
The Haverford Journal

Volume 5, Issue 1

Published by the *Haverford Journal* Editorial Board

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The Haverford Journal is published annually by the *Haverford Journal* Editorial Board at Haverford College, 370 Lancaster Avenue, Haverford, PA 19041. The *Journal* was founded in the spring of 2004 by Robert Schiff in an effort to showcase some of Haverford's best student work in the humanities and social sciences.

Student work appearing in *The Haverford Journal* is selected by the Editorial Board, which puts out a call for papers at the end of every semester. Entries are judged on the basis of academic merit, clarity of writing, persuasiveness, and other factors that contribute to the quality of a given work.

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Atlantic Creoles and the Birth of African American Culture

Daniel Sacks '07

WRITING IN THE 1960s, THE ANTHROPOLOGISTS RICHARD PRICE AND SYDNEY MINTZ argue that the origins of today's African-American culture will be found in the beginnings of slavery. Their argument is based on a particular theoretical notion of culture and also on a particular empirical claim about the brutality of the middle passage, the Atlantic crossing by which most slaves came to the Americas. As their argument is at times difficult to follow, the first goal of this paper is to clarify Mintz and Price's discussion of culture, slavery, and the middle passage. They argue that African American culture began when slaves newly arrived from Africa found that their cultural knowledge had no meaning without the larger institutions through which they expressed their beliefs and values. Mintz and Price, however, imply that this experience is the total slave experience; that African American culture cannot be traced back to Africa; that no cultural retention is possible. My second goal is to show that these stronger implications, though not necessary for their main argument, are incorrect. The success of so-called "Atlantic Creoles" in building and maintaining independent communities of people of African descent reveals that Africans, including slaves who survived the middle passage, were able to retain their cultural identity and implement African culture in the new world.

Mintz and Price argue that culture could not have been transported across the Atlantic by slaves in captivity. They write,

If we define "culture" as a body of beliefs and values socially acquired and patterned, that serve an organized group (a "society") as guides of and for behavior, then the term cannot be applied without some distortion to the manifold endowments of those masses of enslaved individuals, separated from their respective political and domestic settings, who were transported, in more or less heterogeneous cargoes, to the New World.¹

Mintz and Price define culture and then suggest, without clear explanation, that under their definition one cannot talk about the culture of the arriving enslaved

African population. Culture requires society: one acquires the beliefs and values that constitute culture only via social interaction, and the beliefs and values govern interactions and organize life—have meaning—only in the society in which they originated. The slaves, who constituted a directionless "crowd" rather than an ordered "group," arrived without a society, and therefore without culture.

Even if the enslaved populations had been able to transplant their beliefs and values, those values would lack meaning without the institutions in which they originated. Mintz and Price define an institution as "any orderly or regular social interaction that acquires a normative character, and can hence be employed to meet recurrent needs."² Although they do not define the term social interaction, they almost certainly have in mind the connotation that the sociologist Erving Goffman proposed in his influential study, *Behavior in Public Places*. Whenever multiple people are close enough to observe each other, they enter into what Goffman calls a "social occasion," which can consist of either "unfocused interactions" or "focused interactions," gatherings at which people learn about one another, with either deliberate concentration or only in an indirect manner.³ For Mintz and Price, however, Goffman matters because he calls attention to the rules of everyday interaction, for suggesting that norms and values only had meaning in their articulation in a social context. Hence a culture may be defined only in terms of the society it ruled; a culture removed from that society is no culture at all. Mintz and Price present an a priori argument against the possibility of transporting culture from Africa to the Americas; once we accept the claim that African societies were not transported to the new world, it follows inevitably that African culture could not have come, either.

Since perforce African culture could not be transported to the New World, it must have been invented. "The Africans in any New World colony in fact became a *community* and began to share a *culture* in so far as, and as fast as, they themselves created them;" culture only existed by invention.⁴ To be sure, invention often entailed adaptation, the borrowing of older traditions and values consonant with the broad grammar of African culture of which Mintz and Price see some evidence. Mintz and Price's central argument, however, is that the nature of slavery, with the differences in cultural homogeneity, perceived physical traits, power, and status, led to the emergence of distinct "slave institutions within but separate from slave holders."⁵ These institutions, and the values on which they were based, formed the "beginning of African American culture."⁶ Historical institutions persisted, giving rise to present cultural forms.

Mintz and Price argue that culture cannot be separated from social interaction and institutions, and hence there could be no cultural transmission from Africa to the New World. The culture that emerged, though it may have drawn on

African inspirations, was wholly new. To be sure, Mintz and Price are as interested in explaining contemporary African-American culture as they are in exploring historical culture; my concern here is only with their historical account, and I offer an empirical rebuttal. I will suggest that many Africans succeeded in transporting African culture into the New World, and more generally that the transition from Old World to New was not damaging to social structure as Mintz and Price suppose. Key to this argument are the individuals that Ira Berlin has called "Atlantic Creoles," a trans-Atlantic group of dark skinned peoples whose cultural literacy enabled them to thrive in the overlapping African, European, and Creole circles that characterized the Second Atlantic System, the international slave trading regime in the 17th through 19th centuries. Atlantic Creoles served as translators and traders and earned independence and freedom, exploiting their cultural skills and the diversity of the Second Atlantic System to earn the space to create independent, Creole communities: American settlements with African culture.

Berlin uses the term "Atlantic Creole" to refer to certain members of the first generation of the Second Atlantic System, that international development whereby capitalist interests came to dominate the motives and organization of political and social life in the Atlantic world. These Creoles were the early traders and entrepreneurs who provided the cultural mediation necessary to ensure commerce between disparate peoples. "By their experiences and sometimes by their persons," writes Berlin, "they had become part of the three worlds that came together along the Atlantic littoral. Familiar with the commerce of the Atlantic, fluent in its new languages, and intimate with its trade and cultures, they were cosmopolitan in the fullest sense."⁷ Berlin shows that Atlantic Creoles wielded considerable culture and economic power, but faced constant danger. Because of their ambiguous status, neither European nor African, they were not protected by a national interest, and subject to the possibility of enslavement, should an unscrupulous trader find an opportune moment.⁸

Berlin demonstrates that, even when enslaved, Atlantic Creoles retained their ties to African culture, despite the best efforts of slave owners to disabuse them of it. Mintz and Price posit that slave owner's "hoped for the 'acculturation' of slave populations to total acceptance of slave status," and the first step in this acculturation would involve stripping slaves of their freedom and autonomy. Thus, as Berlin notes, when slaves arrived on the property of the wealthy plantation owner Robert "king" Carter, he bestowed upon them European names that erased the arriving Africans of their old identity and infantilized them or made a mockery of their dignity. Atlantic Creoles, however, clung to their names, as Berlin's investigation of naming records in New Holland and Spanish Florida reveals. Tellingly, Berlin writes,

These names trace the tumultuous experience that propelled their owners across the Atlantic and into slavery in the New World. They suggest that whatever tragedy befell them, Atlantic creoles did not arrive in the New World as deracinated chattel stripped of their past and without resources to meet the future. ...Instead, their names provided concrete evidence that they carried a good deal more than their dignity to the Americas.⁹

Atlantic creoles, in holding their names, maintained also their connections with an African cultural heritage.

That heritage manifested itself in the establishment of semi-autonomous communities of African creoles. Berlin notes the existence of two such communities, in New Holland before the arrival of the English, and in New Florida. In New Holland a large slave population belonged to and served the Dutch East Indian Company; because of the prosperity of Holland, free labor was scarce, so slaves were essential in New Holland's economy. As Orlando Patterson has observed, even though slavery entails absolute power in the hands of masters, that power can become a dependence.¹⁰ The slaves of New Holland leveraged their master's dependence on them in to freedom to work independently and eventually the right to manumit themselves and their children. Thus "a small group of former slaves established a community on the outskirts of the Dutch settlement on Manhattan, farmed independently, and sold their produce in the public market." Although economically linked to the New Holland economy, the society of former slaves was distinct. Berlin observes, "at times, established black families legally adopted orphaned black children....The patterns of residence, marriage, church membership, and god parentage speak not only to the material success of the Atlantic Creoles, but to their ability to create community among themselves."¹¹ These communities, moreover, shared an African heritage as well as distinct phonological traits; that is, skin color could not have been the key element of their social distinction: Berlin provides extensive evidence that Atlantic Creoles, once slaves themselves, owned slaves. Skin color was not the only marker of social difference.

Atlantic Creoles also formed semi-autonomous communities in Spanish Florida. Escaping the harsh conditions of the deep South, fugitive slaves in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries fled to Spanish Florida. Claiming to be Catholic, they were quickly adopted by the Spanish authorities, who put them to military work repelling English raiders. A leader of the black militia, Francisco Menéndez, earned the command of a fortified area, Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mosa., which thrived under his authority. "Under Captain Menéndez," Berlin writes, "Mose became the center of black life in colonial Florida," a focal point for newly arriving fugitive slaves and for armed resistance to the British. As in New Holland, an independent black community thrived, with "artisans and tradesmen as well as laborers and domestics." The fugitive slaves living in residence, "married among themselves, into the Native American population, and with slaves as

well."¹² The Atlantic Creoles created a community for themselves.

To be sure, we should be careful when discussing the Atlantic Creoles. Berlin does not explicitly define them, nor does he dwell upon how he identifies Atlantic Creoles as distinct from other members of the early generation of Africans in the Second Atlantic System. But even if we think of Atlantic Creoles as the most capable members of the charter generation, their ability to form independent communities with a basis in their shared African culture is problematic for Mintz and Price's argument; it suggests that the emergence of African-American institutions did not depend exclusively on slavery, and that the intra-Atlantic experience did not divest them of their culture knowledge or divest that knowledge of its meaning. Even though Mintz and Price may be right that today's African-American culture was born in the slave house, their argument does not do justice to the full range of cultural forms found among people of African descent in the New World.

Endnotes

- 1 Sydney W. Mintz and Richard Price, *The Birth of African-American Culture: An Anthropological Perspective*. Boston: 1992.
- 2 Erving Goffman, *Behavior in Public Places*. New York: 1963, 23.
- 3 *Ibid*, 18, 25. On this subject, Geertz writes, "A cockfight is what, searching for a name for something not vertebrate enough to be called a group and not structureless enough to be called a crowd, Erving Goffman has called a 'focused gathering'...." As we will see, the crowd/group distinction is also an important one. Geertz, "Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," <http://webhome.idirect.com/~boweevil/BaliCockGeertz.html>
- 4 Mintz and Price, 14; the emphasis is theirs.
- 5 *Ibid* 39.
- 6 *Ibid* 43.
- 7 Ira Berlin. "From Atlantic Creoles to Africans," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 1996, p. 254
- 8 Berlin himself probably sees the Atlantic Creoles as a rebuttal to Mintz and Price. "The transatlantic journey did not break Creole communities; it only transported them to other sits," (*Atlantic Creoles*, 267). The words refute Mintz and Price's notions about the destructive impact of the trauma of the middle passage.
- 9 Berlin, "Atlantic Creoles," 266.
- 10 Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*. Cambridge: 1982.
- 11 Berlin, "Atlantic Creoles," 270-271.
- 12 *Ibid*, 281.

Don't Bite the Hand that Feeds You: Resituating Reason in Animal Research

David Fischer '10

AFTER A LONG DAY IN THE LAB, I CAN FINALLY SNAP OFF MY LATEX GLOVES AND FLING them into the waste-paper basket. Inside them, my hands suffocate; they emerge pale and damp. I wash them thoroughly with soap for good measure. After all, though mostly protective, latex has a way of letting liquids seep through.

With the laboratory still on my mind, I feel drawn to questions about my research: What philosophical paradigm allows us to do animal research? By what means can we justify, in this context, confining, killing, inducing pain in, or otherwise using animals to our own ends? And are these philosophical paradigms correct? J.M. Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals* imparts a variety of insights regarding the complex answers to these questions. This work tells the fictional story of Elizabeth Costello, a novelist who, when asked to give a lecture in a university setting, chooses to speak of a topic dear to her: the value of animals' lives. Coetzee, through Mrs. Costello, questions our understanding of the animal, and includes provocative perspectives on animal research. To make an already limited scope of animal practices even more precise, only one of those offered perspectives will be discussed here: the standpoint of reason. In her address to Appleton College, Mrs. Costello laments that:

"...although I see that the best way to win acceptance from this learned gathering would be for me to join myself, like a tributary stream running into a great river, to the great Western discourse of man versus beast, of reason versus unreason, something in me resists, foreseeing in that step the concession of the entire battle." (Coetzee 25)

What about distinguishing "man" from "beast" or "reason" from "unreason" is so critical? What is the "entire battle"? And how does maintaining these said distinctions concede it? The current investigation will examine and articulate Mrs. Costello's stance on reason, and use this conception of reason as a lens with which to interpret literary instances of animal research, such as in H.G. Wells's *The*

Island of Dr. Moreau, in order to illuminate the implicit philosophical standards at work in these fictional cases. The validity of these paradigms will then be assessed through alternative perspectives, particularly those provided by Darwin, and discussed in terms of their real-world implications. Thus, these fictional texts, supplemented by scientific and philosophical observations, will serve as a vehicle by which we can understand animal research. While neither animal research nor the perspective of reason exhausts the multifarious array of questions concerning animals and their treatment, investigating this particular angle may lend a broader understanding of our conception of the human-animal relationship.

For the sake of explicitness, we should first establish some basic assumptions which Mrs. Costello makes throughout her arguments. Firstly, when describing reason, she refers to a process conceived as unique to the human species: "reason," she claims, "looks...like the being of human thought... Reason is the being of a certain spectrum of human thinking" (Coetzee 23). Secondly, she indicates that what she means by reason is "thinking, cogitation" (Coetzee 33), to which she "oppose[s]...the sensation of being... a heavily affective sensation" (Coetzee 33) of unreason. While these are only rough indicators of what she means by reason and unreason, they may be useful as working definitions.

So how does our conception of reason affect our ability to use animals for research? Given these described assumptions, Mrs. Costello goes on to imply multiple ways in which this may occur. Firstly, she says that: "The only organism over which we do not claim this power of life and death is Man. Why? Because Man is different. Man understands the dance as the other dancers do not. Man is an intellectual being." (Coetzee 54)

By "dance," here, Mrs. Costello means the "dance of life." "Dancer," therefore, is meant to signify "one who lives." We can also take "understands" and "intellectual" to designate the exercise of reason and the description of rationality, respectively. The claim, therefore, is that because humans "understand" – or apprehend rationally – the process of life, we are ethically prevented from "claim[ing]...power" over their lives and deaths. Animals, on the other hand, do not have the ability to conceive of life rationally, and therefore we may determine the fates of their lives or deaths as we wish. In the context of animal research, this translates into an ability to control the quality and duration of the subjects' lives, as well as the time and manner of their deaths. The fact that "Man" is patronizingly capitalized and animals are merely called "other dancers" ironically accentuates what Mrs. Costello's takes to be an absurdity of this view. More will be said on her specific objections later.

Mrs. Costello elaborates on this implication in her response to a fielded

question about reason versus unreason. She observes that, in *Gulliver's Travels*:

"The horses expel Gulliver. Their ostensible reason is that he does not look like a horse, but something else: a dressed-up Yahoo, in fact. So: the standard of reason that has been applied by carnivorous bipeds to justify a special status for themselves can equally be applied by herbivorous quadrupeds." (Coetzee 56)

In *Gulliver's Travels*, the Yahoos are made to represent unreason, and "are associated with raw meat, the smell of excrement, and what we used to call bestiality" (Coetzee 56). The horses, then, reject Gulliver because he is a being of unreason, albeit "dressed-up" as something else. The "standard of reason," therefore, allows the horses to occupy a superior position with respect to an irrational being. Mrs. Costello makes the connection for us: the horses' belittlement of Gulliver for his lack of reason parallels our perceived superiority – our "special status" – over animals on the same basis. It is this special status that enables us to justify our dominion over animals.

