrators.”

The Genocide in Sudan: A Background

Arbitrary borders from decades of British colonial rule were all that united the country of Sudan. Thus, since the year of independence, 1956, there has been ongoing conflict over government representation, control of natural resources, and the autonomy of different regions of Sudan. The government in the North, the Government of Sudan (GoS), felt threatened by Southern movements for independence and political autonomy, fearing that other areas in Sudan would follow suit, and that they would lose access to the country’s bulk of natural resources. This conflict is broadly referred to as the North-South conflict, which peaked especially during two civil wars from 1962 to 1972 and from 1983 to 2003. There was another conflict in the eastern region of Sudan over control of oil and mineral resources from 1996 to 2006, when the government signed a contract with rebel groups because they were stretched because of the resources that they were expending in the Darfur conflict. Most recently, during the Merowe Dam conflict, the Khartoum government in 2006 displaced thousands of Sudanese to less arable land in order to build a dam that majorly benefitted the GoS and the Khartoum area.

The Darfur conflict is the most recent wave of violence in Sudan. People living in the Darfur region, mostly consisting of the Fur, Masaleet and Zaghawa communities, felt disenchanted by the GoS. Concerns over rights to land and grazing areas precipitated in part because the GoS had been drilling for oil in the region and claiming arable land for large-scale agricultural companies growing cash crops. The Darfur region saw no benefit to the government’s ventures, as the GoS did not spend the profits developing the Darfur areas with infrastructure, education and healthcare facilities, etc., and did not have any effective government representation. In 2003, two rebel groups, the JEM (Justice and Equality Movement) and the SLA (Sudanese Liberation Army) began attacking government targets. The government only admits fighting back for “self-defense,” but denies links to janjaweed despite mounting evidence of their involvement in the razing and pillaging of villages and IDP camps throughout the Darfur region.

The atrocities that the GoS and the janjaweed have committed in Sudan neatly fit into the list of characteristics of genocide. The janjaweed has killed and harmed both bodily and mentally huge numbers of people in the Darfur region. The third condition of “deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction” is evident in the government’s scorched earth policy, in which the militia is allowed to burn food sources and poison wells in villages, forcing refugees to make dangerous journeys to refugee camps that have inadequate resources. The fourth condition, “imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group,” is apparent in that the janjaweed have been documented to target pregnant women. The fifth condition, “forcibly transferring children of the group to another
group,” has been seen in the use of rape as a weapon in Darfur, with the intent of changing the ethnic composition of the child.

In regards to the group composition of the people of the Darfur region, scholars like M.W. Daly and Gerard Prunier argue that a group identity for the individual is not concrete or anachronistic. According to Daly, individuals move between tribes depending on the circumstance, whether there is the possibility for economic advancement or for common interests regarding a political issue. Prunier also argues for a more flexible group identity, portraying the complex makeup of the population of Darfur as an ethnic mosaic, with no group solidly defined by ancient history or unchanging ethnic tensions. Both scholars allude to the idea that “tribal” association is not a particularly poignant aspect of personal identity in Darfur, but rather used as a political, economic or social tool in different situations. Rather, a “tribe” is often a group of people who come together against some external pressure, which may be short or long term, and which could be political, economic, or caused by forces of nature.

Sudan in International Law: An Application of the UN Genocide Convention

When the genocide in the Darfur region of Sudan escalated, there was conflict in the international community as to whether what was happening in the region was genocide. The Government of Sudan, whose current president is Umar al-Bashir, frames the conflict as a defensive response to rebel groups. In August 2004 Colin Powell, the US Secretary of Defense at the time, declared the situation in Darfur genocide. The UN declared that it was not genocide. Article Two of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide defines genocide as such:

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:
- Killing members of the group;
- Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.43

Ultimately, the United Nations decided that, in reference to the conflict in Sudan, “the policy of attacking, killing and forcibly displacing members of some tribes does not evince a specific intent to annihilate, in whole or in part, a group distinguished on racial, ethnic, national or religious grounds.”44

Considering that the atrocities that the GoS and the janjaweed have committed in Darfur fit neatly into the list of acts in the Convention that characterize the crime of genocide, one questions whether the definition that the Convention provides is an accurate indicator of situations in which genocide does or will exist. Many shortcomings of the Convention have been recognized by the scholarly community, including a frequent one that Beth Van Schaack, author of a 1997 article entitled “The Crime of Political Genocide: Repairing the Genocide Convention’s Blind Spot,” expresses emphatically. She states that the exclusion of political groups from the protected groups in the Convention creates a major blind spot in the success of the Convention, and that the exclusion of political groups arose solely from the desire of parties involved in the drafting of the Convention to arrive at a speedier conclusion. She argues that the sloppiness of this decision helps to insulate political leaders from prosecution, as she argues that political values are something as inherent and consistent to people’s identities as their nationality, religion or race.45

One could question whether the UN Genocide Convention is equipped at all to respond to what is happening in Darfur. Lemkin initiated his campaign for the Convention in response to the atrocities Germany committed against Jews in Eastern Europe. It is arguable that what falls under the protection of the Convention, national, racial, religious or ethnic, is rather Eurocentric in its categorization of identity. In a country where there are often separatist movements, and in which the borders were arbitrarily drawn, is national identity a valid categorization? And one wonders whether, if political groups had been included in the Convention, the population of Darfur would fall under this category.

Regardless, some countries have already taken advantage of the Convention’s shortcomings. China, which buys about 70 percent of Sudan’s oil, has resisted attempts by the UN to intervene in Sudan. The oil revenue is supporting the Government of Sudan in its reign of atrocities. Russia, an opponent to UN intervention in Sudan, is also a major benefactor of the genocide in Sudan, as it sells the majority of weapons to the GoS. In 2009 we are still left to wonder how this conflict will end. The UN has taken over the peacekeeping efforts since 2007, but is struggling with resources and too little progress. Humanitarian workers have been harassed and killed as the borders keep tightening. The UN Genocide Convention has provided little incentive, in terms of framework or means, for individual countries to intervene in a situation that was potentially an instance of genocide. This raises questions as to the validity of both the punishment and prevention aspects of the Convention.
The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court builds from the precedent set by the UN Genocide Convention. The Convention provides a definition of genocide, guideline for how countries should respond (with no real enforcement measures) and recognition for a need of some kind of presiding international authority to hold states accountable for genocide. The Rome Statute built off of the UN Genocide Convention, but exhibits a more explicit guideline for intervening in cases of genocide and punishing the perpetrators. It is my belief that the International Criminal Court is in direct conversation with the UN Genocide Convention; that the ICC is in some ways serving as an answer to the weaknesses in the Convention that arose from the tension between maintaining states sovereignty and protection of human rights internationally which surfaced during the drafting of the Convention. The Rome Statute not only provides definitions of the crimes under its jurisdiction, but also offers guidelines as to how to respond.

However, there has been concern that the International Criminal Court may not have the full support it needs to be an effective governing body. Adam Jones states, “concessions made to placate the US and other concerns (including an opt-out clause lasting fully seven years) evoked concern that the ICC might become just another toothless legal body.” Former President George W. Bush revoked support of the Statute in May 2004 and declared US citizens exempt from the jurisdiction of the ICC. Additionally, concessions were made to the US during the drafting that weakened the Court, such as a clause that allows a country to opt out for seven years.

