thresholds

Thresholds

A Journal of Exploratory Research and Analysis

The more interesting changes in life take place at the thresholds of our experience. Something distinctively foreign intrudes into our space of contentment, awakening a sense of urgency we neither recognize nor have the wherewithal to understand. But in time we will, because it has arrived, and our lives are now bound up in this new form of multiplicity. Understanding ourselves in relation to the strangeness of things-to-come challenges us to come to grips with our own development through time, and to consider the role thresholds play in the course of our lives.

Nothing is more sacrosanct than the privilege of firm ground in the territory of language that grants authority to powers of expression. When language is tampered with, we get uncomfortable. When words stop meaning what they used to mean as we grew into them, we get uneasy and disoriented. When the very syntax is ruptured and new logical patterns emerge, structures of normativity are threatened. Similarly, when community-building practices step beyond traditional forms of social interaction, tensions arise in the field of the familiar.

Our first two articles look closely at recent developments in our contemporary "on-line" interface. These developments in how people connect represent challenges to normal social practices, often in subtle exclusionary ways intended to privilege special comraderie and insulated privacy within a functional context of social interaction operating outside the norm. What are we to make of these new environments and their oddly foreign ways of connecting? What sense can we make of these "strange" thresholds emerging from the fabric of our own culture?

Questions of identity also pose interesting challenges in regard to thresholds. We offer three articles on identity reflecting distinctly varied pathways for analysis. In the first case, we look to fictional constructions for perspective on questions of meaning and purpose, and along the way we confront new questions concerning the basic makeup of our lives, including where we might be heading in our development as human beings. In a second case, we look to history, to see what recent humans have allowed themselves to become under social and cultural pressures to conform to political agendas and priorities serving the interests of a privileged group. We look for clues to what went wrong, and for how we might avoid falling into similar patterns in the future. In the third case, we travel a path of theoretical reflection, in this case, philosophical analysis, to explore what it might mean to have an identity in contemporary life, or better, how we might come to think about ourselves differently. In each case, we are introduced to a facet of social construction both foreign and familiar to our own makeup, in which something important is at stake, not only for ourselves, but for cultures-to-come.

These articles direct our attention to the *margins of normalization,* to challenging spaces of multiplicity where questions reveal unthinkable *difference* in the midst of what is unthinkably the *same*. Questions posed in this manner challenge us to think in the *margins of difference.* The goal is to expand our perspective, by revealing silent facets of our surrounding world that are calling for our attention: *thresholds ripe for expanding the scope of life that matters to us.*

Exploratory research and analysis is the key to opening the universe a little more. The contributions to follow offer opportunities for reflective thought and further lines of study regarding phenomena that speak to us from the margins of our personal, human, social, political and institutional involvements. We trust you will enjoy these exploratory excursions into some uncanny regions of our experience! In the process, we invite you to rethink your relation to thresholds.

HONORS PROGRAM
COMMUNITY STATEMENT

The Honors Program at CSU Stanislaus is a community of scholars

bound together by vital principles of academic openness, integrity,

and respect. Through focused study and practice involving

exploration and discovery across a variety of disciplines, the

Honors Program upholds these principles of scholarly engagement

and provides students with the necessary foundations

for further research and inquiry.

Our interdisciplinary curriculum is integral to this work,

and is intended to facilitate creative understanding of the

irreducible complexities of contemporary life and knowledge.

Personal and intellectual honesty and curiosity are essential to this

process. So, too, is critical openness to difficult topics and respect

for different perspectives, values and disciplines. The Honors

Program aims to uphold these virtues in practice, in principle,

and in community with one another.

Honors Program Advisory Committee

May 14, 2004

Acknowledgements

Seniors in the Honors Program are encouraged to tackle complex problems using methods and knowledge from related disciplines. Honors Program faculty and research mentors offer critical feedback and guidance along the way. The main objective is for students to explore, gather and analyze information effectively, and to reflect on the implications of what they have discovered. Group discussions help to promote thoughtful questions. The goal is to communicate knowledge, judgments and original perspective derived from careful inquiry, exploration and analysis. Seniors discussed the results of their research at the **Senior Honors Conference on Friday, May 22, 2009**, *in the John Rogers Faculty Development Center. We hope you can join us for our next conference, in* **May 2010!**

Table of Contents

"Threshold Portal"
Queen's Laundry
Yellowstone National Park

"Bodacious Reach"
Arches National Park

Red Rock Falls, Many Glacier
Glacier National Park

ARE YOU WITH ME? HOW ONLINE CONVERSANTS MAKE L33T CONNECTIONS

C. Anne Engert

R yuo a l33t h4x0r? Can j00 pwn n00bs? "1|=\| 0u |{4N r34|) t|-|15t|-|3N\| 0u i5 t3|-| |_337" (Blashki 81). If the preceding puzzles the reader, I can understand. My first encounter with l33t—a shortened form of elite, alternately written 1337, leet, or leet speak—left me feeling much the same way about this online linguistic phenomenon. I wanted to know more. As a student of English literature and a lover of language, what I found sent shivers up my spine: an alternate alphabet with as many as a dozen options for each standard letter; a wildly shifting substitution-cipher approach to spelling that mixes letters, numbers, and other keyboard characters; a new morphology (patterns of word formation) with its own unique word endings; a dizzying array of acronyms for conversational use. I had the impression that a whole new language was forming before my eyes, or rather behind my back, for I could make little sense of this new and unfamiliar linguistic arena. I had been left behind on the information superhighway, and I could not even read the signs! As I began to investigate further, I soon realized that l33t, while generally not as difficult to decipher as I had initially feared, presents a fascinating and rapidly evolving sociolinguistic development in certain online communities.

From l33t's origins in hacker and gamer communities to its present-day use in online discussion forums and social networking sites, l33t has been used to help identify its user communities in an environment with unique linguistic needs. Remarkable especially for its streamlined nature, online conversation strips communication of all its physical properties—gesture, inflection, and facial expression—so that text must stand alone. Of course, communication by the old-fashioned written letter also uses only text, but that form of exchange does not operate with the immediacy of online communication where real time, turn-based conversations between two or more persons, some half a world apart, take place regularly. Furthermore, where letter writing allows for more expansive expression, online conversation favors quick, concise response. Internet communication channels such as Twitter actually limit users to messages of one hundred forty characters or fewer. In such an environment, l33t has become one available tool for satisfying that need as well as several others. Although L33t-users do employ this linguistic tool for a range of purposes—from password creation to word filter avoidance—my research centers on the ways that certain Internet communities use l33t to determine in-group and out-group status and to strengthen social connections, all within the context of written language. These functions are under ongoing continual evolution, even as l33t itself changes in response to the needs and demands of Internet culture.

I am focusing primarily upon two l33t using communities: gamernode.com, a gamer's discussion forum, and digg.com, a social networking site, as well as including a limited number of examples from other sources. I chose gamernode.com because its user base participates heavily in the gaming community, and they frequently use l33t in their forum posts. As part of my investigation, I read archived threads extensively and researched posters' self-generated forum biographies. I chose digg.com as one of my primary locations for observing l33t for similar reasons—the users often include l33t expressions in their posts, although l33t is by no means dominant on either website. Rather, l33t augments the posters' usual English communication in ways that I will argue are employed to enhance their sense of community. I spent many hours reading and scouring both these sites for examples of l33t usage that illustrate my thesis. Actually, such examples are not difficult to find. I selected conversations for analysis based upon their clear use of l33t as in-group/out-group status identifier or as community affirmation expressions.

The use of l33t has generally been the purview of young, educated males who are at least sufficiently affluent to have access to the necessary electronic hardware that gaming, hacking, and being online require. The online linguistic quirks and creations of hackers and gamers have perhaps been considered by the academic community as a passing fad or a minor Internet phenomenon of little significance. L33t may have been fostered in marginalized communities, but the Internet provides a rapid-growth medium for such social developments. L33t has already transcended its beginnings in hacker and gamer culture and has filtered out into the Internet community at large—sometimes to be embraced and sometimes disdained. The use of l33t has spread worldwide to be used in variation by diverse language groups, and it is rapidly invading the offline world as well. That means, as they say in l33t, 'irl'—in real life. L33t may now be found in a variety of non-Internet media as well as online. The l33t word "pwned" was prominently featured in a print ad for the University of Advancing Technology that appeared in the October 2008 issue of PC Gamer. The NBC show Numb3rs uses l33t spelling in its title, and the show Kidnapped recently featured an episode that flashed a screenshot of a l33t email, followed by a brief explanation of l33ts's origins as part of the plot. Automobile owners are buying vanity license plates printed with l33t meanings. A l33t word, "W00t!" has been accepted into Webster's canon for its dictionary. Recently, even TV commentators can occasionally be heard to include in their news analysis words and phrases that have become part of the l33t vocabulary.

The study of l33t and its communities falls under the discipline of sociolinguistics: the study of language in its social context. Sociolinguists recognize that language is not "a simple, single code" but a deeply "variable phenomenon, and that this variability may have as much to do with society as with language" (Trudgill 32). Researchers in sociolinguistics concern themselves with the ways in which language reflects users' physical environments, social environments, and values, recognizing that changes in any of these factors may produce "corresponding linguistic change" (27-9). L33t is a linguistic change that has grown in the rich soil of an altered physical and social milieu—the computer-mediated environment—and in this context, l33t performs many of the same functions that language always performs.

At its most fundamental, the function of language is to express the thoughts of speakers. Most languages have a range of styles for expression that vary in formality. At the outer end of the scale in informality is

the linguistic style termed slang (Trudgill 83). Slang develops, in part, as a way for speakers to stretch the capacity of their language to accommodate their thoughts. Such change is an "unstoppable given in linguistics" (Pinker 149). Slangs commonly evolve among those who "consider themselves members of a select or separate group. […] [The slang] tests who belongs to the group and who is an intruder, [and is] fully intelligible only to only the initiated." According to Peter Farb, these groups often have extremely severe standards for the use of such slang—more than "any schoolmarm or grammarian" (78). In describing the study of "special parlances," classical languages, "craft jargons, secret argots, and the like," John Gumperz observes that these linguistic constructions may result from "seemingly intentional processes of distortion. He cites the examples of tribal secret languages and the child's play language Pig Latin, which both may involve "phonetic and grammatical elements […] systematically reordered. Similarly, Gumperz explains that "thieves' argots, the slang of youth gangs, [and others], obtain similar results by assigning special meanings to common nouns, verbs, and adjectives" (117). At a somewhat more complex level, the restricted use of classical languages such as Latin and Sanskrit can be noted. Historically used by scribes and clerics to record legal, historical, and theological documents, these languages have served a comparable purpose in maintaining a restrictive "social status . . . where their use is limited to a relatively small [group of] elites" (117).

From creative informality to playful distortion to exclusionary restrictiveness, each of the preceding observations about special sub-languages or academic languages applies, at least in part, to l33t and its use in online communication. The focus of my research is to elaborate and understand how l33t contributes to building a sense of community among users, to describe how users give clues and cues about themselves through their linguistic choices, and to examine l33t users' attitudes toward its use. Blashki observes that among the l33t-using members of the university discussion board which was the focus of her study, "certain 'rules,' or boundaries, were imposed (although unwittingly) by the group to determine correct usage and to monitor 'trolling' (abuse)" (84). Many l33t users claim that l33t is a joke, but their use of it and their reactions to it belie that assertion. Rather, l33t seems to be quite serious linguistic business.