In order to confirm that Mrs. Costello's suggested role of reason – as a superiority mechanism – actually affects the philosophical paradigm of animal research *in particular*, it may be instructive to turn to an alternative but relevant text. H.G. Wells' *The Island of Dr. Moreau* describes the fictional story of Dr. Moreau, a biologist who, through painful experimental procedures, attempts to transform animals into humans. In describing pain (an example of unreason) versus reason, he says:

"Pain is simply our intrinsic medical adviser to warn us and stimulate us.... Then with men, the more intelligent they become the more intelligently they will see after their own welfare, and the less they will need the goad to keep them out of danger.... And pain gets needless." (Wells 114)

To Dr. Moreau, the faculties contained within unreason – including the sensation of pain – act as a "medical adviser" or "goad" to keep animals, including humans, from danger. Additionally, in line with Mrs. Costello's first assumption, Dr. Moreau states that "men" have the unique ability to "become...more" intelligent, which can be taken as synonymous with our working definition of reason. However, and this is the critical point, Dr. Moreau claims that reason can *replace* unreason (e.g., pain), as a superior over an inferior faculty. Faculties of unreason only serve as shoddy means of navigating the world; it is the ability of reason to displace those faculties, to make them "needless." Furthermore, Dr. Moreau says that "I will burn out all the animal... I will make a rational creature of my own" (Wells 120), thereby implying that "rationality" occurs in the absence of "the animal." We therefore see, in this fictional replication of animal research, the effects

of reason's "superiority mechanism"; because reason is considered to be a superior power distinct from the animal, Dr. Moreau can justify inflicting pain – a mere "adviser" or "goad" – on animals who lack the superior faculty.

In addition to this superiority effect, Mrs. Costello suggests an alternative way in which our conception of reason can sustain our pursuit of animal research:

"I could ask what Saint Thomas takes to be the being of God, to which he will reply that the being of God is reason. Likewise Plato, likewise Descartes, in their different ways. The universe is built upon reason. God is a God of reason. The fact that through the application of reason we can come to understand the rules by which the universe works proves that reason and the universe are of the same being. And the fact that animals, lacking reason, cannot understand the universe but have simply to follow its rules blindly proves that, unlike man, they are part of it but not part of its being: that man is godlike, animals thinglike." (Coetzee 23)

Here, Mrs. Costello points out that our very understanding of the universe is one of reason. Thus, this passage both qualifies the previously discussed effect of our conception of reason as well as extends it. Let us begin with the former. Previously, one might have asked *why* our ability to reason about our lives makes our lives more valuable, or at least its manipulation more ethically problematic, than the lives of our animal research subjects. Mrs. Costello addresses this point by connecting our perception of the human being to our conception of the nature of the universe. The universe, she says, has been deemed fundamentally "built upon reason." Therefore, to understand one's life *rationally* is to understand one's life on a Godly, or universal level, and by extension, on an intrinsically more valuable level. On the other hand, animals conceive of their lives not through the fundamental lens of reason, but rather through faculties of unreason such as pain and other sensations. As such, they live inherently less meaningful lives. Thus, because the human life is "godlike" but the animal life merely "thinglike," we are justified in treating them as "things" – as objects with a lesser value to our own.

Beyond qualifying reason's superiority effect, Mrs. Costello's commentary on the rational universe provides us with an additional means of explaining animal research – namely, in justifying its ends. Because the universe is conceived as rational, our scientific research – a discipline which, "through the application of reason we can come to understand the rules by which the universe works" – becomes a primary, if not exclusive method of accessing the meaning of the universe. As such, the endeavors of scientific research become not only crucially important tools of understanding, but even God-like or divine. In this light, the animal lives that rational science consumes along the way become almost trivial

in comparison.

Let us again turn to Dr. Moreau as a way of confirming the applicability of this conclusion to animal research. When speaking to the protagonist, Prendick, Dr. Moreau describes his conception of his research's goals:

"... I am a religious man, Prendick, as every sane man must be. It may be I fancy I have seen more of the ways of this world's Maker than you – for I have sought His laws, in *my* way, all my life..." (Wells 115)

Within the first sentence, Dr. Moreau implicitly classifies himself as three things: "man" (i.e., human), "sane" (i.e., rational), and "religious." Immediately, his self-description as a human of reason supports his conception of the scientist as a position of rationality. We can take his "religiousness" as a reflection upon Mrs. Costello's comment that "God is a God of reason"; because he sees the scientist as a pursuer of reason, and sees God as an overarching rational being, he dedicates himself to God, thus making him "religious." This interpretation of Dr. Moreau is supported by his implication that his religiosity is necessarily contingent (i.e., a "must") upon him being a "sane man," or a man of reason. Furthermore, he claims that he has "seen...the ways of this world's Maker" – i.e., that he "understand[s] the rules by which the universe works," in Mrs. Costello's words – by seeking "His laws, in [his] way" – i.e., by performing his own experiments as a way of discovering the "rules by which the universe works." Therefore, Dr. Moreau's beliefs do in fact conform to Mrs. Costello's implicit claim: that the rational basis of scientific research lends special access to the rational conception of the universe (in this case, as conceived through God).

Dr. Moreau immediately continues this passage with the following:

"And I tell you, pleasure and pain have nothing to do with heaven or hell. Pleasure and pain – Bah!... This store men and women set on pleasure and pain, Prendick, is the mark of the beast upon them, the mark of the beast from which they came. Pain! Pain and pleasure – they are for us, only so long as we wriggle in the dust..." (Wells 115)

Here, Dr. Moreau's treatment of "pleasure and pain" further confirms the conceptions of reason raised by Mrs. Costello. Firstly, his belittlement of those who "set store" in "pleasure and pain" as having "the mark of the beast upon them" as well as his proclamation that such forms of unreason "are for us, only so long as we wriggle in the dust" echo the inferiority and animalistic nature of unreason as opposed to reason (see page 4); it is by this means that we may justify dominion over our animal subjects. Additionally, Dr. Moreau claims that "pleasure and pain have nothing to do with heaven or hell." We can take "heaven and hell" to be a religious aspect of God's universe. If God's universe is purely rational, as

the philosophical paradigm implicitly suggests, then sensations of “pleasure and pain” would not affect – or would “have nothing to do with” – our understanding of the universe. Therefore, Dr. Moreau not only endorses the conception of a rational universe and science’s special rational access, but even extends it pertinently to animal research. The pain that our animal subjects must endure in the process of research does not bear on an understanding of the rational universe, and is therefore trivial.

As an aside, but evoked by Mrs. Costello’s mentioning of “Saint Thomas,” “Plato,” and “Descartes,” it may be useful to contextualize the origins of these conceptions of reason. How did we develop the notion that reason holds us superior to animals, or that the universe is a rational one? While a full treatment of this question is beyond the scope of this essay, some historical background may be helpful. Descartes, for example, provides some relevant context in his 1637 work, *Discourse on the Method of Conducting One’s Reason Well and of Seeking the Truth in the Sciences*. Even from the title, one can see that Descartes was concerned with how we conceptualize reason, and furthermore, how those conceptions affect how we seek scientific truth. He writes that:

...if there were such machines which were to have the organs and the shape of a monkey or of some other animal without reason, we would not have any means of recognizing that they would not in all respects be of the same nature of these animals. (Descartes 79)

Here, Descartes not only reflects, but likely in part establishes, the superiority effect of reason’s conception. An “animal without reason” (in reference to any non-human animal), he holds, would mirror “in all respects” a machine programmed to perform that animal’s functions. By extension, therefore, Descartes supports the notion that humans – who have reason – can treat animals identically to non-living machines; the value of an animal’s life equals only that of an intact machine. It would follow, then, that animals without reason – namely, all non-human animals – can be used freely for animal research.

Descartes even continues to say:

I had...described the rational soul, and shown that it can in no way be derived from the potentiality of matter, thus as can the other things which I had spoken [(e.g., animals)], but rather expressly created. (Descartes 83)

Here, Descartes states his famous mind-body dualism: the belief that the human and animal bodies are corporeal entities while the human soul remains incorporeal. However, embedded in this famous statement we can see the subtle beginnings of a conception of a rational universe. Given that Descartes was a firm

believer in God as the creator of all things, we can take “expressly created” to mean created by God. Descartes therefore believes that God “expressly created” the “rational soul.” Though only implicit, we can see how the belief of God as a creator of reason could lead to Mrs. Costello’s “God of reason.” Thus, we can detect in Descartes’ early work the articulation of what Mrs. Costello would come to claim, and Dr. Moreau to exhibit, concerning our conception of reason: as a uniquely human faculty (giving us dominion over non-rational animals) and as the structure of the universe (justifying our scientific endeavors).

Before moving on, we should note a few last points. Firstly, Descartes makes the additional claim that the animals’ lack of language provides evidence for their lack of souls:

Now by [animals’ lack of language]...one can also know the difference that there is between men and beasts. For it is quite a remarkable thing that there are no men at all so dull...that they not be capable of arranging various words together, and of composing of them a discourse by means of which they made their thoughts understood; and that, on the other hand, there is no animal at all...that did the like.... And this attests not merely thereto that beasts have less reason than men, but rather hereto that they have no reason at all. (Descartes 81)

For now, let it simply be noted that it was the animals’ inability to produce language that, in large part, led Descartes to conceptualize reason in the ways he did – namely, as uniquely human and, by extension, as characteristic of God and the universe. Furthermore, it should be noted that Descartes was not the only one to contribute to this conception of reason. In *Parts of Animals*, Aristotle writes that, “Man is the only animal that stands upright, and this is because his nature and essence is divine. Now the business of that which is most divine is to think and to be intelligent” (Aristotle 173), and in *The Politics*, he writes that, “If therefore nature makes nothing without purpose or in vain, it follows that nature has made all the animals for the sake of men”(Aristotle 87). Saint Augustine also contributes:

...if, when we say, Thou shalt not kill, we do not understand this of... the irrational animals that fly, swim, walk, or creep, since they are dissociated from us by their want of reason, and are therefore by the just appointment of the Creator subjected to us to kill or keep alive for our own uses; if so, then it remains that we understand that commandment simply of man. (Saint Augustine 26)

Thus, Aristotle’s teleology and Saint Augustine’s biblical beliefs were also likely contributors to our situation of reason in the ways previously described. Therefore, our conceptions of reason – and by extension, our decisions in animal research – are potentially remnants of philosophical foundations as old as these.

Overall, in order to understand the fundamental philosophy behind animal research, we have aimed to elucidate the current understanding of reason and its pragmatic instantiations. By picking out the relevant insight from Mrs. Costello, confirming them with Dr. Moreau's philosophical standards, and showing that they are consistent with historical philosophical foundation, we have clarified our conception of reason and illuminated how it influences the paradigm of animal research. Specifically, we have isolated two ways in which this conception has influence: (1) the belief that reason is specific to the human justifies our control over animal lives and (2) the belief that the workings of the universe are rational in nature justifies our research in their pursuit.

Having arrived at this point, however, we must now ask the necessary questions: Is this conception of reason the right one? Are our decisions of animal research founded upon correct assumptions in this regard? While we could approach this question from a myriad of angles, Mrs. Costello offers a particular route of investigation:

"Getting back to Descartes, I would only want to say that the discontinuity he saw between animals and human beings was the result of incomplete information. The science of Descartes's day had no acquaintance with the great apes or with higher marine mammals, and thus little cause to question the assumption that animals cannot think. And of course it had no access to the fossil record that would reveal a graded continuum of anthropoid creatures stretching from the higher primates to *Homo sapiens*." (Coetzee 61)

Mrs. Costello, here, refers to evolution as a way of critiquing these preconceptions of reason. Because Descartes – and likewise Aristotle and Saint Augustine – did not have access to the theory of evolution, they misconstrued reason as a "discontinuity...between animals and human beings." Let us now ask the question: how might Darwin's theory of evolution renovate this conception of reason, and thereby affect our decision to engage in animal research?

The theory of evolution states that natural selection operates as follows: Over time, organisms undergo random genetic mutations. Some of these mutations will result in a physical benefit, while others will translate into a hindrance or have no substantial effect. Those organisms which assume these physical benefits will out-compete other organisms vying for identical resources, such as food, space, or mates. As a result, those with such benefits will flourish and proliferate, passing down in the process their adaptive genetic mutation. Importantly, however, this process refers not only to visible bodily adaptations, but mental ones as well. Charles Darwin explains this in *The Descent of Man*:

We have seen...that man bears in his bodily structure clear traces of his descent from some lower form, but it may be urged that, as man differs so greatly in his mental power from all other animals, there must be some error in this conclusion... But...there is no fundamental difference of this kind. (Darwin 245)

Although some physical adaptations appear more obviously (e.g., new limbs or hair), the theory of evolution suggests that mental faculties arise from physical changes as well. For example, an adaptation of the nervous system might yield perception, locomotion, or memory which, upon helping the organism to survive, would perpetuate the affected population. It follows, then, that reason only constitutes another such adaptation arising from physical mutations. Moreover, Darwin does not limit reason to the human:

Of all the faculties of the human mind, it will, I presume, be admitted that Reason stands at the summit. Only a few persons now dispute that animals possess some power of reasoning. Animals may constantly be seen to pause, deliberate, and resolve. (Darwin 251)

Darwin does not deny that reason is an important capacity for humans; he even capitalizes it to demonstrate its significance. However, his theory unavoidably implies that reason did not emerge as a distinctly human faculty entirely transcendent of other animal faculties. Rather, evolution suggests, reason *evolved* to its state in the human, and while as such more complex, extends before the human in various forms.

Overall, then, how has evolution altered our conception of reason? Firstly, in contrast with Descartes and Saint Augustine, it indicates that reason is not an exclusively human phenomenon: it exists in various structures throughout animals. Just as Darwin suggests, reason, like all physical adaptations, likely developed in gradations and therefore persists in alternative forms. Secondly, evolution implies that reason does not exist as a divine or transcendental faculty, but rather only as another means of survival. Again in contrast with Descartes, Saint Augustine, and even Aristotle, evolution indicates that reason developed like any other faculty; therefore, it is only as "divine" as any other adaptation, and likely in no way "transcendent." Moreover, the "purpose" of reason must be reconceived – reason is not "meant" to apprehend the "mysteries of the universe" but rather only aids our survival. Thirdly, evolution challenges our view of the universe. Because evolution occurs via random and incidentally beneficial mutations, we are discouraged from attributing any rational structure to these processes.¹

So how has evolution affected our conceptions of reason in terms of animal research? Not only does evolutionary theory problematize our conception of

reason, but it also helps to *explain* those prior misconceptions – specifically, by reversing the conceived causality between the place of reason and animal research. Reason aside for the moment, evolution has instilled in us a variety of tendencies which manifest clearly in even lower forms of life. For example, the tendency to protect one’s self as well as one’s own kind has been demonstrated clearly in almost all species. In an indicative comment, Darwin writes that, in monkeys, “we see maternal affection exhibited in the most trifling details” (Darwin 246). Accordingly, one of the primary goals of animal research is exactly this, to protect one’s own kind. In *The Importance of Being a Mouse*, we see this “maternal affection” exhibited in humans, only this time via animal research. Lucinda, a female child character, asks her mother, “Why should mice have shots that may make them sick? When I get a shot, it’s so I won’t get sick – or it’s to help me get well” (Gernhardt 6), to which her mother responds, “but before you...can be given a new medicine, we must be sure it is safe.... And the only way to be sure is to first try it out in the lab on a mouse” (Gernhardt 6). The evolutionarily instilled desire to protect one’s kind, therefore, is fulfilled by the ends of animal research.