On March 6th, 2009, the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for crimes against humanity for Omar al-Bashir, the president of Sudan. This means that if al-Bashir ventures into a country that has signed on to the Rome Statute, that country will have the obligation to hand him over to the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court. This is one example of how the ICC provides more direct guidelines as to how countries are obligated to respond. It is also more concerned with prosecuting individuals as perpetrators of genocide. This narrows the scope of responsibility for the states that have signed on to the Convention, since they are not expected to undertake the unwieldy and confusing task of responding to accusations of genocide in accordance with their constitution (see Appendix A, Article V), but rather would simply comply with an enforcing authority.

We have yet to tell what effect this arrest warrant will have on the genocide taking place in Sudan; it could be a telling test for how well the ICC has accounted for the weaknesses of the UN Genocide Convention. The trade-off between state sovereignty and the willingness of international entities to create international legislation that will effectively respond to human rights abuses is a struggle that has endured throughout the greater part of a century. And although the UN Convention did little to enforce its provisions, it did trigger a new way of thinking in the international community that the nation did have some responsibility to protect the basic human rights of people internationally. The UN Genocide Convention shows how states balanced their commitment to protecting human rights and their concern over protecting their independence on the international stage, and this balancing act continues today, in the way the international community has reacted to the situation in Sudan. Only time will tell whether the ICC is the compromise to resolve tensions and allow for effective international law to prevent genocide and punish its perpetrators.

Appendix A

Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide

(adopted December 9, 1948)

Preamble:

The Contracting Parties,

Having considered the declaration made by the General Assembly of the United Nations in its resolution 96 (I) dated 11 December 1946 that genocide is a crime under international law, contrary to the spirit and aims of the United Nations and condemned by the civilized world,

Recognizing that at all periods of history genocide has inflicted great losses on humanity, and

Being convinced that, in order to liberate mankind from such an odious scourge, international co-operation is required,

Hereby agree as hereinafter provided:

Article I: The Contracting Parties confirm that genocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war, is a crime under international law which they undertake to prevent and to punish.

Article II: In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

(a) Killing members of the group;
(b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of
the group;
(c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
(d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
(e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Article III: The following acts shall be punishable:
(a) Genocide;
(b) Conspiracy to commit genocide;
(c) Direct and public incitement to commit genocide;
(d) Attempt to commit genocide;
(e) Complicity in genocide.

Article IV: Persons committing genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in article III shall be punished, whether they are constitutionally responsible rulers, public officials or private individuals.

Article V: The Contracting Parties undertake to enact, in accordance with their respective Constitutions, the necessary legislation to give effect to the provisions of the present Convention, and, in particular, to provide effective penalties for persons guilty of genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in article III.

Article VI: Persons charged with genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in article III shall be tried by a competent tribunal of the State in the territory of which the act was committed, or by such international penal tribunal as may have jurisdiction with respect to those Contracting Parties which shall have accepted its jurisdiction.

Article VII: Genocide and the other acts enumerated in article III shall not be considered as political crimes for the purpose of extradition.

The Contracting Parties pledge themselves in such cases to grant extradition in accordance with their laws and treaties in force.

Article VIII: Any Contracting Party may call upon the competent organs of the United Nations to take such action under the Charter of the United Nations as they consider appropriate for the prevention and suppression of acts of genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in article III.

Article IX: Disputes between the Contracting Parties relating to the interpretation, application or fulfilment of the present Convention, including those relating to the responsibility of a State for genocide or for any of the other acts enumerated in article III, shall be submitted to the International Court of Justice at the request of any of the parties to the dispute.

Article X: The present Convention, of which the Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish texts are equally authentic, shall bear the date of 9 December 1948.

Article XI: The present Convention shall be open until 31 December 1949 for signature on behalf of any Member of the United Nations and of any nonmember State to which an invitation to sign has been addressed by the General Assembly.

The present Convention shall be ratified, and the instruments of ratification shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.
After 1 January 1950, the present Convention may be acceded to on behalf of any Member of the United Nations and of any non-member State which has received an invitation as aforesaid. Instruments of accession shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Article XII: Any Contracting Party may at any time, by notification addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, extend the application of the present Convention to all or any of the territories for the conduct of whose foreign relations that Contracting Party is responsible.

Article XIII: On the day when the first twenty instruments of ratification or accession have been deposited, the Secretary-General shall draw up a proces-verbal and transmit a copy thereof to each Member of the United Nations and to each of the non-member States contemplated in article XI.

The present Convention shall come into force on the ninetieth day following the date of deposit of the twentieth instrument of ratification or accession.

Any ratification or accession effected, subsequent to the latter date shall become effective on the ninetieth day following the deposit of the instrument of ratification or accession.

Article XIV: The present Convention shall remain in effect for a period of ten years as from the date of its coming into force.

It shall thereafter remain in force for successive periods of
five years for such Contracting Parties as have not de-
nounced it at least six months before the expiration of the
current period.

Denunciation shall be effected by a written notification ad-
dressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Article XV: If, as a result of denunciations, the number of
Parties to the present Convention should become less than
sixteen, the Convention shall cease to be in force as from the
date on which the last of these denunciations shall become
effective.

Article XVI: A request for the revision of the present
Convention may be made at any time by any Contracting
Party by means of a notification in writing addressed to the
Secretary-General.

The General Assembly shall decide upon the steps, if any, to
be taken in respect of such request.

Article XVII: The Secretary-General of the United Nations
shall notify all Members of the United Nations and the non-
member States contemplated in article XI of the following:
(a) Signatures, ratifications and accessions received in ac-
cordance with article XI;
(b) Notifications received in accordance with article XII;
(c) The date upon which the present Convention comes into
force in accordance with article XIII;
(d) Denunciations received in accordance with article XIV;
(e) The abrogation of the Convention in accordance with
article XV;
(f) Notifications received in accordance with article XVI.

Article XVIII: The original of the present Convention shall
be deposited in the archives of the United Nations.

A certified copy of the Convention shall be transmitted to
each Member of the United Nations and to each of the non-
member States contemplated in article XI.

Article XIX: The present Convention shall be registered by
the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the date of
its coming into force.48

Appendix B

Article VII: [Jurisdiction] Persons charged with genocide
or any of the other acts enumerated in Article IV shall be
tried by a competent tribunal of the State in the territory
of which the act was committed or by a competent interna-
tional tribunal.49

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La Cueca Chilena: A Case Study in Musical Nationalism

Luis-Michael Zayas

Abstract: La cueca, the national song and dance of Chile, has been generally ignored in American and European scholarship despite its importance to the people of a nation. As an art form, la cueca is enjoyed widely by Chileans of all social strata and geographic regions, achieving a vaunted position in the hearts of the Chilean people and their cultural lives. This research report examines la cueca to provide insight into how this Latin American musical tradition functions as a form of cultural nationalism. Based on extensive archival research and ethnomusicological fieldwork conducted in Chile, this case study posits that the abstract and interdependent artistic structures of la cueca provide sufficient latitude for personal interpretation in the performance in both music and dance. Simultaneously, the structures of la cueca provide a common form that has led to its easy recognition and dissemination throughout Chile. Performers of la cueca share a common understanding of this musico-poetic structure, but their performance is varied stylistically, resulting in an inclusive form of musical nationalism. This investigation opens with a review of la cueca’s origins and history, then proceeds to a discussion of the urban movement of the 1960s that cultivated la cueca’s origins and localized variation is beneficial to the symbolic power of la cueca. Furthermore, this strict structure does not inhibit the expression of individual iden-
tities or personalities, but rather affords an effective unity for cultural nationalism. It is for this reason that la cueca is such a powerful force in Chile; the expression of one’s regional or personal identity through la cueca can be equally the expression of a greater national identity.