L33t has its beginnings among hacker communities during the early days of the Internet. The hacker group Cult of the Dead Cow is widely credited with originating the term l33t or 1337. Their Windows 95/98 hacking program Back Orifice preferred to access systems through UDP 31337. These numbers correspond to the letters e-l-e-e-t, or leet/l33t/1337. The use of certain l33t terminology and the substitution cipher, however, predate these late 1990s events. The 1988 hacker e-zine Phrack references the even earlier use of "ELITE" as a password. For a self-proclaimed "1337 hax0r," the appellation connoted mastery of the arcane world of computer code and the ability to use the complex systems of electronic technology with skill and finesse. By 1997, hacker newsletters were featuring extensive use of alphanumeric substitution and other display alterations in their text:

> We ArE tHe HaX0R bRoThErZ, AnD SiNcE aLl oF yOo aRe LaYmOrS aNd WeRe k-RaD HaX0Rz wE dEcIdEd To TeAcH yOu Of OuR k-RaD wAyZ. ThIs Is OuR fIrzT NeWzLeTtEr, BuT eXpEct AlOt oF uS iN tHe NeAr FuTuRe yOu FuXiNg lAyMoRs!! NoW rEeD oN tO bEcOmE a LeEt HaX0R!

During this time, more and more aspiring "hax0rs" were coming online, diluting the ranks of this previously elite group with

computer-enamored teens who generally had more show than substance in their hacking skills. These "script kiddies" and AOL chatters were often the object of scorn and ridicule for their apparent beliefs that using l33t was the same as being l33t. This divide contributed to a sense of sarcasm and mocking irony in l33t that continues to be one of its major features.

Over the next several years, l33t moved out from the hacker community into the gaming world and beyond. For gamers, l33t became a means for expressing dominance and for trumpeting superior game-playing abilities. As with the hackers before them, gamers too, used l33t as a marker of community status. To be accepted in the virtual gaming environment, one must possess "l33t skillz", both at the game and at decoding the rapid-fire l33t text streams (Beavis). In both these communities, l33t's coded expressions not only reinforce ties to the group, they also permit outsiders to be easily identified and allow users to communicate surreptitiously, if they so desire.

This element of secrecy and the covert nature of hacking makes early l33t a sort of linguistic argot, an anti-language used by underground or outlaw groups to conceal their communication from outsiders. As a hacker code, for example, l33t was sometimes used as a way to avoid word filters set to exclude certain taboo phrases or as a method of avoiding "the prying eyes of keyword searches" (Carooso). L33t could also be employed in creating stronger passwords. Finally, leet adds to its characteristic differences a pervasive sense of irreverence and playfulness. Blashki describes leet as "highly metatextual [and] characterized by increasingly complex layers of signification with each subsequent use of the term coined in the discussion and constant reference within the word itself to its previous iterations" (83). This dynamic can be seen at

work, for example, when one l33t user begins with 'OMG' and another follows with 'zOMG' or 'omgwtf." Additional iterations could include 'OMG11!!!one!!1 or OMGWTFBBQ!!1. Similarly, 'lol' (laugh out loud) becomes 'lols,' 'lulz,' or even "lollerskates." 'Rofl' (rolling on the floor laughing) can become 'roflcopter' and tl;dr can morph into 'teal deer,' with each subsequent offering raising the level of irony or emphasis.

Continuing its gradual infiltration into the wider Internet culture, l33t has fed into and incorporated elements from other nascent systems of online communication along the way. Lolcat speak, and the rapidly churning world of Internet memes (culturally replicating units of thoughts, e.g., catchphrases) have each contributed to l33t's expanding vocabulary. L33t's flexibility—as well as an emphasis on speed—also encompasses a vast array of acronyms, many blended in from gaming, text messaging, and IRC (Internet Relay Chat). Some of these acronyms have become quite widely used and may be recognized by even the most casual Internet user. Who has not seen 'LOL' (laugh out loud) or 'OMG' (oh, my god)? Dozens of other acronyms are available to the l33t user, and increasingly, to the average Internet user as well. Some express positive emotion (lol, rofl, roflmao); some give information about the users' activities (afk—away from keyboard; g2g—got to go; brb—be right back); some express irony, disdain, or anger (wtf—what the f**k, stfu, gtfo); some embody longer messages (tl;dr—too long, didn't read; kthxbai—OK, thanks, bye). Online dictionaries house hundreds of acronyms, and it is these shorthand expressions that have been the source of some of occasional negative press reports concerning l33t. Acronyms such as 'pos' (parents over shoulder) and 'nifoc' (naked in front of computer) have raised some alarm bells in some circles; however, these are a

minor element of what l33t has come to encompass. L33t's fluid edges and the rapidly shifting tastes of its users make any attempt to draw a discrete boundary around l33t next to impossible. Nevertheless, through all these infusions, l33t retains its defining features: visual creativity (both representational and denotational), irreverence, sarcasm and irony, and a sense of exclusiveness and competence.

These elements shape the bonds of camaraderie among those who use l33t to affirm in-group status or to recognize out-group poseurs. Users need information about the disembodied presences on the other end of a line of text in an online message or conversation: Is it a n00b or is it a l33t user or player? Blashki concludes that users may also employ l33t as a means to express their humor and creativity, their disdain for convention, their sense of irony, and as a means to stake out their marginalized territory apart from the world at large. This mostly younger group seeks to maintain its sense of exclusivity and mastery over the realm of the Internet and computer-mediated communication—an environment that many older persons find less familiar. L33t may be one way the younger generation shows that it does not "wish to be constrained by the rules and boundaries of previous generations" (82). L33t allows such users to express textually their departure from convention through their alteration, personalization, and control of the very language they use to maintain the new boundaries they set for themselves.

Creating community online has become a process with almost as many manifestations as users. I am approaching my analysis of l33t usage on gamernode.com and digg.com as two points on a spectrum of Internet life. In his study of l33t use on the website SomethingAwful.com, David Heineman suggests that consideration of identity construction in Internet subcultures should

include the interrogation of "relationships of power in cyberspace" along with "the existence (or non-existence) of hierarchical structures" in connection with the power and privilege that various groups—such as hackers—stake out for themselves. Although l33t has grown out of its hacker origins, still, l33t and its evolving frontiers perform a role in defining the power relationships among users. The two sites I am focusing upon (gamernode.com and digg.com) each contain both hierarchical and egalitarian characteristics, but in differing proportions. In each of these sites, no one sets l33t use up as a yardstick for acceptance or rejection. Instead, the ways that l33t comes to be used and perceived follows a more rhizomatic process. Described by DeLeuze and Guattari, a rhizomatic structure operates similarly to the biological development exhibited by tuberous root systems that spread underground to form new nodes of growth, all without any hierarchical direction (Colman 231-2). Rhizomatic growth results in what DeLeuze and Guattari call plateaus, assemblages of the networks connections of growth that do not depend upon a "point of culmination or an external goal" (Lorraine 206-7). These plateaus arise and resonate organically, and their observable points of emergence may appear in multiple places at once without visible connection. Such a model well suits the increasingly general appearance of l33t in many, many Internet communities and in non-Internet environments as well.

The methodologies for my investigations into l33t usage in gamernode.com and digg.com are a combination of discourse analysis and conversation analysis. Discourse analysis seeks to look at a text not only for what is in the text but also for what assumptions are made by the speaker/writer and the hearer/reader. What inferences and gap-filling are necessary to process the text? Discourse analysis charges that the reader, not

the text, must necessarily be responsible for the process of interpretation. This practice of interpretation that takes so much for granted is part of how a discourse "establish[es] and consolidat[es] solidarity relations among members of a particular social grouping," and the ability to process such a text is "an important sign that you 'belong'" (Fairclough 83-4). The tools of discourse analysis are description, interpretation, and explanation. Description covers the experiential and relational values of the words used (i.e., the ways that euphemisms may be used to avoid unpleasant relational associations), the types of metaphors used, pronoun choices, and other features of the text itself. Interpretation examines the situational context, including possible intertextual histories; it asks who is involved and which direction the power is flowing in the text (146-9). Evaluation seeks to situate the text's discourse as part of a social process determined by social structures. Discourse analysis sees the discourse "as part of social struggle, within a matrix of relations of power" that encompass the societal, the institutional, and the situational perspectives (163).

The intersubjective approach of conversation analysis seeks to understand how conversation participants create their shared understandings through turn taking. The methodology also focuses on "adjacency pairs" (e.g. greetings and expected responses) (Drew 197). These sorts of "normative frameworks" contribute to participants' understanding of one another's contributions to the conversation, including the possibility of deviancy from expected norms (198). Standard conversation analysis employs a set of notation symbols to mark aspects of a conversation outside the sentences and words—things such as facial expression, gestures, and laughs, gasps, or sighs. Since the Internet conversations I am analyzing have none of these, that element of conversation analysis is not relevant to my

discussion. What that means for the conversation participants is that they must rely much more on the power of their words and symbols alone to communicate what would ordinarily come from various physical interactions in a conversation.

In analyzing the l33t conversations I have collected, I am using elements from both these methodologies. The conversation conducted on October 2006 by forum members on gamersnode.com offers a fascinating portrait of l33t in action. In this extended exchange, a newly registered member—3vil—makes an initial post written nearly entirely in l33t and other fractured English. This forum is devoted to gaming and gamers' talk. L33t expressions would be expected there, and they are not difficult to find among the posts. Many posters' screen names use l33t (bu11eTJuNkiE, Sil3ntKill3r-1S, D3TON8R). Nevertheless, other posters respond to 3vil's post with derision and laughter, castigating him for using l33t. Eventually, after ten pages of turn-based conversational sparring, 3vil is banned by the forum moderator. Several factors come into play during the incident, including the flow of power in a social hierarchy. My conversation analysis of the interchange will highlight and scrutinize a notable paradox of the conversation: Even while condemning 3vil for his particularly inept use of l33t, the complaining posters sometimes chose to use l33t expressions themselves.

The conversations I have collected from digg.com illustrate l33t as an expression of social camaraderie and cohesion. This social networking site centers its activities on collecting news and other items of interest from all over the Internet and bringing them together for members to read and discuss. The discussion is only occasionally turn-based; sequential comments dominate among perhaps dozens, sometimes even hundreds of entries under a single heading. The

community forms around posters' individual contributions to the extended comment list. L33t does not constitute a principal proportion of the language used on digg.com, but it does frequently surface—usually in expressions of exaggeration or of sarcasm. In these cases, l33t often becomes a point of commonality in a group with extremely diverse interests. The following brief examples show l33t used as a marker of community solidarity in a digg.com submissions:

Posters discuss a news item reporting the story of two parents fighting over which street gang their toddler should join:

amdforever: I wanted to post a witty digg comment here, but I am just completely SPEECHLESS right now. WTFBBQ

oblique63: dugg for wtfbbq

J0415: mmmm…bbq…mmm…

MrMacMan: mmmm…wtf… mmm..

Four different posters participate in this conversation, each making only one comment, yet, using l33t expressions, they manage to create a text that displays their sense of community and common culture. The initial poster incorporates the l33t acronym WTFBBQ to express dismay over the topic of the article under discussion. Three others follow up, but they do not comment on the gang parents. Instead, they divert the conversation to focus on the l33t. Oblique63 writes "dugg for wtfbbq," meaning that (s)he approves of the l33t irony in the comment and repeats it for emphasis. J0415 takes the game a step further, honing in on just the "bbq" and playing with its food associations as well as intensifying its l33t significance. MrMacMan continues with the food motif begun by J0415 but returns to "wtf," bringing the conversation full circle. Each poster reinforces the previous one's l33t acronym, with a light dash of ironic humor.