Another one of these instilled tendencies is one of curiosity. Darwin writes that:

All animals feel Wonder, and many exhibit Curiosity.... Brehm gives a curious account of the instinctive dread, which his monkeys exhibited, for snakes; but their curiosity was so great that they could not desist from... lifting up the lid of the box in which the snakes were kept. (Darwin 248)

If animal research does not exist for the purpose of directly perpetuating the survival of our own kind, it emerges out of a curiosity of the world. However, as Darwin explains, this curiosity too can be explained by evolutionary instinct. This motive of animal research is demonstrated by Dr. Moreau, who says:

You cannot imagine what [one’s research]... means to an investigator, what an intellectual passion grows upon him. You cannot imagine the strange colorless delight of these intellectual desires. The thing before you is no longer an animal, a fellow-creature, but a problem. (Wells 115)

Dr. Moreau’s experiments do not arise directly from the desire to protect or prolong his life; his work neither has any visible potential to help the human condition, nor through it does he acquire wealth, fame, or so on. Rather, it seems, his single motivation arises out of fulfilling his “intellectual passion” and “desires.” Darwin, almost needlessly, points to these “passions,” “delights,” and “desires” as instinctual ones, shared by a variety of other animals.

Evolution suggests, therefore, that our conception of reason arises out of a fundamental desire to engage in animal research. Whether to enhance the quantity or quality of human life (the latter of which could include either health benefits or satiation of our curiosities), animal research works towards our ends, and the philosophical paradigms follow accordingly. In other words, our desire to engage in animal research instills, for its own support, our conception of reason as a superior human faculty or as the structure of the universe, not vice versa. This is why, *because* of Dr. Moreau’s “intellectual desires,” the “thing” before him becomes a “problem,” rather than a “fellow-creature.” His conception of animals reflects his more fundamental desires.

Several authors endorse this reversal of causality, even if they do not explicitly highlight its evolutionary undertones. Montaigne, in “Apology for Raymond Sebond,” challenges conceptualizing reason as a superior faculty:

We ourselves assume imaginary and fanciful advantages, advantages which are to come and non-existent...which we erroneously attribute to...reason, knowledge, honour.... It is not upon any true ground of reason, but from a foolish arrogance and stubbornness, that we put ourselves before the other animals, remove ourselves from their condition and fellowship. (Montaigne 480).

Montaigne sees that the “advantages” attributed to “reason” are only “imaginary” and “fanciful,” and in fact arise from human “arrogance,” or the desire to better the human species. In the context of animal research, this “imaginary” ability to “remove ourselves from” the animals’ “condition and fellowship” gives us ethical comfort as we use them for our own ends. Although well before Darwin, Montaigne, in “Of Cruelty,” even foresaw how these “imaginary” distinctions dissolve when acknowledging the fundamental similarities between human and animals:

[When I recognize the] close resemblance between us and the animals, and how much of a share they have in our greatest privileges, and with how much probability they are likened to us, truly I beat down a lot of our presumption and willingly resign that imaginary kingship that people give us over the other creatures. (Montaigne 318)

As Darwin would come to see, Montaigne suspected the “probability” that “our greatest privileges” – such as reason – are shared among the non-human animals. Just as we have done by examining evolution, Montaigne “resign[s]” the “presumption” which gives us “imaginary kingship...over the other creatures.” Therefore, in texts as early as Montaigne’s, we see a resistance to accepting reason as a superior faculty, from the suspicion that this conception develops from “arrogance” rather than “true grounds.”

Mrs. Costello also reflects our conclusions, specifically concerning our previous conception of a rational universe, when she says:

“Might it not be that the phenomenon we are examining here is, rather than the flowering of a faculty that allows access to the secrets of the universe, the specialism of a rather narrow self-regenerating intellectual tradition whose forte is reasoning, in the same way that the forte of chess-players is playing chess, which for its own motives it tries to install at the center of the universe?” (Coetzee 25)

Previously, as reflected by Dr. Moreau and Descartes, we entertained the possibility that reason was “a faculty that allows access to the secrets of the universe,” or that the universe was inherently rational in structure. By doing so, we could justify the ends of our scientific, rational endeavors. However, in line with our Darwin-driven conclusions, Mrs. Costello here challenges our “install[ation]” of reason at the “center of the universe” as only “self-regenerating,” reflecting our “forte,” and being done “for its own motives.” She later points out that:

“Understanding a thing often looks to me like playing with one of those Rubik cubes. Once you have made all the little bricks snap into place, hey presto, you understand. It makes sense if you live inside a Rubik cube, but if you don’t...” (Coetzee 45)

Reason, therefore, only provides one perspective of apprehending the universe. This reflects what was earlier indicated through evolution: that reason, rather than constituting some special transcendent faculty, lends access to the universe with equal metaphysical value than any other faculty. Undoubtedly, reason has enhanced our ability to survive and thrive, but it does not follow that the universe is inherently rational. Our decision to “install” reason “at the center of the universe” only mirrors our evolutionarily selfish “motives.” Just as Montaigne points out that our superior conception of reason works towards our own “arrogant” ends, Mrs. Costello here points out that our conception of a rational universe works in the same way.

Let us take a brief aside to mention several fictional texts which reflect, or can be illuminated by, these concluded re-conceptions of reason. Felix Salten’s *Bambi*, Jack London’s *The Call of the Wild*, and *Old Yeller* all give their animal characters forms of reason: *Old Yeller*’s ability to refrain from eating meat in order to achieve future ends reflects an exercise of reason, and Salten’s *Bambi* and London’s *Buck* even use language (although *Buck* only inwardly), perhaps as a direct challenge to Descartes’ evidence for irrational animals. The decisions to have animals reason in these media may in part reflect a resistance to the philosophical paradigm deeming reason uniquely human.

Our renovated situation of reason may also elucidate the failure of Dr. Moreau’s project. As previously discussed, Dr. Moreau supports the conception of reason as a superior human faculty and as the structure of the universe. Despite his awareness and endorsement of evolution, Dr. Moreau does not pursue this theory’s implications in conceiving reason. However, the nature and failure of his experiments – in transforming animals to humans – lends unique insight into the problems of this conception. Because he believes that superior reason is exclusively human, his project would implicitly entail endowing the animal with this superior quality, namely by “burn[ing] out all the animal...[and] mak[ing] a rational creature” (Wells 120). However, Dr. Moreau consistently fails to achieve the results that he desires:

“And least satisfactory of all is something I cannot touch, somewhere – I cannot determine where – in the seat of emotions. Cravings, instincts, desires that harm humanity, a strange hidden reservoir to burst suddenly and inundate the whole being of the creature with anger, hate, or fear.” (Wells 120)

The “least satisfactory” aspect of his creations is their persisting faculties of unreason – “emotions,” “cravings,” “instincts,” “desires,” “anger,” “hate,” and “fear.” However, evolution shows us that this is a necessary result: there is no such thing as reason purely distinct from unreason, and thus to consider the human as essentially composed of pure reason is to misconceive the human. Therefore, Dr. Moreau’s creations, do not *fail* to mirror human’s pure reason, but rather *successfully* reflect the inextricable tie between the faculties of reason and unreason which *together* compose the human. We may thereby reinterpret his lament that he,

“...can see through it all, see into their very souls, and see there nothing but the souls of beasts, beasts that perish – anger, and the lusts to live and gratify themselves... Yet they’re odd. Complex, like everything else alive. There is a kind of upward striving in them, part vanity, part waste sexual emotion, part waste curiosity. It mocks me. (Wells 122)

Dr. Moreau describes, almost exactly, himself. His “lust” to “gratify” himself is clear in his obsessive experiments, his “upward striving” and “vanity” further reflect his insatiable desire to succeed, his “waste sexual emotion” mirrors his isolation from the opposite sex (he lives alone on an island), and his “waste curiosity” demonstrates, with almost “mocking” clarity, the nature of his entire project (see above). We therefore see, through Dr. Moreau’s necessary failure – or rather, his unrecognized success – the inadequacy of our prior conception of reason.

So where are we now left concerning animal research? We have thus far shown that, under the lens of evolution, neither the placement of reason as a transcendent faculty nor the conception of reason as a universal structure hold; these were rather only ways of justifying our ends, and did not truly reflect the nature

of reason. But what new perspective have we gained on animal research? So our reason does not hold us above animals, it only functions as another mechanism for survival, but what now? Or in Mrs. Coetzee's words, "Therefore what? Therefore we are free to use [animals] for our own ends? Therefore we are free to kill them" (Coetzee 44)? If we are only organisms geared towards survival, may we just continue our selfish research anyway? Ultimately, although evolution has allowed us to problematize these prior enabling rational justifications, it has left us with no ethical or pragmatic conclusions.

And yet we are not the only ones to arrive at this impasse; a variety of thoughtful works have come to the same ethical dead end. Mrs. Costello offers sympathetic imagination (i.e., our ability to imagine our way into the minds of animals) as a way to salvage the value of the animal's life, but another character, O'Hearne, rebuts that this very faculty enables us to imagine death, and therefore makes the human life more valuable (Coetzee 63-64). Another character, Wunderlich, proposes that, "at bottom we protect our own kind" (Coetzee 45) as a way of distinguishing value, while Isaac Bashevis Singer's *The Slaughterer* and *The Silence of the Lambs*' Hannibal Lector suggest that, "Everyone may kill, and every killing is permitted" (Singer 30). We might even go in the opposite direction, and as *Bambi*'s chapter of the death-fearing leaves or Montaigne suggests, embrace "a general duty of humanity, that attaches us not only to animals, who have life and feeling, but even to trees and plants" (Montaigne 318). Thus despite the answers we have generated, we are left with a new question: how will we reconstruct the ethics of animal research? Despite his misconceptions, Dr. Moreau may have been correct in this regard: "That is the only way I ever heard of research going. I asked a question, devised some method of getting an answer, and got – a fresh question. Was this possible, or that possible" (Wells 115)?

Ultimately, with a transcendent reason out of the picture, the meaning we assign to our lives – what is "possible" – may be up to us. Perhaps this is why, when asked if her vegetarianism "comes out of a moral conviction" (Coetzee 43), Mrs. Costello responds, "No, I don't think so.... It comes out of a desire to save my soul" (Coetzee 43). Mrs. Costello cannot justify a single moral conviction. Moreover, she does not "think so" – she cannot employ reason to support her formation of meaning. Rather, she can only do what she feels can "save [her] soul" in an otherwise ambivalent reality. No wonder, then, there is a slight comfort in her son's assurance that this life – this irrational interplay of organisms and constructed meaning – "will soon be over" (Coetzee 69).

I come out, reflective but dissatisfied. I look down to notice a small spot of blood on my fingertip and scattered blotches over the keyboard; it had rubbed off in the process of writing. And like the stubborn animal passions of Dr. Moreau's

creations, they won't come out. Was the blood a mouse's or mine? It's remarkable how, without science's tests and instruments, I really cannot know.

¹ It should be noted that these three effects are by no means entirely distinct. Rather, depending on the philosophy, many of these consequences entail the others. For example, Descartes' belief that the soul was incorporeal – or transcendent – emerged from his claim that it was exclusively human. In this case, the first mentioned evolutionary consequence would necessarily entail the second.

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A Different Kind of Peace: Explaining Bush Administration Opposition to Syria–Israel Peace Talks

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ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS DURING HIS TWO-TERM ADMINISTRATION, U.S. PRESIDENT George W. Bush and his representatives surprised many interested parties by opposing bilateral peace talks between Syria and Israel.¹ Apparently, an end to hostilities between the two states, historically bitter enemies, was not viewed to be in line with U.S. interests.

This policy can accurately be described as a puzzle. "Peace in the Middle East" has been both a ubiquitous foreign policy phrase and a goal for U.S. presidents for decades, reflected most notably through U.S. involvement in a number of peace summits and U.S. assent to negotiations between other states. The fact that many of these negotiations took place without U.S. supervision was not a concern. In addition, the talks would have a legitimate chance for success. Syria and Israel have had productive negotiations in the past, which the U.S. supported wholeheartedly at the time, indicating the existence of at least some common ground. Finally, though more parenthetically, it could be argued that a peace agreement between Syria and Israel is in U.S. security interests as it would both create a more stable Syria and drive a wedge between Syria and Iran.

This raises an important question: what explains the policy? The question is not one of relations between Israel and Syria, but Syria and the U.S. Why did the U.S. decide Syria did not deserve to participate? Rhetoric from U.S. officials suggests that Syria's particular actions and characteristics were the reason for opposition to bilateral negotiations. Indeed, as Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice claimed in a meeting with Israeli officials, even exploratory talks would be too much of a reward in Damascus due to Syria's hostile actions towards the U.S.² I will begin by providing a brief overview of past U.S. involvement in the Middle East peace process, focusing on situations where bilateral negotiations occurred without U.S. opposition. I also will discuss the recent history of Syria–Israel peace

talks. Both of these serve to establish that Bush's stance is a puzzling departure from past policy. Second, I will describe U.S.-Syria relations by considering issues of conflict between the states as well as U.S. policy stances and statements towards Syria. Third, I will discuss the broader ideology of Bush foreign policy, primarily using White House documents, to shed light on the policy towards Syria. Fourth, I will attempt to explain the policy by evaluating several possible explanations: the influence from close advisers and Cabinet members as well as the bureaucratic theory of "groupthink;" the individual level of analysis, looking at Bush's own ideology, leadership style, and view of executive power; Holsti's theory of "national role conception"; and democratic politics and public opinion.

This essay is not a policy critique but an attempt to explain. It is a "why" more than a "what." It does not necessarily aim to find a single correct answer. Many factors were at play, some explanations are based on contradictory accounts, and I have doubtless failed to examine valid alternative explanations. Rather, I hope that this essay can provide a plausible reasoning for U.S. opposition to Syria-Israel peace talks. Additionally, some of these explanations could potentially be useful in analyzing foreign policymaking in the Bush Administration and in general. Bush's policy choices are likely to have an impact for generations, and deserve extended analysis.

Background

ENCOURAGING PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST HAS BEEN A LONGSTANDING U.S. POLICY, certainly including supporting peace talks without direct U.S. oversight or mediation. In 1977 Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat met quietly to discuss guidelines for the talks which led to the Camp David Accord and to plan Sadat's historic visit to Jerusalem.³ Next, a set of 17 secret meetings between Israeli and PLO officials built the foundation of the 1993 Oslo Accords.⁴ In addition, the content of the 1994 treaty between Jordan and Israel was created mostly through secret negotiations.⁵

Though the U.S. was involved in the official signing of these talks, it is significant that most of the negotiations took place without direct U.S. involvement—a trend which was hardly a problem for U.S. officials. As President Bill Clinton put it most directly, "only the region's leaders can make peace."⁶ Bush's policy, then, is a clear departure from the past.

The treatment of Syria in particular by Bush is also puzzling. Though some of Syria's recent actions have increased tensions with the U.S., relations between the states have always been far from friendly. Syria has been on the terrorist watch list since 1979, and its continued antagonizing of Israel has been a major concern of U.S. presidents for decades.⁷ Yet no president has gone so far as to op-

pose negotiations, and in recent years Syrian and Israeli officials have made impressive strides in fulfilling Clinton's calls for regional peace. Syria-Israel peace talks focus primarily on the Golan Heights, a 450-square-mile strip of land that Israel seized during the Six Day War in June 1967. Other governments, including the U.S., have not recognized this action.⁸ It seems that the only realistic path to a peace agreement would involve Israeli withdrawal from the Golan.

Israeli leaders have often been receptive to this idea. In 1993, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin told U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher that Israel would withdraw from the Golan if Syria would "meet Israeli needs."⁹ Furthermore, in the late 1990s, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Syria's Hafiz al-Assad held talks about potential Golan withdrawal, which the U.S. approved.¹⁰ Some claim, however, that the closest the sides came to an agreement was in talks between Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Hafiz in 2000. According to some sources, negotiations broke down because of a disagreement over a 10-meter-wide strip bordering the Sea of Galilee, where Hafiz desired to swim again as he had as a child. Ultimately those issues, as well as concerns about security and water access, stalled the negotiations, and Hafiz's death in 2000 effectively ended that initiative.¹¹

It has not stopped there, however. Hafiz's son and successor, Bashar al-Assad, has repeatedly expressed willingness to resume talks, even without preconditions, but hawkish Israeli officials and U.S. pressure have impeded progress.¹² The issue is further complicated by the recent revelation of an unofficial peace agreement made by former director general of Israel's Foreign Ministry Alon Liel and well-connected Syrian businessman Ibrahim Suleiman.¹³ The deal would put the Golan under Syrian control but turn a substantial portion into a park which Israelis could visit without a visa. Both Syrian and Israeli officials have denied knowledge of the talks, but at the very least the deal indicates that some common ground exists.