As a performance art, the realization of la cueca from abstract form to live performance relies on musicians and dancers. In Spanish, the name given to these artists, intérpretes (“interpreters”), is emblematic of the role they play, because in realizing la cueca’s abstract form, they are interpreting a theoretical structure, and in the resultant performance, the intérprete performs a personalized manifestation of la cueca. As I will show, the presence of these personalized manifestations have been both revered and feared for their greater significance to the Chilean nation, and I maintain that each and every individualized and/or localized variation is beneficial to the symbolic power of la cueca and its relation to a national identity.

In preliminary research, I found that the discourse on la cueca has primarily been confined within Latin America, and has yet to examine the vital relationship between the structure and function of la cueca. With one notable exception (Knudsen, 2001), Latin American folklorists focusing almost singularly on the structure have written the majority of the scholarship on la cueca, and as they discuss la cueca’s function in Chilean society, they romanticize the analysis.¹ While the analyses of form are invaluable to this investigation, they lack a comprehensive approach and argument that

Introduction and Methodology

In this work, I investigate the role of la cueca in the formation of the Chilean national identity. Drawing from archival research performed in the Biblioteca Nacional in Santiago, Chile, and six months of field work in Chile, I propose a rethinking of the popular notion that strict musical and choreographic forms prohibit personal expression, visible most notably in the founding ideologies of jazz and rock’n’roll. I argue that the strict musico-poetic and choreographic structures of la cueca serve as a common bond and shared experience in Chile. Furthermore, this strict structure does not inhibit the expression of individual iden-
is critical for an examination of la cueca’s role in Chilean identity formation. As the prolific musicologist Charles Seeger has suggested, “In distinguishing, naming, and classifying any matter of attention in the humanities, we must accept, I believe, as a necessary methodological postulate, the equal importance and interdependence of concepts of structure and function.” Like an anthropologist observing a ritual, documenting the structure is essential because it is the recording of facts, of data, of pieces of information observed objectively. As rituals and music unfold over time, they are also processes, and the question, “a process to what end?” is a question of function. It is difficult, and rather unavailing, to assert that a certain movement or melody in la cueca is Chilean nationalism, but understanding the phenomena of the realization and performance of la cueca as an object or event can aid in drawing the crucial connection between the structure and function. Because the scholarship concerning the function of la cueca has tended to be sentimental with the underdetermined conclusion that “la cueca unites all Chileans,” my hope is that my analysis will make more explicit the connection between the formal structure and the nuances of its function(s) in Chile. The methodological approach I have taken in this work is that associated with the field of ethnomusicology, which utilizes many accepted ethnographic and musicological theories and techniques. Specifically, I have relied on the techniques of participant-observation, semi-structured interviews, musical analysis, and historical and archival research to examine the role of la cueca in Chilean identity formation. In order to enter such a discourse from an ethnomusicological perspective, I will begin with an exposition of la cueca origins and abstract musical structure, followed by analyses of significant historical moments that have impacted la cueca.

A Mestizo Music: La Cueca’s Origins and Construction

La cueca as a dance and song form was not born within the political boundaries of contemporary Chile. In fact, according to author and composer Jose Zapiola, la cueca arrived in Santiago, Chile, sometime between 1824 and 1825 from Lima, Peru. At this point in time, however, it was referred to as “la zamacueca” and continued to develop in both countries under the same name until the War of the Pacific. In fact, in the painting La Zamacueca by Manuel Antonio Caro, created in the 1870s, despite the large Chilean flag to the right and little ones strewn about, the characters in the scene are dressed in iconic Peruvian dress instead of that associated with culture of Chile.

After Chile won the war in 1883 and claimed parts of southern Peru and western Bolivia, Peruvians chose to rename their variation of la zamacueca “la marinera,” in honor of the sailors who died in combat. During this same period, Peruvians were also referring to the style of zamacueca danced in Chile as la cueca chilena, and later as la cueca. Although it was in 1929 that the land dispute between the two nations was officially resolved with the help of the United States, la cueca chilena of Chile had long been recognized as a Chilean popular song and dance, and was distinct from la marinera of Peru.

Despite its known origins in Peru, much of the choreographic, musical, and poetic elements of la cueca were derived from non-Peruvian structures. La cueca is an example of the mixing of cultures so prevalent in Latin America, and is equally significant for this reason. La cueca belongs to a family of Latin American dances that incorporate similar choreographic elements like the zapateado (bombastic tap-dancing), valseado (waltz steps), and escobillado (side-stepping). A handkerchief is also used in this family of dances for expressive and sometimes gendering purposes, and the dances are sometimes known by the aptly suited appellation “Latin American handkerchief dances.” Other dances that belong to this family are la marinera (Peru), el bambuco (Colombia), el jarocho (Venezuela), and el jarocho (Mexico).

To perform the music of la cueca, the most basic and essential instrument necessary is the guitar because of its melodic, harmonic and rhythmic capabilities, but equally important is its extreme portability and low cost. Folk harps, pianos, and accordions are also very common members of musical groups, but bear certain logistical restrictions (e.g., weight, size, portability, etc.). There are many percussive instruments used for la cueca, such as the pandero (tambourine), cajón (wooden box that is sat on), platillos (tea-saucers struck together), tormento (wooden box that is placed on one’s knees), and the cacharaina (jaw bone of a horse or donkey).

Harmonically, la cueca uses harmonies from the European musical tradition, presumably brought to Latin America in the fifteenth century by Spanish soldiers. When in the major mode, the most common harmonic progression is tonic to dominant (I-V), and more elaborate progressions may include predominant harmonies, subdominant (IV) and supertonic (ii). In the minor mode, other harmonic progressions may be heard, most of which involve a simple modulation to the key of the relative major. For the most part, the dominant 7th extension is the only triadic extension to be heard. These unelaborated and simplistic harmonies utilized in la cueca can be found in the majority of Latin American folk music, as well as in all music based on Western tonality and 12-tone equal temperament.

The rhythmic texture and layering of la cueca is one of the features that make it distinct and easily identifiable. The strumming rhythm for the guitar was described to me as a variation of the cachimbo rhythm, which my informant,
Don Nano, the lead guitarist of Tierra Chilena, considered the basis of many Latin American rhythms. Notated in 6/8, la cueca utilizes another rhythmic trope of Latin American folkloric musics: the hemiola. The hemiola figure, the articulation of two units of triple meter as if they were notated as three units of duple meter, can be heard in the Argentine chacarera, zamba, and gato, in the Mexican huapango, and in the Chilean tonada. Many scholars attribute the presence of the hemiola rhythm in Chile and Latin America to the influence of the African slaves brought there.

As opposed to a form of indigenous music not influenced by Western musical principles, the musical-structural aspects of la cueca are fundamentally based in the Western musical tradition, with only mere tinges of African and indigenous musical traditions. I have created the following figure to exemplify the rhythmic texture of la cueca, and it is based on the common characteristics that all cueca’s exhibit.

Because of la cueca’s many similarities to other Latin American folkloric musics, it is important to now demonstrate the uniqueness of the Chilean cueca. In addition to its unique rhythmic layering, a central element of la cueca’s artistic distinctiveness is its strict musico-poetic form, which also demarcates its strict choreographic structure, a unique interaction in its own right. By musico-poetic structure, I am referring to the combination of the independent poetic and melodic structures that results in a singular musico-poetic structure. During what follows, it must be remembered that the musico-poetic structure is what all Chileans recognize as la cueca, and are able to hear past localized variations and understand the performance as cueca. This structure is crucial to the argument at hand because it is an example of a common bond, a common experience, among Chileans, and is symbolic of such a community.

