ACKNOWLEDGING OTHERNESS

LUCIANA COLAPINTO

The clickety-click of the departures sign cuts through the continuous murmur, as three trains switch to status "boarding." I am overwhelmed by the sounds of the stampede of travelers rushing to get in line, a noise that begins to die down as the travelers feed into the descending escalators at the edges of the large room. Off the newly evacuated floors of Penn Station emerges a couple in their eighties, inching their way towards the tall information man standing to my right. The do not recognize. It sits awkwardly on his head, too much space left at the top. I know that he has never worn a hat before.

Finally, the couple reaches the information man, and the husband takes a step forward, looking back at his wife a few times for reassurance. No words are spoken. All that I hear is the annoying static coming from the walkie-talkie attached to the information man's waist. The old man continues to look back and forth from his wife to the intimidating stranger in front of him. I wait for a line of encouragement from the information man, a simple "Can I help you?" to relieve the obvious difficulty of this encounter. I grow angry at his unnecessary exertion of the little authority he has. The silence is eventually broken when the old man takes out his ticket, and pointing to it, says in broken English (it sounds like he is Hispanic), "I want to take this to Secaucus." "Track 6," says the information guard. This is his favorite terse reply.

The old man looks down at his ticket, "I also wanted . . ." but the information man has already turned his back, ignoring the request. We wait in vain for him to turn around. Defeated, the old man turns back to his wife. She motions a "Well? Go on…" gesture, the kind that mothers make when their sons are too scared to pay for candy at the register on their own. Gathering up what is left of his confidence, the old man speaks thickly to the information man's back: "Where is track 6?" The information man turns around, and heaving a sigh of aggravation, points in the direction of the track. "Thank you," the old man nods excessively and walks towards the gate with his wife.

I look back at the information man, who now shifts the weight back and forth from his heels to the balls of his feet. I try to detect any sign of remorse, but my attempts are futile, and soon I am wracked with a new preoccupation. I have always been aware of the diversity that makes up New York, and I had always believed that there was something about being a New Yorker that bridged the differences between diverse groups. But as I reflected on the way in which the information man purposely created distance between himself and the old Hispanic man, I began to see a different reality: perhaps New Yorkers create division between groups and establish an "other" (a person or group that opposes a certain ideal) as a tool of successful living. But what is in the nature of "otherness" and in the nature of New York and its citizens that calls

for this division? And what are the consequences, for both society and the individual, of acknowledging "otherness"?

My wishes for the interaction between these two men may very well seem overly romantic for what was just a momentary encounter in Penn Station. But I cannot help but think that my longing for contact is a natural feeling in this enormous and often cold city. In her essay "The Use of Sidewalks: Contact," Jane Jacobs recognizes city dwellers' "wishes for differing degrees of contact" as a catalyst for the social interactions among them (77-78). She asserts that the best kind of public contact arises in public settings, (sidewalks, for example), and emphasizes the futility and danger of attempting to achieve public contact through private interaction: ""Togetherness' is a fittingly nauseating name for an old ideal in planning theory. . . . The requirement that much shall be shared drives city people apart" (81). Jacobs's disdain for private contact in the public sphere is highlighted through her example of a street in Baltimore that has no sidewalk public life and instead uses a sidewalk park as a primary location for private contact:

> Still more distressing, when mothers of different income or color or educational background bring their children to the street park, they and their children are rudely and pointedly ostracized. They fit awkwardly into the suburbanlike sharing of private lives that has grown in default of city sidewalk life. The park lacks benches purposely; the "togetherness" people ruled them out because they might be interpreted as an invitation to people who cannot fit in. (83)

The words "rudely," "pointedly," and "ostracized" transform what might have been perceived as a mere distaste for "togetherness" into an unsettling representation of the discrimination that can arise out of this ideal. Jacobs's representation of the benchless park emphasizes the thick irony of the exclusive "togetherness" of this Baltimore street. She senses the phoniness of this planned utopia, the manner in which by choosing to exclude members from its inclusive neighborhood, the inhabitants of these residences are in essence cheating, making the process of togetherness easier by avoiding the inherent difficulty of co-existence. By establishing the "other," and making their inclusiveness exclusive, the residents achieve a powerful sense of belonging.

As I imagine this mother wheeling a stroller into the park, her clothes, her voice, her hair and her make-up a stark contrast to the park's everyday visitors, I am reminded of the old Hispanic man with his broken English and too-new hat. I think of the "togetherness" people in the park, rudely complacent, and am reminded of the information man, who seemed to take advantage of the old man's "otherness." It is the old man and the visiting mother that give the information man and the Baltimore residents the identity they long for. As long as the former (out of place and visibly awkward) is present, the latter can exert the little authority they have and celebrate

their comfortable position of belonging. The suffering of the excluded "other" becomes a necessary component of the "togetherness" people's contentment.

Like Jacobs, Joan Didion finds that the employment of the "other" masks unpleasant truths by establishing clear-cut, opposing forces. Didion argues, however, that the dangers of this concealment go beyond divisiveness and discrimination. In her essay "Sentimental Journeys," she carefully examines the "sentimental narratives" (faulty and manipulative representations of public conflicts) that serve to "personalize and obscure" the real problems at the source of the city's disorder (275). Presenting the case of Trisha Meili, the "Central Park Jogger" who was raped in 1989, Didion argues that the success of the case's narratives arose out of the personalized and contrasting representations of the victim and her alleged attackers. She presents various headlines of newspapers following the case, "Teen Wolfpack Beats and Rapes Wall Street Exec on Jogging Path. Wolf Pack's Prey. Female Jogger Near Death After Savage Attack by Roving Gang" (255), depicting the press' insensitive portrayal of a helpless victim and the ravenous animals that allegedly attacked her.

In the simple narratives that evolved, the jogger became the image of everything that was right in the city (the "well-brought-up virgin," the ivy graduate, the Wall-Street executive). The accused "by contrast, were seen as incapable of appreciating these marginal distinctions, ignorant of both the norms and accoutrements of middle-class life" (Didion 272). For the narrative to capture the peoples' attention, it was not enough that the victim was the embodiment of success in the city. There had to be an opposing force, a person or group that challenged that ideal, so that the narrative could be distilled into a simple problem of good vs. evil, easily accessible to the citizens of New York.

Two "opposing visions" emerged. One "was of a city systematically ruined, violated, raped by its underclass. The [other] . . . was of a city in which the powerless had been systematically ruined, violated, raped by the powerful" (Didion 300). In using the exact same adjectives Didion illustrates that both opposing visions are as narrow as the narratives that sparked them. The personalization in the case of the Central Park Jogger allowed these groups to simplify the issues of race into problems of ravenous wolves and their prey. In doing so they were able to not only mask the complexities of the case, but also the economic crisis that was wrenching the city. The establishment of the "other" allowed New Yorkers to avoid confronting the real problems at the source of the city's disorder, turning their attention instead to concerns that already had a set vocabulary and a familiar narrative and could thus be easily manipulated into the uncomplicated subjects that they were willing to address.

Didion's concept of "sentimental narratives" is also reflected in James Baldwin's "Notes of a Native Son," a personal essay in which he paints with heart-wrenching detail his experience of growing up as an African American in the 1940s. In his retelling of the incident that sparked the Harlem riots (a black soldier's fight with a white policeman over a black woman that resulted in the shooting of the black soldier),

Baldwin emphasizes that the story that spread throughout Harlem held little merit. He writes, "The facts were somewhat different—for example, the soldier had not been shot in the back, and was not dead, and the girl seems to have been as dubious a symbol of womanhood as her white counterpart in Georgia usually is" (110). This narrative, he suggests became a popular favorite among the inhabitants of Harlem because, "This invention expressed and corroborated their hates and fears so perfectly" (110). The similarity between the woman in Harlem and the Central Park Jogger moves beyond their common role of victim. Their glorified representations in their respective stories depict the "invention" that Baldwin offers as his own "sentimental narrative." The personalization of the black woman as a chaste victim and the policeman as the "other"—and consequently the implicit distinction between black and white, good and evil—once again made the case into an accessible narrative for the silenced voice that had been waiting for a chance to speak. The story thus transformed into whatever the public wanted it to represent, the embodiment of the problems they were longing to address.

Baldwin also emphasizes that the popularity of these narratives is largely due to their ability to obscure personal strife. The establishment of the other created an environment where hate could be expressed freely, and sorrow driven into obscurity: "I imagine that one of the reasons people cling to their hates so stubbornly is because they sense, once hate is gone, that they will be forced to deal with pain" (101). Like Didion, Baldwin illustrates how the narrative of the "other" allowed the people of Harlem to address their problems superficially, avoiding the internal pain that was at the root of their suffering. It was imagined, perhaps, that if the pain was simply ignored, or transferred into rage, it would begin to go away. Instead, the hate became a destructive force and served only to exacerbate the pain.

Despite these apparent similarities, however, Baldwin speaks of "otherness" in a way that sounds very little like Didion. He writes about acknowledging "otherness" from the perspective of an "other" and thus brings new dimensions to the meaning of the word. When he walks down the street after his confrontational interaction with a waitress, he becomes overwhelmed by his awareness of the differences that separate him from those around him: "People were moving in every direction but it seemed to me, in that instant, that all of the people I could see, and many more than that, were moving toward me, against me, and that everyone was white. I remember how their faces gleamed" (95). This is not the same "otherness" illustrated in Penn Station, a Baltimore sidewalk park, or the headlines of New York City newspapers. The "others" that Baldwin sees are not ostracized because they are different together; they are the majority. Baldwin, by contrast, represents the minority. Everyone walks together and "against" him, as he stands alone. He thus shares in the otherness of the old Hispanic man in Penn Station, the alleged rapists, and the awkward mother standing defenseless before the "togetherness" group.