In another digg.com exchange, posters respond to an article about new music manipulation software that corrects vocal imperfections:

ginestony: So Hanna Montana doesn't actually sing good??? oh noes!

Onyxblaze: Well

In this very short exchange, l33t usage gets a positive reception. In response to poster ginestony's l33t expression "oh noes!", Onyxblaze types "well." With this one word, Onyzblaze diverts the topic of the thread from the news article to ginestony's usage of l33t. Onyxblaze corrects ginestony, but not for the l33t, rather for the incorrect use of the adjective 'good' where the adverb 'well' should have been used. The correction pointedly ignores the l33t and in doing so, emphasizes its value in the exchange. The l33t word works here to promote community.

In a further parallel example, digg.com users play with l33t's creative flexibility in the following excerpt from a thread that discusses a screen shot revealing some disturbing information about a poster who wears diapers:

LiamIsOnFire: OH MY LOLLERCAUST.

jon30041: Aw damn, and I've got all that chocolate to eat still... Blech!

Beanstudd2: I just went LOLLERSKATING!

Building on the basic l33t acronym 'lol' (laugh out loud), the first poster intensifies the ironic laughter with "LOLLERCAUST," pulling in an allusion to the holocaust with reference to the beyond-belief information in the article. The third poster in the chain retains the 'lol' word base but returns the tone to a more playful one with "LOLLERSKATING." In this exchange, the

article becomes secondary once more to the camaraderie of word play featuring l33t.

Communal sequences such as this one occur regularly on digg.com, and some display a high degree of awareness of the linguistic process that the posters participate in together. Active manipulation of the language, using l33t and its ebbs and flows into the larger online culture, becomes a mutual exhibition of cultural sophistication and mastery for the diggers. The collections of l33t expressions and Internet memes used in such a digger conversation enter a realm of spiraling self-referentiality that reflects the intensely interconnected virtual world these Internet denizens inhabit.

What happens, however, when the l33t and the memes filter out fully into the mainstream, when they become part of the larger culture? The communities that have created these innovations abandon the old new, for the new new. They may express disdain for those who use the expressions they now see as outdated, or worse, having lost their cutting edge. 'Old' is one of Internet culture's most potent insults. Yet, over and over again, in conversations on the very boards that complain about the use and misuse of l33t, l33t is decried in one line and casually employed in the next. The passage through this ubiquitous self-policing seems to be the price for entry into these communities. To the uninitiated, the learner, such a vetting procedure may seem quite a contrast to the ways that people generally learn language, for example, as children learn from their parents. The online world does not coax, but demands competence with language. Above all else, l33t in its various forms has become a lightning rod for online discussions about language. Although the Internet is changing the way we communicate, the need for speakers to navigate their relationships to others face-to-face or online persists. In its ongoing evolution as a tool of communication, l33t offers its users a means of solving an old problem in an innovative way. The rapidity with which the Internet spreads new ideas, linguistic ones too, makes understanding these new onramps to the information superhighway a necessity for those who want to stay ahead of the curve.

Works Cited

Blashki, Katherine, and Sophie Nichol. "Game Geek's Goss: Linguistic Creativity in Young Males Within an Online University forum." Australian Journal of Emerging Technologies and Society. 3 (2005): 77-86.

Beavis, Catherine. "Pretty Good for a girl: gender, identity, and computer games." International DiGRA Conference. Vancouver, British Columbia. 16 June, 2005.

Carooso, Jeff. "Are You l33t? One-time Hacker Slang Now Ridiculed By All Except those Who Use It." Network World. 17 May 2004: 76.

Colman, Felicity J. "Rhizome." The DeLeuze Dictionary. Ed. Adrian Parr. New York: Columbia UP, 2005. 231-33.

Digg. 10 Apr. 2008. 10 Apr. 2008. <http://digg.com>.

Drew, Paul. "Conversation Analysis." The Sage Encyclopedia of Social Research Methods. Ed. Michael S. Lewis-Beck, Alan Bryman, and Tim Futing Liao. Thousand Oaks, Ca: SAGE Publications, 2004.

Fairclough, Norman. Language and Power. London: Longman, 1993.

Farb, Peter. Word Play. New York: Knoph, 1974.

GamerNode. 5 Oct. 2006. 15 Apr.2008. <http://www.gamernode.com>.

Gumperz, John S. Language in Social Groups. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP. 1971.

Heineman, David. "Searching Something Awful: 9134|\|1|\|6 |\/|34|\|1|\|6 PhR0|\/| 13375p34k."

Loraine, Tamsin. "Plateau." The DeLeuze Dictionary. Ed. Adrian Parr. New York: Columbia UP, 2005. 206-7.

Perea, Manuel, Jon A. Dunabeitia, and M. Carreiras. ""R34d1ng W0rd5 W1th Numb3rs." Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance. 34 (2008): 237-41. Wilson Web. 24 Feb. 2008. <http://vnweb.hwwilsonweb.com>.

Pinker, Steven. The Stuff of Thought: Language as a Window into Human Nature. New York: Penguin Group. 2007.

Smokeymcfuzz. "Leet Speak News Cast." YouTube. Online posting 28 Aug. 2006. 24 May 2008. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L_Ac17HHGiA>.

Trudgill, Peter. Sociolinguistics: An Introduction. Middlesex, UK: Penguin, 1978.

"Extra-Terrestrial Skin"
Arches National Park

VIDEOGAMES AND SOCIAL LEARNING: CULTURE BY PROXY

Justin Hartsfield

Introduction

To the newcomer, experiencing an online multiplayer game is like discovering a remote village. The customs of its inhabitants can be readily harvested from the interactions of this relatively unexamined group. Observation and analysis of group activities can be conducted with minimal interference and in an environment as sterile as a Petri dish. The online game provides both the ability to peer into a cultural setting as if through a microscope lens, while also offering the capability to immerse oneself interactively with the community. The curious aspect of online games, however, emerges from the diversity of their members due to the accessibility of the game locales to a myriad of users. Princeton's wordnet describes culture as being "the attitudes and behavior that are characteristic of a particular social group or organization." In the following paper I examine how social groups are constructed within the framework of an online multiplayer game and note characteristics that those groups claim in defining the portion of their identity which they derive from the online game. In its essential form, all human social interaction consists of two or more human beings communicating through a medium. As the medium alters the methods of communication, participants invent methods for communicating and formulate criteria for network formation. The groups formed in the environment of online videogames mirror those which draw their identity from a variety of other networks and present an observable model of those networks. Observing this network of online gamers provides insight into the dynamics of all social networks. Throughout this paper, cultural exchange will refer to the exchange of two participants of a community through the medium in which the network is established (Silverman, 1998). In most cases examined by this research, this medium will be text which is transmitted over the internet through a game's chat interface.

Culture on Tap

A British band called The Buggles said it best when they sang their 1979 tune "Video Killed the Radio Star". They were keen enough to identify changing trends in their time, and though their song might be exaggerated, a similar trend is prevalent today; the internet might just kill the TV star. Youtube, an internet video website, sports a name that acknowledges the internet's role in redefining the medium in which our ideas are aired. Its aim is to emulate television by allowing individual video makers to share their homebrewed creations with the world. On youtube, anyone with their own camcorder and an internet connection can create a channel and begin broadcasting to the masses. The channels are convenient for viewers because they aren't dependent on timeslots and airtimes; the videos are available for watching at any time. Videos of this type, hosted online and always available, have come to be known as Videos on Demand, or VODs. The development of VODs is part of an online trend in entertainment and communication methods. A common way of describing the trends in

internet interactivity is by referring to the abstract concept of the internet as "Web 2.0".

Web 2.0 is fast upon us. The term grew from a conference held in 2004, which had the term in its title. The idea of Web 2.0 is not necessarily an upgrade in technology, but the way in which that technology is utilized. Specifically, the idea of Web 2.0 is to involve users in more interaction with the internet, and to add functionality to websites by utilizing programming practices such as AJAX (Asynchronous Javascript and XML) and multi-tier web design. Among the products of web 2.0 are websites such as youtube, flickr, gmail, and facebook. These sites are feature rich and strongly conducive to the web application genre.

Another result of the web 2.0 ideal has been the event of subscription based content. Methods such as RSS and ATOM web feeds have emerged to allow the syndication and aggregation of many types of data. Webpage owners can publish their updates to their entire readership automatically, while social networks have their own various news feeds and updating methods. Subscribers to weblogs (commonly referred to as blogs), channels and websites of all kinds can gather all of their monitored material to their feed reader and peruse the data in one location. RSS feeds are not limited to text updates and often contain accompanying audio and video files. A popular pastime for web goers has been the creation of "podcasts," which are periodic audio recordings that are published through feeds to subscribers. Also, coupling an audio commentary with a video resource enables viewers to gain a deeper insight of what they are watching because of the expertise of the commentator, in addition to the benefits which arise from commentaries in alternate languages which enable viewers to further understand a resource which was not originally presented in their native language. Such commentators are often referred to as

"casters" because they broadcast or podcast the resource with their commentary.

The accessibility of resources on the internet brings the home computer into the realm of monumental entertainment devices, on par with the likes of the radio and the television. Cultures are melding into one decentralized entity that is influenced by users around the world, and is waiting to be tapped by anyone who turns on their computer. It is in this environment that I explore one avenue of this cultural exchange.

Background

A new wave of cultural sharing has emerged in South Korea as professional gaming is spotlighted as an industry of international sensation. In particular, the game Starcraft has gained widespread acclaim, where professional Starcraft games are broadcast regularly, with television channels dedicated solely to the game (Ongamenet and MBCGame). South Korea even goes so far as sponsor a professional team for their airforce called Airforce ACE. Many of its teams and events are sponsored by major multinational corporations, such as Samsung, LG, and Intel-Averatec.

Companies such as gretchcorp (who oversees GomTV) have begun the mobilization of an online broadcasting industry in South Korea. A majority of their television is viewed online via the GomPlayer application. For years, the production of these games has filtered to the masses outside of South Korea by means of youtube uploads, and guides designed by community sites to download and install Korean television players, such as the GomPlayer or the DaumPotPlayer.

With the eventual realization of the potential of English casting (broadcasting games live with English commentary), a league was set up to facilitate English broadcasting of Starcraft games. The

resulting production saw millions of viewers from over one hundred different countries. The Korean progamers were astonished to find that the "foreign" audience was so keen on watching their games, and equally surprised by the support which the accompanying community sites offered for the players. Since 1998, the game developer Blizzard has also been astonished by the progaming sensation their game has inspired, and often holds community events, such as BlizzCon.

One community site, TeamLiquid.net, has been corresponding with the Korean professional Starcraft teams and setting up various events, such as their TLAttack! episodes which periodically feature professional gamers. They also arrange for occasional shipments of team merchandise to the states, and organize meets at international events.

In these communities, the South Koreans have found goodwill toward their lifestyles, and many avenues for cultural exchange. One famous player, Ma Jae-Yoon, who's gamer ID is sAviOr, declared at the 2008 BlizzCon in Anaheim,CA that he would "Destroy all in 2009." The address was significant because this statement was spoken in English. sAviOr set aside his fear of speaking in a language with which he was not comfortable to further his bond with the "foreign" community. Many participants in the community plan to travel to South Korea, if they have not already done so, as a "pilgrimage" to experience the Korean culture, and share in a common interest in Starcraft. An American caster who lives in Korea and commentates for GomTV, named Nick "Tasteless" Plott, jokingly refers to Korea as the "holy land" of progaming, and often speaks of his adventures in the Korean culture while he casts.