In 1947, the Argentine folklorist, Carlos Vega published La Forma de la Cueca Chilena, which has since become a part of the canon of cueca literature. It is also a prime example of analyses focused on structure with no evidenced conclusion on the function of such a structure. In the composition of the poetic lyrics, there are three principle sections: la cuarteta, la seguidilla, and la cola. In la cuarteta, though 6 lines are sung, there are only 4 distinct lines of poetry, hence the title of this section. While in the final performed cuarteta each sung line is 11 syllables, the first three syllables are either muletillas (a semantically valueless phrase like ay rosa, mi vida, la vida, caramba, ay si si, alla va, etc.), or a repetition of the first three syllables of the original cuarteta line (an 8 syllable line). The example I have chosen is La Negrita, by Inti-Illimani, and while it is a contemporary cueca, its structure, but not meaning, is quite simple and unelaborated, perfect for our discussion (see Table 1). Also, as these lyrics are sung as a melody, the melodic structure of la cueca is quite unique: there are only two melodic phrases that are used (which I refer to as A and B), and each phrase corresponds to a specific line, or enjambed lines, of poetry and cannot be used randomly. The musico-poetic structure of la cueca is, in a sense, strophic.

During la cuarteta, the dancing couples side-step from right to left, making half-moons in their wake, and meeting at each side. The distance from one another that they experience in the middle of their right-to-left movement is integral to this courting and coquettish dance because it makes the coming together at each side all the more gratifying. Finally, as I mentioned before that the poetic form also directs the choreographic structure, the dancers hear that la cuarteta is ending and make their first turn, referred to as the vuelta primera.

In la seguidilla, there are 10 lines of sung poetry, but only 7 are distinct. La seguidilla is divided into two smaller sections, a section of 6 lines and a section 4. The original lines alternate length between 7 syllables and 5 syllables. During the first section, the dancers perform what is called the escobillado, in which they sweep their feet along the ground while standing in a somewhat stationary position, with eyes locked. At the end of the first section of la seguidilla,
the dancers make their second turn, the *vuelta segunda*. In the second section, the dancers perform what is called the *zapateado* section, a bombastic ground stomping where the male is on display, trying to win the heart of his partner by showcasing his bravado and ability. At the end of the second section, the dancers make their final turn, *la vuelta final*.

Finally, *la cola* (‘the tail’) is 2 lines of poetry, but is less precise in its construction. The material can be varied from previous material, or can be entirely new. The main focus of this section is that of semantic and melodic closure. During this section, the dancers still make the *vuelta final* and finally lock arms at the end, representing the man’s successful “conquest” of the woman.

What I have just presented is the form of *la cueca* as it exists in theory or on paper. In his book on *la cueca*, E. Rodriguez Arancibia entitled the chapter on the structure of *la cueca* “Ideal Representation.” This is *la cueca’s* abstract structure. In practice, this strict structure is not varied, but its sound or performance is subject to stylistic variations based on the region, technical ability, and personality. I do not propose that every Chilean knows how to describe the structure of the music, poetry and dance in the way that I have presented it. On one occasion, in fact, after hearing a talented folkloric guitarist and singer perform a number of *cuecas*, I asked him to explain the musico-poetic structure to me, and he could only tell me that it was 18 lines of poetry, and three sections. Only a composer of *cuecas* need know the complexities of the structure.

The abstract structure of *la cueca* is what Graham McFee would refer to as a *token*. In his work, *Understanding Dance*, McFee presents the type/token concept, which I have adopted for use with *la cueca* to describe the versions and variations in performance arts. He uses this analogy to explain the concept:

Suppose I distribute a flag to each of ten people. Now I ask how many flags there are. Clearly there is a sense in which there are ten flags: each person has a stick with a piece of cloth attached to it. This we call the *token* sense. Equally clear is the sense in which there is just one flag, for each person has the Union Jack; or two flags, because five have the Union Jack and five have the Stars and Stripes, and so on. This we call the *type* sense.

While the token characterizes the basic or abstract structure of a certain thing, the type is the form it actually takes when realized. In *la cueca*, its formal musico-poetic and choreographic structure is the token, and the stylistic variations are the types. While the *type/token* concept explains the artistic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vuelta</th>
<th>P.S. Line[^1]</th>
<th>Lyrics</th>
<th>(M)S M.P.</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inicial</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yo te-ni, Yo te-ni-a un-a ne-gri-ta</td>
<td>(3)8 A</td>
<td>I used to have a negrita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Que la a-ma, que la a-ma-ba y la que ri-a</td>
<td>(3)8 B</td>
<td>That I loved and wanted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3[^2]</td>
<td>Que la a-ma, que la a-ma-ba y la que ri-a</td>
<td>(3)8 B</td>
<td>That I loved and wanted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Un di-a, un di-a la vi ilo-ram-do</td>
<td>(3)8 A</td>
<td>One day I saw her crying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sin sa-her, sin sa-her lo que te-ni-a</td>
<td>(3)8 B</td>
<td>Without knowing what was wrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6[^3]</td>
<td>Yo te-ni, Yo te-ni-a un-a ne-gri-ta</td>
<td>(3)8 B</td>
<td>I used to have a negrita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primera</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Esta ne-gri-ta dia-bla</td>
<td>(0)7 A</td>
<td>This devilish negrita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ca-ra-ba, se me-tio un di-a</td>
<td>(3)5</td>
<td>Caramba, One day she went in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>A la ca-sa del o-tro</td>
<td>(0)7 B</td>
<td>To someone else’s house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>ca-ra-ca-ra-ba, que e-lia te-ni-a</td>
<td>(5)5</td>
<td>Cara-Caramba, what she’s got,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segunda</td>
<td>11[^4]</td>
<td>Esta ne-gri-ta dia-bla</td>
<td>(0)7 B</td>
<td>This devilish negrita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12[^4]</td>
<td>Ca-ra-ba, se me-tio un di-a</td>
<td>(3)5</td>
<td>Caramba, One day she went in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13[^5]</td>
<td>Que e-lia te-ni-a, si</td>
<td>(1)5 A</td>
<td>What she’s got, yea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>ca-ra-ba, ne-gra chin-cho-sa</td>
<td>(3)5</td>
<td>Caramba, tiresome negra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>yo no te es-toy quer-i-en-do</td>
<td>(0)7 B</td>
<td>Now I don’t want you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>ca-ra-ca-ra-ba, por vel ei-do-sa</td>
<td>(5)5</td>
<td>Cara-Caramba, for being flighty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Esta ne-gri-ta as-tu-ta</td>
<td>(0)7 B</td>
<td>Caramba, she used to sell fruit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Ca-ra-ba, ven-di-a fru-ta</td>
<td>(3)5</td>
<td>Caramba, she used to sell fruit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**P.S.—Poetic Section; **[^1]**—Line From Which the Poetic Material is Repeated; (M)S—(Number of Muletilla Syllables)Number of Syllables of Poetry; M.P.—Melodic Phrase.

Table 1
interpretations as they relate to each other, the development of these styles and their histories will explain the social functions of the type/token concept as it pertains to la cueca.