Baldwin's perspective raises a consciousness that is not found in any of the other essays. The duality of his identity, expressed using a poignant first-person narrative, brings an added intimacy to his writing and allows him to articulate a vivid and convincing illustration of the dangers and pain that accompany "otherness." His writing exposes the conflict of a man deeply embedded in the subject he addresses, lacking the easy escape or comfortable distance that Jacobs, Didion, and I used to our advantage in our analysis of otherness. When I witnessed the episode in Penn Station, my pity emphasized the vast difference between the old-Hispanic man and myself. I could situate myself above him, looking down upon his personal struggle; take my acknowledgment of otherness and move on, perhaps forget about it in a couple hours and then revisit it later in writing. When Baldwin sees otherness in the white people that surround him, the results are far more consequential, for he sees the otherness that they see in him. The words "rage," "anger," "disease," "poison," and "hate" permeate his essay, rendering it with living emotion and urgency and conveying the almost incomprehensible burden of what it means to be the "other." Baldwin's writing thus exposes the true devastation that arises out of the creation of "otherness" in New York City.

It is thus the combinations of a large and indifferent city and its lonely inhabitants looking for belonging, overwhelmingly broad problems of race and economic crisis and fear of confrontation, and perhaps even a fear of the otherness that we see in ourselves that leads New Yorkers to establish a divide between themselves and the person or group that to them represents the "other." In this vast and complicated metropolis, it seems that the "other" has thrived in its ability to simultaneously include and exclude, reveal and obscure, for its multifaceted nature matches the multifaceted demands of the New York City citizens.

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HIGHER EDUCATION… ELECTIVE, OR PRE-REQUISITE TO LIFE?

MICHAEL TODD MOBLEY

Stock footage from almost any college campus in the United States might look a little more like the latest Stephen King novel turned mini-series than an environment for higher education. Hundreds of dejected, dispirited, and deprived young adults, fearful and confused, trudge across a beautifully landscaped plaza. . . . University of Virginia professor Mark Edmundson describes scenes almost as bleak on his campus and in his classroom. Edmundson believes that the capitalistic American way has created a "culture of consumption" that has imbedded itself deep within students' psyches, stifling their ambitions and limiting their ability to think and act in individual and passionate ways (3-4). Edmundson names television as the key culprit in instigating this "culture of consumption." The hypnotic lure of MTV and Oprah keeps Americans inside the fortified walls of their home, physically isolated from the real world. Our culture has changed. It is now time to encourage students to find their own direction, enabling the truest use of one of our most intrinsic human abilities: choice.

Though television plays a large role, it is not solely to blame for the university campus being overrun by a zombotic population of students. Brazilian educational reformist, Paulo Freire, utilizes his experiences to explicate and criticize what he calls the "banking concept" of education. Within this system data is "deposited" into the student's mind by teachers in a way that does not demand critical reflection upon that knowledge. Students are not encouraged to explore, reflect, and apply the information presented, they are merely allowed to "receive, memorize, and repeat" (72).

Veteran teacher John Taylor Gatto spent thirty years negotiating his way through crossfire in Manhattan's public school system. Gatto's experience illuminates many similarities between our public school system and Freire's depiction of the oppressive "banking" pedagogy. As Gatto demonstrates, our educational system expects peaceful, patient, and absorbent behavior from students. Students are denied the opportunity to learn through rigorous discussion, individual problem solving, and critical thinking (1-3). Brilliant ideas and deeper understanding often come from passionate exchange. Unfortunately, passionate exchange often provides nothing more than a one-way ticket to the principal's office. With this threat looming over students' heads, they quickly learn to play the part expected—lumps of clay waiting to be molded.

But what exactly are students being molded into? Gatto asserts that the American educational system is designed to limit development, encourage "mediocre intellects," debilitate the creative spirit, and mediate the capacity for "appreciable leadership skills" (4). American culture is a capitalistic culture. Capitalism requires capital, and capital requires the two things Gatto believes our school systems were created to produce:

"employees and consumers" (6). This method of controlling the masses, fueling the work force, and creating a society more susceptible to consumption ultimately works to impede the development of young adults. Such debilitation leaves us with a school system that distributes high school diplomas to people who cannot even balance the checkbook that they are so often encouraged to use. It also creates a detached young culture that is vulnerably left to glean what life experience it can from the beguiling advertisements it is subjected to on television.

Many present-day college students are too young, too naïve, and too confused for college. It is not hard to believe Mark Edmundson's claim that universities are filled with a one-dimensional passionless crop of students. One-dimension is all these young adults know. Observation is the only level of consciousness they have been allowed to achieve. Listen to the teacher and memorize what he has to say. Watch the television, and it will show you how society works. The mechanical distribution of classroom information in conjunction with the television at home has denied students the opportunity to step beyond observation and take action. Edmundson states, "The TV medium is inhospitable to inspiration, improvisation, failures, slipups. All must run perfectly" (3). However, living a life beyond observation—living an independent life with responsibilities to fulfill, decisions to make, and no one to blame or credit but yourself—will show you that inspiration, improvisation, failures, and slipups are integral, and often the most rewarding elements of life. Without inspiration there would be no art. Without improvisation there would be no surprise. Without failures there would be no heartache. Without slipups, there are few reality checks to encourage us to look at ourselves in a more levelheaded way. To deny these elements is to deny truly living life.

These are not things that can be "deposited" in the classroom, and they are not things that can be demonstrated while lounging on the living room sofa watching re-runs of *Friends*. Only truly experiencing life can answer such questions. This being the case, why are young adults not encouraged to live their own life and grasp a more firm hold on their wants and needs before they are sent to universities? Universities, where thousands of dollars are spent to prepare students for what they know nothing about; therefore cannot truly understand. Or more importantly, respect.

David Denby, film critic for *The New Yorker*, writes about his experience of returning to Columbia after years of writing professionally and raising a family. Denby's perspective is different the second time around. Living life has allowed an alternative through which he can interpret and understand the core curriculum that years before had left him apprehensive and disillusioned, yet not knowing why. This new perspective also has allowed Denby to see more clearly the state in which young students arrive in universities. Denby recounts the exhausting efforts made by Professor Edward Tayler as he struggled to move his students away from the "banking" method of education and encourage participation in the classroom. Tayler had to "trick" or "con" his students into contributing their thoughts and opinions to

discussions (44). Denby describes these students as being confused. The pressures of society have hastily placed these young adults in an atmosphere that is contrary to the one they have been accustomed to. Their safe mechanical world, largely created by the educational system and consumerism, has been turned upside down and they have little independent life experience in which they can ground themselves. Denby recaps Tayler lecturing on "The Hermeneutic Circle." This model asserts that words are merely words if you are not able to step back and place them within a context. Yet there would be no context if there were no words. Both must work together if one is to truly understand a piece of literature. This method is not only critical to employ while reading; it is also critical in life (32). If there is no greater understanding of the world at large, there will be no true understanding for the reasons of data given in the classroom. The reverse is also true. The classroom and the world at large should work together in helping one understand how to lead a fulfilled life.

Young adults should not be rushed into college so quickly. Students straight out of high school, never having had the opportunity to experience life, frequently fail to break from the "banking" mentality. As I walk around my college campus, I overhear students complaining about assignments they have been given. This professor is so horrible! This assignment is completely unnecessary. I will never use this in life! I want to scream, yes, you will! Perhaps the memory of specific content learned in the college classroom will fade, but the context in which you learn, the questions you have to raise, and the decisions you are encouraged to make are extremely beneficial lessons. The pressures of society push many young adults along, never allowing them the opportunity to come upon this realization.

Six years ago, I was a dejected, dispirited, and deprived young adult trudging across a college campus complaining about the useless load of crap teachers felt the need to dump on me. I could not see the overarching importance—or the use—of knowledge I could gain from college. Throughout my life I was told what and how to think. I had not read any books or essays by Paulo Freire, or John Taylor Gatto, but I could have written pages about the "banking" method of education and the boredom and lifelessness it creates. I had not read an essay by Mark Edmundson. However, I was disturbed by the uniformity and lack of ambition in myself and in my peers. Public schools and the television did not provide me an opportunity to learn who I truly was or what I wanted. Instead I experienced the debilitation of the spirit and the limited development that John Taylor Gatto accuses the educational system of intentionally producing. I was miserable, confused, and angry. I needed something real. Faster than you could say college dropout, my bags were packed, and I was on my way to the most "real" place I could think of: New York City.

It was not until then that I started to live my life on my terms. I learned the importance of independence and individuality. The struggle, pleasure, and confusion that accompany adult responsibilities allowed me to begin the process of learning who I was, what I enjoyed, and what goals I wanted to achieve. However, after working

and traveling for a few years I felt that there was still something missing. I needed more. I slowly began to realize that my mind was craving academic knowledge. This realization inspired an unexplainable and intense passion. In order to achieve my personal and professional goals I needed to be what John Taylor Gatto claimed capitalism feared most: an educated, independent, and creative thinker. For the first time I began to feel as though that useless load of crap did not have to be so useless. I was not clear exactly how, but I knew there was some way that I could utilize my life experience and make my education work for me. I had a passion to liberate myself by stepping beyond the state of observation and reaction that had been encouraged throughout my life and to take action.

It was time to walk across that campus once more. I knew the importance and weight of my decision, and that allowed me to bring something that was impossible to possess as an eighteen-year-old straight out of high school—respect. I brought an immeasurable amount of respect for the knowledge I could gain, ways in which this knowledge could be of use, and the opportunities it could illuminate. My life experience created a deep passion. It was this passion that gave me a good reason to write those checks for over twenty thousand dollars a year in tuition.