In short, an Israeli-Syrian peace agreement seems plausible. Yet the Bush Administration has opposed talks, indicating a departure from past policy. I will now attempt to explain why.

U.S.-Syria Relations

Issues in U.S.-Syria Relations

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF ISSUES THAT TIGHTEN RELATIONS BETWEEN SYRIA AND THE U.S. that merit a short discussion. As I will explain, some of Syria's choices have contributed to the "rogue state" designation that led to U.S. opposition to Syria-Israel peace talks. First is Syria's continued involvement in, and even domination of,

the internal affairs of Lebanon. As Jeremy M. Sharp notes, many Syrian nationalists view Lebanon as “an appendage of the Syrian state,” and Syrian policy seems to support that view.¹⁴ In addition to the continued presence of Syrian troops in Lebanon and accusations of Syria’s encouraging domestic unrest, Syrian agents have been linked to two high-profile assassinations: former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in 2005 (which resulted in the withdrawal of the U.S. Ambassador) and then-Minister Pierre Gemayel in 2006.^{15,16} Syria is also a prominent supporter of Hezbollah within Lebanon. Besides supplying weapons to the group, Syria serves as “an important interlocutor between Iran and its Hezbollah protégés.”¹⁷ In this way, Syria played an important role in the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah war, seriously damaging relations with the U.S. by both endangering Israel and supporting a terrorist organization.

Second is Syrian involvement in the Iraq War. Though Syria has not deployed its own forces, it has allowed insurgents to enter Iraq due to lax border security.¹⁸ Indeed, patrol guards along Iraq’s border with Syria and Jordan have been described as “undermanned, under-equipped, and under-motivated or intimidated.”¹⁹ It is hard to believe that Syrian authorities are unaware of how they are at the very least indirectly aiding the Iraqi insurgency, and there has been little demonstration of will to effectively secure the borders. There have been some indications that Syria is beginning to rectify the problem, but it remains an important point of contention in U.S.-Syrian Relations.²⁰

Third is Syria’s support for Hamas. The U.S. has regarded Israel as its most important ally in the Middle East for decades—a belief which was certainly true in the Bush Administration. It should not be surprising, then, that Syria’s continued support of Hamas through public statements, financial assistance, and reportedly weapons has drawn American ire.²¹ Furthermore, the U.S. has designated Hamas a terrorist organization, for which it has repeatedly claimed not to tolerate outside support.

Last is Syria’s proliferation of weapons, particularly weapons of mass destruction. In recent years, Syria has built up a stockpile of chemical weapons and surface-to-surface missiles, reportedly researched biological weapons, and expressed nuclear aspirations.²² As if the possession of weapons of mass destruction were not enough to cause U.S. concern for regional and global stability, Syria’s missile program has been linked to that of North Korea, a full-blown member of the “axis of evil.”

U.S. Policy Towards Syria

For some of the reasons above, in 2002 Syria was designated a “rogue state” by the Bush Administration, a small step below the vaunted “axis of evil.”²³

Then-Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security John Bolton made this public in a 2002 speech at the Heritage Foundation.²⁴ Though perhaps Orwellian political jargon—after all, the phrase is an American invention—this designation is a significant within the Bush foreign policy framework. Bush believes that “rogue states” share common characteristics, and the 2002 NSS defines rogue states as ones that:

- brutalize their own people and squander their national resources for the personal gain of the rulers;
- display no regard for international law, threaten their neighbors, and callously violate international treaties to which they are party;
- are determined to acquire weapons of mass destruction, along with other advanced military technology, to be used as threats or offensively to achieve the aggressive designs of these regimes;
- sponsor terrorism around the globe; and
- reject basic human values and hate the United States and everything for which it stands.²⁵

Bush’s worldview treats rogue states as major security threats. It is no wonder, then, that Bush would block any attempt to treat them as legitimate members of the international community. Indeed, the assumption was that any negotiation with Syria from the U.S. or its allies would be considered a “prize.”²⁶ This sentiment was codified in legislation with the passage of the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003.²⁷ The Act sets sanctions and restrictions on investment until Syria withdraws from Lebanon, secures the border with Iraq, and stops its missile programs and development of weapons of mass destruction. Ironically, the Act also explicitly calls for Syria to enter into bilateral negotiations with Israel.

This perspective has also been borne out by a number of rather jarring statements from Bush Administration officials. Ambassador John Bolton took this view, saying, “Syria doesn’t need dialogue to know what they need to do.”²⁸ Similarly, U.S. Department of State spokesman Sean McCormack claimed, “the Syrian government hasn’t really demonstrated through its actions any sort of intent to actually play a constructive role in the region.”²⁹ Unsurprisingly, President Bush mirrored the beliefs of the ranking officials in his Administration, arguing that “Photo opportunities and/or meeting with President Assad lead the Assad Government to believe they’re part of the mainstream of the international community when, in fact, they’re a state sponsor of terror.”³⁰

In addition, the Bush Administration seems to have supported the take-down of Bashar’s regime. In 2006, National Security Council staff met twice with the National Salvation Front, a coalition of exiled Syrian opposition figures that includes members of the radical Islamic Muslim Brotherhood to “learn more about

the group and assess its commitment to democracy.”³¹ Though the National Salvation Front does not pose a credible threat to Bashar, the meetings demonstrate the anti-Bashar sentiment within the Bush Administration.

Ideological Foundations of Bush Foreign Policy

As I HAVE TRIED TO SHOW, BUSH ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS HAVE GENERALLY OPPOSED diplomatic engagement with Syria. To fully understand the policy, however, it is useful to examine articulations of the so-called “Bush doctrine,” the ideology that led to the policy positions. I will do this by discussing the White House National Security Strategies (NSS) from 2002 and 2006, which contain useful rhetoric and theory about Bush foreign policy. While I concede that the documents are written for political purposes, and accordingly full of political euphemisms, they provide a solid theoretical backing for U.S. opposition to peace talks between Syria and Israel. The first two sentences of the 2002 NSS get directly to the point:

The great struggles of the twentieth century between liberty and totalitarianism ended with a decisive victory for the forces of freedom—and a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise. In the twenty-first century, only nations that share a commitment to protecting basic human rights and guaranteeing political and economic freedom will be able to unleash the potential of their people and assure their future prosperity.³²

In just a few words, the Bush White House articulates perhaps the most important feature of its foreign policy: an unrelenting, black-and-white moral clarity in favor of liberal democracy. That is the “single sustainable model” for long-term success; diversity in political systems is not an option. Since negotiations between Syria and Israel would have the effect of legitimizing the Syrian regime or, should an agreement be reached, entrenching “rogue” and authoritarian Syria in the region, the U.S. must oppose them.

Indeed, spreading liberal democracy appears to be a primary goal for the Bush Administration. It is instructive that the seemingly ubiquitous goal of “peace in the Middle East” is not present in either Bush NSS. As it is written in the 2006 version, “[The U.S. has] stood for the spread of democracy in the broader Middle East” (emphasis added).³³ This is a stark contrast from the more traditional U.S. position demonstrated in the 1997 NSS under Clinton, which posits that “America must continue to be an unrelenting force for peace [in the Middle East.] ... Taking reasonable risks for peace keeps us from being drawn into far more costly conflicts.”³⁴ To Bush, democracy is the ultimate goal, not peace. Peace agreements with hostile regimes, especially “rogue” regimes like Syria, are an unacceptable compromise. That is not to say that previous U.S. policy did not seek democracy, or that seeking peace and democracy are mutually exclusive, but there was cer-

tainly a reordering of priorities. One might even say that Bush’s version of “peace” is not about cessation of violence as much as a global community of democracies based on freedom and liberty. Even though a Syria–Israel peace could prevent violence, it is a step away from Bush’s ultimate policy objectives.

Nevertheless, there is more behind the policy than altruistic ideology. Indeed, there seems to be a belief that encouraging democracy is in U.S. security interests as well. As claimed in the 2006 NSS, “because free nations tend toward peace, the advance of liberty will make America more secure”; furthermore, victory in the war on terror and promotion of democracy are “inseparable priorities.”³⁵ Anything but steadfast encouragement of democracy could ultimately be harmful to U.S. security.

It is worth noting, however, that the Bush Administration has not been completely consistent in its application of this ideology, shown most clearly by its negotiations with North Korea, an official member of the “axis of evil.”³⁶ However, as the policy towards Syria–Israel negotiations seems to fit with this ideology, it remains appropriate to apply it in the present discussion.

Explanations

As I HAVE SHOWN, BUSH OPPOSITION TO BILATERAL PEACE TALKS BETWEEN ISRAEL and Syria is a departure from previous norms. I have also attempted to explain the reasons for Bush’s isolation of Syria, looking at both specifics of Syria–U.S. relations and Bush’s general ideology. Now I will move to the primary question: what explains the implementation of this policy? I will discuss several theories, focusing on the ideological influence of Bush’s close advisors, the phenomenon of “groupthink,” Bush’s individual agency, the conception of a national role, and democratic politics.

Bureaucratic Politics: Ideological Influence from Close Advisors

One common view among analysts of the Bush Administration is that Bush’s cabal of neoconservative advisers is most responsible for his policies. As Francis Fukuyama puts it, “More than any other group, it was the neoconservatives [inside] the Bush Administration who pushed for democratizing Iraq and the broader Middle East.”³⁷ Though plausible on its face, to prove this claim three conditions must be observed: some or all of Bush’s advisers must have been neoconservatives, Bush’s policies towards peace talks between Syria and Israel must be demonstrably neoconservative, and the advisers must have had access to Bush and opportunities to influence the White House discourse. I will address each condition in turn.

Neoconservatives in the Bush Administration

There is strong evidence that many of Bush's close advisers fall into the neoconservative camp. Yuen Foong Khong counts ten Bush Administration officials who were signatories of the Project for the New American Century, a neo-conservative collective that in 1998 called for, among other things, regime change in Iraq. This list includes Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz (both of whom served under Bush's father), and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations John Bolton. In addition, Vice President Dick Cheney, though not thought of as a doctrinal neoconservative, shares many viewpoints with the ideology.³⁸ Indeed, Bush placed neoconservatives or sympathizers of neoconservatism in prominent Cabinet positions.

Neoconservatism in Bush's Policies

It is difficult to place a policy choice within a single ideological framework. In policymaking, so many different factors must be taken into account that it is impossible to say whether a choice was made because of ideology or other factors. Still, themes and trends can be examined to identify a correlation. Khong defines four main tenets of neoconservative foreign policy: moral clarity between good and evil in the political system (which creates two sets of states, liberal and illiberal), support for a benevolent US hegemony, military pre-eminence and the leveraging of military power (i.e. willingness to use force to pursue goals), and skepticism about international law and institutions.³⁹ According to this definition, does the ideology fit with Bush's opposition to Syria-Israel negotiations?

The view of "moral clarity" seems to fit particularly well with the policy of isolating Syria. Liberal democracies are "good", and other forms of government are "evil." Therefore, the U.S. must act in accordance with that conception by refusing to legitimize "evil" states through negotiations. Furthermore, the sheer audacity of the U.S. in opposing the policy preferences of a demonstrated ally for what it views as a worldwide good seems to place the U.S. in the role of a benevolent hegemon. The final two tenets are at best marginally applicable in this case, and thus do not merit discussion.

There are also interesting parallels between themes of Bush foreign policy and one of neoconservatism's most important documents. In 1996, William Kristol and Robert Kagan laid out the fundamental principles of neoconservatism in their seminal article, "Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy," which appeared in *Foreign Affairs*. In the article, the authors advocate "actively promoting American principles of governance abroad—democracy, free markets, respect for liberty."⁴⁰ One cannot help but notice a connection between the advocacy of "democracy, free markets, respect for liberty" in the article and the "single sustainable model" of "freedom, democracy and free enterprise" in the 2002 NSS. This further

demonstrates the connection between Bush policy and neoconservatism. Again, I do not suggest that Bush policy matches perfectly with neoconservative ideology, but that there appears to be a substantive correlation, particularly concerning U.S. opposition to Syria-Israel peace talks. That is sufficient for my purposes here.

Access and Influence of Bush's Advisers

Of the three conditions, the most difficult to prove is whether neoconservatives in the Cabinet had access to and influence over Bush, the man who officially made decisions (in his words, "the decider").⁴¹ Though the dynamics of White House decision making are not publicly observable, a number of journalists and Administration officials have recently released accounts of their experiences with Bush. I will rely on those here.

At first glance there appears to be strong evidence for claims that Bush's advisers had substantial influence on matters of policy. In fact, Bush saw his advisers as a check on himself; Bob Woodward quotes him as saying, "If I have any genius or smarts, it's the ability to recognize talent, ask them to serve and work with them as a team."⁴² And Bush certainly picked experienced, talented advisers, with his national security team boasting close to 100 years of experience. He, on the other hand, had none.⁴³ Just due to his own lack of foreign policy experience, his reliance on advisers should not be surprising.

But in modern times every president relies heavily on his staff, because there are simply too many issues to understand and too many decisions to make. Bush, however, seems to have done so to a greater extent than other presidents. Richard Clarke notes that all advisers were told that "the president is not a big reader" and that Bush would go to bed by 10:00.⁴⁴ This forced the staff to explain issues in their own words, giving them a chance to frame the issues in a way that encouraged a presidential decision that fit their own policy preferences. And when Bush made a decision, Ron Suskind claims, it was more about personal judgment than costs and benefits. Indeed, he evaluated the advice he was given according to who it came from and how they were giving it, not necessarily what they were saying.⁴⁵ If we are to believe that the ideology of his advisers pushed him to oppose Syria-Israel peace talks, this decision making process is a crucial revelation.

In addition, experienced, politically savvy advisers can often have remarkable autonomy, especially when the sitting president lacks experience. Vice President Dick Cheney is notorious for his supposed manipulation of the internal politics of the White House. Suskind describes this so-called "Cheney Doctrine" as the attempt to frame issues for Bush clearly and simply to compensate for his weak analytical abilities.⁴⁶ This also served as a response to Watergate, to some

extent; when a president is ignorant of the details, he can retain “plausible deniability” if the policy fails. Indeed, Cheney sought to “protect” the president from accountability by making his briefings non-explicit.⁴⁷ This policy gave the advisers substantial behind-the-scenes power.

Suskind goes even further. He claims that within the Bush White House there was not even a real policy process, no researching of different options in “policy shops” that would be debated with the president and his advisers. Instead, “issues argued, often vociferously, at the level of deputies and principals rarely seemed to go upstream in their fullest form to the president’s desk....”⁴⁸ If the real policymaking happened below the president, it seems that foreign policy choices could have easily been dictated by close policy advisers. And if they opposed Syria-Israel peace talks, it would not be difficult to push the president in that direction.

Bureaucratic Politics: “Groupthink”

Explanation of influence from advisers relates to the theory of “groupthink.” Modern scholarship on foreign policy theory often trumpets the role of psychological factors in the making of foreign policy to explain why actors make decisions that cannot be explained rationally. In the case of Bush Administration opposition to Syria-Israel peace talks, psychology very well could have played a role. After all, besides the aforementioned departure from traditional U.S. policy, it could be argued that a peace agreement would be in U.S. security interests because it could decrease violence in the Middle East and create a rift between Syria and Iran.