Just as Starcraft exemplifies the culmination of multicultural interests, many

other games facilitate such interactions. Possibly the most widely known of which being the World of Warcraft (WOW), which has been the subject of numerous studies. The vast alternate world of interacting players has been utilized for articles ranging from epidemiological studies (Feffer study) to cultural differences in gameplay and social dynamics (Nardi, Hybrid Cultural Ecology).

To satisfy readers' curiosity, the epidemiological study conducted in WOW was researched by Nina Fefferman. The incident occurred when the videogame studio Blizzard introduced a raid boss called Hakkar the Soulflayer who possessed the ability to inflict a character with an infectious debuff (a character ailment with negative affects). Some creative players figured out a way to contract the debuff and spread it into the general population, causing disturbances within the community, but also giving Fefferman the opportunity to study the transmission of a disease in a simulated environment of citizens.

The game has become such a popular culture icon that it has been included in jeopardy questions on multiple occasions and spawned many parodies such as the "Make Love, not Warcraft" episode of South Park. Videogame language penetrates society and embodies the ethos of a society that plays videogames regularly.

Each videogame has its own niche within the social makeup of communities. These niches often overlap, particularly within the same genre of game, or within games from a shared production studio (WOW being created by Blizzard, patriarch studio of Starcraft). Gamers identify themselves by the types of games they play, and use their common interests in games to form social networks, reaching across normal boundaries of stereotypes and cultural differences. A publication by the Harvard Center for Mental

Health and Media asserts that games provide a focus for socialization and a source for self esteem and pride for their users because of the common ground presented in the knowledge of the game (Kutner, 2008).

An organization specifically designed to bring videogamers together from around the world holds what is essentially the videogame Olympics every year. The World Cyber Games (WCG) covers over eighty countries and sees millions of participants in its event every year. The motto of the WCG is "Beyond the Game," and the WCG emphasizes the breaking down of cultural barriers to bring humanity closer. Their mission statement can be found on their website, and reads:

> *"WCG is a comprehensive Digital Culture Festival, where language and cultural festival barriers are stripped away, and international exchange and harmony are promoted through extensive events including tournaments, conferences, exhibitions." (WCG)*

The Game of Starcraft

Starcraft is a real time strategy (RTS) game where players choose one of three distinct races, the Terran, the Zerg, and the Protoss. The players build an army, and attempt to destroy their enemies by issuing commands to the units under their control. It supports one to eight players, and can be played online through Blizzard's Battle.net, or other (unofficial) gateways, such as the International Cyber Cup (ICCUP). The three races possess their own unique units, attributes and abilities, which are related to their respective storylines in the single player "campaign" mode. The battles take place on many different types of maps which come packaged with the game or are drawn from the vast storehouse of user created maps.

My experience

I have accumulated approximately three thousand Starcraft games over the course of four years of gameplay. Estimating the average length of a game to be one half-hour, yields sixty-two days of gameplay. I am a member of Gosugamers.net, TeamLiquid.net, and SC2GG.com, which are web based communities founded upon the game of Starcraft. Over the past year I have also been intrigued by the progaming scene in Korea and have been excitedly watching the English casted games from GomTV and SC2GG.com (I've watched every English casted game from the Gom Classic for all seasons).

Conversation Analysis

Conversation Analysis, sometimes referred to as Discourse Analysis, oif which it is a component part, is a multi-faceted methodology for evaluating dialog. The field of Conversation Analysis encompasses many different techniques and concepts such as turn taking, sequence organization, repair, and action formation. Turn taking has become widely accepted for its prevalence in conversations of many languages as an inherent part of dialog, and is studied for its impact on conversations. Early work in the field of Conversation Analysis is attributed primarily to Harvey Sacks, with additional credit given to his colleagues Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson. Their work was acclaimed during the infant years of Conversation Analysis and established foundational works for the field.

Their primary work concerned turn taking in conversation, observing the usage of leading questions, and preliminary greeting ceremonies. The work also included analysis of the order and timing of questions and responses and the interplay of conversation as a function of circumstances. Though many of the conversations which I've collected utilize these elements, some of them are impossible to recount with the given methodological framework.

The chat logs present the conversation in plain text, with no visual or auditory cues to the participants. When introducing her research on 1337 speak, Anne Engert describes her material, which is very similar to the data examined here, as being: "in an environment that strips conversation of all its physical properties—gesture, inflection, and facial expression—so that text must stand alone." (Engert, 1) In order to compensate for this lack of stimuli, players will creatively add phrases, or character combinations called "emoticons" which carry meta-meanings to fill in the context of a response or statement. For example, an emoticon might look like this d: - D to denote happiness, or like this >< to denote frustration in either a humorous or occasionally serious fashion (depending on the rest of the context). Additionally, the order of responses, and delay between responses cannot be accurately measured because of the latency which results from typing responses and network delays. In verbal conversation, an individual can begin their response in a very short amount of time, perhaps by simply beginning to open their mouth, or inhaling deeply. These cues simply do not exist in the framework of the collected data, leading to more frequent overlaps of conversation turns and increased presence of conversational repair. Repair occurs when a meaning is misinterpreted, or incorrectly communicated. Typos and rapidly changing context (in relation to the speed of the typist) require additional corrections and hints to the reader, which I attempt to discuss in my analysis.

Therefore, instead of strong emphasis on the turn taking aspects of the dialogs, I will be discussing other aspects of the conversational analysis method, particularly focusing on context. In a publication reflecting on the work of Oliver Sacks, David Silverman describes another integral aspect of conversational analysis in this excerpt:

"As with the return of greetings, responses to reciting proverbs show that when we speak we do far more complicated things than simply confirming assertions and/or emptying out the contents of our minds. Instead, it seems that what we say will be heard in terms of its position in this particular conversational 'space' – after a previous turn in the light of a possible next turn."

(Silverman, 9)

The conversational 'space' that Silverman describes will be the space of the Starcraft Universe throughout this paper, and I will draw in many resources from this contextual space to aid in the analysis of the texts.

Methods

Throughout my gameplay experience I have acquired a working knowledge of the Starcraft community. I have saved several chatlogs through the use of a command from a third-party add-on called "ChaosLauncher." The chats were taken at random intervals over the past eight months. Battle.net has gateways designed to deliver the best service (in regards to network latency) for certain regions of the world. These chats were taken from the gateway designed to service the western United States. The gateway from which the logs were taken is divided into channels of up to forty users each. Users can select which channel they want to move into by typing the name of the channel in the channel text field or selecting from a list of Blizzard's pre-made channels, provided that channel isn't restricted or full. Players are initially placed in a generic channel that is numbered and incremented based on the amount of activity on Battle.net. A new "home channel" is created for each group of forty players that join Battle.net and stay in a "home channel." Most players choose to select a channel where they can find their clan members exclusively, or an agreed upon meeting channel, in order

to avoid the unnecessary chatter or frequent spamming of "bots" (see below for an explanation of terms) in the main channel. Players will often drift between channels as they are invited into new ones, and meet new players who know of another channel that friends frequent. The very existence of popular channels is intriguing from the standpoint of social networks (more discussion to follow). The chats were taken from a channel known to have an average of twenty players during normal hours of play. The conversations were taken candidly, with no participation on my behalf. I merely sat in the channel and went away from the computer while random players engaged in conversation within the framework of the channel.

It is important to note that the channel is a staging area for the actual games. Players congregate in the channel between games in order to coordinate their next games, discuss strategies, and to converse with other players regarding various topics.

In addition to the chatlogs that I collected, I utilized my local network of gamer friends to gather supplementary chatlogs from various videogames. I sent out an email to fifteen of my peers who I suspected play multiplayer online videogames, and requested that they send me any logs that they could acquire. I gave instructions to listen in on guild channels, and general player chat channels in order to gain the highest amount of conversation in their logs. I also suggested that they might want to find locations with high concentrations of new players (noobs) in order to observe the behavior of a wide assortment of players, both veteran and noob alike. In response, I received a plethora of logs from a space-themed massively multiplayer online roleplaying game (MMORPG) entitled "Eve," a clan administrator's random selection of logs for servers of the First Person Shooters (FPS)

Battlefiled 2 and Battlefield 2142, and a monitored conversation from an MMORPG called Ragnarok.

The volume of text was of such a magnitude (~250MB!) that I was unable to read all of the collected material. Samples were taken at random from files that proved to be full of conversation involving high ratios of player chat to "bot" messages. Bots are programs created to function within a given chat framework and designed to inject specific advertisement information so that anyone participating in chat will view the information. Many of the files consisted almost entirely of messages generated by advertisement bots or server announcements and were relatively bereft of user conversation. Those files were omitted from this analysis. The remaining files, still being of considerable volume, were arranged by the file size. A majority of the files were recorded by automated chat-logging functions of the games at regular intervals, which resulted in a larger file size for files more dense with conversation. Samples were then taken from the more populated files randomly, with a preference for Starcraft files, due to my more complete knowledge of the intricacies of that particular game.

In order to filter out the unwanted overhead data (such as server announcements, bot advertisements, or meta-information about who enters or joins the channel) I created a java program to find, replace, and remove unwanted text. I used the program to run various filtering techniques on sample passages of text.

The logs have been preserved in their original form to the extent that the privacy of the observed participants would allow, excluding extraneous information that was filtered. All names were changed, including clan names/tags, and references to names within the dialog. I have attempted to substitute analogous names and references to

names in order to maintain the subtleties of the conversations. Substituted identifying information within the text will appear in curly brackets {pseudoName}, while additional context will be added with square brackets [missing word/letter]. Angled brackets <> are included in the original text to denote the user who created the displayed message, and I use square brackets within angled brackets to substitute clan information. Example: <username[clanname]>message.

Social Hierarchy

<Tutut> whats up
<Weevil> yo
<Tutut> hows it goin {Weevil}
<Weevil> bored
<Weevil> ness
<Tutut> d*** that sucks
<Tutut> r u guys playin games?
<Weevil> not yet
<Tutut> oh
<Tutut> till when?
<Weevil> bout half an hour
<Tutut> alright then
<Tutut> b back in half an hour
<Weevil> ight

To start off, we see a simple example of social networking, and game coordination. It is evident that the two players are already acquainted with each other, and familiar enough that they exchange greetings and organize a time to play a game together. Tutut mentions "u guys" in reference to additional players that Tutut and Weevil regularly play with. Players generally find groups of players that they know from their real life experiences and those that they meet while playing pub games (games open to the public) to form networks of gaming friends.

A popular WOW webcomic called *Looking For Group* captures a trend in WOW which is characterized by the phrase "lfg" and means "looking for group." The comic recognizes the gravitation of online gamers towards each other and groups, be it facilitated by the game mechanisms or not. An excerpt from the comic is displayed below (lfgcomic.com, Vol. I p.12):

The key line "interesting friends you've made" captures the aura of lfgcomic as it follows the unlikely group of adventurers through a fantasy world that mirrors the world of warcraft universe. The comic highlights the formation of social structures within the environment of games, and satirizes the wide variety of personality types that players may possess while still being able to cooperate and function as one group. In this example you have both the kind-hearted yet naïve "Pinky" who seeks only good and justice paired up with the dubious sociopath Richard who is bent on destruction and mayhem. The comic exhibits self-referencing humor while also referencing the game WOW and the greater realm of multiplayer games, and as a product of a particular gaming community does its part in characterizing the zany social structures that result from multiplayer online gaming. The next chatlog excerpt further showcases group structure and dynamics.