Rational thought suggests that the media will not loosen its tight grip around the reins driving popular culture. It is unlikely that the educational system will change either; it seems to accomplish precisely what it what was created to accomplish. I do not claim to hold the key that would resolve the problems in our failing educational system. I do not know how to reverse the effects of consumerism. The only thing I claim to know is the importance of living your own life, and doing so at your own pace. No person should be pressured or forced to engage in what they do not understand. With that in mind I offer this to any miserable, confused, or angry young student: Live life, experience the world, find yourself, and do not decide what direction to continue until you can truly respect what will come from this choice. A college education should not be a pre-requisite to life; it should be an elective that will enrich the understanding of the world and your place in it.

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A HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT: THE PURSUIT OF OIL IN A GLOBAL AGE

BRIAN DAWSON

Though seldom mentioned by American politicians and news media, the world is still recovering from the worst ecological disaster to occur in modern Europe. On November 13, 2002, the *Prestige*, a Greek-owned tanker carrying 84,849 tons of oil, began to fracture in choppy seas off the coast of Spain. As the leaking vessel began to slowly sink, the Dutch salvage company in charge of its rescue requested that the *Prestige* be towed to a small bay where the spill could be contained. After Spain refused to allow the tanker near its coast, Portugal dispatched a warship to ensure, unequivocally, that the *Prestige* would find no shelter in its territorial waters. Several days of debate produced a solution mutually agreed upon by the various European countries involved: tow the *Prestige* to Africa (Tremlett). Unfortunately for the European community, the decision was made too late—they were unable to export their problem to the developing world. The crippled boat had become completely submerged and strong currents and winds had spread oil across nearly two-hundred miles of shoreline. Since the tragedy, the once commercially viable fishing and shellfish industry has been decimated by toxic pollutants, more than 300,000 seabirds have died, and up to 24,000 tons of oil still floats in slicks off the Spanish, French, and English coasts (Brown and Tremlett).

Transporting petroleum products by sea is an extraordinarily hazardous business, particularly considering that two-thirds of the world's oil tankers have the older single hull design, like the *Prestige* (Adams). The more modern double hull tankers offer some protection from spills, but many countries, like Russia, have yet to begin replacing older ships that the International Maritime Organization has required to be phased out by 2015 (Brown). Even with the limited protection provided by a double hull, spills are bound to happen. The four major cleanup methods—containment, skimming, solvents, and burning—are poor at best. Containment by floating barriers fails in rough seas, skimming only recovers oil from the water's surface, solvents come with their own potential for ecological damage, and burning causes terrible air pollution (Adams). The reality is that the more oil we ship across the ocean, the more we increase the chances of catastrophe.

Sadly, the dangers involved in the international petroleum business are not restricted to transport; the dangers include hostile geo-political relations. Yet, blaming the oil industry for current American aggression in the Middle East does nothing to reduce the underlying issues surrounding this international conflict. "Blood for oil" may be a catchy slogan and it may be justified, but adopting platitudes fails to answer the why. The core of this question centers on individual responsibility and the environment. In war and the global ecosystem, why is there an "us" and a "them"? In

order to respond to this question, it becomes necessary to examine the actions of not simply our military, but all personnel presently conducting business abroad that could affect ecological or political stability.

Foreign governments' environmental restrictions on oil operations pale in comparison to those of the United States. Multinational corporations embrace these lax regulations overseas as a means to save money. However, cutting corners financially has resulted in dire consequences ecologically. In Ecuador, for example, an ongoing lawsuit has accused ChevronTexaco of polluting 2.5 million acres of rainforest. Rather than properly disposing of toxic waste, ChevronTexaco discharged up to four million gallons a day of heavy-metal contaminated wastewater directly into the Amazon wetlands. Additionally, they discarded liquid drilling waste in hundreds of open, unlined pits, near dozens of indigenous villages (Vidal). In the United States, these would have been flagrant environmental violations leading to criminal prosecutions. In Ecuador, ChevronTexaco saved four billion dollars and may eventually have to pay minor reparations. With no rules governing global drilling operations, the oil industry has no incentive to respect fragile environments abroad.

It's unfortunate we need the oil industry at all, but consumption of oil and gas in the United States continues to rise. Even if we assume that the tireless efforts of conservationists will succeed and hydrocarbon usage will not increase, our current level of consumption is staggering. The United States makes up less than five percent of the world's population, yet we devour more than twenty-five percent of its petroleum (NationMaster). Annually, slightly more than half of the oil we burn through is imported. Virtually all of this imported crude is produced in countries with substandard environmental regulations and then shipped via tanker to the United States. In order to minimize damage to the global ecosystem, petroleum production must be conducted under strictly controlled conditions and transport across oceans must be curtailed.

Environmentalists unanimously agree that any drilling operations should be executed with absolute care. The problem is, realistically, that there are very few places where production can be rigorously controlled. Compounding this, the few nations who demand corporations comply with strict environmental guidelines also seem to hold fast to the contradictory ideal: "Not in my backyard." Crowds cheer outside a courthouse after an injunction is handed down blocking an oil company from drilling in their area. The people, proud they were able to protect their community, return to normal life without a thought to the consequences of their actions. The oil industry is constantly searching for more production; when they are denied in one region it is easy to find another where the locals do not have access to the same time, education, and finances that would allow them to fully comprehend the potential harm to their environment. Don't all people, regardless of background, deserve the same protections for their land and waterways?

Apparently in Russia, they do not. Sakhalin Island is at the far northeast corner of Russia. After repeatedly being denied drilling permits on federal land in Alaska, ExxonMobil and Royal Dutch/Shell simply sought a target that most similarly matched the Alaskan coast in reservoir volume and geology. In this case, the target happened to lie directly across the bay on Sakhalin Island, Russia. Of course, Sakhalin is not protected by the same environmental rules that govern Alaska.

The Wall Street Journal's Jim Carlton said of the situation, "Therein lies a global tradeoff: As environmental groups scramble to shield one piece of the planet from oil exploration, the drilling rigs pop up on another sensitive front." Since the start of the Sakhalin project, ExxonMobil has allowed seismic blasting within 2.5 miles of endangered gray whales. In Alaska, a twelve-mile buffer is enforced to keep from driving the whales away from migratory routes and feeding grounds. Shell regularly discharges toxic drilling muds into shallow ocean water. All such dumping is prohibited in Alaska to protect marine life.

To date, neither company has put forth any method to protect salmon from pipeline discharges, while a specific plan is required in the United States. Perhaps most disturbing is that multinationals transport the oil, by tanker, through the Tartar Straits in winter broken-ice conditions. In 2000, Alaska forced the oil industry to run spill cleanup tests in broken-ice—the corporations failed every test. Since then, tanker transport in Alaska, minimal already as a result of extensive pipeline infrastructure, is halted during broken-ice conditions (Carlton). Ultimately, the perpetuation of environmental nationalism contradicts the realities of a global ecosystem. In order to stop the "global tradeoff," we must direct the resource industry to locations with the most rigid environmental laws.

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is one such location. To clarify, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, or ANWR, encompasses 19.5 million acres of Alaska's northeast corner. The sole area that has ever been discussed as a possible exploration target is the ANWR's 1.5 million-acre coastal strip. The last plan debated proposed opening seven percent of the ANWR for drilling. Most environmental organizations estimate the reserves at around 3.2 billion barrels of oil, whereas industry studies put the number at sixteen billion barrels. Using just the low-end figure, the United States could replace six years crude oil supply from our largest and most contentious importing region—the Middle East (ANWR).

The ANWR makes an ideal site not only due to its substantial reserves, but because public concern would force all drilling operations to be conducted under an environmental microscope. In fact, the state of Alaska proudly proclaims the environmental restrictions it places on the petroleum industry are the "most heavily regulated in the world" (ANWR). However, in addition to volume and environmental standards, there is one other factor that must be considered in this particular area—the opinion of the Native Americans who live there.

The Eskimos are the lone inhabitants of the ANWR, and although some individual tribes dissent, most support opening up their lands to drilling. Nicholas D. Kristof, of the *New York Times*, summed up the Eskimo's sentiments after spending a week in the ANWR, "Some resent the idea that American environmentalists 5,000 miles away want to lock them forever in a quaint wilderness, just for the psychic value of knowing that it is there." As Kristof discovered, Alaska's indigenous community sees oil drilling as a means to achieve better schools and more jobs. They are upset that people who live elsewhere deny them access to more comfortable lives. The Eskimos are no strangers to petroleum as oil has pooled in patches along their coastal lands for thousands of years. In an interview with an Eskimo tribesman, Kristof states that Bert Akootchoot "angrily told me that if environmentalists were so anxious about the Arctic, they should come here and clean up the petroleum that naturally seeps to the surface of the tundra." The human factor, particularly from a too often ignored population segment, lends credible weight to the already sound argument in favor of oil drilling in the ANWR.

The ANWR's oil could be best leveraged by coupling it with a substantial source of natural gas in order to ensure the United States lasting sovereignty as an energy producer. Gas is rapidly becoming the more important resource as the United States shifts its energy policies. Ninety percent of all new power plants in the United States will utilize natural gas (Raabe). Yet, many existing gas plants, particularly in California, currently operate at less than full capacity due to a shortage in supply. Trends among electricity producers suggest a steadily increasing demand for natural gas. This is good news for the environment since gas burns far cleaner than coal or oil. Moreover, by furthering our reliance on gas, we decrease dependence on foreign nations for oil. The question then becomes, where will this gas come from? The Rocky Mountain Front is estimated to contain 2.2 trillion cubic feet of gas (Herring). That's roughly forty-one percent of the gas reserves in the United States. Most of it lies beneath federal lands: Glacier National Park, the Scapegoat Wilderness Area, and the Lewis and Clark reserve. For the moment, these lands are completely closed to drilling.