Nationalism is another crucial concept in this essay, but because of its complexities, I must set some parameters for my use of this concept. Many scholars agree, while dissenting on specifics, that a nation is a momentary idea, an “imagined community” of sorts, that evolves as the history of our world continues to be written. A nation is different from a state because the latter refers to the various forms of government institutions and legal policies, such as political borders and militaries. Thus, by nation, I am referring to a sense of interconnectedness felt by individuals living in a certain area, possibly a state, as a result of the tendencies and/or culture of these people. A core issue implicit in both the nation and nationalism is that of power, and the struggle for it. This could be considered the case of the American Civil War, what I would call a struggle of nationalisms. The North and South fought for the political and ideological power of the state, driven by two very different concepts of the American nation. What can be seen here is that the understanding of the nation can differ from one group to another, denoting the “imagined” aspect of the nation, while the understanding of a state does not change.

Nationalism is, then, belief in and support for the nation. Similarly, cultural nationalism is the representation of a nation through cultural means and, once again, the struggle for ideological control of the nation may take the form of cultural nationalism. Contained within the category of cultural nationalism is musical nationalism. In its most obvious form, “state-sponsored” musical nationalism is often presented as national anthems, patriotic songs, and military music. When musical nationalism is sponsored by the state, it tends not to focus on local distinctions and traditions and instead forefronts a general mold of the state. On the other end of the spectrum, from the bottom-up, musical nationalism that is created and performed by the masses tends to accent the local aspects of the music, such as the use of certain instruments, or references to certain locations or people. In essence, grass roots musical nationalism incorporates “folkloric” elements, which can take many different forms. However, what we will see later is that the people of a nation can accept many different forms of musical nationalism that are linked to different local traditions, but when the government promotes a localized tradition, the power is taken from the people, and trouble will likely erupt.

Formative Years: La Zamacueca in the Nineteenth Century

When Jose Zapiola witnessed la zamacueca in Santiago in 1823, it was still very new to Chile and new as a form in general. Between 1810 and 1825, Latin American republics were gaining independence from their colonial rulers, and as their nations began to take shape, it was important to create forms of national culture that citizens would identify themselves with, or at least, identify as symbols of the nation in which they lived. What these aspiring nations, in turn, created were forms of “official” nationalism. Thomas Turino, a professor of musicology and anthropology, lists such forms as “military music that is indexically linked to states through contextual use, and patriotic songs and national anthems that make the connection through their texts as well as indexically.” These early forms of nationalism were not representative of local traditions because, at this point, it was more important to promote the larger national culture than to divide the not yet formed nation into many individual local traditions. The style of these songs was firmly rooted in the Western classical tradition because, at the time, that was the only model. In the case of the Chilean national anthem, one of the original composers was not even Chilean, but Spanish! These forms of musical nationalism were state-sponsored and politically motivated, but did not have any significant tie to one specific ideological disposition.

Meanwhile, la zamacueca was becoming more and more popular in Chile. In 1830, during the first season of the National Opera, during one of the keyboard lesson scenes in a performance of The Barber of Seville, la zamacueca was even danced on stage. In that same year, Diego Portales, a Chilean minister more powerful than the president, is reported to have said, “I wouldn’t trade la cueca for the Presidency!” Historical sources from the 1830s until the turn of the century present la cueca in different positions in society. A French traveler in Chile in the 1840s said that “la zamacueca, coy and gracious, has seen itself relegated to the low classes of society.” During my archival work in the Chilean National Library, however, I found facsimiles of musical scores of zamacuecas, dating between 1850 and 1878, scored for piano, and even one with violin accompaniment. Only the wealthy would be able to afford pianos and have the education to read the scores, so la cueca was clearly being cultivated in the upper class as well. A statement found on a Chilean government website reads, “In the middle of the nineteenth century, la cueca was already known in a large part of the national territory with its own characteristics and original melodies, being interpreted and danced as much in the aristocratic salons as in the popular meetings places.” These statements tell us that la cueca was clearly being diffused throughout all social classes, in a “large part” of Chile. Combined with the fact that in the 1860s, Peruvians were referring to la cueca as la chilena, it is clear the la cueca was becoming a part of the national culture, and was, thus, symbolic of the culture.

Early twentieth century Latin America is characterized
by scholars as a period of “neocolonialism”: society was still ruled by oligarchs who lived and believed in a transplanted European culture. With a growing desire for domestic industrialization came nationalist movements that would attempt to break the imperial ties between foreign countries and their own Latin American nations. Culturally, these nationalist movements stressed the uniqueness of Latin America and “celebrated the mixing of indigenous, European, and African genes.”

This early strain of imperialism, and equally to idealize the strength and beauty of racially mixed nationalists from the urban middle-class re-taking of their respective countries, recent immigrants European, and African genes.”

To achieve the democratic sequences of the 1959 Cuban Revolution were being felt throughout Latin America. Marxist revolutionary movements began to spring up almost everywhere, and the US government became increasingly more protective of its economic interests in Latin America. To combat the possibility of the expropriation of these economic interests by the communists, the US government began supporting anticommunist dictatorships and, when this was no longer an option, sent in US military or proxy forces to resolve the situation.

This is the setting of the creation of la cueca bravá, and it is in this setting that la cueca bravá would be suppressed.

La Cueca Brava: The Art of War

In the documentary La Cueca Brava, the story of the birth of la cueca urbana is told by the musicians who led this “movement,” Los Chileneros and the band’s members. During the 1960s and early 1970s, Los Chileneros created a style of la cueca that represented their lives in the urban settings of Santiago and Valparaíso, a watershed moment in the history of la cueca. It was called la cueca urbana, and later became known as la cueca brava, and la cueca chilenera. This style was set apart from its predecessor and contemporary, the traditional cueca, as an expression of an artistically underrepresented Chilean population: the urban, working class Chilean. To be clear, this style is not that of the Chilean banker who lives in a well-to-do part of Santiago; it is the voice of the working class living in the impoverished sectors, the battlefields (canchas) where the cunning come out on top. These sectors are referred to as el roto or los barrios bravos, hence the name la cueca brava. Most Chileans maintain el roto can also be any small Chilean town (el roto=el pueblo Chileno). However, bravo means ‘fierce,’ which alludes to the competitive aspect of these sectors and in the music. The Chilean ethnomusicologist Rodrigo Torres, a leading scholar on la cueca bravá, has described la cueca bravá as a “genre-mirror where a part of our society looks at itself and constructs a gaze towards itself.”

While traditional cueca lyrics tend to focus on light-hearted topics, like Chilean rivers, a Chilean dish, a “country” girl, or a funny love story, performers of la cueca bravá, while familiar with these traditional cucas, occasionally singing them, focus their compositions on their experiences in these barrios bravos. Some stories in their cucas are of drug smugglers, police arresting their friends, the beauty of the barrios bravos, pimps, and alcoholism. All of these themes, as well as a few themes from traditional cucas, can be found on Los Chileneros’ first two albums, La Cueva Centrina and La Cueva Brava. These cueca bravá musicians, Hernan “Nano” Nuñez...
and Luis “El Baucha” Araneda, among others, were raised with la cueca, and when they became musicians and performers themselves, they integrated their local lifestyle and ideology into la cueca, and produced the cueca brava.