    <Leyenda[Lucky]> {Lucky} sucks
    < Leyenda[Lucky]> lol
    <SuperSpeed> ahahahaa
    < Leyenda[Lucky]> im bored already
    <SuperSpeed> imma tell {tom}
    <SuperSpeed> u saed hat
    < Leyenda[Lucky]> go ahead
    <SuperSpeed> that
    < Leyenda[Lucky]> i dont care
    < Leyenda[Lucky]> they need me n****
    < Leyenda[Lucky]> xD
    <SuperSpeed> ya you do....
    < Leyenda[Lucky]> ive said it
    < Leyenda[Lucky]> infront of them
    < Leyenda[Lucky]> arleady
    <Blue_Whiskey> lol
    < Leyenda[Lucky]> i even say like {leader} sucks
    < Leyenda[Lucky]> etc...
    < Leyenda[Lucky]> they don care
    < Leyenda[Lucky]> lol

Here we see that Leyenda and SuperSpeed both recognize the status of being in a clan as an important social symbol. Leyenda starts the conversation by jokingly discrediting his own clan because the skill level of its players is not of the caliber that he believes a clan should have. SuperSpeed then responds by appealing to the authority of a prominent leader in clan Lucky. Leyenda, however, subverts the authority of the leader in order to showcase his skill as a member so valuable to the clan that they could not afford to lose him. He promotes his Starcraft prowess as an important element of the clan Lucky, and uses that as a reason to joke with other players about his clan. Leyenda develops his ego through the virtual space of the game, and interjects "lol" after each statement of judgment upon his clan and clan members. This is done to soften the sentiment that his clan members play the game poorly, or with lesser capabilities than Leyenda claims he can play. The "lol" is used here as a device to soften what would normally seem a very harsh statement, which reflects his respect for the other players and his clan, despite their skill level. Note that this segment of conversation does not cast judgment on those who do not belong to a clan, but does imply that the clan in which a player is a member reflects the reputation of that clan on the player. Also note that the usage of conversational repair (following the mistyped "that") is interjected at a random time after the commission of the error, most likely after the error was noticed by the typist.

Clans and Reputation
    <Infestor[Butterfly]> the other clan {Clany} came here started bming[bad manners, bad mouthing] all
    <SuperSpeed> ya
    <SuperSpeed> {wayward}
    <SuperSpeed> and
    <SuperSpeed> some other dude
    <Infestor[Butterfly]> {chromosome} and {leader} and me [L]ost to those noobs
    <SuperSpeed> {quiet}?
    <SuperSpeed> nice
    <Stuff[Butterfly]> They're all {Swandive}
    <SuperSpeed> haahahahaha
    <SuperSpeed> figures

<Infestor[Butterfly]> and so clan {buttersworth} and them went 2
  game in row
<Stuff[Butterfly]> {Sneezy Lashes} and {Wayward} are
  {Swandive}
<Infestor[Butterfly]> guess who got raped
<Infestor[Butterfly]> lol
<SuperSpeed> thats it
<Infestor[Butterfly]> {Clany} got raped
<Infestor[Butterfly]> lol
<SuperSpeed> LOL
<SuperSpeed> nice
<Infestor[Butterfly]> sup {stuffy}
<SuperSpeed> u got the rep
<Infestor[Butterfly]> i do

Most clans on Starcraft regard each other with mutual respect, while still fostering healthy rivalries. Here we see an account of clan rivalry in action, as Infestor retells a series of events that he witnessed. First he tells of how members of the clan Clany entered the channel and began demonstrating bad manners, probably putting down members of other clans who were in the channel at the time. SuperSpeed corroborates the story by adding the IDs (the names of the players) of the Clany members who came into the channel. Infestor continues and mentions that he and a couple of other clan members (Leader being a member of clan Lucky) lost to the haughty Clany members, while backhandedly calling them noobs (unskilled players). The conversation takes a brief aside as SuperSpeed asks about other members of the community, and then continues with Infestor's story. Infestor recounts how clan Buttersworth then challenged the Clany members and "raped" them. "Rape" in this context is a word whose meaning has deviated from the common meaning of the word in English. Here, "rape" refers to a sound defeat, in which one side dominated the other in gameplay. Though it is sometimes used to a further extent to imply sexual undertones, that is not the case in this example. The rest of the clan members express their enthusiasm for the defeat of the poorly- mannered Clany members because that defeat represents the preservation of the reputation of the members who frequent this channel. Infector concludes by mentioning that he has the rep (the saved replay file of the match) as proof of the validity of the games and so that anyone interested can watch.

This event also served to reinforce understood rules of the community that require respectful treatment of other players. It is generally accepted that having "bad manners" is a negative quality for Starcraft players. This ideal is echoed in the ICCUP server especially, where manners are emphasized. A particularly frustrating strategy in the game, dubbed the "manner pylon" makes the importance of manners more evident. The name serves as a reminder for the victims of the strategy to maintain good manners, while humorously acknowledging the impulse to exercise bad manners in frustrating situations.

Strategy and Analysis
<Rebel> {super}
<Rebel> you have to learn never let
      a zerg grow
<BiSu> lol
<BiSu> ya {spr} [SuperSpeed]
<SuperSpeed> i told himthat
<SuperSpeed> no s***
<BiSu> never let a zerg grow
<freaky> {speeedddddd}
<SuperSpeed> LOL
<Rebel> lol
<SuperSpeed> sup sup?
<Rebel> i was too big
<Reaver> OMG [Oh my God]
<Rebel> for both you
<SuperSpeed> omfg [Oh my f****** God]
<Reaver> water [I'm going to go get some water]
<freaky> o.o
<BiSu> {allen}
<Cashew> sup {speed}
<BiSu> u bak
<BiSu> ??

<Reaver> who is {bisu}?
<SuperSpeed> my f***** storms never went
                    off...cept once
<Rebelt> gg {spped} [SuperSpeed]
<SuperSpeed> sup {cashew}
<BiSu> im new
<Reaver> mmm
<Reaver> tf
<SuperSpeed> gg bv [good game]
<Rebel> gg [good game]
<Rebel> man
<Rebel> that was hard for me
<SuperSpeed> lol
<SuperSpeed> brb [Be right Back]

Here we see a complicated segment involving several parallel portions of conversation. The main strand of conversation involves the discussion of general strategy, while another minor strand of the conversation includes the introduction of a new player in to the channel. The conversation starts off with Rebel, after the conclusion of a match between Rebel and Bisu versus SuperSpeed and another player. Rebel starts by mentioning that letting a player who chooses the Zerg race play for a long enough time without harassing their bases allows them to become powerful and "big" so that they are difficult to defeat. SuperSpeed, whom you have seen in a fair number of these excerpts, plays the game quite frequently, which accounts for the high occurrence of his name in these logs. SuperSpeed responds that he tried to inform his teammate of this information during the game. SuperSpeed's partner was likely a pub (a random public player that SuperSpeed did not know). Several other players enter the conversation to exchange greetings, and announce that they will be away from the keyboard while they get a drink of water. SuperSpeed adds the fact that his strategy included casting the spell "Psionic Storm" or "storms", which is effective against zerg units, but he missed. He implies that the outcome of the game would have been

different had his storms been more accurately placed. The players exchange "gg" (good game) as a sign of sportsmanship as Reaver is introduced to the new player in the channel, BiSu.

Here players discuss how to defeat a Zerg player, specifically highlighting their weakness to the Protoss spell Psionic Storm, and the timing required to make an effective attack (earlier as opposed to later). The game Eve shows a parallel structure of leadership, and tactics in the following conversation:

Side > jump?
Drake > Give a primary
jet > just target
Drake > Drake > Give a primary
Murky > go go go
pabb > man this is cool
DPaw > INVITE {BOOLEAN RUSH}
Krystal > PRIMARY {RONSON}
jet > anything and shoot m8
Krystal > SECOND {CROWN 42}
Drake > cyno up
Drake > {ronson}
Crow > This sounds awful.
DPaw > invite {BOOLEAN RUSH}
Drake > primary
Krystal > PRIMARY {RONSON}
Drake > all dmg [damage] on {ronson}
Krystal > SECOND {SCARED}
Drake > gogo
dale > LOL JUMP IN 2 MINS LOL
SupremeAce> lol their fleet sucks
Krystal> FLEET STAY ON GATE
GreatTed > thats not it
Azaeroth Monkey > ITS RED ALLIANCE!!!!!
Krystal > PRIM {WINGGIN}
LandLubber > why did you sit this side when thats all they had?
Krystal > DO NOT ENGAGE THAT NEUTRAL CARRIER
Krystal > FLEET APPROACH GATE

This chat was taken from the fleet channel, where members of the same fleet talk about their strategies. Krystal takes on a leadership position, as a knowledgeable player and

assigns primary and secondary targets to the members of fleet. Drake assumes a role of second in command. This segment demonstrates the need for hard and fast rules in game situations, and the need for a clearly defined chain of command. It is especially apparent that Krystal is in charge by the last two instructions to the fleet to refrain from engaging a neutral unit, as it will likely cause the fleet more trouble than it is worth.

The players value strategies that are effective and will benefit both the group and the individual within the confines of the game, and yet they also value information they can glean from game interactions that benefit them "in real life" (commonly called "IRL" in game terms.) In this way, the game life of the player interfaces with the non-game life of the player; the two worlds interlace. The following are examples of interactions that bleed through the game interface into the player's real life scenarios:

Real Life
    <Milk> damn
    <Base> sucked
    <brool)> make
    <Base> sry man
    <Milk> raped
    <Base> yeah
    <Base> new map
    <BiSu> oops
    <Base> + one hand
    <Base> no good for me
    <brool)> mf make a game
    <brool)> ?
    <Milk > why one hand
    <Base> i gotta get going for now
    <Milk> xd
    <Base> but i'll be on later
    <Milk> oh kk
    <Base> i told you
    <Base> lol
    <Base> my son
    <Base> was being fussy
    <Milk> lol
    <brool)> mf
    <Base> so i had to hold him

    <brool)> create
    <Base> 5 mo old
    <Milk> ooohhh
    <Quiet> lol
    <Milk> lil [lol]
    <Base> aight man... later

Here we see a player discussing physical circumstances outside of the game framework that affected his performance in the previous game. Base apologizes to his allies from the previous game because he was only able to use one of his hands to control his game due to his fussy son. Base also shares part of his personal life by mentioning that he has a son, and shares further when he says that his son is 5 months old. The final snippet of conversation I have selected for this article further demonstrates the bridging of game conversations to real life situations:

    <two5ive> I can cook alot of things
    <Mazda(zizo)> so can i
    <JohnnyBiggs> i can only cook spagetti
    <JohnnyBiggs> but the noodles always suck
    <two5ive> Come to my house ill give you a
                        decent meal
    <JohnnyBiggs> gimme some steak
    <JohnnyBiggs> and a baked potatoe
    <JohnnyBiggs> and some corn bread
    <JohnnyBiggs> and koolaid
    <two5ive> Wait for the water to boil
    <two5ive> then put pasta in
    <JohnnyBiggs> i put
    <Mazda(zizo)> wow
    <JohnnyBiggs> some oil
    <JohnnyBiggs> too
    <two5ive> wait for 25 mins
    <Mazda(zizo)> thats like pho
    <Mazda(zizo)> man
    <JohnnyBiggs> i do wait
    <JohnnyBiggs> for it to boil
    <Mazda(zizo)> no u dont
    <two5ive> you dont wait long enough sir

In this part of the conversation, Johnny gets a lesson in cooking, as he announces that he can only cook spaghetti that has sub-par noodles. Mazda and two5ive help by giving Johnny a simple tutorial for noodle making. Mazda

mentions that making the noodles is just like making pho (a traditional Vietnamese dish). Johnny eases the embarrassment of his poor noodle cooking skills by demanding many types of food from two5ive as he explains the steps for boiling noodles. two5ive softens the commanding impact of the instructions towards the end by appending the word "sir" to the directive.