The argument for drilling in the Rocky Mountain Front is similar to that of the ANWR. However, it is worth mentioning the significant technological improvements that make drilling, particularly for gas, more friendly to the environment. Directional drilling allows multiple wells to be drilled from one location. Prior to directional drilling, each well would need its own well-bore and ground level pad with associated machinery. Gas wells, which are generally much deeper than oil wells, require enormous drilling rigs that initially had to be moved around from one pad to the next.

All of this contributed to far more clutter above and below ground. Now, rigs are often fixed to a particular location, much like an offshore platform. This drastically cuts down on subterranean ecological damage and also reduces the surface drilling area to a fraction of its original size. In turn, this provides drilling operators a much better opportunity to hide their equipment, thus minimizing the negative impact on

wilderness scenery. The aesthetics of the Rocky Mountain Front are, understandably, of great concern to those who live in the surrounding region. Yet, there is more at stake than just aesthetics, and unlike Alaska's ANWR, the Rocky Mountain community is split on whether to allow drilling or not.

A large portion of the population in and immediately adjacent to the Rocky Mountain Front's federal lands fall into two demographics: poor working-class families or wealthy landowners. The working class fills the industrial labor jobs in mills, mines, quarries, and the like. The wealthy are mostly vacation homeowners with mountain escapes. Not surprisingly, the poor favor drilling since its revenues will likely lend their communities a much-needed economic boost. Nonprofit groups advocating the development of federal land support these local economic interests with appeals to the national concern regarding consumption.

Claire Moseley of Public Lands Advocacy, a grassroots organization formed by local laborers, recently said of the Rocky Mountain National Front, "We think it is one of the most important reserves in the country . . . and it makes no sense to set it aside when we are facing natural gas shortages" (Herring). The potential positive effects on the lives of their neighbors and on the nation's energy supply fail to influence the wealthy part-time residents who continue to oppose any drilling outright. Undoubtedly, they would grumble if their home/private ski lodge had no heat to keep their guests warm or no lights to distinguish the scotch from the bourbon. At the same time, the thought of oil drilling near their pristine manicured landscape would most certainly elicit the familiar response, "Not in my backyard." Consequently, for the moment, the Rocky Mountain Front's local population stands at an impasse.

Too often the debate regarding domestic drilling is stalemated because no room is left for compromise. Proposed policies seem to be one extreme or the other. The environmentalists oppose all drilling period, while the energy industry wants complete autonomy to drill anywhere. This issue is not so black and white; the solution is dependent on finding a middle ground. A plan must be formulated which benefits both sides without antagonizing the opposition. Industry could be allowed careful exploration in the ANWR and the Rocky Mountain Front, potentially followed by limited commercial drilling. In exchange, there should be an increase in carbon emissions standards, major additional funding for studies on renewable energy, incentives for corporations who produce energy saving products, and more stringent vehicle mileage requirements.

This line of thinking is slowly gaining support. Yale's esteemed environmental law professor, Daniel Esty, has proposed a similar policy and other academics are beginning to investigate taking a middle-of-the-road stance (Kristof). Nationally, the benefits to this approach would include a decline in air pollution, real advances in the pursuit for "clean" power, a reduction in electricity and fuel consumption, and most significantly, decreased reliance on foreign oil imports.

Internationally, it is essential that we reach an agreement on this issue since the United States foreign policy is and is perceived to be dictated by our energy policy. Going back several decades, all our presidential administrations have made securing resources a strategic priority. In 1980, Jimmy Carter said that any attempt to impede the flow of oil in the Persian Gulf would be regarded as an "assault on the vital interests of the United States," and would be "repelled by any means necessary, including military force." More recently, an energy review, launched by Dick Cheney in May 2002, recommended to President Bush that he "make energy security a priority of our trade and foreign policy" (Vidal). Regardless of how intertwined these policies actually are, foreign nations, particularly in the Middle East, believe petroleum to be the key catalyst for United States military action.

Just over a year ago, *The Brookings Review* published a survey conducted in six Arab countries by Shibley Telhami, professor for Peace and Development at the University of Maryland, which found that an overwhelming majority of those polled expressed a negative opinion of the United States. The respondents explained that their view was based on American policy in the Middle East. When asked what motivates this policy, eighty percent answered "oil." The answers given least frequently were: "democracy, economic development, or peace." Without altering this viewpoint, there remains a worldwide threat of conflict, as evidenced by the ongoing wars in eight of the top twelve nations with the most proven oil reserves (Vidal). This perceived connection, between foreign policy and energy, is not limited to an international audience.

In the United States, beginning January 2003, a series of television commercials proposed a link between geo-political instability and petroleum. One of the ads went as follows: A man is shown filling up his vehicle while a child's voice says: "This is George. This is the gas that George bought for his SUV." A map of the Middle East showing Iraq and Saudi Arabia appears and the voice-over continues: "These are the countries where the executives bought the oil that made the gas." Over a shot of a terrorist training camp, it says: "And these are the terrorists who get money from those countries every time George fills up his SUV." (Campbell)

While the specific logic depicted in this commercial can be argued, it demonstrates that an association exists here in the United States. Popular perception ties international conflict to America's relationship with the environment, and generally speaking this is not too far from the truth. Through war and through oil excavation and transport practices, the world's ecosystem and its people are harmed. In the United States, we have the means to reduce the chance of international disaster by working together. Environmentalists and the petroleum industry must set aside their differences and compromise. Additionally, Americans must remember that though we may be a part of a neighborhood, a city, a state, and a country, we are also a part of the global community. Now more than ever, the United States is interconnected with the worldwide economy and environment. There is no escaping the repercussions of global mismanagement. Given America's high consumption and low production, it

must seem insulting to use force or support environmental damage in other countries to obtain energy. It is not worth preserving our land if we destroy someone else's. After all, the Earth is everyone's backyard.

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CINEMATIC JOURNALISM: THE NEW LOOK OF REALITY

ILLYAN KAPLAN-SEEM

For millennia words were humanity's most accurate way of recording and remembering history. But in the last one hundred fifty years, the world has come to take for granted what Roland Barthes called the "evidential force" of the photographic image, its ability to show us a slice of reality, something that once was. Documentary photographers and photojournalists have provided us with what we consider the most persuasive form of historical evidence, and we rely on such reporters and their documents to bring us information about important events and situations around the world. But like words, images can relate fact or fiction. And as with words, our understanding of the veracity of images is largely determined by the genre in which they are used. In recent years, changing journalistic ideals and technologies have contributed to the emergence of an increasingly subjective, cinematic style of journalism, and as a result the status of the image as a reliable historical document is being compromised. As it becomes ever more difficult to distinguish fact from fiction, we run the serious risk of assuming the role of a mere audience in a world that desperately needs our active participation.

Until the 1920s, cameras were large and awkward devices, but the release of the Leica, a lightweight, portable camera, in 1925 enabled the modern field of photojournalism to emerge. The desire to represent important moments with pictures is an ancient impulse seen in drawings, paintings, and engravings, but with "fast" cameras like the Leica came the possibility of actually capturing moments in a mechanical, scientific, and seemingly objective manner. Photographers began to exploit the speed of the camera to capture, for the first time in history, "candid" images, images that were not posed (Davenport 96). Along with the new cameras came a new philosophy that photographs should, and could, capture the immediate truth of an objective reality.

The "documentary" genre that emerged from this philosophy shot from a head-on, eye-level angle, in sharp focus, without elaborate composition, and with natural light. The documentary style seemed to eliminate most of the subjective interference and artistic pretension of the photographer. This documentary style became the default for photojournalism and is still the style we associate with news. Photojournalists, documentary photographers who intend their work for publication, quickly became important fixtures in news organizations as the public clamored for new and interesting images of the world. The years leading up to World War II saw the rise of professional photojournalism, and with the introduction of *Life* magazine in 1936, documentary photographs became equal to words as America's source of information (Davenport 98).

Fig. 1

At the end of World War II, it would be through the medium of photography that Americans would come to fully understand the evil they had been battling. Images from Nazi concentration camps were irrefutable proof that the war had been necessary and just. Margaret Bourke-White's photograph (Fig. 1) of a woman covering her face to avoid looking at a heap of dead bodies is one of the most disturbing and compelling images from the camps. It is also an example of the important attributes of good photojournalism. Unlike most of Bourke-White's photographs, which tend to be stylized and dramatically lit (Fig. 2 and 3), this image is shot in the straightforward documentary style. The photographer does not aestheticize the scene. There is a simple reporting of facts: the dead bodies, the MP's, the civilians. The only missing information is supplied by the caption, "German civilians made to face their nation's crime, Buchenwald, 1945" (Callahan 128). This objectivity allows the viewer to make a variety of interpretations: the woman is horrified by what has happened, she is unwilling to accept what she sees, her refusal to look represents the willful blindness of the German people to the Nazi's activities. As in real life, the exact meaning of the scene, and the appropriate reaction to it, are left for the viewer to determine. Bourke-White's image acts on the viewer much the way the real scene might. First there is the recognition of something altogether wrong, something hideously unnatural. Then disbelief sets in (Are they dead? Is it real?), followed by shock, disgust, rage, and finally sorrow, a sorrow filled with the grim acceptance of the truth of the image and the world it captures.