The wardrobe and style of the accompanying dance also reflects the life in los barrios bravos. Interestingly, it is quite reminiscent of the lunfardo style of Buenos Aires, Argentina, the style commonly associated with tango. Thus, la cueca brava was not danced by the traditional huaso and china. It was suave men in sports-coats and slacks with silk scarves around their necks, and seductive women in short, revealing dresses and high heels that danced the brava style of la cueca. These couples perform the steps in a more fluid and calm manner, and the dance becomes quite sultry at times, especially when the man opens his blazer, invites the lady in, and tries to sneak a kiss. During my fieldwork in Chile, my informants often told me that these movements and techniques are from a time when cueca was danced in the brothel, with “professional” women.

Looking back to Torres’s analogy of la cueca brava as a “mirror,” through which to view the new lyrical content and performance aesthetic, we can see that la cueca brava does, indeed, “construct a gaze towards itself.” By presenting thematic issues that represent aspects of these marginalized populations, and by presenting themselves as representatives of these communities, these cuequeros constructed the “self” that they wished to present, which was authenticated by their constituency within the movement and community. The artistic process is one of choice; an artistic object is the result of a series of choices, some conscious, others unconscious. Thus, la cueca brava is autobiographical in the sense that it is the product of a people telling their story the way they see it and, simultaneously, the way they want their story to be told.

The context in which la cueca brava was performed and the way it was performed are equally significant in understanding this style because, as a “mirror,” la cueca brava offers a view of the conditions of these marginalized sectors. La cueca brava is known for its use, and possibly creation, of cueca a la rueda, or, ‘cueca in the round.’ At clandestine locations, like the central train station or brothels or bars (referred to as casas), members of the cueca brava community met, gathered in a circle, with panderos and other instruments in hand, and sang. In this circle, one singer would sing the first section of poetry, and then the man to his right would take the next section, and so on. This is where the competition begins. When a singer begins a section, another singer in the circle has the opportunity to “steal” somebody’s verse if he is able to sing over that person. This was accomplished by changing the timbre of the singing voice and using an almost nasally style of singing. So, if a man was singing in a “chest” or operatic voice, the nasally timbre would cut right through and take the forefront.

Nano Nuñez is credited with this style of singing because, as he saw it, the traditional style was a “mess” (chacota), and he wanted there to be a lead voice, one that would cut through all the other voices. This distinct vocal timbre is one of the competitive and fierce aspects of this style. When the verse gets to a singer, and someone else in the circle overpowers his voice, he has lost the battle.

In these circles, however, a cuequero must not only be a strong singer, but also a learned poet and musician. In La Cueca Brava, El Baucha of Los Chileneros makes a telling comparison between el cuequero and el payador, a traditional, folkloric Chilean poet/musician, like a troubadour, who often competes with other payadors:

And this has been the craftiness of los cuequeros, [to] have a lot of material, just like el payador. El payador has to have his rhymes and have some rhymes hidden, but good ones, good ones to defend himself. He’s fighting with a knife and all of sudden takes out his revolver.

While I’m unsure how to interpret his later comment, “To me, killing an animal is the same as singing a cueca,” the comparison between the cuequero and the payador, and the closing metaphor reveal that now, in addition to the content of la cueca brava, the role of the cuequero equally reflects the life of this population and their consequent ideologies.

Luis “El Baucha” Araneda (right of center, playing a white pandero) sings a cueca after the premiere of a documentary focused on the current cueca brava movement. “El Baucha” is considered one of the founders of la cueca brava. Photography by Luis-Michael Zayas.

While a ritual taking the form of a circle may be associated with equality and inclusion, cueca a la rueda is different because only a skilled cuequero can take part, reflecting the similar Darwinian approach common in these marginalized populations. This competition is so vital to la cueca brava because it is a process of self-definition and, simultaneously, artistic innovation. The dynamics and rules of the rueda define
The working class's demand for political democracy, heard in the sounds of la cueca brava, would later be answered; in 1970 the candidate Salvador Allende of the Popular Unity party was elected President of Chile, one of the world’s first cases of a democratically elected Marxist. When this Socialist took the presidency, the working class finally achieved political representation, but as Allende worked at improving the conditions of the working class, the aristocracy was furious because they were losing economic and political control of Chile. Generals and commanders within the Chilean military, longtime allies of wealthy elites, agreed that Chile could not become a socialist state and took action to silence Allende as he iterated the concerns of the working class. On September 11th, 1973, the military junta authorized an air strike on La Moneda, the presidential palace located in the center of downtown Santiago, with General Augusto Pinochet commanding. In the days, weeks, and years that followed, General Pinochet not only froze civil liberties, but wholly rejected them in the attempt to quell the threat of any supporters of the Allende presidency. La cueca brava was no exception, and as a member of Los Chileneros tells it, “The houses died in ’73. When the coup happened. That’s when the bohemian night ceased.” A 6 p.m. curfew was implemented, and the authority to shoot on sight was given to law enforcement. When Pinochet left office in 1990, The National Commission of Truth and Reconciliation was created to “draw up a report on the overall truth of [the human rights] violations [of the Pinochet Regime],” and in their final report, the Commission concluded that 2,279 people had been killed by the military regime, with an additional 641 deaths that were “cases in which the Commission could not come to conviction.” Never before had Chile’s motto, “By Right or Might,” been more fitting.

On September 18th, 1979, the Chilean independence day or El Dia Patria, General Pinochet declared la cueca the national dance of Chile in Decree No. 23. The decree states, in its most basic summation, that since la cueca has been so widely performed and cultivated in Chile, and it represents the emotional and linguistic diversity of “the Chilean,” so “la cueca constitutes, in terms of music and dance, the most genuine expression of the national soul [alma nacional].” What is also proposed in this decree is the formation of permanent state-sponsored organizations that will aid in education and in the cultivation of la cueca, and the creation of annual seminars or classes that will teach novice and intermediate dancers la cueca during the month of September. In 1980 the Ministry of Education added a clause to Decree

*la cueca brava*, becoming the symbol of this community.

In comparing the cuequero to the payador, El Baucha bridges the gap between *la cueca’s* folkloric antecedents and the struggles of modernity and urbanization, connecting *la cueca brava* with the larger tradition and also situating *la cueca brava* within this larger tradition. In the two albums mentioned above, there are a number of songs, such as Que Vivan Las Fiestas Patrias, Que Bonita Es Peñaflor, El Buen Mozo, and Los Mineros, that are centered on national and local pride, as well as songs that celebrate laborers like waiters and miners. By artistically honoring the national, the local, and the people through the *la cueca brava* style, the cuequero creates songs of musical nationalism, in a local style.

*La cueca brava’s* expression of nationalism can also be heard in the symbolic integration of piano. This is not inconsequential; the piano’s newly found role is quite symbolic: it is the working class’s appropriation of a traditionally aristocratic instrument. Nano Nuñez talked about this in the documentary saying, “The piano is that which has given life to *la cueca,*” at which point he recited a *cuela* he had written about the piano:

> The piano was always the ‘sir,’
> From the high society.
> When it met the *cuela,*
> It already had spunk.
>
> Now it walks in the slope
> And it gives it shine.
> It goes everywhere
> With the young-cats.
>
> With the young-cats, yea
> And it was *la cueca*
> Who took it to the stage,
> At a party.
>
> It’s filled with vibe,
> Perfect for the party.45

The artistic discovery and integration of the piano into *la cueca brava* presented in *this cueca* is evidence of the symbolic nature of certain instruments and timbres. For so much of Chile’s history, the powerful landowners and businessmen that formed the aristocracy and high society ruled the country. Thus, the integration of the traditionally aristocratic piano by the cuequeros of the working class is effectively a political statement: a declaration that the rapidly growing working class was to be included in politics, and if the aristocracy did not acquiesce, the working class would take without asking.