“Groupthink” is a psychological theory advanced by Irving L. Janis. The theory argues that dynamics within a decision-making group can have massive effects on the final decision. Especially in times of crisis when groups are insulated from outside influence, the “members’ strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action.”⁴⁹ Indeed, as Janis elaborates, there is more at play than inevitable human error:

Over and beyond all the familiar source of human error is a powerful source of defective judgment that arises in cohesive groups—the concurrence-seeking tendency, which fosters overoptimism, lack of vigilance, and sloganistic thinking about the weakness and immorality of out-groups. This tendency can take its toll even when the decision-makers are conscientious statesmen trying to make the best possible decisions for their country for all mankind.⁵⁰

Again, I am not trying to argue that the Bush policy was an “error.” But Bush’s heavy reliance on a small number of loyal advisers seems to fit the Janis’ concerns about how a “concurrence-seeking tendency” may affect policy. Per-

haps, once the policy of opposition to Syria-Israel peace became prevalent within Bush’s Cabinet, it became impossible to overturn due to group dynamics. Though it was not a “crisis,” that policy was made in private and received little press coverage fits with Janis’ requirement of policy isolation. Indeed, within the Bush inner circle there was hardly a constructive policy dialogue. As Scott McClellan writes, “Bush’s foreign policy advisers played right into his thinking, doing little to question it or to cause him to pause long enough to fully consider the consequences before going forward.”⁵¹ While there was no dissent within the Cabinet, Secretary of State Colin Powell was known for his willingness to express minority opinions.⁵² However, it is certainly plausible that the phenomenon of groupthink had the effect of squashing Powell’s views, thereby guaranteeing that the policy would go forward. While groupthink cannot independently explain the policy of opposition to Syria-Israel peace talks, it could have pushed the policy along.

Bush’s choices and personality played a role in this group dynamic as well. Bush viewed loyalty as an essential characteristic when selecting advisers; he was not interested in having policy dialogue that gave credence to multiple viewpoints. McClellan even suggests that Bush picked National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice to replace Powell as Secretary of State because she would “bring the State Department bureaucracy ... more in line with Administration policy, whether they agreed with it or not.”⁵³ If loyalty is favored over experience and diversity of opinions, then strict, rash policies can be the result.

Individual Level: Bush’s Agency

Was Bush truly a marionette handled by his advisers, a mere pawn of those appointed to serve him? Other accounts of the Administration dispute this claim. Rather, they argue Bush was the forceful voice behind foreign policy decisions. Thus, individual level of analysis may explain some facets of U.S. opposition to Syria-Israel peace talks. This explanation hinges on three components of Bush’s governance: his foreign policy ideology, his influence over White House bureaucracy, and his view of the Constitutional role of the executive.

Foreign Policy Ideology

While he lacked nuance, Bush certainly held a foreign policy ideology of his own. Indeed, he often spoke in grandiosities, espousing broad goals (e.g. “world peace”), as if he could actually achieve these unrealistic objectives. Bush compensated for his lack of concrete policy knowledge by generalizing, what David Frum calls a “pragmatic vagueness.”⁵⁵ Particularly relevant to the Syria-Israel issue were Bush’s beliefs in a “God-given right to live in freedom” and an uncompromising hatred of tyrants.⁵⁶ This ideology could very well have led to his isolation of Syria, a state where Bashar al-Assad reigns as a tyrant, allowing no

freedom. Neoconservatism might have influenced Bush's ideology independently of his advisors. Therefore, Bush could have taken a primary role in the establishment of the policy.

Leadership Style

The extent to which Bush participated in the policy dialogue is critical in understanding Bush's leadership style. Importantly, both the president and his advisers generate White House policy. A number of accounts disagree with Suskind's view of Bush as a passive observer in policymaking. These accounts claim that Bush was decisive and eager to get something done as quickly as possible. Instead of making decisions based on intellectual analysis, he acted based on gut and conviction, always reluctant to abandon his ideals.⁵⁷ After having observed Bush's control of the White House, David Frum claims that he could "never take seriously the idea that someone else was running [the Administration]."⁵⁸ Bush led meetings, confronted subordinates, and was unafraid to speak his mind. According to Frum, that Bush's advisers had significant access and influence hardly means he was not the primary actor. Bush often overrode even Cheney, a powerful figure in the Administration.⁵⁹ Accepting Frum's view bolsters the theory that Bush was much more responsible for the Syria-Israel policy than his bureaucracy.

Vision of Executive Power

Can an individual president be solely responsible for policy? Under the U.S. Constitution, the executive and legislative branches are supposed to share the duty of policymaking. And while the president serving as the most powerful actor in U.S. foreign policy is not unprecedented, Bush's broad view of executive power served as a mechanism to turn his preferences into law. His use of "signing statements" demonstrates this point. These signing statements are written pronouncements that a president officially submits along with his signature on a piece of legislation when signing bills into law. His closing paragraph in the signing statement for the aforementioned Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003 is particularly telling:

My approval of the Act does not constitute my adoption of the various statements of policy in the Act as U.S. foreign policy. Given the Constitution's commitment to the Presidency of the authority to conduct the Nation's foreign affairs, the executive branch shall construe such policy statements as advisory, giving them the due weight that comity between the legislative and executive branches should require, to the extent consistent with U.S. foreign policy.⁶⁰

In other words, for Bush, an act of Congress is merely advisory; if he disagrees with the policy, he should feel free to ignore it. (Since the policy of opposition to Syria-Israel peace talks directly violates this Act, this ideology is not just theoretical.) Even though Bush is not the first president to use signing statements or ignore

Congress, the American Bar Association has claimed that Bush used these statements far more often and to a greater effect than his predecessors.⁶¹ His audacity in refusing to accept acts of Congress as law enabled his personal preference to become policy. For some presidents, an act of Congress would have been sufficient to cause a change in policy. However, for Bush, this was not enough.

Bush's personal ideology, his leadership style, and his view of executive power make a strong case that he had significant agency in the shaping of U.S. opposition to bilateral peace talks between Syria and Israel. Though it is difficult to reconcile these different accounts of Bush's role in the Administration, particularly those of Suskind and Frum, this disagreement creates a useful opportunity for discussion.

Holsti's "National Role Conception"

In modern international relations discourse, concepts like identity and national role have been moved from the abstract to actual concrete factors in the creation of foreign policy. Relevant to the Syria-Israel issue is Bush's broad, idealistic rhetoric concerning the U.S.'s role in the post-9/11 world. Thus, it is possible that Bush's framing of 9/11 led to a new "national role conception" that limited potential policy choices. As a result, continued isolation of Syria was the only option.

K.J. Holsti was highly influential in the advancement of national role conception (NRC) as an explanation for foreign policy. As Holsti puts it:

A NRC includes the policymakers' own definitions of the general kinds of decisions, commitments, rules and actions suitable to their state, and of the functions, if any, their state should perform on a continuing basis in the international system or in subordinate regional systems. It is their "image" of the appropriate orientations or functions of their state toward, or in, the external environment.⁶²

It is crucial that policymakers' own definitions of what their state should do dictates the conception of a national role. Lisbeth Aggestam relates the notion of "role" to theater: each actor must behave according to the script.⁶³ Policymakers, in effect, can edit the script or substitute elements if they choose, but their definitions of national role can limit the policy choices available to them. As Holsti continues, "The more these national role conceptions become part of the political culture of a nation, the more likely they set limits on perceived, or politically feasible policy alternatives..."⁶⁴ The argument, then, is that Bush's rhetoric changed the national role conception and thus severely limited his policy choices.

Upon examination of his rhetoric this explanation seems plausible. His

speeches were composed of not just descriptions of facts, but broad ideals and descriptions of a polarized world politics. Karl K. Schonberg describes Bush's characterization of the international system as one of a "morally and ideologically bifurcated world" where "on one side were the forces of peace, democracy, and civilization;" on the other, the forces of aggression, totalitarianism, and barbarism....⁶⁵ Bush himself described this latter category of states as "in despair and grow[ing] in hatred," and "recruiting grounds for terror ... that will stalk America and other free nations...."⁶⁶ And in such a world complacency is not an option. As Bush said himself in the 2004 State of the Union address:

America is a nation with a mission, and that mission comes from our most basic beliefs. We have no desire to dominate, no ambitions of empire. Our aim is a democratic peace—a peace founded upon the dignity and rights of every man and woman. America acts in this cause with friends and allies at our side, yet we understand our special calling: This great republic will lead the cause of freedom.... The cause we serve is right, because it is the cause of all mankind.⁶⁷

If Bush's view of America's "mission" to pursue a global democratic peace managed to gain credence, it could have potentially changed the national role conception. If that were the case, Bush would have to abandon policies that seemed to contradict that role. Since Syria's status as a rogue state and sponsor of terrorism would place them squarely in the category of the states that oppose the U.S. "mission," allowing negotiation with them would be contrary to U.S. goals and broader global ideals. If Bush managed to change the NRC, this would not be a viable policy option.

Once again, however, this view is undercut by Bush's support for U.S. talks with North Korea, a state that would certainly be on the list of states that actively oppose freedom. But perhaps the message and mission of democracy promotion present in Bush's rhetoric is meant to apply mostly to the Middle East, the central target for the War on Terror. If we accept that more limited national role conception the explanation remains plausible.

Democratic Politics and Public Opinion

The proper role of public opinion in the formation of foreign policy is one of the most fascinating questions in American politics. Especially in recent decades, scholars have viewed foreign policy as essentially immune from direct democratic accountability. Indeed, compared with other policy areas, foreign policy is "further removed from the daily experience of the citizen."⁶⁸ But is this necessarily a bad thing? Alexis de Tocqueville (quoted here by Kenneth Waltz) thought not:

Foreign politics demand scarcely any of those qualities which are peculiar to a

democracy; they require, on the contrary, the perfect use of almost all those in which it is deficient. . . . a democracy can only with great difficulty regulate the details of an important undertaking, persevere in a fixed design, and work out its execution in spite of serious obstacles. It cannot combine its measures with secrecy or await their consequences with patience.⁶⁹

Others, including Jeremy Bentham and James Mill, have argued on the contrary that public opinion is the greatest source of policy wisdom.⁷⁰ But perhaps more important than the theoretical question is the practical one: Does public opinion have an effect on foreign policy? If so, it is plausible that public support for the policy could have caused Bush Administration opposition to Syria-Israel peace talks.

It is often assumed that the official and symbolic role of the president puts foreign policy squarely in his sphere. (President Ronald Reagan's famous self-supplied line, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall," in front of the Berlin Wall comes to mind.) But some scholars have argued that the domestic political structure in the U.S. lends itself to public opinion having a legitimate impact on foreign policy. In a 1991 study of the foreign policy processes in the U.S., France, the Federal Republic of Germany, and Japan, Thomas Risse-Kaplan discusses in detail how public opinion shaped foreign policy. Though he is quick to cast aside the claim that foreign policy is completely grounded in public opinion—a "bottom-up" process—he also denies that it is entirely "top-down," or elite-centered.⁷¹ He uses three variables to determine the extent to which public opinion matters in foreign policy: the degree of centralization of political institutions; societal structure, particularly polarization, strength of social organization, and potential for mobilization; and the potential for coalition-building in the policy networks between state and society.⁷²

Interestingly, Risse-Kaplan finds that, in theory, "the comparatively open and decentralized American political system and its society-dominated policy network should provide public opinion with ample opportunity to affect policy outcomes."⁷³ This is borne out later in his analysis when he claims that public opinion left a "discernible mark on the decision-making process" of U.S. policy towards the Soviet Union in the 1980s.⁷⁴

Given Risse-Kaplan's claims of structural potential, it is reasonable to suggest that public opinion may have contributed to the Bush Administration's opposition to Syria-Israel peace talks. The attacks of September 11, 2001 brought the effects of foreign policy onto American shores as had not happened in decades. Suddenly, interactions with other states and non-state actors became more than an overseas drama with a negligible impact on the daily lives of U.S. citizens. Streets were lined with American flags, and "Bin Laden: Wanted Dead or Alive"

became an omnipresent phrase. Perhaps an unrelenting hatred of terrorism and its state sponsors, including Syria, led to a public opinion supporting the isolation of hostile and “rogue” states. Under public pressure, Bush may have had no choice but to oppose reinforcing the Syrian regime through peace talks. If a mobilized and concerned public exercised its potential for impacting foreign policy, Bush’s policy could certainly have been a result.

To evaluate this claim it is necessary to examine the public opinion surrounding the Syria–Israel issue. As far as I can tell there were no opinion polls taken about that issue in particular—not surprising, given the issue’s low profile in the American media—so the only option is to rely on similar or related questions. The closest-related policy question asked was whether the U.S. should engage Syria in dialogue, thereby ending attempts to marginalize Syria in the international community. On this matter, in a 2006 World Public Opinion poll, 75% of Americans supported dialogue with both Syria and Iran.⁷⁵ Public opinion, then, does not appear to have caused recent opposition to Syria–Israel peace talks—in fact, it proved powerless.

Conclusions

THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION PRESENTS A FASCINATING CASE FOR FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSTS. Strict ideologies, varied foreign policy experience, and forceful personalities in the upper echelon of government combined with perhaps the country’s most horrific international crisis to create a new conception of U.S. strategy and interests. Traditional peace turned from a definite foreign policy end to a potential hindrance, undermining broader national and global policy goals. The shift changed the meaning of American internationalism, and Bush’s opposition to Syria–Israel peace talks is a reflection of this shift.

The policies that resulted from such a complicated and unique situation cannot be explained simply. I hope that my analysis succeeds in suggesting the kinds of issues that may have affected the policy, as well as questioning popular assumptions (particularly the “Bush as a pawn” view). Though all of the potential explanations have weaknesses, a combination of the bureaucratic and individual levels is most convincing. Perhaps Bush was influenced by neoconservatism prior to assuming office and then fiercely acted on these principles. This audacious establishment of the unitary executive, also developed by his Cabinet, helped to turn ideals and a sense of moral clarity into policy. But once again, the mechanism by which ideologies and belief systems turn into policy is remain open to debate, and even within the Administration there are different impressions. Furthermore, the implications of Bush’s policy will take years to reach their full impact. New information may later emerge or be declassified that refutes the propositions

written here. The key point is that no single factor can adequately explain what happened.

Now that Bush has left office, it appears that policy towards Syria is shifting. Senior officials from the Obama Administration have already met with Syrian leaders, something that had not taken place since the Hariri assassination. More specifically, peace between Syria and Israel is one of Obama’s stated foreign policy goals.⁷⁶ But even if Bush’s foreign policy is a historical anomaly, it remains a useful case study for analysis.

Notes

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Echoes and Cycles of Faith in Coleridge's "Frost at Midnight"

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COLERIDGE'S "FROST AT MIDNIGHT" IS OFTEN CONSIDERED TO BE THE MOST COHESIVE and successful of the Conversation poems. Though ostensibly less dramatic than the potentially palinodic "Dejection: An Ode" that succeeds it, it represents, by Coleridge's own definition, the work of an artist who "has reached the summit of his art."¹ In its four verse paragraphs, the poem progresses smoothly from present to past to far future, deftly linking all three through recurrent images and phrases that convincingly weave—for the benefit of both the reader and Coleridge's son, to whom the last two verse paragraphs are addressed—birth, death, and life together in a single, harmonious poetic tapestry. Both lullaby and prayer, "Frost at Midnight" is a poem that relies upon the same sense of poetic failure that forms the primary conceit of "Dejection: An Ode" in order to draw out, in dim contrast to the latter and through a kind of holistic upgathering of seeming lack and impossibility, a sense of hope. Such hope resists becoming a Wordsworthian "faith so mild" though the application of Coleridge's peculiarly nocturnal touch, which blends warmth with cold, life with death, and sound with silence, and which emphasizes not the surety of perfect natural goodness but simply the unassuming promise of cyclical renewal.

The first thing one observes in reading "Frost at Midnight" is its insistence on highly localized repetition; that is, the way in which Coleridge will often use the same word or phrase twice within the space of several lines, or even within the same line. For example, in line 8, the word "calm" is repeated twice, and is thereby amplified: "'Tis calm indeed! so calm, that it disturbs...". Moving on to line 11, we encounter the phrase "Sea, and hill, and wood," which is a barely altered version of its incarnation in the previous line, "Sea, hill, and wood." In lines 15 and 16, the word "flutter" appears twice, first as "fluttered," then as "flutters," emphasizing a subtle shift from past to present; farther down, in line 27, it will appear again as "fluttering." At the beginning of the next verse paragraph,

the phrase "how oft" is repeated twice, separated by the break between lines 24 and 25, and is echoed again by its variation "as oft" in line 27. Line 29 describes Coleridge's "birth-place" as "sweet," in line 32, the church bells will ring "sweetly," and "sweet" will return in line 66 in Coleridge's address to his son Hartley. Skipping to the middle of the third verse paragraph, we find in line 56 the description "lake and sandy shores, beneath the crags/Of ancient mountain" which will be quickly followed in line 58 by the slightly changed "lakes and shores/And mountain crags." Finally, we discover in the poem's last three lines the same "secret ministry of frost" (73) that was at work in the very first line, as well as the beautiful (but evidently repetitive) closing line, "Quietly shining to the quiet Moon" (75).