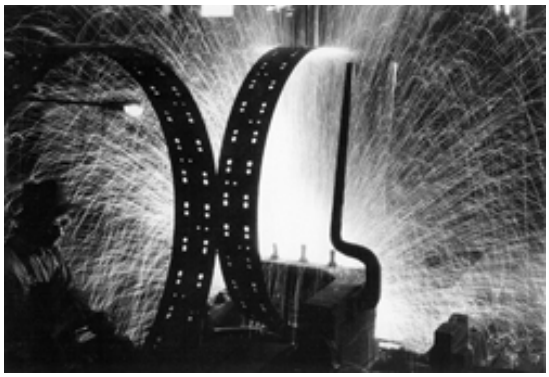

Fig. 2

Bourke-White's image documents a specific event in which Germans were forced to view Buchenwald, and at the same time stands as a representative image of the larger history of the Holocaust and WWII. The photographic style makes it a strong historical document on both accounts. Documentary style images appear "realistic," that is as objective reportings of actual situations, to which the photograph bears witness. This realism allows the viewer to see past the medium of the photograph itself, into the content of the scene depicted. In the mind of the viewer the image becomes equal to the event, and the photograph then plays on the emotions as if it were real. The photograph can act, says Susan Sontag, "[as] a means of making 'real' (or more 'real') matters that the privileged and the merely safe might prefer to ignore" (7). The power of the documentary image lies in its ability to elicit from the viewer an "active response," rather than passive acceptance or mere voyeurism (Sontag 81). The photograph, any photograph, is a window onto a world. The photographic style is a key component in determining whether we perceive that world as our own—real, factual, historical—world, or some other—unreal, fictional, imaginary—world. Only when the image is perceived as factual can it carry the full weight of an historical document and ensure that we will remember the reality of the event depicted.

Fig. 3

The fact that there is nothing special, aesthetically speaking, about Bourke-White's image gives it added credibility as a document. There is no rule that a photojournalist's work cannot be beautiful. But a beautiful image is typically associated with the efforts of an artist. Since art is sometimes thought of as subjective self-expression, the goals of an artist might seem to interfere with the journalistic ideal of objective factual reporting. What is important here is not whether these goals do necessarily interfere, nor whether the photographer is an artist or a journalist—I believe he can be both. The value of an historical document is derived from the relationship between the document and the viewer. If a photograph that is dramatically composed and lit gives the appearance of having been orchestrated or manipulated by the photographer, or if the composition appears to be implying an opinion or romantic vision, it cannot be equated with an objective factual reality. Since this equating is what gives the photograph its weight as a document, the belief of the viewer is the primary factor in determining the historical authority of an image. While not inherently incompatible with journalism, beauty can easily conflict with and overshadow substance, particularly in a medium that is by its nature biased toward appearances.[1] An image that is not as "good" is less likely to seem planned or manufactured, and is therefore seemingly more objective, hence more believable as a document.

Fig. 4

The power and truth of an image seem to lie more in the murky waters of human psychology than in the objective properties of the image itself. According to art historian John Tagg, the acceptability of an image as an historical document has very little to do with its visual style. In his book *The Burden of Representation*, Tagg asserts that our belief in the factual nature of the documentary genre is a culturally defined convention (8-10, 103, 119). He argues that the acceptance of certain types of images as forms of historical evidence stems from their adoption and dissemination by respected governmental and private institutions, such as law enforcement agencies and newspaper publishers, who presented these images as accurate representations of reality. It is not, according to Tagg, the authority of the image that makes it a valid historical document, but the authority of the institution that legitimizes the image (4, 63, 76, 118). Over time we have, as a society, been conditioned to accept documentary style images as accurate representations of reality, but the documentary style is just a genre, and we might, Tagg implies, have accepted a different visual style as "realistic."

Fig. 5

Tagg's is an interesting perspective to take when examining the work of contemporary photographer Sebastião Salgado. Salgado is considered by some the

most talented documentary photographer working today. For the last sixteen years he has been taking pictures of suffering: suffering caused by civil war, oppression, and famine. Yet because of the extreme beauty of many of his images, Salgado has been accused of making art out of the suffering of others. He has said, "What I want in my pictures is not that they'll look like art objects. They are journalist pictures. All my pictures. No exceptions" (Harris 160). During 1984-85 Salgado was in the Sahel region of Africa, where refugees from Ethiopia's civil war were being killed, not by violence, but by famine. While in some of his photographs Salgado employs a straightforward documentary style to great journalistic effect (Fig. 4 and 5), in others his framing, composition, and aesthetic decisions seem to reject the notion that there is any boundary between subjective art and objective journalism. Salgado does not differentiate between his different types of images, and in displaying his photographs side by side he indicates to the viewer that they are of equal journalistic importance.

Fig. 6

One of Salgado's most famous images (Fig. 6), the first of twenty-nine prints in his photo essay from the Sahel, of what appears to be a group of nomads crossing the desert, has an epic, cinematic quality to it. As he often does, Salgado frames his subjects on the edge of a barren landscape, isolating them and making them seem alone in a vast, empty world. Wrapped in blankets his nomads are like natural objects, pillars of rock or sand. This serves to create a frozen quality that is common to Salgado's images. It seems as though his figures have been standing forever, as if time had stopped thousands of years ago while the Jews were still wandering the desert, and this image is of that unchanging, eternal moment. The image has no internal clues as to its context, either in time or in location. The wrapped figure on the right, we cannot tell if it is a man or a woman, clearly resonates with images of the Madonna (Fig. 7). It even appears that there is a child being held underneath her cloak. If we focus on this character, we can see that she has an aura, or glow. The sky to the far left and right of the Madonna figure is a much darker shade of gray than what surrounds her. And this aura extends below the horizon, down around the edges of the subject. The only natural cause for this odd lighting might be if the sun were directly behind the figure.

Yet it is clear from the highlights that the sun is to the left of the subjects and low in the sky. The cloth on the left edge of the Madonna figure, however, seems darker than it should be, and is not picking up the same highlight as the other figures. Though there is no way to prove it, this aura appears to be the product of work done in the darkroom.

Fig. 7

NYU professor and curator Fred Ritchin has said that "while respecting the facts of the situation, Salgado attempts to re-create, through visual metaphor, what he sees as its essential human drama—the invisible made visible" (147). One wonders if Salgado embeds the Christian symbolism consciously and purposefully, or if it simply arises from the "invisible" world he brings forth. Ritchin goes on to suggest that Salgado, a Brazilian, "[is] with other Latin Americans drawn to what has been called a 'magical realism'" (147). His photograph of an emaciated boy standing in the desert, leaning on a cane (Fig. 8) is an example of an image whose documentary value is intermingled with its magical qualities. The boy's physical condition, the dead tree, and the barren landscape seem, as a documentary statement, to be about drought, famine, poverty, hardship. But as in the previous image there is a narrative, cinematic quality. The boy's cane, and his skeletal features give him the dual appearance of child and old man. The analogy of the boy with the tree, and the fact that the boy is naked, again make the subject feel like part of the natural environment. The frozen feeling and the completely unified white background give this image an otherworldly quality. The subject stands erect, poised, proud, staring out at what we can only assume to be more emptiness. Salgado's subject becomes the sole human journeying through this vast other universe that is somehow natural, yet eternal and transcendent.

Fig. 8

The above photographs cannot be said to employ the documentary style. Yet Salgado is considered, and considers himself, a documentary photographer and photojournalist. Salgado's story is more subjective and his images more beautiful than most documentary work. But does that mean that his photographs are less reliable as historical documents? The answer is that Salgado is not, for the most part, concerned with documenting the obvious or apparent circumstances of his subjects. He seeks to tell the story not of the individuals he photographs, nor of their broader situation, but of what he seems to see as a universal human story of suffering and spiritual transcendence. It is Salgado's story, a parable drawn from Latin American Catholic influences, but certainly not journalism or documentary photography as it is normally understood. Salgado is like a writer who mixes journalism, editorial, and fiction in the same book and leaves it to his readers to understand the difference. That Salgado is considered a documentary photographer raises the question of what it means at this moment in time to document reality.

I believe that Salgado's style is indicative of a changing tolerance in what is being accepted as real, and at the same time a changing understanding of what reality is. And these are not changes for the better. New forms of media have altered the conventional social understanding of what represents factual reality. Flipping television channels, we go from Fox News (reality?), to "Law and Order" "ripped from the headlines" (fiction?), to "Survivor" (reality television?). On television, as in Salgado's images, there is no clear way to define where fact ends and fiction begins. Keeping in mind Tagg's argument that different visual styles might be accepted as real, it is possible, and I think probable, that Salgado's magical, or spiritual realism is a style that to him best represents reality. His photographs record subjective reality, and are in that sense documentary and historical, but not journalistic.

If his images are accepted as real, if they are truly equated with reality, then they may represent a new convention, a new type of historical document. Yet the magical realism, epic landscapes, perfect lighting and framing (and perhaps special effects) of Salgado's photographs have a cinematic quality. And like films they seem real in a way that reality is not—better, more interesting, and importantly, more bearable. There is no violence, no horror, no struggle that is too much for a movie viewer to bear. If journalism looks like film it allows us to suspend our disbelief, when we should in fact be (as with the Bourke-White image) confronting our disbelief. For images "to alter conduct," Susan Sontag argues, "they must shock" (81). But images such as Salgado's trigger our movie-viewing persona, one that expects and accepts violence, destruction, and suffering. In the majority of Salgado's images, the form overwhelms the content, and the vital step of equating the image with reality does not take place.

As we continue to gain more of our factual information from television, the television style image will replace the documentary image as the default indicator of reality. Wide screen, High Definition televisions, which will soon be ubiquitous, will give television a more cinematic appearance, and as "films" begin to be shot on High Definition video (rather than film) the difference in aesthetic quality between television and film will largely dissolve. Salgado's style of documentary is a precursor to what will become an epic, cinematic style of journalism, which will not clearly separate fact from fiction.