*Por La Razon o La Fuerza* The Coup of *La Cueca*

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Under closer analysis, however, one will notice that the “traditional” wardrobe (which is very important in all forms of dance) does not depict the farmer, peasant, or “José six-pack” of the Central Valley of Chile. The elaborate spurs, leather boots, suede sombrero, and fine wool chamanto (Chilean poncho) depict a different Chilean character: the wealthy landowner. Thus, the elite not only are back to controlling the national culture, but are making their own image, or at least an image of their predecessors, a symbol of nationalism. Once again, it is easy to see how la cueca can function as a “mirror” of society.

Now fully politicized, la cueca could now be used as a form of protest. Women whose husbands, sons, fathers, brothers had “disappeared” as a result of the brutal military regime performed la cueca in a new way to protest the authoritarian regime: they danced alone. This was called la cueca sola, or the ‘alone cueca.’ By dancing la cueca alone, without a partner, the woman allows her performance to symbolize the destruction of families and of Chile; la cueca sola became a new form of cultural nationalism. As la cueca became an important part of the political-cultural nationalism promoted by the state, the cueca sola came to symbolically represent the brutality of the regime on the nation and national heritage.

The military regime also forced thousands of Chileans into exile, many never to return. In Australia, Canada, Norway, the US, and other places around the world, Chilean exiles have created cultural centers to preserve the memory of home. Unlike immigrants, the exiles did not choose to leave their nation of origin, but were forced out, and in exile they are forced to deal with a new culture and way of life. Having been robbed of their previous lives and kicked out of their homes, the one thing that the exile can hold on to and never be forced to give up is the memory of home. The exile’s realization of this newfound agency marks the beginning of a journey of remembering home; the quotidian activities of home, once taken for granted, are now meaningful symbols of one’s heritage. Through the recreation of the dances, foods, language, music, and art of home, the exile community can both remember and experience home.

In his work on a Chilean exile community in Oslo, Norway, Jan Sverre Knudsen shows that la cueca is one such method through which exiles connect, viscerally and symbolically, to their Chilean cultural heritage. Most importantly, this exile community’s performances of la cueca are, as I have suggested before, situations where the performers are expressing aspects of their identity through stylistic variations of la cueca. Having said that, in this exile community, dancers perform the “traditional” or “championship” style of la cueca, the same style institutionalized by the same military regime that forced these Chileans into exile.

As can be seen in a statement by one of Knudsen’s informants (“In Chile I was just a person. Here I became a Chilean”), exiles are forced to confront a newfound aspect of their identity when living in the host country: their nationality. In Chile, there was no need to truly recognize one’s national identity because it was one common to every Chilean, a given attribute. The formation of one’s identity within Chile, then, relied on individualized, unique or less common characteristics, possibly regional traits that would differentiate a person from his/her neighbor. In Chile, this differentiation would happen through regionalized or stylized variations of la cueca, but in exile communities like the...
one in Oslo, performing la cueca in the “traditional” style is seen as the most succinct symbolic representation of the Chilean identity. It is also not surprising to read that many of these exiles learned how to dance la cueca once in exile; la cueca was viewed as too common in the formation of one’s identity within Chile. Thus, as exiles confront their own national identity, what we see is that the generalized or stereotyped Chilean identity will sufficiently differentiate one’s self from one’s non-Chilean neighbor. The expression of la cueca is vital to the exile communities around the world because it is a physical act of remembering that incorporates all members of the community. In fact, it is so important to the exile communities abroad that the international championship of la cueca is held annually in Toronto, Canada!

No Pare, Sigue, Sigue!: Personal Observations and Conclusion

During my eight months in Chile, I divided my time among three groups of performers that represent different schools of cueca interpretation. One group was the Ballet Folklórico de la Universidad de Santiago de Chile (BAFUSACH), a university funded and organized dance troop of about thirty people. With financial stability provided by the university, BAFUSACH is granted the ability to stray outside what would be considered traditionally folkloric and, in my opinion, offers a “high-art” re-interpretation of the folkloric forms.

Another group I observed and performed with was Tierra Chilena. Don Sergio Rodríguez Araneda, to whom I am indebted for his guidance, mentorship, and friendship during my time in Chile, founded the group in 1963 and continues to direct the group to this day. Their repertoire and interpretations are on the “traditional” side of the spectrum. Tierra Chilena is also composed of about fifty mainly young people, and the ages of the dancers range from fifteen to twenty-five years, while the ages of the musicians range between fifteen and sixty years. This is typical, since the dancers need to be in peak physical condition whereas the musicians do not.

The last group I worked with was not a formal organization like Tierra Chilena or BAFUSACH, but was the cueca brava community, composed of both amateur and professional bands, musicians and dancers, as well as those who merely wanted to associate themselves with the scene and were not performers. On each day of the week, there was a different place where this community would meet. Tuesdays was cueca a la rueda at a former squat turned cultural center in downtown Santiago. Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays were at different bars where one of the cueca brava bands was playing. This community had many members, somewhere around two hundred, though only about fifty attended the events on a daily basis. Unlike groups like Tierra Chilena and BAFUSACH, the cueca brava community was self-contained in the sense that when a cueca brava band performed, they often included members of this community, and it was the rest of the community for whom they were performing. As opposed to performing for a general public, they were performing for their peers, just as had happened at the conception of la cueca brava in the 1960s.

In this cueca brava community, I met a met man named Don Jaime. He was a regular in the cueca brava scene, and an excellent dancer, even appearing in music videos. The first time we sat down and talked, Don Jaime, who appeared to be about forty, though I never asked, told me he owned a construction business. He then told me that he taught classes on la cueca, and also promoted many cueca brava events. At the end of our conversation he said, “Construction is my job; my life is cueca.” Instead of defining himself as a businessman, Don Jaime chose cueca as his identity.

His story shows that la cueca, in addition to being a means through which one can express one’s identity, is a means of forming an identity. The reason is that we often define ourselves by what we do: he is a writer; you are a teacher; I am a swimmer. In Tierra Chilena, I met a twenty-five-year-old dancer, Patricia, who while in high school was a cheerleader. However, once she graduated and went on to college, there were no outlets for her to perform as a cheerleader anymore. Later on, she heard about auditions for Tierra Chilena, and made the cut; now she is the lead female dancer in the troop. Now Patricia is a folkloric dancer.

A couple from the audience dances cueca as Las Torcazas, one of the few all girl cueca groups, performs in Matucana Metro Station (6/5/08). Photography by Luis-Michael Zayas.

Charles Seeger once posed the following questions as a means of understanding the musical process that is a great summation of the dynamics of la cueca:

Why do people make music? To communicate.
What do they communicate? A discipline.
How do they communicate it? By play.
As I have stated throughout this work, through la cueca, musicians and dancers have effectively expressed the issues that are relevant to them (communicate), and in doing so, represent a group (a discipline). I now turn to the issue of “play,” the primary reason that la cueca has been so popular among Chileans.

At every step in the process of composing a cueca, a composer has options. The composer chooses the melody and harmony, but more importantly chooses the story to tell. As long as the melody follows the structure of la cueca, any story can be told. This is like a game, a non-zero sum one. With the only rules of the game being the musico-poetic structure, the goal of this game is to fit the telling of your story into the structure. Like we’ve seen in la cueca brava, this game can be competitive. This competition among artists is playful, like a game of Scrabble. Indeed, everyone wants to win, but just participating is satisfying. The best part of the “game of cueca,” is that there are no winners or losers. However, as I’ve already shown, the military regime didn’t necessarily change the rules of the game, but changed the stakes; la cueca became a zero-sum game, where winning meant conforming and loosing could mean your life.