While gamers in a community learn from one another in the lobby between games, they also learn about cultural oddities from broadcasted events centered around their game. The following is a portion of a transcript from a commentary delivered with a GomTV game by two casters. The commentary is a conversation between Nick "Tasteless" Plott and "Little" Susie Kim where they briefly discuss Korean culture.

> LittleSusie: Alright that says you know tayoga sarang he
> Tasteless: Best of best
> LittleSusie: Best of the best
> Tasteless: clever signs anyone?
> LittleSusie: That means, umm that means you know they're just proclaiming their love for best, basically
> Tasteless: That's what I gathered as well. I think umm..
> LittleSusie: There's a good word for you guys to know in Korean. Sarang he means I love you, so..
> Tasteless: Sarang he?
> LittleSusie: Ya, there you go. So they're all proclaiming their love for Best because they love him.
> Tasteless: What a baller.
> LittleSusie: What a baller he's got a choice of like...I don't even know how many girls are in here.
> Tasteless: He's seriously got at least two control groups of women down here.

Tasteless and Susie read one of the signs that were held up in the audience during a match that Best (a starcraft player) was participating in. They translate the Korean characters into English for the audience and teach them an important phrase in Korean: "I love you". They also tie the new information to the game of Starcraft afterward by mentioning that Best has two "control groups" of women to choose from. They utilize a sort of Starcraft communication protocol by making jokes that refer to game aspects to make the audience feel at ease. A control group is a grouping of 12 units in Starcraft, so Tasteless is suggesting that Best has around two dozen female fans present in the vicinity of the sign. Many of the casts from Gom provide information about Korean culture that foreign viewers do not know. Many of the exchanges also involve the former professional Starcraft team coach "SuperDanielMan". The commentaries include currency conversion into soju bottles (apparently a popular Korean drink), descriptions of PC Bong computer cafes, a Korean dish called kimchee, an account of the phenomenon where deodorant is absent in Korean culture-- only being found at large supermarkets, and many more.

Conclusion

The identities of individual players are derived from the networks in which they claim membership and which accept the individual into the network. Globalization rises from the increase in electronic networks which require only connectivity to the network and mutual acceptance of the members. The games examined above serve as a model for all social networks and display characteristics that can be considered in the examination of any network

Videogame communities take on distinct structures with leadership roles that promote well mannered play. They also value individuality and place importance on personal reputation. They value strategies that benefit their members both in the game and IRL, and the community possesses a self-correcting mechanism to promote their desired "good manner" play. Throughout

their play experiences, game users form intricate social networks that support their sense of ownership of a group, and contribute towards the self esteem of the individual, shaping their identity in the framework of such societies. These groups give rise to cultural dispersion in the form of localized norms, standards and habits. Because of the impact on the Starcraft community created by the progaming realm in Korea (BiSu, from one of the chat segments, is an emulation of a famous professional Protoss player in Korea named Bisu[Shield]) players are encouraged to explore the culture of other regions of the world.

With the introduction of online multiplayer games, many other genres and titles are being exposed to the same "transparency of location" for its users. Players adopt an attitude that disregards location altogether while embracing unity through affiliation with a set of gaming experiences. These sentiments are reinforced by events such as the WCG which provide environments for gamers to appreciate cultural influences while enjoying a shared bond with individuals with whom they would otherwise be unfamiliar. In sum, the common interest in videogames serves as a basis for furthering intercultural relationships across the world.

Suggested Future Studies

The results of this study suggest a wealth of ideas for future studies in a range of fields. The environment in which gamers construct social networks provides data that is more readily recordable (and computable) than information from real life. The ease with which an entire conversation can be saved for future analysis establishes such records as promising research tools for conversational analysis. Aside from that, friendships and network structures are concretely recorded in the servers which contain them. Future studies on the structures of networks such as battle.net could shed light on theories such as the "small world" theory, which includes the concept that the social network of humankind is separated by only six degrees of indirect friendship "edges".

Additional studies could include an analysis of intentional information-sharing or information-withholding and the purposes of such practices. For example, an analysis of gender roles in games, and the usage of gender "switching" in order to attempt to gain a strategic advantage in the game would be an interesting study.

Finally, as game technology progresses, games approach levels of communication which are comparable to real life interchanges. A series of tests performed to compare voice chat (discussions held through voice servers such as ventrillo) to text chat, or even to video chat, could produce valuable information regarding artifacts of the mediums used for the discussions. This information could also enumerate aspects of real life communication that were not previously observable without the contrast of such technologies and their methods of communication. The inquiry into human networks and communication would be greatly benefited by these and many other such studies utilizing the networks as they continue to form themselves in an accessible manner through the videogame platform.

Works Consulted

Dodds,Peter Sheridan. Muhamad, Roby. Watts, Duncan J. An Experimental Study of Search in Global Social Networks. http://www.sociology.columbia.edu/pdf-files/watts04.pdf

Fefferman, Nina. Speech: Social Behavior and the Dynamics of Corrupted Blood in World of Warcraft. Delivered at Rice University, Duncan Hall : McMurtry Auditorium (Rm 1055) Houston, Texas for "Houston Games for Health Day" on December 4, 2008. Nina Fefferman's website: http://www.math.princeton.edu/~feferman/Epi.html

Gosugamers. http://www.gosugamers.net.

Gretch. http://www.gomtv.net.

Kutner, Lawrence and Olson, Cheryl. *Grand Theft Childhood: The Surprising Truth About Violent Video Games and What Parents Can Do*. 2008. Simon and Schuster. New York.

Lfgcomic.com

MBCGame. http://www.mbcgame.co.kr/.

Nardi, Bonnie. A Hybrid Cultural Ecology: World of Warcraft in China
        http://darrouzet-nardi.net/bonnie/fp559-Lindtner.pdf

Nardi, Bonnie. Learning Conversations in World of Warcraft
        http://darrouzet-nardi.net/bonnie/pdf/Nardi-HICSS.pdf

Nardi, Bonnie. Strangers and Friends: Collaborative Play in World of Warcraft
        http://darrouzet-nardi.net/bonnie/pdf/fp199-Nardi.pdf

O'Reily, Tim. Web 2.0. http://www.oreillynet.com/pub/a/oreilly/tim/news/2005/09/30/what-is-web-20.html

Ongamenet. http://www.ongamenet.com/.

Sacks, Harvey. *A Simplest Systematics for the Organization of Turn Taking for Conversation*. Academic Press. 1978. New York, London, San Francisco.

Sc2gg. http://www.sc2gg.com.

Silverman, David. *Harvey Sacks: Social Science and Conversation Analysis.* Oxford University Press, US. 1998.

Teamliquid. http://www.teamliquid.net.

World Cyber Games. http://www.wcg.com/6th/main.asp.

Science Fiction Storytelling and Identity:
Seeing the Human Through Android Eyes

Yvonne A. De La Cruz

"Individual science fiction stories may seem as trivial as ever to the blinder critics and philosophers of today - but the core of science fiction, its essence has become crucial to our salvation if we are to be saved at all."

-Isaac Asimov

For a long as we can remember, storytelling has been an integral part of communication between people. It is and has been a way to connect with others through ideas, thoughts, and dreams. Stories began as an oral tradition, meshing moral lessons with entertainment; however, as human technology advanced and the invention of writing came about, the storytelling format began to change. Oral narrative transformed into written stories, and those writings have become the center of our storytelling process. Books and screenplays are now the foundation of the stories we tell, while televised media and feature films are the hub of our entertainment pleasure.

As we look at the advancement of technology alongside the storytelling element, it's hard to ignore the role that both science and Science Fiction play within story plot lines. Just as science has become partner in a vital relationship with technological advancement, Science Fiction has become an important aspect of storytelling. Together, science and Science Fiction enhance both the moralistic teaching and the entertainment aspects within storytelling by addressing new concepts developed in technology and by providing further insights into human behavior. As Science Fiction writers incorporate science into their narratives, they attempt a search for answers beyond any boundaries that might limit explanations concerning humans and human behavior. Thus, Science Fiction writers have triggered a human fascination with questions that we may have pertaining to human existence: Why are we here? What is our purpose? What makes humans… well, humans? The answers we seek are not easy to come by.

As time has passed, our questions concerning human existence have come to the forefront of Science Fiction storytelling. The idea of molding and shaping a human-like figure with human consciousness and intelligence has become prominent in the examination of the human psyche in order to study our human selves. Although the creation of artificial life is a theme currently existent in Science Fiction, the concept was first addressed by Mary Shelley in her classic novel, *Frankenstein*. Shelley's novel attempts to highlight both the glories and the flaws of humanity by placing a human man in the position of God and, thereby, having him become a Creator of Life. Yet, the novel also places emphasis on human behavior—such as anger and compassion—and questions pertaining to whether human behavior is a learned trait or an innate quality. If a childlike creation is able to learn human behavior, does that make him, her, or it human? This question is represented throughout Shelley's story, and it has become such a prevalent question that Science Fiction writers have adopted it as a major theme. The use of this idea in order to attempt to define humanity and human behavior has continued in Science Fiction works like Isaac Asimov's *I, Robot* and Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*. Both of these novels are

examples of how Science Fiction begins to venture into further territories of human inquiry. Writers and readers of Science Fiction would agree that the genre provides a higher level of examination to the study of the human psyche because there are no boundaries placed within the realm of Science Fiction. The concepts that are highlighted in both Asimov's and Dick's novels are extensively addressed in the re-imagined television show *Battlestar Galactica*. In this series, attempts to define humanity and search for the answers to individual existence are furthered by the creation of Artificial Intelligence and by humanity's response to that creation. My research shows that Science Fiction as a genre addresses the limits of human experience by using the creation and development of Artificial Intelligence to define humanity. I analyze these novels of Shelley, Asimov, and Dick, their movie counterparts, and the television show *Battlestar Galactica*, using the parent/child dynamic and Asimov's notion of a "Frankenstein Complex" as a lens to view and explain human behavior.

The parent/child dynamic is prevalent in all of the storylines I discuss, and it is a concept that may help us to better understand ourselves whether we are placed in the position of parent—as an authority figure—or child. We may also better identify with the creation of A.I. if we see ourselves as the child in our parent/child relationship with God. For example, the parent/child dynamic between the Creator and his Creation in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is one of the foremost themes that helps us to reflect on our own relationship with God, because not only does Dr. Frankenstein place himself in the role of Creator and God, but he also becomes father to the child he has created. This relationship is identified through the "monster"'s continual referrals to Dr. Frankenstein as his father. Therefore, being children of God ourselves, we can identify with the monster who

searches for the love and acceptance of his creator. Shelley's novel also presents the concept of the "Frankenstein Complex," which is a common theme in Asimov's work, and it is also an idea that has continued into many Science Fiction novels that have followed. The "Frankenstein Complex" is a term used to describe the eminent fear that humanity has of artificial creation. Whether it is from the fear that God (our parent in the parent/child relationship) will punish us for our sins of creation or because we are afraid that our creations will trump our power and establish a position above us, the "Frankenstein Complex" seems to drive our behavior concerning the creation of Artificial Intelligence. Here, it is argued that that when the parent/child dynamic is coupled with the "Frankenstein Complex," it can be used as a effective lens through which to view all of the works I discuss.