Obviously, such unrelenting repetition is neither an accident nor a product of phrasal laziness, but an attempt to evoke a certain kind of poetic rhythm, which in turn creates a correspondent atmosphere that will feed, but not generate, the poem's underlying meaning. In this case, the poem's constant inner repetitions, or echoes, can be read—or better, heard—as verbal manifestations of the "Echo or mirror... of itself" (22) that "the idling Spirit/By its own moods interprets" (20-21) to be everywhere and in all things amid the silence of a solitary winter evening. On the page, we see how certain words or phrases in the poem become literal mirror images of themselves through repetition; in reading aloud, we hear how the repeated phrases are woven throughout the poem in a series of elegantly constructed echoes. On a similar note, it should be observed that several events in the poem, such as the crying of the owlet in line 2, occur twice ("The owlet's cry/Came loud—and hark, again! loud as before"), and that other occurrences, such as the flapping of the stranger at the grate, are deliberately linked to past occasions when the very same event occurred, thus too occurring "twice," though not in quick succession. Such doublings function as actual, rather than verbal, echoes. Our recognition of these manifold echoes should begin to reveal to us the primary object of poetic exploration in "Frost at Midnight"; that is, the perceived (or, arguably, manufactured) patterns, cycles, and repetitions that characterize, and more importantly, make meaningful, our remembered lives.

Keeping in mind the phenomenon of the echo as the most important thematic device in this poem, it is logical to next examine how the poem employs the dual concepts of sound and silence, or absence of sound, to set the semiotic stage. In the first verse paragraph, Coleridge tells us that "'Tis calm indeed! so calm, that it disturbs/And vexes meditation with its strange/And extreme silentness" (8-10). He goes on to say that "the numberless goings-on of life" taking place in the "populous village" are "inaudible as dreams" (13), and that the "film, which [flutters] on the grate/Still flutters there, the sole unquiet thing...in this hush of nature" (17). There are two important things to be noticed in these lines; first,

that the “hush of nature” (17) that has fallen over the cottage is not, in fact, a calm one. Though Coleridge calls it thus, he proceeds to contradict himself through clarification: the “strange and extreme silentness” (10) is restless and disturbing in its excess; in fact, the deepness of this silence actually jostles the “listener” from his “meditation” and evokes a feeling of unreality, of being outside oneself and removed from “all the numberless goings-on of life,” which have become “inaudible as dreams” The “numberless goings-on of life” are particularly striking in that their inaudibility seems to stem at least partly from the fact that they are “numberless”; unlike the silence, a surfeit of which actually causes motion (or disturbance) of a sort, the excess of the “goings-on of life” causes their presence to dissipate and fade into silence. More generally, it is important to note Coleridge’s use of a negative adjective (“numberless” – without number) to denote what is actually an abundance, thus playing provocatively with the potential similitude between infinity and nothingness, presence and absence, “there” and “not there,” as well as the unsettling possibility that both extremes can occur concurrently: a silence so absolute, for example, that it is heard—a literal, sensational paradox.

Before confronting the metaphysical implications of “the idling Spirit” finding “everywhere/Echo or mirror seeking of itself” (21-22), it is perhaps helpful, in order to discern the significance of the fluttering stranger that forms the poem’s primary image, to look ahead into verse paragraph two, in which Coleridge discusses two particular memories of his boyhood. Staring in what can be uncertainly described as a “reverie” at the trembling film of soot on the fire grate, the poet is transported mentally back in time to his childhood, recalling:

How oft, at school, with most believing mind
 Presageful, have I gazed upon the bars
 To watch that fluttering *stranger!* and as oft
 With unclosed lids, already had I dreamt
 Of my sweet birth-place, and the old church-tower,
 Whose bells, the poor man’s only music, rang
 From morn to evening, all the hot Fair-day,
 So sweetly, that they stirred and haunted me
 With a wild pleasure, falling on mine ear
 Most like articulate sounds of things to come! [25-34]

In this passage, we experience a memory wrapped within a memory, as well as a prophecy, or foretelling, embedded in those memories that can only be discerned by the light of “things to come” (things which have, by the point at which the poem begins, at last come to pass). The poet recalls being a schoolboy in possession of a “most believing mind,” which is clearly meant to refer primarily to his superstitious willingness to believe in the power of the stranger to predict the arrival of a long absent friend or acquaintance, such as a “townsman, or aunt, or sister more beloved” (43). However, the phrase “most believing mind” seems also to refer to a more general naïveté beyond this particular example of magi-

cal thinking: while “presageful” is most often used to mean “prescient,” it also contains the word “sage,” meaning “wise.” Thus “presageful” can be doubly read to mean “innocent” as well as “prophetic.” Still, the reader should detect a hint of cynicism in the phrase “most believing mind” that makes clear the poet’s eventual disillusionment—after all, though the youthful Coleridge never ceases to look hopefully up from his “swimming book” (39) (perhaps, indeed, the Bible), he never does see the “stranger’s face” (42). This disillusionment carries over to the “wild pleasure” the poet once felt on hearing the sound of the church bells, a spontaneous pleasure that has presumably since vanished and that can rightly be read as Coleridge’s urban version of Wordsworth’s similarly intoxicated frolicking through the British countryside in “Tintern Abbey.”

At this point, it is appropriate to examine the unifying image of the fluttering stranger, an image which, to the modern reader, is perhaps a strange one on which to fixate. If one researches the possible definitions of the word “stranger,” however, its metaphorical role begins to become more clear: alongside the OED definition of a stranger as “An unknown person; a person whom one has not seen before; also in wider sense, a person with whom one is not yet well acquainted,” as well as the usage seen here (“Any of the things which are popularly imagined to forebode the coming of an unexpected visitor, e.g. a floating tea-leaf in the cup; an excrescence on the wick of a candle, causing guttering; a piece of soot flapping on the bar of the grate; a moth flying towards one”), one additionally finds the following telling definition:

Said playfully of a newborn child. Usu. *little stranger*. ‘Welcome, little stranger!’ was a quotation common in the early part of the 19th century, and sometimes printed or embroidered on articles for nursery use.

We can see from this definition as well as from Coleridge’s later description of Hartley’s “gentle breathings, heard in this deep calm” (46) that mimic (or echo) the breathy fluttering of the stranger on the grate (whose “motion in this hush of nature/Gives it dim sympathies with [those] who live” (17-18)) that a parallel is being drawn between the “cradled infant” and the fragile piece of soot generated by the poet’s dying fire. To push the metaphor further, the stranger is a byproduct created by the fire’s consumption of fuel, resulting from the slow release and loss of previously stored and concentrated energy; in order for it to exist, the fire must indeed be “low-burnt.” If we see, as Coleridge seems to want us to, Hartley as the stranger, then the poet-father himself must be the dying flame: as is the case with every parent and child, one breathes and grows as the life of the other begins to wane. Thus does Coleridge’s “idling Spirit” seek and find in the image of the stranger on the grate both a mirroring of his relationship with his infant son and yet another prediction: while the stranger’s presence previously foretold Hartley’s birth, it now seems as though the “unexpected visitor” it

portends can only be Death—the ultimate “unknown person... whom one has not seen before.”

In light of the self-sacrificial implications of the first two verse paragraphs, Coleridge’s direct address to Hartley in the third verse paragraph strikes us as all the more poignant:

Dear Babe, that sleepest cradled by my side,
Whose gentle breathings, heard in this deep calm,
Fill up the interspersed vacancies
And momentary pauses of the thought!
My babe so beautiful! it thrills my heart
With tender gladness, thus to look at thee,
And think that thou shalt learn far other lore
And in far other scenes! For I was reared
In the great city, pent ‘mid cloisters dim,
And saw nought lovely but the sky and stars.
But thou, my babe! shalt wander like a breeze
By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags
Of ancient mountain, and beneath the clouds,
Which image in their bulk both lakes and shores
And mountain crags: so shalt thou see and hear
The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
Of that eternal language, which thy God
Utters, who from eternity doth teach
Himself in all, and all things in himself.
Great universal Teacher! he shall mould
Thy spirit, and by giving make it ask. [45-65]

While in the first verse paragraph, Hartley’s “gentle breathings” (46) were muted so that the stranger was “the sole unquiet thing” (16), Coleridge here turns up the volume on his son’s presence, telling us that the infant’s quiet intake of breath “Fill[s] up the interspersed vacancies/And momentary pauses of the thought!” (47-48) These “vacancies” can be read both as “pauses of the thought” and as broader “vacancies” within Coleridge’s own life. As he once wrote in one of his letters, “I feel, with an intensity unfathomable by words, my utter nothingness, impotence, & worthlessness, in and for myself” (*The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* as qu. by Greene, 911); again, like many parents, he seems to want to vicariously fill those instances in his life that seem lacking with the bright promise of Hartley’s future, a substitution that is hopeful to the point of being heartbreaking.

Coleridge contrasts his own childhood, which was spent “in the great city, pent ‘mid cloisters dim” (53) with what he imagines Hartley’s will be like, which, oddly, resembles nothing so much as Wordsworth’s. He imagines that if Hartley is able to “wander like a breeze/By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags/Of ancient mountain” (55-57), he will be able to discern “The lovely

shapes and sounds intelligible/Of that eternal language, which thy God/Utters” (60-62), and which, presumably, represents that eternal language that Coleridge was never able to learn from the “stern preceptor” and only briefly glimpsed in the tolling of the church bells. Clearly, while Coleridge is (debatably) the most traditionally religious of the Romantic poets, he is also a firm believer in Wordsworth’s assertion in “The Tables Turned” that:

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can. [21-24]

While Coleridge as a child “saw nought lovely but the sky and stars” (54), and thus saw only the reflections (or echoes) of “lakes and shores/And mountain crags” (58-59) that he sees as being “image[d] in the bulk” (58) of clouds, Hartley, he believes, will be able to experience not only these facsimiles, but the truth implicit in original Nature, the actual “lakes,” “sandy shores,” and “ancient mountain[s]” (56-57). He will hear God’s voice not mediated through church bells or through Bible leaves (or other “swimming books”) but directly, it seems, from its source: Coleridge takes comfort and is thankful that his “babe so beautiful” will not, like him, be content with echoes.

The final verse paragraph represents a continuation of this hope—or perhaps more accurately, prayer—and a return to the images of the poem’s first verse paragraph:

Therefore all seasons shall be sweet to thee,
Whether the summer clothe the general earth
With greenness, or the redbreast sit and sing
Betwixt the tufts of snow on the bare branch
Of mossy apple-tree, while the nigh thatch
Smokes in the sun-thaw; whether the eave-drops fall
Heard only in the trances of the blast
Or if the secret ministry of frost
Shall hang them up in silent icicles.
Quietly shining to the quiet Moon. [66-75]

Coleridge again asserts the instructive gentleness of Nature—an assertion that Wordsworth will later appropriate as the line “Nature never did betray/The heart that loved her” in “Tintern Abbey”—a gentleness he sees as persisting despite the ravages of life’s literal and figurative winters and which is epitomized by the image of “the redbreast” that still “sit[s] and sing[s]” “Betwixt the tufts of snow on the bare branch” (68-69). Meanwhile, the frost from the first lines of verse paragraph 1 returns to “Hang...up in silent icicles” (74) those “eave-drops” (71) that result from the melting “sun-thaw” (71), so that winter’s chill is presented as a

reparative force, rather than in its more traditional incarnation as a negative, life-taking force.

It is this eponymous frost, in fact, that represents most succinctly Coleridge's strangely sweet interpretation of mortality and death as explicated in "Frost at Midnight." Although frost is well-known as an occurrence that kills, it is also one that is often presented as artful: literature is rife with metaphors that ascribe artistic agency to frost so that it "paints" icy pictures on windows and so on; the phenomenon has even been personified in the English folkloric figure of Jack Frost. Such metaphors seem to lend themselves to a comparison with the poet himself; aligned, it seems, with the "secret ministry of frost," Coleridge, through poetry, crystallizes and makes beautiful in the still of midnight those patterns he discerns in the dewy, uncertain recesses of his past. Still he perceives the impermanence and fragility of his endeavor; the fire is but a "thin blue flame" and will soon fall into dissipating smoke and nothingness. Yet Coleridge is convinced of Nature's regenerative cycles and its capacity to balance death with life, a capacity he sees mirrored—or reflected—in the wax and wane of his son's and his own life, respectively, as well as in the continual freezing and thawing of icicles, in the encroachment and recession of frost across a nighttime landscape, and in the ever-shifting, ever-returning phases of the "quiet Moon." Ultimately, the poem does not make promises it cannot keep. Coleridge does not promise his son eternal happiness—it is the *seasons*, not the years, that shall be sweet—nor does he evade the intractability of death. Tellingly, he assures his son that God "shall mould/Thy spirit, and by giving make it *ask*" (64-65, my italics). It is this asking, which implies a state of perennial, unfulfilled want, regardless of circumstance, that Coleridge admits, accepts, and even prays for as being good, right, natural, and divine; it is this acceptance of the unceasing interchange between giving and asking—echoed everywhere in Nature—that generates at last the poem's bitter-sweet and patient optimism.

Endnotes

1. "... and the musician has reached the summit of his art, when having thus modified the present with the past, he at the same time weds the past in the present to some prepared and corresponsive future. The auditors thoughts and feelings move under the same influence: retrospection blends with anticipation, and hope and memory (a Female Janus) becomes one power with a double aspect." (*The Philosophical Lectures of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, as qu. by Gilpin, 645)

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Image, Text, and the Barthesian Haiku

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Author's note: This essay is concerned with just a tiny sampling of the work of the literary and cultural critic and semiotician Roland Barthes. Most famous for his literary criticism, Barthes also wrote about many other aspects of culture, including advertising images and fashion magazines. He was at the forefront of the major intellectual movements of structuralism, semiotics and poststructuralism. In the diversity of its subject matter and in its attention to the ways in which cultural products make and establish meaning, Barthes' work is crucial to our contemporary understanding of the field of cultural studies.

Roland Barthes' writings on photography stand in an odd relationship to his literary criticism. In one sense, we might read the critic's progression from such rigorously analytical early works as "Rhetoric of the Image" (1964) through to the deeply personal "reflections on photography" of *Camera Lucida* (1980) as complementary to the progression of his writings on literature, from theoretically engaged texts such as *On Racine* (1963) to the blissful withdrawal of *The Pleasure of the Text* (1973). Yet photography and writing are almost never complementary for Barthes; when he writes of the relationship between the two forms, photography is privileged precisely for its capacity to do something that writing assuredly cannot do. Writing, for Barthes, whether "literary" or otherwise, can always be coded—can always be fixed to a meaning or "systems of meaning." (S/Z, 6) Photography, however, holds the capacity to exceed meaning, to transmit its "message" and affect the viewer through means that can neither be coded nor defined. This distinction between writing as *codable* and photography as *excessive* is one which, in different formulations, subsists from the earlier through to the final works.

We can see this distinction at its clearest when Barthes writes of the direct relationship between photograph and text, as in his analysis of an advertisement (consisting of a photograph and some writing) in "Rhetoric of the Image."