In using this game analogy, I am, in effect, demonstrating the relationship between the structure and function of la cueca. Thus the musico-poetic structure is what defines la cueca and, consequently, is the commonality of every story told in this form, and because Chileans have traditionally been the tellers, listeners, and dancers of stories in this form, the telling, listening, or dancing to a story in this form is an act of identification with this group. However, what makes this static relationship between structure and function dynamic is the obvious and overwhelming willingness of Chileans to take part in the cultivation and performance of la cueca, the most important element of this entire work. As I refer to the musico-poetic structure of la cueca as an abstract form, without performers to realize the form, la cueca wouldn’t exist. This is the essence of la cueca as a form of Chilean musical nationalism: the Chilean population, the people, are the agents responsible for maintaining, cultivating, and performing la cueca, and it is these same people who ascribe meaning to it. The enjoyment of expression and “play” felt by Chileans through their participation in la cueca, at some point in time, was given the explanation that this enjoyment is what it feels like to be a part of a community, specifically, a nation. Objects do not have inherent meaning; peoples ascribe meaning to objects. A red light does not mean stop, but we have given it that meaning. Thus, the meaning ascribed to a symbol is a form of power, which can be seen so clearly when drivers of huge tin boxes stop when they see a light. La cueca is a symbol of nationalism and a form of musical nationalism because the people of Chile have chosen it to be, and their cultivation of it under this pretense, only bolsters this meaning. The shared desire of the Chilean people to maintain the power of the meaning of la cueca in the hands of the people is reflected through the continuing cultivation of la cueca by the people of Chile.

1 See Soublette and Parra, 1959; Garrido, 1943; Vega, 1947; Rodríguez Arancibia, 1950.
3 Pablo Garrido, Biografía de la cueca (Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Ercilla, 1943), 58.
5 William Skuban, Lines in the Sand: Nationalism and Identity on the Peruvian–Chilean Frontier (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007), XIII.
7 A common example of the hemiola figure can be heard in the singing of “[I-Like-To-Be-In-A-[Mer-i-ca]” from West Side Story. The hemiola is denoted by the bold font.
9 Carlos Vega, La Forma de la Cueva Chilena (Santiago de Chile: Instituto de Investigaciones Musicales, 1947), 16.
11 Inti-Illimani (Musical group). Amar de nuevo. Danbury, CT: Xenophile, 1999; all translations of Spanish texts are those of the author, and any inaccuracies are the fault of the author.
12 Soublette and Parra, El Folktore de Chile, 1.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid, 11.
16 Ibid, 9-12.
18 Ibid, 90-91.
La Cueca Brava, DVD, directed by Mario Rojas (Chile: Zoo Films, 1999). This documentary may be accessed online at: (http://www.nuestro.cl/notas/rescate/mario_rojas.htm)

La Biografía de la Cueca, 69.

Rodrigo Torres, “El Arte De Cuequear: Identidad Y Memoria Del Arrabal Chileno,” in Revisitando Chile, ed. Sonia Montecino Aguirre (Santiago de Chile: Cuadernos Bicentenario, Presidencia de la República, 2003), 149-157. Original Spanish text: “…género-espejo donde una parte de nuestra sociedad se mira y construye una Mirada sobre sí misma.”

Rojas, La Cueca Brava.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid. Original Spanish quote: “Y esa ha sido la píldora de los cuequeños, tener harto material, igual que el payador. El payador tiene que tener sus payas y tener unas payas escondidas, pero bienas, buenas cosas, para defenderte. Esto peleando con cuchillo y de repente saca el revolver.”

Ibid. Original Spanish text: “Siempre el piano fue el señor/De la alta sociedad./Cuando conocí a la cueca,/Ya fue más de la ‘galla./ Ahora anda en el lote,/Y le da brillo/Va a todas las para/con los chiquillos./Con los chiquillos, sí/Y fue la cueca;/Quién lo sabía a la cancha/en una fiesta/Esta tirado con onda/para la fonda.”

Chasteen, Born in Blood and Fire, 294.


Rojas, La Cueca Brava.


Chile, Report of the National Commission, 1.

Ibid, 899.


Ibid. See also: Garrido, La Biografía de La Cueca, 76.

Chasteen, Born in Blood and Fire, 182.


Ibid, 218.


Garrido, La Biografía de la Cueca, 66.

Chasteen, Born in Blood and Fire, 249.

Ibid, 259

La Cueca Brava, DVD, directed by Mario Rojas (Chile: Zoo Films, 1999). This documentary may be accessed online at: (http://www.nuestro.cl/notas/rescate/mario_rojas.htm)

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Chasteen, Born in Blood and Fire, 294.


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Charles Seeger, “Music as a Tradition of Communication and Play,” Ethnomusicology 6, no. 3 (September 1962), 156.

Bibliography


**Discography:**


Biographies of the Authors for the Inquiry

Bobbie Bigby, a native of Tulsa, Oklahoma, is a senior majoring in Anthropology and Chinese Literature. Her project, directed by mentor Geoff Childs (Ph.D., Anthropology), investigates the intersection of indigenous religious rituals and tourism in the ethnic Naxi community of Southwestern China. Throughout her undergraduate career, Bobbie’s research interests have focused on indigenous agency through language and culture revival, as well as ethnic-state relationships in China, India, and the United States. Bobbie ultimately plans to pursue a career in Anthropology that places her both in the classroom and in the field, working on behalf of indigenous communities abroad.

Mimi Li majors in French and Economics. She grew up in Chengdu, China, and St. Louis, Missouri, discovered Alice Walker and The Color Purple as an eighth grader at Wydown Middle School, and has been learning to look at the world with an academic feminist’s eye ever since. In her free time, she can be found seeking out unnecessarily esoteric things to read, think, and talk about. After graduation, she plans to work for a few years before finding her way to a graduate school.

Kimberly Short is a senior from Dunkirk, Maryland, majoring in English Literature with a minor in Marketing. Her project focuses on African American female affluence in the early 1990s as it was depicted in situation comedies. In particular she looks at the comedy Living Single, which presented four up and coming African American female roommates in New York City. Upon graduation, Kim hopes to pursue a career in public relations where her Mellon project will assist her understanding of the communications industry and the research surrounding it. She is indebted to the Mellon program for providing the skills to research, the guidance to become a stronger writer, and the experience that has made her a more determined individual. She would like to thank the Mellon seminar, Dr. Thompson, Mary Vizzini, and her mentor, Dr. Philip Sewell, for their continued support and direction over the past two years.

Ashley Williams is a History major and Writing minor. Her academic interests include African and European history, and creative writing. She is hoping to do Americorps next year.

Luis-Michael Zayas was born in the suburbs of NYC, a diverse landscape where his passion for the performing arts and ethnic cultures blossomed. With a major in Music and a minor in Latin American Studies, Luis-Michael’s MMUF project on a Chilean folkloric song style is the culmination of years of academic study, and embodies his deep interest in Latin American folkloric musics. After graduation, he plans to pursue a career in non-profit performing arts administration before beginning a Masters degree in Ethnomusicology. The MMUF has been an invaluable asset in Luis-Michael’s intellectual and scholarly capital, and the research and analytical skills afforded to him by his experience in the fellowship will remain beneficial far beyond the realm of academia.