Journalistic objectivity may be an arbitrary convention, a form of subjectivity unconsciously agreed upon as representing truth. Yet even if that is the case the maintenance of a conventional means of depicting true events is absolutely necessary for a morally functional society. Words and images are our only means of conveying complex information. While we have rules of logic for language, there are no such rules for images. Without a conventional standard for veracity, communication becomes the meaningless shuffling of symbols. For decades the documentary style image has been the standard for truth, but as artists like Salgado appropriate and incorporate this style into a subjective documentary genre, our journalism and our world will become more beautiful and less real, and photography will lose its power to represent reality, and to elicit an active response. If photographic documents do not act on us as if they were real, if images like Bourke-White's are seen as fiction rather than fact, than we will lose the power and knowledge of our history. And will be doomed to repeat it.

NOTE

1. I am not arguing that art must always be beautiful, only that a visual image that is beautiful conforms to what is typically understood as an artist's goal. A beautiful painting does not happen by chance, the way a beautiful photograph can, and many paintings we see are beautiful. Therefore, whether or not it is

true in the case of a photograph, we may be tempted to equate beauty with design, which affects the viewer's beliefs about a given image.

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SPINS, SENTIMENT, AND SENSATIONALISM: THE JESSICA LYNCH STORY

KAYLA RACHLIN SMALL

Her face was plastered on every magazine in the country, the camouflage of her jacket bringing out the brown of her eyes. As bombs fell on Iraq, killing thousands of civilians, the survival of one woman rose above all death counts to symbolize glory, hope, and freedom. People across America held their breaths during her captivity and rejoiced when she came home. Our reaction to Private Jessica Lynch's story speaks volumes about our voracious appetite for sentimentality, as well as the ubiquitous influences of the media and war propaganda. The treatment of this case reflects the tendencies towards sentimentality and symbolization described by Joan Didion in her essay "Sentimental Journeys"; it also exemplifies ideas about war propaganda voiced by H. Bruce Franklin in his piece "From Realism to Virtual Reality: Images of America's Wars." Didion and Franklin both discuss the way in which reality can be spun, or downright ignored, to mislead the public. The two authors criticize the extreme power of the media and other institutions to shape our perceptions, both through altering truths and g outright lies.

In April 2003, the Pentagon stated that Jessica Lynch had been rescued from an Iraqi hospital in a daring display of American military valor. The media then ran with that heroic story to turn Lynch's tale into one of the most sentimental episodes of the war. An article in the *New York Post*, for example, was shamelessly headlined "How Daring Midnight Ballet Brought Back Pfc. Jessica From The Enemy's Evil Clutches" and went on to describe Lynch's rescue as something out of a Tom Clancy novel (Latham and Sujo). It was not surprising that both the government and the media made an exceedingly big deal out of such an incident. It is not uncommon for a disproportionate amount of attention to be paid to a figure in current events who stands out by being young, attractive, and female. This treatment of Lynch's story evokes memories of a similar event that was also tremendously sentimentalized: the Central Park Jogger case. Like the story of the Jogger, in which a young woman was brutally attacked in the park in 1989, Jessica Lynch's story ballooned, thanks to a number of factors, from the wealth of article titles that played off Saving Private Ryan and Kissing Jessica Stein, to the iconic photo of a smiling Jessica in her fatigues against a backdrop of the American flag.

In her essay "Sentimental Journeys," which examines the Jogger incident, Joan Didion writes, "Crimes are universally understood to be news to the extent that they offer, however erroneously, a story, a lesson, a higher concept" (255-256). The Jessica Lynch incident was a story better than fiction, and the media was determined to tell that story for maximum effect. It tugged heartstrings by voyaging beyond Lynch's capture and rescue, delving into the heart and soul of the petite blonde who wanted

to be an elementary school teacher, just as fourteen years earlier the media had highlighted the jogger's "top-notch work" and her fun-loving personality (Didion 253). The two women, both undue victims and miraculous survivors, were turned into symbols—the jogger of what was right with New York, and Lynch of what was right with America. The story of Jessica Lynch's ordeal, replete with teary-eyed mothers and picture-perfect reunion, ranks right up there with the Central Park Jogger's story as one of the most sentimental narratives in recent memory.

In "Sentimental Journeys," Didion claims, "cases are widely regarded by the American reporters as windows on the city or culture in which they take place" (308). Jayson Blair, the *New York Times* reporter who was later accused of plagiarism, used Lynch's story as a window into Appalachia. In an article that he claimed was based on interviews with Lynch, Blair wrote:

> Mr. Lynch seemed distracted as he stood on the porch of his hilltop home here looking into the tobacco fields and pastures. He talked about the satellite television service that brought CNN and other cable news networks into his home, his family's long history of military service and the poor condition of the local economy. ("Relatives")

Its promise of giving Americans insight into a region of the country few people knew much about was one of the reasons why Jessica Lynch's story was a media goldmine. Reporters edged their way into the tight-knit Lynch family, invading their home in an attempt to show the rest of the country about the environment from which Jessica hailed. The "opportunity to enter not only households but parts of the culture normally closed" was another factor that made the Lynch case so susceptible to becoming a sentimental, overexposed narrative (Didion 308).

But Lynch's story has another aspect to it, besides being an archetypal tale about the trials and tribulations of a young white female and a window into a relatively unseen culture: it's a war story. Lynch was fashioned into the type of propagandist symbol that has long characterized American military conflicts. In "From Realism to Virtual Reality: Images of America's Wars," H. Bruce Franklin discusses the historical use of these propaganda techniques, which have proven to be especially potent in controversial wars such as those in Vietnam and Iraq. Lynch's ordeal not only helped garner support for US involvement in Iraq, but it embedded in the minds of Americans a concrete image of the people who had been deployed there. Lynch was an example of how the government wanted all soldiers to be seen: as kind and caring, patriotic and passionate.

Furthermore, Lynch helped show that the military was not a selfish institution that sent young people towards danger or death without giving them something in return. The military had done great things for Jessica Lynch: it had provided her with a means of escape from stifling, rural West Virginia; it had allowed her to travel the world; and

it would fund a college education that would enable her better to serve society. She was the perfect symbol of all that could be gained from joining the military. The US Army could not have picked a better poster girl.

When the celebration over Lynch's rescue died down, it became evident that many of the "facts" in the story were closer to fiction. For example, injuries that the Pentagon claimed Lynch sustained by fighting against Iraqi soldiers turned out to be the result of a Hummer crash. Furthermore, Lynch had been "imprisoned" in a hospital devoid of Iraqi military personnel, where she was assigned the only specialist bed in the hospital and one of only two nurses on the floor (Kampfner). Confronted with public distrust in both itself and the Pentagon, the media were driven to reexamine what had occurred.

Revisiting the details of this incident allowed the media to prove its commitment to the truth. The *New York Times* tackled the alteration of Lynch's story in an article correcting the untruths propagated by Jayson Blair. In the correction, Jessica Lynch's sister Brandi said that Blair's assertion that tobacco fields and cattle pastures were visible from the porch of the Lynch home was completely false ("Correcting the Record"). By drawing attention to such inaccuracies, the *New York Times* convinced its readers that it was concerned with the truth, and that all the propaganda machines and corrupt journalists in the world would not stop it from continuing to serve the reader; the newspaper came off as honorable, despite the fact that it had misled the public in the first place.

Other media outlets criticized not themselves but their peers in their attempt to gain the public's trust. When CBS was criticized for pitching a massive multimedia deal to Lynch's family while she was still hospitalized, the network defended itself by saying, "Unlike the *New York Times*' own ethical problems, there is no question about the accuracy or integrity of CBS News' reporting" (Haberman). Some of the proposed ideas that made CBS so desperate for the rights to tell Lynch's story included a TV movie through its "movie division, which specializes in inspirational stories of courage" (Haberman) and an MTV concert in Lynch's honor, to be aired from her hometown. While CBS might not have committed outright plagiarism, their aggression, their shameless pursuit of the story's rights, and their apparent determination to make a profit from the incident were far from innocent. But through the use of statements that insulted the *New York Times*, CBS helped detract the blame from itself and disguise the fact that it was just as eager as Blair to sentimentalize and sensationalize Lynch's story.

Newspapers and networks are not the only ones to have twisted the truth about Lynch's rescue. By having a hidden camera film the Navy SEALS operation that released Lynch from the Iraqi hospital, the military did just as much to make Lynch's rescue into an exciting story as any network. As one writer put it,

> It was like a Hollywood film. [The soliders] cried, 'Go, go, go', with guns and blanks and the sound of explosions. They made a show—an action movie like Sylvester Stallone or Jackie Chan, with jumping and shouting, breaking down doors. All the time with the camera rolling. (Kampfner)

Many people were angered by the excessive importance placed on taping the rescue, as Franklin argues, reflecting their disapproval of the role of photographers and videographers in the midst of war. He describes a comic book published after the Vietnam War that depicted photojournalists as villains screaming "Keep shooting, keep shooting!" (Franklin 61). This double entendre criticizes the emphasis placed on getting good images, a goal that can overshadow the true purpose of a mission. The Pentagon's determination to videotape Lynch's rescue, and its similar resolve to acquire high-quality photos and videos of the conflict in Vietnam, suggest that the military's priorities lay not so much in the actual conduct of war but in its portrayal. The military is just as much at fault as the networks for turning war into a sometimes heartwarming, sometimes horrific narrative.

Jessica Lynch's story will be retold in November 2003, when NBC's made-for-TV movie *Saving Private Lynch* is broadcast into homes across America. Movies have long been used to change our ideas of historical events, and, as Franklin notes, such movies and stories are "an effective vehicle for romanticizing and popularizing war" (53). Many movies about the Vietnam War, for example, sought to "reverse the roles of victim and victimizer" (59) and to "radically [reimagine] the war" (57). The pervasive feeling surrounding *Saving Private Lynch*, as expressed in an abundance of news articles in the fall of 2003, is that the movie will likely veer from reality.