Isaac Asimov's *I, Robot* is a collection of short stories based on the creation of non-human looking robots with added intelligence, which makes them more human-like. This collection also presents the concept of the "Frankenstein Complex" in almost every storyline. Asimov also attempts to define humanness as he furthers the idea of man's role as the creator of Artificial Intelligence. However, he seems to be highlighting the benefits rather than the dangers of Artificial Intelligence for all mankind. The first story in the collection, "Robbie," depicts a powerful relationship between a nursemaid robot—named Robbie after its model number RB—and a young girl. The mother of the girl becomes fearful of her child's loving and playful relationship with the robot (perhaps because she herself does not have such a relationship with her daughter) and persuades her husband to get rid of the child's playmate. It is clear that Robbie's nursemaid attributes benefit the little girl, and once Robbie is gone, she refuses to make any further efforts toward a loving

relationship. Here, the "Frankenstein Complex" is evident within the girl's mother, who fears Robbie because he seems to be taking on a human role. Also, Asimov presents a struggle in the parent/child dynamic by first placing Robbie in the position of parent over the little girl and then having the mother attempt to re-assert her role as parent over her child. By eliminating Robbie from the family, the mother establishes her power of authority over Robbie; thereby, reducing his role of parent to that of a child as well. At the same time, Asimov is intimating that the downfall of humanity comes not from the literal destruction of humanity at the hands of Artificial Intelligence, but by humanity's own hands because of human's distrust of other beings, coupled with the need to assert control over beings they deem inferior. Asimov's ideas about A.I. development in concert with the possible downfall of humanity are twofold: that robots are not "monsters that [would] destroy their creators, because… people who build robots will also know enough to build safeguards into them"; and, that when the time comes, if "robots are sufficiently intelligent to replace" humanity, then they should (Ingersoll 68-69). All of these concepts are clearly present throughout the remainder of Asimov's collection.

In Alex Proyas' film adaptation of *I, Robot*, he successfully incorporates all of the ideas that exist in the storylines of Asimov's collection, and he incorporates the concepts of parent/child dynamic along with the "Frankenstein Complex" are quite successfully. There is clearly a parent/child relationship evident between the robot Sonny and his creator Dr. Lanning, while Detective Del Spooner thoroughly represents the "Frankenstein Complex." However, at the end of the movie, the need for humans to maintain authority and control over the lesser beings— the robots—refers back to the idea that this storyline—as with most Science Fiction storylines nowadays—is highly geared around the "Frankenstein Complex." The film is different than most of Asimov's stories where some of the humans allow the A.I. to assert control of a situation because it is still completing the task given, and there seems to be no reason to change the system that is working. In essence, Proyas' film depicts a different undertone throughout the movie than that which appears in Asimov's short story collection: in the written stories there are no humans trying to play God in order to assert control over the A.I. creations, and most of the humans are able to find a symbiotic balance in living with their creations.

Philip K. Dick's novel, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, provides a clear example of the parent/child dynamic with the creators of Artificial Intelligence—identified as the Rosen Association—beginning to morph into a God-like entity. Dick's work raises the question of humanness by portraying the Nexus-6 androids, or "Andys," (known as Replicants in the *Blade Runner* movie version) as biologically human in representation with the ability to learn and adapt to human behavior. We are able to identify with these androids due to our own parent/child relationship with God, and also because their reasoning for revolt is equivalent to our basic human instinct: the want and need for survival. The "Frankenstein Complex" is fully flushed out in this story because the protagonist, Deckard, is hired to "retire"—that is, kill—the "Andys" because of their revolt. Here, the "Andys" are attempting to gain a higher status in their parent/child relationship, yet humans are attempting to maintain their control, or dominance, over those they see as lesser beings. Dick's novel seems to highlight the looming disaster that may come when humans begin to play God, reversing their role into position as Creator, thus changing their place in the parent/child dynamic.

The film production of Dick's novel, *Blade Runner*—directed by Ridley Scott— furthers the attempt to define humanity through the creation of A.I. by using and emphasizing the parent/child dynamic and the "Frankenstein Complex," which are the most apparent themes in the novel. The goal of the protagonist Deckard is to find and kill all of the renegade Replicants, who rebel because they are attempting to avoid being terminated. In one scene, Roy Batty—the leader of the rebel Replicants—appears to his Creator—the CEO of the Tyrell Corporation—to ask for more life. When this request is denied, Batty kills his creator, an act that clearly represents Man's destruction of God. In both of these major plot lines, Scott has utilized both the parent/child dynamic and the "Frankenstein Complex" in order to highlight the question of what it means to be human. By the end of the movie, Deckard begins to sympathize with one Replicant, Rachel, with whom he has a romantic interlude and falls in love. There is also an implication at the end that Deckard himself is a Replicant, a notion that plays with the idea that human qualities and behaviors may not only belong to humans if these qualities and behaviors are able to be lived and learned by other beings such as Artificial Intelligence.

All of these novels place focus on man's assumption that he can create life and take it away as he sees fit, which is a concept that is at the hub of the parent/child relationship I discuss. Also, these works begin to highlight the question as to whether or not Artificial Intelligence is an "intelligent design" to begin with. Both Shelley's and Dick's works seem to point a shameful finger towards those who choose to venture onto the path of creating Artificial Intelligence, thereby, highlighting the "Frankenstein Complex." They seem to shape a cloud of condemnation hovering over the Creators' decisions to create life and then destroy it. Asimov, on the other hand, seems to be inviting the idea of A.I. creation as a positive and enlightening journey towards answering the questions we all have about life. Even though Asimov does warn about the possibilities of disaster that are feasible upon creating artificial life, he points out that these dangers are only made possible through human fears pertaining to A.I. development. Either way, all of these storytellers, both in the written works and their cinematic versions, depict the destruction of humanity as the fault of humans themselves.

As Science Fiction has become more and more popular, the concept of Artificial Intelligence development has become an increasingly prevalent storyline. There have been many movies, television shows, and even anime films that have brought the idea of A.I. and android creation to the attention of the average movie/television viewer. Film trilogies like The Matrix and The Terminator utilize the "Frankenstein Complex" to further concerns about the creation and development of A.I.—particularly with the creation of robots and androids—and their effect on the evolution of humanity. These storylines also take into account the parent/child dynamic as humanity (the parent) attempts to assert control over Artificial Intelligence (the child). In the anime film, *Vexille*, the parent/child dynamic is furthered when one scientist creates a virus that would transform all humans into Cyborgs. His reasoning behind this transformation is to give humans eternal life. However, near the end of the film, it is clear that the scientist's true motive for the creation of the Cyborg virus is to gain control over all humanity. Thus, the parent—the scientist—is attempting to assert ultimate control over his children—humans who have been transformed into Cyborgs. By simply viewing these and other storylines that involve the creation of Artificial Intelligence, on any level, it is clear that we are fascinated by the clockworks of humanity. Our want and need to find out what makes humans human has come to the forefront of Science Fiction

storytelling, and we are using this genre to help us flush out those answers.

In many of its recent storylines, the re-imagined television series *Battlestar Galactica*, broadens the scope of the examination we are undertaking. The basis of this series is the creation of A.I.—also known as the Cylons—and the destruction of humanity at the hands of that creation. The center of this story is much like many other Science Fiction storylines that involve A.I. and android creation. Man creates Cylon as help to relieve him of the stresses of everyday life, Cylon gains consciousness and rebels because it no longer wants to be a slave to man. However, the re-imagined *Battlestar* Galactica begins to take up further questions about the definition of humanity by incorporating both religious theology and philosophy. The Cylons, who now look like flesh and blood human beings, return to the twelve planets of Kobol—the designated home base of humanity—after a forty-year leave of absence in order to destroy "humanity's children" because it is the "will of God." (*Battlestar Galactica: The Miniseries*). The Cylons entire reasoning for the destruction of man stems from a belief in a one true God, while the humans still believe in a polytheistic faith based on many of the Greek Gods we are familiar with. This small seed planted within the storyline grows and changes the story as it evolves from season to season. The Cylons are looked at from a viewer's perspective as becoming more and more human-like because we are able to identify with some of the human qualities that are inherent in the Cylons' belief system. With this concept in mind, we are able to follow the human learning capabilities of one Cylon—Caprica 6—as she transforms from an obvious machine (she breaks the neck of an infant in the miniseries in order to observe the fragility of human life) to a loving and understanding human-like being (as she loves another human being, becomes pregnant, and learns to appreciate all life no matter if human or Cylon). Sharon Agathon, another human-like Cylon, also evolves as the show progresses because of her love for her husband—human Karl "Helo" Agathon—and the daughter that both share. Evidently, it is through love and becoming an individual apart from the rest of the Cylon singularity that both Caprica and Sharon are able to develop their human-like qualities (Moore 109). Through the examination of Caprica, Sharon, and other Cylon models like them, it is clear that the series' creators have enabled themselves to explore a new area of A.I. creation that might answer questions of what it means to be human. Although this series unmistakably uses the "Frankenstein Complex" and the parent/child dynamic in the opening episodes of the series, later on it is able to venture closer to the definition of humanity by adding religious theology and philosophy to the storyline.

As Science Fiction continues to incorporate the creation and development of Artificial Intelligence into its storylines, the definition of what it means to be human will change and grow as well. The storytellers of this type of storyline are clearly interested in coming to an ultimate definition of this question. It is interesting to see that the creators of all of these stories have used the "Frankenstein Complex" and the parent/child dynamic to place emphasis on our human fears and control issues in order to attempt to define humanity, and perhaps as this type of storyline develops in Science Fiction, more writers and storytellers will incorporate other concepts—just as the writers of *Battlestar Galactica* have—in order to encourage attempts at a more clear definition. Even so, as the actual creation of Artificial Intelligence develops and changes, these questions have become even more relevant. The storylines concerning A.I. are not only pertinent because we wish to define ourselvesm but we also find interest in this topic because the possibility of

creating A.I. with the ability to adapt to and learn human behavior is very real. With A.I. technology advances almost literally knocking on our front door, fear of losing control has become omnipresent. Although Science Fiction is in fact fiction, there is a popular belief that the science behind it may become very real. It is in this light that we ask ourselves if the fears we have are plausible and whether we are able to assert the control we would want to have over our creations. In the end, perhaps the biggest fear we have, as we give in to our fears and loosen our control over A.I. creations, comes to this: If we create A.I. in human likeness and consciousness, do we threaten to rid ourselves of the very things that make us human in the first place? Perhaps the loss of our place in humanity is the reason why we hold onto our fears and attempt to keep that control.

Works Cited

Battlestar Galactica: The Miniseries. Dir. Michael Rymer. Perf. Edward James Olmos, Mary McDonnell, Katee Sackhoff, Jamie Bamber, James Callis, Tricia Helfer, Grace Parks, Michael Hogan. DVD. Sci Fi Channel, 2003. Film.

Ingersoll, Earl G., Isaac Asimov, Gregory Fitzgerald, Jack Wolf, Joshua Duberman, and Robert Philmus. "A Conversation with Isaac Asimov." Science Fiction Studies Mar 1987: 68-77. JSTOR. University Library. California State University, Stanislaus. Web.9 Feb 2009. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4239795>.

Moore, Robert W.. ""To Be a Person": Sharon Agathon and the Social Expression of Individuality." Cylons in America: Critical Studies in Battlestar Galactica. Ed. Tiffany Potter and C.W. Marshall. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, Inc., 2008.