[The text is] intended to *fix* the floating chain of signifieds in such a way as to counter the terror of uncertain signs... the text *directs* the reader through the signifieds of the image, causing him to avoid some and receive others; by means of an often subtle *dispatching*, it remote-controls

him towards a meaning chosen in advance... The text has a *repressive* value." (Barthes 1977, 39-40)

The opposition between the unfixed, "floating" capacity of the image and the directional, controlled and controlling nature of the text could not be plainer. It is an opposition Barthes will rearticulate differently in *Camera Lucida* when he writes, "the Photograph is pure contingency and can be nothing else (it is always *something* that is represented)—contrary to the text which, by the sudden action of a single word, can shift a sentence from description to reflection." (Barthes 1981, 28) In this articulation, the distinction between photograph and text is framed in quite different terms, so different that this distinction seems almost the *opposite* of that made in "Rhetoric of the Image": here, the photograph is fixed, tied to something definite (that "*something* that is represented") while the text has the capacity to "shift," to move free of any fixed relation to a referent. Yet, despite this inversion of the place of the referent, the place of *meaning* remains the same between these two articulations of the image-text distinction: in both cases, the text is seen to fix meaning, while the photograph *exceeds* it.

In the definition Barthes gives in *Camera Lucida*, even as the photograph is said to be fixed to its referent,ⁱ this does not fix the meaning of the image: indeed, it is the very fact that the photograph has this fixed referent, this irreducible something, which enables it to exceed the meaning to which the text must always submit. The photograph, in itself, does not *mean*, rather it refers: it is *just an image*, an image of something or someone. Meaning must be ascribed to it, either by an accompanying text or by a photographer who uses his manipulative skill to "counter the terror of uncertain signs." The text, on the other hand, even as it is free to "shift" without being tied to its referent(s), can only shift within and between different codified meanings; "the sudden action of a single word" can shift the meaning of a sentence, but this capacity for "shifting,"—moving from one meaning or system of meaning to another—serves only as a reminder of the inescapability of meaning itself, a reminder that the text can always be coded. The text pushes the critic toward new forms of interpretation, to more and more ways of "coding," whereas the photograph, in its excess of meaning, scandalizes the very project of criticism.ⁱⁱ

Now that we have seen this distinction mapped out in its clearest form in two of Barthes' major works on photography, I want to turn to a place in Barthes' work where this distinction briefly ceases, where photography and writing are thought of not in opposition but in their similarity. This is the place of the haiku. The haiku, for Barthes, has almost the opposite function of other forms of written language. Instead of fixing or *repressing* the 'uncodability' of the photograph, the haiku, when Barthes has recourse to it, serves as a kind of *metaphor* for the photographic image, as a way of attempting to explicate the very indefinable

yet undeniable *presence* of the image, its refusal to submit to codes. The haiku, Barthes suggests, enacts a similar refusal. In "The Third Meaning" (1970), when writing of this excessive quality of the image, he asserts, "If it could be described (a contradiction in terms), it would have exactly the nature of the Japanese *haiku*—anaphoric gesture without significant content, a sort of gash rased of meaning (of desire for meaning)." (Barthes 1977, 62)

The haiku is introduced here in a very strange place indeed. Immediately after telling us that this excessive quality of the image (identified in this essay as "the obtuse meaning") cannot be described (a description would be "a contradiction in terms"), Barthes tells us "exactly" what this impossible description would look like—it would "have exactly the nature of" the haiku. The haiku is here quite explicitly given the task of doing the impossible: to describe the indescribable, to provide a caption to the image that does not delimit its multiplicity or fix "the terror of uncertain signs" to a definite signified. "The haiku" has a capacity that other forms of writing lack: to be *like an image*, to achieve a *presence* that exceeds meaning. Yet this capacity is always linked to impossibility, and to fantasy—the fantasy of a writing that cannot be coded, that can be analyzed neither by the Barthes of "structural analysis" nor he of "textual analysis." Like the photograph, the haiku is an attack upon the very idea of progress, of "development," and hence an attack upon the narrative with which this paper began, the narrative of Barthes the 'developing critic,' moving from "work" to "text," from structuralism to post-structuralism, from the cultural to the personal.ⁱⁱⁱ We are now getting closer to the significance of the haiku for Barthes, of its function within and upon his critical project.

Reading further into *Camera Lucida*, we come across a further invocation of the haiku: "We say "to develop a photograph"; but what the chemical action develops is undevelopable, an essence, what cannot be transformed. This brings the Photograph close to the Haiku. For the notation of a haiku, too, is undevelopable: everything is given, without provoking the desire for or even the possibility of a rhetorical expansion. In both cases we might (we must) speak of an *intense immobility*." (Barthes 1982, 49) When the haiku returns as a point of comparison with the photograph here in *Camera Lucida*, it performs a specific attack upon the notion of "development". The haiku denies the critic his analytical function, one of "developing" and "rhetorically expanding" upon the object of analysis. The haiku is permitted all those qualities denied to other forms of writing: immobility, 'undevelopability', emptiness; qualities otherwise only ascribed to the photograph.

The haiku allows Barthes to consider a form of writing that does not submit to the codes, the meanings to which all other texts fall prey. Yet, as we saw in the above passage from "The Third Meaning," the haiku's freedom from codes

is tied to the impossible, to fantasy. The haiku Barthes imagines is exactly that: imaginary. Hence, it is not altogether *like* the photograph, which may be studied at the empirical level and yet maintain its excess, its scandal, in spite of the interpreter's effort to mollify this excess. In these passages from the different texts quoted above, Barthes writes occasionally of "the Photograph" as a generality, and occasionally of particular photographs; however he only speaks of "the Haiku," never of particular haiku. When, at other moments in his work, Barthes does resort to certain haiku in their particularity, his fantasy (and hence the haiku's relation to the photograph) begins to disintegrate, for *these* haiku become textual objects, the very thing Barthes imagines "*the haiku*" not to be. We may consider his attempts to read and write haiku in *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments* (1977), beginning with the following (uncited) quotation of a 'real' Japanese haiku:

The full moon this fall,
All night long
I have paced around the pond.

No indirect means could be more effective in the expression of sadness than that "all night long." What if I were to try it, myself?

This summer morning, the bay sparkling,
I went outside
To pick a wistaria.

...
On the one hand, this is saying nothing; on the other, it is saying too much: impossible to adjust. My expressive needs oscillate between the mild little haiku summarizing a huge situation, and a great flood of banalities. I am both too big and too weak for writing; I am alongside it, for writing is always dense, violent, indifferent to the infantile ego which solicits it. (*A Lover's Discourse*, 97-98)

Beginning here with a haiku apparently perfect in its expression, Barthes decides, in response, *to try it himself*:^{iv} He does so, twice (I have here quoted only the first of these two attempts), before bemoaning his failure. Barthes, trapped in his Western mind, his "infantile ego," cannot achieve the simplicity, the undevelopability of the true haiku. Yet, in quoting and (however briefly) *describing* this 'true' haiku, Barthes inevitably leads it to fall prey to meaning: "No indirect means could be more effective in the expression of sadness than that "all night long."" In isolating this particular part of the text, Barthes begins to dissect, to codify this haiku. Why is *that* part the most significant, why is it *that* which expresses sadness? Such questions being opened up here, we return to the game of criticism, of meaning. The haiku now is reduced to the level of writing, of text; separated from the fantasy of "*the haiku*," this individual haiku reveals the limit of the photograph-haiku metaphor, a metaphor which stands up only so long as one speaks of the haiku in its

capacity, of the possible haiku, and never in terms of its specificity, of *this* or *that* haiku.

To observe this, however, is not to diminish the significance of the haiku for Barthes, or of the lasting value of the comparison he makes between the haiku and the photograph. In imagining a kind of writing that could exceed all of the codes and all of the meanings that plague the text, Barthes was able to move just close enough to describing that very indescribable quality of the photograph so as to make that indescribability manifest: the only form of writing that can perform this work is an imaginary, an invisible kind. Barthes once wrote that the haiku held "only a flash, a slash of light," much like a photograph. "But," he continued, "the haiku's flash illumines, reveals nothing; it is the flash of a photograph one takes very carefully... but having neglected to load the camera with film." (*Empire of Signs*, 83) The photograph-haiku metaphor has helped us to posit the excess of the photograph, to take description as far as it can go, up to the point where it announces its inability to go further. But when the metaphor is reversed, we see its limit, we quite clearly see the contrast between the two forms: the photograph is more than just a "flash," more than a *presence*. It is also recorded, lasting, tactile, actual (for here we have remembered to load the camera with film) and ultimately more *excessive* than the haiku. To exceed meaning, to truly rock the foundations of criticism, more is needed than the blind flash of the haiku. Unlike that of the haiku, the photograph's flash reveals something, that something being its referent. Its *excess* lies in its capacity to both point to a definite, fixed referent, and yet not to be definitively held to any signifieds. Such is the duality of the photograph for Barthes, a duality that exceeds what any form of writing, even the haiku, is capable of.

Endnotes

- i In a similar vein to the passage quoted above, Barthes writes on pages 5-6 of *Camera Lucida*: "It is as if the Photograph always carries its referent with itself, both affected by the same amorous or funereal immobility, at the very heart of the moving world: they are glued together, limb by limb."
- ii This is of course not to suggest that the manner of analyzing texts outlined and performed by Barthes in *S/Z* and "Textual Analysis of a Tale by Edgar Allen Poe" is not radically and importantly different from his earlier, "structural analysis" of texts, or from other, more traditional modes of literary criticism. It is however intended to suggest that photography provides a different challenge to Barthes' critical project than does writing, a challenge that disturbed and thrilled Barthes throughout his career.
- iii For a representative instance of this account of the Barthesian narrative, see 116-123 in Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983). See also Barthes' "From Work to Text," in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley / Los Angeles: University of California Press), 56-64.
- iv For simplicity's sake I refer here to the "I" of *A Lover's Discourse* as "Barthes," though this assignation is not unproblematic.

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Turning Turk

Mind, Body, and Performance in *Othello*

David Thorstad '12

Abstract: Shakespeare's *Othello* documents the struggle of its titular character – a Moorish general living in Venice – to define his identity. Venetian society attempts to reduce the general to an irrational, foreign body, while Othello himself stresses the rational, cultured conduct that marks him as a Venetian. The problem of Othello's identity persists throughout his marriage to Desdemona and comes to a head as he strangles her, seemingly demonstrating his emotional volatility in acting so hastily upon rumors of Desdemona's infidelity. As a group of Venetian dignitaries orders Othello's arrest, he delivers a remorseful soliloquy to explain his actions, in the process providing one of the play's clearest treatments of the question of Othello's identity. This paper investigates the theme of Othello's identity through a close reading of his last soliloquy, finding within it an account that successfully challenges Venetian society's conception of Othello's identity without advancing a persuasive alternative of its own.

IN HIS FINAL SOLILOQUY, OTHELLO ASKS THE CROWD ASSEMBLED IN HIS BEDROOM TO REMEMBER him by writing:

Of one that loved not wisely, but too well;
 Of one not easily jealous, but being wrought,
 Perplexed in the extreme; of one whose hand,
 Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away
 Richer than all his tribe; of one whose subdued eyes,
 Albeit unused to the melting mood,
 Drops tears as fast as the Arabian trees
 Their medicinable gum. Set you down this;
 And say besides that in Aleppo once,
 Where a malignant and a turbaned Turk
 Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,
 I took by th' throat the circumcised dog
 And smote him – thus.¹

With these words, Othello stabs himself. In his speech, Othello broaches

the theme of his own identity, describing himself first as “one,” a unified whole, then breaking himself into two parts: a “Turk” and a “Venetian,” symbolic of the contradiction he embodies as a Moor in Venice. As Othello's “Turk” and “Venetian” identities begin to take shape, dichotomies emerge between reason and emotion, mind and body, foreigner and Venetian. This paper argues that these oppositions result from Othello's attempt to explain his dual status as Moor and Venetian by arguing within a distinction between his irrational, ‘Turkish’ body, and his rational, ‘Venetian’ mind. As Othello's self-depiction comes into conflict with society's narrative of Othello's identity, both Othello's account of himself and society's beliefs about Othello begin to crumble.

In Othello's first self-depiction, characterized by the pronoun “one,” a dichotomy emerges between reason and emotion. The binary opposition between reason and emotion is established by the first two lines: Othello could have loved “wisely,” but instead loved passionately, or “too well”; Othello is not normally “jealous,” but has been “wrought” up and “perplexed,” made to act emotionally in spite of his generally rational nature. Throughout this account, a rational Othello is overwhelmed by unfamiliar emotions. Although he is “unused to the melting mood,” now it seizes hold of him, and his eyes “dro[p] tears as fast as the Arabian trees/ their medicinable gum.” Having been “perplexed” by emotion, Othello “thr[ows] a pearl away” whose value a reasoning Othello had understood. This emotional behavior is associated with Othello's eastern origins through the “Arabian” character of his tears and the comparison of his pearl-throwing hand with a “base Indian.” In this account of Othello's identity, his reason has been overcome by emotions that are linked to his eastern birth.

Othello also associates his irrational, emotional behavior with his “base” body. It was his “hand,” that, “like the base Indian, threw a pearl away” by killing Desdemona. In comparing the hand to an Indian, rather than to an Indian's hand, Othello breaks the parallelism, drawing attention to the metonymical description of his hand. This depiction of Othello's hand treats the hand like an autonomous individual that is capable of taking emotional actions of its own accord. Othello uses a similar strategy in placing his tears in his eyes, speaking “of one whose subdued eyes/ Albeit unused to the melting mood, drops tears.” By using the verb “drops” rather than ‘drop,’ Othello shifts the subject from his eyes to himself, implying that his eyes have caused the individual Othello to cry, behaving emotionally and of their own initiative. The corporeal roots of Othello's emotional behavior are further reinforced by the physical imagery of being “wrought,” through which the arousal of Othello's emotions is likened to the work of a smith's hammer, or the stirring up of the sea, both violent physical changes acting upon Othello's body. With this imagery, Othello places the origin of his emotions in his base, irrational body, which acts emotionally without direction from his rational mind.

Recognizing these emerging dichotomies between mind and body, reason and emotion, Venetian and foreigner, Othello breaks himself into two parts: an irrational, Turkish body and a rational, Venetian mind. The "Turk" is corporeal – described in terms of his "turbaned" and "circumcised" physical appearance – while the "Venetian" is incorporeal: his body is never described. The Turk is irrational, a "malignant" who cannot understand true religion, in contrast to the Venetian, who proves his rationality by enforcing justice upon the lawbreaking, irrational Turk. The Turk is foreign to Venice, residing "in Aleppo," but the Venetian is a native of Venice who finds himself temporarily in the east. Having depicted his body as an irrational Turk and his mind as a rational Venetian, Othello acts out the role of the Venetian, relating how "I took by th' throat the circumcised dog/ And smote him – thus," in the process grabbing his own throat and stabbing himself. Through this act Othello performs the Venetian mind's rejection of the Turkish body, thereby associating himself with the Venetian.

The performative character of Othello's suicide calls attention to the performative role of the entire soliloquy, in which Othello seeks through his actions to demonstrate the nature of his identity to an audience. Othello's "tears" and gestures with his "hand" in the earlier part of the passage are actions meant to reveal Othello's identity to the onlookers every bit as much as his suicide. The motivation for Othello's performance is revealed by his focus on the act of writing, as he entreats the audience, "set you down this/ and say besides that in Aleppo once...," making clear his desire to see his story recorded. This emphasis on writing reveals Othello's understanding that his identity has been written upon him by society, which through its words creates the contradiction between Turk and Venetian and inscribes it on Othello, labeling him the 'Moor of Venice'. Through his performance, Othello accepts society's authority to write down his identity, as well as the dichotomy between Turk and Venetian, seeking to demonstrate through his actions that he is more Venetian than Turk so that he will be written about as a Venetian. Thus, Othello argues that anyone who wishes to "speak of me as I am...must speak" of the character Othello portrays as himself, who begins to increasingly resemble the Venetian Othello (V, ii, 341-2). The implicit demand is for society to validate Othello's Venetian identity by writing of him in their "letters" as the Venetian whose role he plays (V, ii, 339).