To defend itself, the media has directly addressed this negative publicity. The writer of the script said in an interview:

> I had to give the network attorneys the information in every scene as to what exact magazine, what exact article, what page I got the content from. That went to the legal department with a photocopy of the articles. They then would double- and triple-check what version could be O.K. to use. ("Saving Private Lynch")

Fasano's disclaimer-filled comments, in which he goes so far as to say "Please . . . Don't shoot the messenger," seek to defend the media's versions of events ("Saving Private Lynch"). But while this version may claim to be painstakingly researched, when the movie airs we will likely be presented with a sensationalized, twisted story. No one is going to make a movie about an America POW in no imminent danger, being given TLC by Iraqi nurses, which is the plotline that the facts about Lynch's capture actually point to. The history of war movies, as Franklin says, is a history of skewed reality, and *Saving Private Lynch* is not expected to be any different.

Criticizing the truth-twisting tactics employed by the government gave both the public and the media an opportunity to make opinionated statements about the conflict in Iraq. In a time when the Dixie Chicks were vilified for one anti-Bush comment, attacking the Lynch incident was safer than attacking the country, government, or president in general. Analyzing the holes in the story was a way of expressing disapproval of the war. Just as Jessica Lynch was a positive symbol for the war and the military, the skewing of her story became a negative symbol for the lies surrounding the war. Throughout the course of the war, numerous statements of arguable legitimacy had been thrown at the American public, mainly concerning Iraq's possession of chemical and biological weapons. Many people expressed their general outrage at these widespread lies by focusing on the Lynch case as a specific example of this deception.

In a *New York Times* editorial, Nicholas Kristof wrote that the public had been "misled" by reports that Lynch had fired at her captors, that she had been seriously injured, etc., commenting that, "As a citizen, I deeply resent my government trying to spin me like a Ping-Pong ball" ("Saving Private Jessica"). The resentment of this one event, as expressed in the numerous editorials and letters like Kristof's, allowed people to vocalize their overall resentment of the war. Lynch's ordeal became a sounding board for those who felt the war itself was unjust.

As new facts come to light, and Jessica Lynch's story is retold in new ways, the media's portrayal of the story has been challenged. Perhaps the greatest power to retell the story belongs to Lynch herself. Lynch, who recently was honorably discharged from the army, has already signed a book deal. The Central Park Jogger, who came forth and identified herself as a woman named Trisha Meili, told her story in last year's memoir, *I Am The Central Park Jogger*. We cannot know in advance whether Lynch's account of her ordeal will veer towards sentimentality or hard cold facts, whether it will exalt or denounce the US military. But a story is a multi-dimensional object, a confluence of many sources of information. The stories of Lynch and Meili are already engraved in our minds in ways that their own words may be powerless to alter. When the media presents us with a packaged story that is complete with excitement and closure, then a woman suffering from amnesia (like both Lynch and Meili), despite her position as the story's heroine, is almost powerless to unwrap that package and shine her on what's inside.

Jessica Lynch has been called many things: an icon, a heroine, a "wholesome West Virginia country girl" (Linda Davies, qtd. in Jehl and Blair). In the years to come her story will no doubt be told and retold, made into legend and attacked with fervor. But what will not change, regardless of the books published and movies made, is the power the incident had over the American public in 2003, as our country engaged in a conflict that promised to end quickly but instead dragged on mercilessly. As both a propaganda tool and a sentimental narrative, Lynch demonstrated just how capable the government and media are of selling us an alternative version of the truth. Cases like

hers might harm our trust in reported news, but considering our insatiable appetite for great stories, we cannot expect the news to cut back on how much fiction it reports as fact. The next time we go to war, or the next time a young woman survives a harrowing ordeal, the truth will no doubt continue to be molded and manipulated to our liking. That is how it has been for hundreds of years, and how it will continue to be.

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TABLOID ABSURDITY: ALLEGORIES OF A CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN POLITICAL CRISIS

MONIQUE WOLKOFF

Waiting to buy our groceries in the supermarket checkout line, occasionally we'll glance at the rack of tabloids and wonder, who could possibly read these flagrant fabrications? Nevertheless, tabloids may be worth a closer look. In *Men In Black*, Tommy Lee Jones, Agent K, and Will Smith, Agent J, scour the tabloids for reports of extra-terrestrial activity, viewing these absurdities as "the best investigative journalism on the planet" (*Men In Black*). The American government and society in the film see supermarket tabloids as the purest form of unencumbered truth, where the most absurd conspiracies are blatant fact and the skeptics are merely in denial. This comic portrayal of a society with radically different values of journalistic validity hints at a presence of truth in tabloid journalism that is often brusquely dismissed. Though we are all aware of the lies and inventions presented in such tabloids as The *Weekly World News*, perhaps it is possible to uncover an element of truthful social commentary beneath the surface of their flagrant fabrications. By looking at the tabloids' commentary on American politics and power, we can discern an allegory for current American values and concerns: one that provides a unique forum for contemporary societal frustrations.

Since its birth as a refuge to individuals driven from their homelands by religious persecution, America has been a nation rich with symbolism of new beginnings and allegoric representations of important historic events. Defining allegory as the expression of truths or generalizations about human existence by means of symbolic fictional figures and actions, one can begin to recognize many such representations throughout American History. The way Americans interpret their own social, political, and economic condition through cultural allegory has evolved and developed from the idealism of colonial America to the cynicism of the modern era.

Deborah L. Madson's *Allegory in America* provides a fluid explanation of American allegory as it has evolved from colonialism to the postmodernist era, while also chronicling the transformation of American ideals and values. In the early stages of colonial settlement, Americans created allegories to represent the trials and hardship with which they were repeatedly assailed. Stemming from the idea of religion as the basis of the migration from Europe to the New World, the allegories adopted were generally biblical (Madsen 2). In particular, colonists related their experience to that of the "redeemed people [led by Moses] out of bondage in Egypt into the freedom of the Promised Land" (2). The colonists viewed their mission to develop "a citie [sic] upon a hill" as a religious calling to set an example for other nations of redemption and second chances (2). Thus, just as Moses led the persecuted Jews from Egypt, America

became the new 'Promised Land,' one of intense religious loyalty and opportunity. The biblical allegory allowed colonists to explain the trials and challenges such as famine, Indian attack, and disease that they were experiencing. Colonists could justify their suffering as symbolic of God's concern for their spiritual welfare, "a means of warning them of the dangers of complacency" (2). Consequently, the biblical allegory served to sanction colonial actions by reassuring colonists of the righteousness of their choices.

Inversely, the same allegory could be used as a rebellion against these very rationalizations. While the persecuted Jews were escaping unjust treatment from the Egyptians, the colonists were instilling similar abuses on the natives of the new land. Here, the reading of the allegory serves as a critique of the colonists for the hypocrisy of manipulating such an allegory to justify their own oppressive actions. The influence of the Exodus story on New World America, Madsen suggests, represents the tendency of allegories to propagate during times of cultural crisis as a means of encouraging continued strength. Yet, the many facets and elements of each allegorical tale lend it a flexibility, allowing it to represent not only the orthodox vision, in this case of America as the land of opportunity, but also "a voice to those who dissent from this vision, who use allegory only to reject what it has come to stand for" (Madsen 5). Therefore, we see both the origination of allegorical tradition in American society as well as its propensity to create a paradox, a means of questioning its own values.

A cultural crisis of today, from which an allegory might stem, lies in the lack of political stability stemming from conflicting opinions concerning presidential legitimacy and capability. Going into the Presidential Election of 2000, the country was starkly divided between support for the Democratic candidate, Al Gore, and the Republican candidate, George W. Bush. In fact, the election was so closely divided that President Bush was set into office without the backing of the popular vote, which made for one of the "messiest postelection [periods] in American history" (Cook 652). An ABC News/ Washington Post Survey of 1,050 adults taken in late February, 2001, showed Bush's popularity, 55% approval, to be the "lowest job-approval rating of any newly elected President in the past 50 years" (Cook 652). Throughout Bush's presidency, the country has seen a continuous seesaw of rising and falling support for the President's actions.

In fact, a poll taken just prior to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, found President Bush's approval rating had dipped to a low 51%, only to sky rocket after the attacks to an impressive 90%, before sinking once again to 57% by early March of the following year (Cook 2507). Earlier this year, Richard Benedetto, a journalist for *USA Today*, found the President's "score for honesty and trustworthiness [to be] at the lowest point of his presidency" (Benedetto A7). Explanations for Bush's rising and falling popularity inevitably stem from an immense polarity within the country, "the country remains evenly split, 50-50, between the two major parties" (Cook 2507). A country so divided lends itself to allegorization, though not in such a conventional form as those of colonial times.

Rather, the specific allegory adopted during each moment of cultural crisis appears to reflect the popular culture and societal values of the given period. Just as the colonists of the New World created a biblical allegory to the richness of their religious piety, we might expect to find our contemporary allegory veiled under the cover of American consumerism and materialism. In his commentary on the declining value of pure education in the university culture, Mark Edmundson notes that "university culture like American culture writ large is . . . ever more devoted to consumption and entertainment" (2). Even politics has become a matter of entertainment, as one might see in such politically oriented talk shows as *Politically Incorrect with Bill Maher* and *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*. With immense efforts to draw voter attention and interest through entertaining and catchy campaigns, we have become "a country learning about one party's potential nominees in a way that suggests it might be easier to learn about their platform had they taken out ads in *Daily Variety*" (Goodman D1). Tim Goodman, a journalist for *The San Francisco Chronicle*, comments that the upcoming election is so entertainment-oriented that it appears to be "ignoring the real information and concentrating on poll results and personal high jinks" (D1). American society today depends on entertainment in all areas of knowledge acquisition, from university education to information about political campaigns. In this age of entertainment, it is no wonder that we might begin to discover our allegories of American political ideology in something as common and consumer based as a supermarket tabloid.