In the silence that follows, the onlookers refuse to validate Othello's performance as an accurate representation of his identity. Othello's act ends on a half-line, unresolved: "And smote him – thus," leaving an unexpected silence that is only gradually interrupted by interjections from Lodovico and Gratiano on the next line (V, ii, 355). This silence emphasizes the absence of the anticipated acceptance and transcription of Othello's account. Far from writing down Othello's

words, Lodovico and Gratiano stress their refusal to write by punning on the period that would end a written account of Othello's suicide²: "O bloody period," cries Lodovico; "All that's spoke," Gratiano replies, "is marred" (V, ii, 355). To the onlookers, the "bloody" termination of Othello's performance shows that his account is "marred" and inaccurate; its horrific period proves that to write the period which seals Othello's account as the final word on his identity would be a mistake. To this end, the audience never again mentions Othello's identity, refusing through their silence to verify Othello's claim that he has become a Venetian.

If this performance were Othello's only attempt to recast his own identity, his efforts would be unsuccessful due to his failure to persuade his audience to rewrite his identity based on the performance. But Othello adopts two more arguments throughout the soliloquy to challenge society's construction of his identity. First, he problematizes the mind-body dichotomy between Venetian and Turk by referring to the Turkish Othello as "a malignant and a turbaned Turk." The word 'malignant' functions here as a noun,³ implying that Othello is speaking about two different people, but he clarifies that he is speaking only about one person by referring to the malignant and turbaned attacker in the singular, as a "circumcised dog." The most plausible explanation for Othello's strange speech is that he is speaking about two different aspects of the same person – dividing his religious 'malignancy' from the 'turbaned Turk' whose garb advertises his religion. Othello's argument is that his 'malignancy' is not produced by his body, or else it would be redundant to separate his malignancy from his turbaned physical appearance. If Othello's irrational malignancy is not rooted solely in his body, then it becomes problematic to distinguish between an irrational Turkish body and a rational Venetian mind, since Othello's malignancy is not confined to the Turk. The mind-body divide continues to crumble when Othello uses his sword to stab the Venetian body, performing the role of the Venetian mind not through his mind, but through his Turkish body. By challenging the binary nature of the mind-body divide, Othello rejects society's account of his identity as Turk and Moor, but Othello's argument is somewhat damaged by the scant time he spends developing it, and by his failure to provide an alternative conception of his identity.

Othello also seems to challenge society's authority to determine his identity by dictating what the observers should write about him. Othello's two invitations to write are not requests, but commands: "set you down this," he intones, and earlier "then you must speak," removing all illusion of choice with the word 'must' (V, ii, 342) With these demands Othello claims the authority to tell his own story, to have this story written and thus authenticated. Othello's claim is clearly damaged by the observers' refusal to write down his words, which preserves their account of the Moor of Venice unchallenged. But the irony is that Othello's account does survive, as Shakespeare's audience watches Othello deliver the final words

on the problem of his own identity. While Othello's account is hardly a radical rejection of society's tale, his insistence on the validity of his performance imbues the silence that follows with an air of defiance, as Othello's challenge suggests to the theater audience that his words do not require the written confirmation that the onstage audience refuses to give. Through this bold move, Othello succeeds in winning some degree of attention for his self-depiction, despite its rejection by society.

Seen this way, the silence that follows Othello's suicide is not the end to the question of Othello's identity; on the contrary, it is almost a beginning. In one important sense, society succeeds in upholding their account of the persistent contradiction between Othello as Turk and Venetian by refusing to validate Othello's rejection of the Turk. Yet questions remain – whether Othello's identity can be neatly divided into Turk and Moor, and whether society has any right to do so. The silence provides a space for reflection, in which the audience must grapple with Othello's account and decide for themselves the issue of Othello's identity. That Othello provides no alternative to the binary distinction between Venetian and Turk only serves to generate more questions for those unwilling to believe either society's account of Othello as Turk and Moor, or Othello's performed excision of the Turk. For many listeners, the silence bears witness both to the failure of society's attempts to define Othello, and of Othello's attempts to define himself.

Endnotes

1 Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. Michael Neill (NY: Oxford, 2006), V, ii, 343-54.

2 fn, 397.

3 fn, 396.

Empowered Yet Limited: Woman as the Subject and Object of Exchange in Query and Funari's *Live Nude Girls Unite!*

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GAYLE RUBIN'S "THE TRAFFIC IN WOMEN" AND JULIA QUERY AND VICKY FUNARI'S *Live Nude Girls Unite!* are two seemingly opposite works that examine the exchange of women. "The Traffic in Women" is a theoretical and historical grounding of the commodification of women, whereas *Live Nude Girls Unite!* is a modern documentary that closely follows exotic dancers at San Francisco's Lusty Lady in their struggle for sex workers' rights. By using Rubin's essay as a theoretical foundation on which to build an analysis of the Lusty Lady's exotic dancers, one can examine whether or not sex work empowers women through a new lens. Sex work can be empowering under specific conditions that allow women to maintain agency over their actions, even if they must present themselves as objects to customers; however, in so doing, they perpetuate the image of woman as a sex object and thus remain limited by a societal system dictated by male desire.

Rubin's "The Traffic in Women" describes the system of exchange through which men control women. Rubin maintains that "The asymmetry of gender—the difference between exchanger and exchanged—entails the constraint of female sexuality" (183). The oppressive nature of the exchange of women is rooted in the gender difference between the subject and object of exchange; men are the sexual subjects of exchange and exercise control over women, who are the sexual objects of exchange. Women lose control over their own bodies and suffer because of the limited ways in which they can act and express themselves; sex work is one of the many ways in which men transact women. Within Rubin's framework, women cannot be empowered because they cannot truly speak or act for themselves when men exchange them.

On the other hand, Rubin's analysis does not account for the choices wom-

en make when they enter the sex work industry. Though men may often maintain control of the exchange of women within the sex industry, some women choose to enter the sex work industry of their own accord and thus exchange themselves as objects. The distinction that Rubin describes between the subject and object of exchange disappears when women choose to sell their own sexuality as their livelihood. Rubin does not necessarily account for the ways in which this new framework might give women more control and allow sex work to become empowering rather than oppressive.

The presupposition that sex work empowers women if they *choose* to work in the sex industry may be an oversimplification, though. The women who choose to become dancers at the Lusty Lady are quick to realize that good working conditions are necessary for sex work to be empowering. In other words, sex work can empower women only if working conditions allow them to transcend the problematic exchange Rubin discusses – to thus remain active subjects making choices, as opposed to passive objects being exchanged.

Most of the dancers on whom the film focuses explicitly state their belief that sex work can be empowering under the right circumstances. Julia Query, the feminist scholar and exotic dancer who wrote, directed, and starred in the film, states that sex work should be just that – work. Sex workers shouldn't be degraded just because of the industry in which they choose to work. Another dancer, Naomi, specifically states that exotic dancers are not exploited simply because they are exotic dancers; they are exploited because of poor working conditions and bad management. As she puts it, "selling pussy" doesn't have to be oppressive (*Live Nude Girls Unite!*). Tara states that, though she is in the sex industry for profit, she thinks her job has a healthy "life force" and considers herself to be providing an important spiritual service to her customers (*Live Nude Girls Unite!*); she gets more out of her work than just money. Decadence, who works part-time as a social worker and part-time at the Lusty Lady, states that through sex work she has found a way to "use sexuality and feminine power in a way that [makes her] feel good and [profits her]" (*Live Nude Girls Unite!*). For these women, sex work is empowering.

One brief cartoon that appears in *Live Nude Girls Unite!* further reinforces the film's message that sex work can be empowering. The cartoon flashes back and forth between the stereotypical feminist, who is wearing a tee-shirt with the woman symbol on it and burning her bra over a campfire, and the exotic dancer, who is wearing no shirt at all and holding her bra out over the edge of the stage as she dances for a male audience. At first these two images are seemingly at odds with one another; the feminist is defying the typical image of the sexual object while the dancer seems to be reinforcing it. Yet the visual similarity between these two figures emphasizes the similarity between their feminist struggles; women don't

have to be bra-burning activists to fight for their rights as subjects and empower themselves. Coupled with the dancers' attitudes towards the sex industry, this cartoon aids in demonstrating that, within *Live Nude Girls Unite!*, exotic dancing can still be empowering in the feminist sense as long as sex workers can maintain themselves as subjects.

Yet just because these women believe in the possibility of empowerment doesn't necessarily mean that they initially find it at the Lusty Lady. These women, many of whom have college degrees in philosophy or women's studies, have chosen to work at the Lusty Lady in particular because it is both lucrative and supposedly the "hip, feminist peep show in town" that doesn't degrade women (*Live Nude Girls Unite!*). Though they seek out the Lusty Lady because of its supposedly good working conditions, they soon discover that it is far from perfect. The dancers' initial complaints about their working conditions (that eventually drive them to unionize) show how important it is to them to be treated as subjects and employees, even though they must look and act like sex objects for male customers. Since empowerment depends upon the woman's ability to maintain herself as the subject, it makes sense that the practices most upsetting to the Lusty Lady dancers were those that shifted control away from them to the management.

The management seeks overwhelming control over workers' choices and bodies, infringing upon the very agency that can make sex work a liberating profession for women. In some instances, the management pressures the workers to go further sexually than their job descriptions initially entailed, undermining basic workers' rights and treating the dancers as sex objects to be controlled rather than as employees who should be allowed to make their own decisions. Women who work as dancers with no customer contact are sometimes told that it would be okay if the customers touched their breasts; or they are urged to give lap dances when they do not want to. Furthermore, stage dancers must pay stage fees – fees to remain only on the stage and avoid more contact-heavy forms of dancing such as lap-dancing, as if it were a privilege to be earned rather than a choice to be made. Through these practices, management attempts to take control of the worker's sexual choices and dictate what they should be comfortable with, instead of allowing the women to make the choice themselves; the management thus attempts to keep the dancers from being the subjects of their own exchange.

The way in which the Lusty Lady's management reacts to incidents in the workplace also shows their view of sex workers as objects who are necessarily degraded – a practice that the workers themselves deny by seeking their own empowerment, and indeed, by insisting that such empowerment is possible. For instance, when one dancer, Star, discovers a customer secretly videotaping her from inside of the booth, she demands that management take action to improve

the workers' rights and safety—for instance, by removing booth windows with one-way glass so that dancers may see what their customers were doing. Management responds by telling her that if she cannot live with current practices, then she should not work at that establishment. Star reacts by insisting that she should not have to live with it to work there, or that she should have to give up workers' rights on the sole basis of the fact that she is a sex worker. By suggesting that sex workers must conform to unacceptable working conditions, management implies that women cannot or should not have control over their working conditions and, therefore, cannot be active subjects.

The Lusty Lady's dancers both resist and defy this view upon their decision to negotiate a contract and unionize. They want to control their own conditions rather than allow management to control them, so they push for an agency shop policy that would allow the workers to unionize and demand more rights. The Lusty Lady's management wants an open shop policy, in which workers would not have to unionize. A brief cartoon explains the difference between the two policies; for the agency shop policy, the cartoon depicts two dancers side by side dancing on their own; whereas, under the open shop policy, the cartoon zooms away from the two dancers to reveal that they are being controlled via marionette strings held by a large, menacing-looking wolf wearing a suit—their depiction of management. The dancers demand an agency shop policy because it is important for them to be subjects in control of their own exchange rather than puppets of club management.

By looking at how these women struggle for their rights as subjects even at a “hip, feminist peepshow,” one can see why sex work is often oppressive even if a woman chooses to assert a sense of agency in her work (*Live Nude Girls Unite!*). Merely deciding to become an exotic dancer does not mean that the experience will be empowering; working conditions must fulfill many criteria just to allow for the presupposition that women are both the subjects and the objects of their own exchange as opposed to merely the objects that Rubin describes. The reality of *Live Nude Girls Unite!* shows that sex work doesn't necessarily empower women, but it *can* empower women under very specific working conditions that allow the woman to maintain herself as the subject.

Yet even if the dancers at the Lusty Lady have a better contract and more control over their own exchange, they are still necessarily presenting themselves as sexual objects to the men for whom they dance. These women are paid to gyrate in front of tiny windows while male customers derive sexual pleasure from looking at their bodies. Despite the fact that they present themselves to customers as passive objects of exchange, *Live Nude Girls Unite!* supports the idea that women can still function as the active subject in this context because they are merely rep-

resenting an ideal sexuality to make money rather than selling their own personal sexuality; they are able to remain subjects in regard to their work while maintaining the illusion of objectification to please male customers.

The Lusty Lady's dancers make conscious decisions to change superficial aspects of their bodies and maintain this illusion. One dancer states that getting made up before going out to dance—donning long wigs and garish make-up to imitate a man's sexual fantasy—is like putting on a mask, in that she is choosing to wear a costume and perform a certain way. As one lesbian dancer lowers a long wig down over her very short hair, another woman jokes, “Suddenly, she's heterosexual!” Knowing that heterosexual men supposedly prefer long hair and “straight-looking” women, she makes a conscious decision to change the male customers' perception of her to match this image. Another dancer describes how she has two voices: the high-pitched baby-talk that she uses with customers, and her real, much lower voice. The use of this baby voice with customers shows that while the customer may be drooling over this simpering, feminine-sounding voice, the woman is really putting on an act and aware of how silly she sounds. These exotic dancers deliberately mold themselves for their own purposes, actively constructing the desired image of the passive female to manipulate male customers' perceptions. Despite the fact that they are disguised as objects, these women make conscious decisions in regards to how they speak and act—with the goal of obtaining a higher profit—and, thus, they are necessarily empowered.

Thus, sex work can empower women even when they present themselves as objects because they are controlling their own bodies; however, even though they are consciously acting a certain way, the objectified image that they choose to perpetuate is dictated by what male customers find attractive. The image of society's ideal female that they imitate is still rooted in Rubin's analysis of the way that exchange constrains female sexuality and dictates what is acceptable. Rubin specifically states that the conditions of exchange dictate ideal female sexuality as “one which [responds] to the desire of others, rather than one which actively [desires] and [seeks] a response” (182). Even when a dancer at the Lusty Lady is able to move beyond Rubin's framework of man as subject and woman as object and become both the subject and object of her own exchange, the fact that she decides to objectify herself for men corresponds directly to Rubin's image of the passive female object that men desire. Though the conditions of exchange are different, the sexual imagery present in *Live Nude Girls Unite!* is eerily reminiscent of that which Rubin describes in conjunction with masculine-controlled exchange.

Though men do not directly control the exchange of women in this film's context, the dancers are still restricted to responding to male desires and standards in order to make money. When a dancer decides to make herself more conventionally at-

tractive by donning a long-haired wig, talking in a high-pitched voice, or putting on make-up, she makes that decision based on sexual ideals about the passive female who caters to men's desires. The objectified image of the woman that sex workers choose to present – and the fact that they must pretend to be objects at all to attract customers – is dictated by the desires of the heterosexual male community; perhaps this is why Query states that, after a while, sex work is merely “boring” (*Live Nude Girls Unite!*). The workers at the Lusty Lady must function within the boundaries of acceptable heteronormative sexuality, continually reproducing the same image of woman as object rather than producing a new image. Thus, Rubin's constraints on female sexuality persist.

In her stand-up comedy routine, Query jokes that her feminist co-workers have finally figured out how to handle patriarchy – by taking its money. Indeed, the dancers at the Lusty Lady take matters into their own hands to change working conditions and become the subjects of their own exchange, moving beyond Rubin's descriptive framework into a realm where they can exist as subjects and where sex work can empower rather than oppress. Yet even though Query and her co-workers are creating a safer space for themselves with more rights, they still imitate the passive female described in “The Traffic in Women” to please male customers. They are limited to functioning within a system that directly caters to the dominant masculine culture rather than counteracting it.

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Acknowledgments

The Editorial Board owes special thanks to...

Haverford's student body, which submitted another impressive set of essays, even in the face of another editorial transition.

Haverford's faculty members, who encouraged students to believe in their work and submit their essays. Particular thanks to those members of the faculty who offered to help us with the editing process.

James Weissinger for helping us brainstorm and always replying to our emails.

Dean Phil Bean for his guidance, creativity, and constant support.

The John B. Hurford '60 Humanities Center for giving the publication a home and making us feel welcome with their support.