Supermarket tabloids overflow with entertainment, appearing to focus much more on amusing their readers than on passing on any important information. William Randolph Hearst, one of the pioneers of tabloid journalism, espoused a journalistic philosophy of "90% entertainment, 10% information—and the information without boring you" (Sloan 25). Yet, considering the absent need for intellectualism in such reporting, tabloid journalists are not nearly as self-effacing and uneducated as one might expect. In order to improve the quality of their product in the early 1970s, tabloid publishers began to draw in the most esteemed journalists from respectable newspapers ranging from the *Los Angeles Times* to the *Fort Worth Press*. They accomplished this by promising a "fat pay raise" (14) which resulted in the *Enquirer* salaries being "the highest paid by any paper or magazine in the country" (14). Thus, with such well-regarded minds concocting stories, these tabloids should not be dismissed so quickly as being entirely without merit. One might wonder, with such respectable writers, whether tabloids have a more formative effect on their audience than we might previously have assumed.

The majority of tabloid readers are between the ages of twenty and forty-nine, the voting public, creating a very effective audience for political commentary ("Trends in Newspaper Readership"). While expecting all of these readers to recognize the political commentary concealed in the tales woven by tabloid journalists, the reactions of readers to these stories certainly vary. The flexibility of tabloid journalism lies in its ability to be read in one of two ways: as serious, though fantastical, journalism, or as

ridiculously absurd comedy. Those who choose to read tabloids in the former manner take its stories at face value, rarely questioning the truth of the news as reported. Those who employ the latter method might use tabloids as a lens to ridicule modern society. This dual function lends tabloid journalism the ability to create an effective modern allegory. Tabloids possess a subversive nature, a painstakingly hidden truth which, when discovered, can open the eyes of the reader to the hypocrisies of their own society.

Between the considerable experience and ability of tabloid journalists and the unknowingly susceptible audience, one can imagine that these journalists might be tempted to slip some political commentary into their stories. In fact, tabloid journalists of the 1970s, became "the first among their profession since World War II—at least in this country—to take a questioning, aggressive, often adversarial approach to government and other major forces that control our society" (Sloan 15). Thus, thirty years ago, tabloid staff set a precedent of intelligent political commentary that appears to remain, though painstakingly hidden, even in the most sensationalized and unrealistic tabloids of today.

The search for political commentary in The *Weekly World News*, yields a fruitful article, "2-Headed Man for President—And Vice President," which appears to be merely a comical fabrication, yet, with further scrutiny, serves as an allegory of current American political division. The article discusses the background and political platform of a fictional two-headed character, Peter Paul Prentice (one head being Peter, the other Paul), running for the presidency and vice presidency as an independent. By setting up the candidate as an independent, the journalist, Annie Van Horne, creates a foundation for a critical commentary on both democratic and republican ideals.

The article presents a valid political platform with qualities typical of the two prominently conflicting parties, the Republicans and the Democrats. Van Horne describes such espoused policies as balancing the budget and increasing military spending which, according to analysts, are typical of the Republican Party (Fineman 38). She also describes what many call characteristically Democratic policies, such as Medicare drug benefits to senior citizens and legalization of purchasing pharmaceuticals overseas (Alter 22). We see further symbolism of the conflict between Republicans and Democrats in Prentice's place of birth: Sarasota, Florida, one of the many counties in Florida which experienced a re-count after the confused elections of 2000. Thus, Van Horne sets the candidate up as an embodiment of both parties, thereby allowing us to see his two-headedness as a symbol of the conflict between the Right and the Left.

Yet, Peter Paul Prentice is not only referred to as "two-headed," he is also termed "two-faced" (Van Horne 6), indicating an element of hypocrisy among any single candidate or political party. This idea of hypocrisy serves as a common means of ammunition against one's opponent. In the current 2004 election, Republicans attack John Kerry for his hypocritical acceptance of campaign contributions from companies

which he had previously condemned for their practice of sending their operations overseas to avoid U.S. taxes (*Human Events* 6).

Similarly, in the elections of 2000, Bush was criticized for his hypocrisy when he promised to change the accusatory tone of modern presidential campaigns and then went on to cast "aspersions of Gore's mistakes and exaggerations" (Safire B11). The *Weekly World News*' Van Horne not only critiques the current political system through a disguised reference to hypocrisy, she also bluntly assails the vanity of the current president, professing that Peter Paul Prentice would expand education with the money that President Bush would have used for "pork barrel programs" such as "adding [his] bust to Mount Rushmore" (Van Horne 6). Thus, through the use of fantastical characters and a fictional scenario, the *Weekly World News* creates an allegory which serves as a critique of the dishonesty, self-interest, and duality of the current political system.

In another edition of the *Weekly World News*, correspondent Miguel Figueroa writes "Oil Discovered in Cuba–U.S. Troops Poised to Liberate Island Nation," an article which subtly critiques the faults of the current presidency and the conservative ideology. The article discusses a fictional discovery of oil off the cost of Cuba, a discovery that, Figueroa purports, will lead America to invade Cuba and overthrow Fidel Castro. The supposed oil in Cuba mirrors the situation that Bush faced in Iraq, thus serving as an allegory of the Iraq War. By touching on the motivations for which Bush was accused of going to war with Iraq, the article mocks American self-centeredness.

Figueroa comments on the idea of oil as motivation when he remarks, "it's the access to millions of gallons of 'black gold' that really excites the White House" (11), as well as on the perception that successful grandiose action will ensure re-election—"this time the vote in Florida won't be close, trust me" (11). Figueroa bluntly discusses the Bush's hypothetical motivation for invading Cuba as he explains that Americans have located the oil but now need to "[overthrow] Fidel so we can go get it" (11). The directness of such an assertion reflects a common critique, espoused by George Soros, of America's self-serving motivation for war with Iraq.

In *The Bubble of American Supremacy*, Soros discusses Bush's possible reasons for initiating war on Iraq and focuses on America's limited resources of oil saying, "to lift the [oil] embargo with Saddam Hussein still in power might have made him too dangerous; therefore he had to be removed from power" (53). To emphasize this idea of American self-interest, Figueroa makes allusion to a past attempt to overthrow Castro in the Bay of Pigs Invasion. That "ill-fated attack" (11) was only "half-hearted" says Figueroa, but in the current attack, he counters, we're going to "kick butt and take over" (11). Figueroa creates an implied link between the half-heartedness of the previous attempt and its ultimate failure. He elaborates that the attack will be "nothing like" that of 1961, implying not only dissimilar effects but also different incentives. While the Bay of Pigs Invasion was spurred by a hatred of communism, the current

attack is motivated by personal gain, lower gas prices, and "a big political payoff" (11) for the President. In this way, Figueroa broaches the topic of American Supremacy, the concern that America considers only its own interests. Out of these subtleties and allusions as well as blatant exaggerations, Figueroa fashions an allegorical critique of American political action, a fictional story with real implications.

Yet, not only the content of Figueroa's article serves as an allegory of the War in Iraq, but also the style in which he creates his argument. By quoting only the President himself and "unnamed" White House officials, Figueora approaches the article through the perspective of the party now in power, the conservatives. In a way, this perspective allows him to more effectively critique the conservative ideology. Endowing himself with the power to exaggerate the conservative opinions, he creates a subversive parody of the current government.

In his argument in favor of invading Cuba, Figueroa mimics the rhetorical techniques employed by George W. Bush during his rationalization of initiating war in Iraq. In a speech Bush made to the National Press Conference on March 6, 2003, the President attempted to kindle American patriotism by tying his desire to commence war in Iraq to the memory of the terrorist attacks of *September 11th*. Despite the fact that the government found "no proven ties" (Soros 41) between Saddam Hussein and the Al Qaeda terrorists, Bush continually made comments setting the two parties as parallel threats. In one blunt attempt to draw an analogy between the terrorist threat from Iraq and Al Qaeda, Bush avowed that "the attacks of September 11th, 2001 showed what the enemies of America did with four airplanes. We will not wait to see what terrorists or terrorist states could do with weapons of mass destruction" (Bush).

In the same manner, Figueroa juxtaposes references to Saddam Hussein in the plans to overthrow Fidel Castro saying, "Cuban dictator Fidel Castro could soon be out of power and in jail—just like Saddam Hussein" (11). Figueroa creates an exaggerated parallelism even more evidently contrived then that of the President in order to cast a light of enmity on Castro, just as Bush had cast that same light on Hussein. The lack of subtlety in Figueroa's juxtapositions appears to serve as a direct parody of Bush's rationalization of war. The style in which Figueroa composes his article creates a further allegory in itself of the manipulated rhetoric used by President Bush to gather support for a war with Iraq.

Through the creation of fictional scenarios and the use of occasionally fictional, often real political figures, the *Weekly World News* engineers a series of political allegories that mirror both the divisive nature of our political system and the failures and inconsistencies of American political action. These allegories offer readers not only a sensationalized and fantasized version of modern American current events, but also a glimpse of the uncertainty and concern that many Americans feel when they learn of these proceedings. The fantastical imagery and symbolism of far-fetched supermarket tabloids provide stories of American politics and power that few other forms of media are at liberty to tell. By taking such a subversive approach, disguising

political critique as entertainment, tabloid journalists catch their readers unaware. They force even the unwilling reader to recognize some level of hypocrisy whether only in the allegory or itself, or in the current events which it represents. These supermarket tabloids provide a forum to disagree with current political policies without doing so directly. They create an allegory which, when read literally, merely weaves a tale similar to the unfolding of events in our contemporary society. Yet, when recognized for their hypocrisy, these tales open up a world for the critiquing; they create a forum for discreetly recognizing the flaws of one's government without betraying one's own political inclinations.

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