Works Consulted

Asimov, Isaac. Asimov's Chronology of Science and Discovery. New York: Harper Collins, 1994.

Asimov, Isaac. I, Robot. New York: Bantam Dell, 1950.

Asimov, Isaac, and Karen A. Frenkel. Robots: Machines in Man's Image. New York: Harmony Books, 1985.

Battlestar Galactica and Philosophy. Ed. Josef Steiff and Tristan D. Tamplin. Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company, 2008.

Bladerunner. Dir. Ridley Scott. Perf. Harrison Ford, Rutger Hauer, Sean Young, Edward James Olmos, Darryl Hannah. DVD. Warner Bros, 1982.

Cylons in America: Critical Studies in Battlestar Galactica. Ed. Tiffany Potter and C.W. Marshall. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, Inc., 2008.

Dick, Phillip K.. Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep. New York: Balllantine Books, 1968.

Frankenstein. Dir. James Whale. Perf. Colin Clive, Mae Clark, John Boles, Boris Karloff. DVD. Universal Pictures, 1931.

Goss, Theodore and John Paul Riquelme. "From Superhuman to Posthuman: The Gothic Technological Imaginary in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein and Octavia Butler's Xenogenesis." Modern Fiction Studies 2007: 434-459. Project Muse. MUSE. California State University, Stanislaus. 29 Mar 2008 <http://muse.jhu.edu>.

Gunn, James. Isaac Asimov, the Foundations of Science Fiction. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2005.

Herman, William E., and Bryan K. Herman. "Humanistic Themes in Science Fiction: An Interview with David A. Kyle." The Humanistic Psychologist 2006: 263-280. Project Muse. MUSE. California State University, Stanislaus. 12 Apr 2008 <http://muse.jhu.edu>.

I, Robot. Dir. Alex Proyas. Perf. Will Smith, Bridget Moynahan, Alan Tudyk, James Cromwell. DVD. 20th Century Fox, 2004.

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein. Dir. Kenneth Branaugh. Perf. Robert De Niro, Kenneth Branaugh, Helena Bonhan Carter, Aiden Quinn, Ian Holm. DVD. TriStar Pictures, 1994.

Pinker, Steven. "Toward A Consilient Study of Literature." Philosophy and Literature Apr 2007: 162-178. Project Muse. MUSE. California State University, Stanislaus. 12 Apr 2008 <http://muse.jhu.edu>.

Robots, Androids, and Mechanical Odditites: The Science Fiction of Philip K. Dick. Ed. Patricia S. Warrick and Martin H. Greenberg. Southern Illinois University Press, 1984.

Science Fiction Writers: Critical Studies of the Major Authors from Early Nineteenth Century to the Present Day. Ed. E. F. Bleiler. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1982.

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*. New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2003.

So Say We All: An Unauthorized Collection of Thoughts and Opinions on Battlestar Galactica. Ed. Richard Hatch. Dallas: Benbella Books, Inc., 2006.

A Nazi German cartoon circa 1938 depicts the Jews
as an octopus encircling the globe.[1]

---

[1] Plank, Josef. "Churchill and the Great Republic: Seppla, Jews as an Octopus Encircling the Globe."
Library of Congress. 1935-1943. http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/churchill/interactive/_html/wc0213.html

ANTI-SEMITISM IN NAZI GERMANY

Isaac Farhadian

From the first century of the Christian Era, for a period reflecting two thousand years of anti-Semitism, there have been three singular anti-Judaic measures implemented against European populations of Jewish people: conversion, expulsion, and complete annihilation.[2] Raul Hilberg argues that anti-Semitism has had three successive goals during its post-Roman era. Hilberg proclaims that the "missionaries of Christianity had said in effect: You have no right to live among us as Jews. The secular rulers who followed proclaimed: You have no right to live among us. The German Nazis decreed: You have no right to live." [3] Why was anti-Semitism so widespread in Germany, both in the political sphere and in the cultural sphere, and what were the contributing factors that led to the near-annihilation of European Jewry?

In the eyes of anti-Semites, conversion and expulsion were only temporary solutions in dealing with the Jewish Question. Hilberg asserts, "The process began with the attempt to drive the Jews into Christianity. The development was continued in order to force the victims into exile. It was finished when the Jews were driven to their deaths." In other words, Hilberg argues, the cyclical triad of anti-Jewish resentment did not originate in Germany but rather was completed in utter destruction. The Nazis only differed from previous regimes because they turned actions into words in eradicating the Jews, whom they identified as racially degenerate, parasitic, Untermensch (sub-humans),

economic powerhouses, media owners, Marxists, World War I backstabbers, and World War II instigators.[4] The third and final stage of Hilberg's cyclical triad was fully executed under the Nazis' fanatical belief that Jews initiated the Second World War. The National Socialists did not "discard the past; they built upon it; they did not begin a development; they completed it." [5]

The earliest accounts of National Socialist anti-Semitic policies towards Jews originated during the infant stages of the socialist movement which gained ground under the highly unpopular Weimar Republic. [6] The lack of stability of the Weimar regime was largely attributed to the humiliating defeat of the Great War, the subjugation of foreign oppression, and the economic depression that followed soon afterwards.[7] Also associated with the Weimar was the series of disastrous events in the post-war years: financial collapse; rising inflation; the inherent structural weakness of a foreign-designed constitution; the deep resentment of the signing of the Treaty of Versailles; the lack of support for the Republic among the German people; and, most importantly, as National Socialists argued later, lack of awareness of the degree to which International Jewry was attempting to control

---

[2] Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2003), 4.

[3] Hilberg, *Destruction*, 5.

[4] Jeffrey Herf, *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda During World War II and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 152-53.

[5] Hilberg, *Destruction*, 5.

[6] Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany* (Princeton, New Jersey Princeton University Press, 2007), 38.

[7] Eberhard Jäckel, *Hitler's Weltanschauung* (Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1972), 27.

the German people. [8] The lack of anti-Semitism this newly instated republic demonstrated only intensified suspicions amongst radical nationalists that this "disgusting" form of oppressive government, leading to the dismemberment of the Second Reich, was the work of Jews. [9] The Weimar Republic was seen as an instrument of exploitation created by Democratic Jews who wanted to bankrupt the resources of the Fatherland.[10] It was thought that international Jewry might successfully take over Germany by establishing a democratic rule where their voices would be much louder than the voices of the rest of the German people.[11] National Socialists believed that the Jews established the Weimar Republic because they knew they could not be legally persecuted or punished for their transgressions and financial and political ambitions under a democratic or Marxist administration.[12]

On February 25, 1920, the Twenty-Five Point Program of the National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP) was promulgated in the city of Munich. The extremist ideology of the Twenty-Five Point Program was evident in the wide range of topics it addressed: German ultra-nationalism; complete denunciation of the Treaty of Versailles; condemnation of the newly established Weimar Republic; "Racial Hygiene"; military rearmament; territorial expansionism; and hostility towards large businesses.[13] This program established the

ideological foundation blocks of the Nazi party. It was of primary significance because it not only symbolized the ambitions of the growing party but it also laid out the system of beliefs under which its future administration would govern.

The first mention of racial segregationist measures against Jews lay in Point Four of the program, addressing the construct of Racial Hygiene. It dictated, "Only those who are our fellow countrymen can become citizens. Only those who have German blood, regardless of creed, can be our countrymen. Hence no Jew can be a countryman." [14] From the very beginning, the leaders of the Nazi party knew that their dream of establishing an Aryan utopia would have to come at the expense of excluding and ultimately exterminating would-be offenders that could infect (as they saw it) the racial purity of the Nordic race. These groups included the Sinti (Gypsy), the Roma (a subgroup of the Romani people), and the Jews.

In Point Twenty-Four, the program dictated the following:

> We demand freedom of religion for all religious denominations within the state so long as they do not endanger its existence or oppose the moral senses of the Germanic race. The Party as such advocates the standpoint of a positive Christianity without binding itself confessionally to any one denomination. It combats the Jewish-materialistic spirit within and around us, and is convinced that a lasting recovery of our nation can only succeed from within the framework: The good of the state before the good of the individual. [15]

The interesting part of this excerpt is that when referring to religion it mentions mainly

---

[8] Weitz, *Weimar Germany* 35-37.

[9] Jeffrey Herf, *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda During World War II and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 147.

[10] Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company 1999), 562.

[11] Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany* (Princeton, New Jersey Princeton University Press, 2007), 139-140.

[12] Herf, *Enemy*, 152-53.

[13] Donald D. Wall, *Nazi Germany and World War II* (Belmont : Thomas Wadsworth, 2003), 29

[14] The Avalon Projecct: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy. "Program of the National Socialist German Workers' Party." http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/nsdappro.asp.

[15] Konrad Heiden, *A History of National Socialism*, 1935. Translated by Alfred A. Knopf, page 17.

Christian sects such as Catholicism and Protestantism but when it references Jews, it simply identifies them as materialists rather than a religious group that has existed for three millennia. In Nazi Germany Jews were not persecuted on the grounds of their creed but rather for many other ideologically-driven reasons or presumptions.

Why did early Nazi leaders such as Adolf Hitler, Anton Drexler, Gottfried Feder, and Dietrich Eckart propose such appalling discriminatory measures towards the Jewish population not only in Germany but also in Europe as a whole? The answer to that question can be found in Germany's defeat during the Great War. Throughout the course of his infamous book *Mein Kampf*, Hitler speaks of a struggle not only between races but also between ideologies. Time after time Hitler makes reference to Marxism and Jewry as interchangeable concepts used as a common rationale to destroy civilization. He refers to Marxism as a Jewish doctrine "that rejects the aristocratic principle of Nature and replaces the eternal privilege of power and strength by the mass of numbers and their dead weight. Thus it denies the value of personality in man, contests the significance of nationality and race, and thereby withdraws from humanity the premise of its existence and its culture." [16] The fact that most of Bolsheviks who were involved with the October Revolution were of Jewish descent only added fuel to the hysterical belief that Communism was a Jewish-inspired and Jewish-led movement seeking world domination.[17] The fall of Czarist Russia was attributed solely to Jewish revolutionaries whose ultimate goal was to destroy all established order, annihilate

Christianity from the face of the earth and ultimately impose their own dominion from horizon to horizon.[18]

In *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, Saul Friedlander argues that "the most explosive ideological mixture present in postwar Germany was a fusion of constant fear of the Red Menace with nationalist resentment born of defeat."[19] Communism was Nazism's greatest adversary in post-World War I Germany. Up until the early 1930s, the German Communist Party (KPD) had won the majority of the vote, thus establishing itself as a cohesive movement whose chief concern was to obtain administrative power. The most powerful tool the Nazis often exploited to their advantage was the linkage they established between modernization, advanced capitalism, Bolshevism and Jews. The vast majority of the German population resented the encroachment of Marxism and feared a gradual Marxist takeover in all facets of German everyday life. Hitler utilized his charismatic oratorical skills to lend authority to public denunciation of all communist activities and beliefs; his outspoken linkage of communists and Jews was highly popular. As a result of combining growing anti-Semitism with everything that was supposedly wrong with Germany, economically, socially, and racially, Hitler achieved unprecedented success with his diatribes, and party membership flourished to record highs.

Incidents that further added fuel to the general notion that Jews were disproportionately using an insurrectionist Marxist creed to achieve dominion in Germany were uprisings such as the Spartacist Rebellion of 1919, which aimed to overthrow the democratically established Weimar Republic. The goal of the Spartacist

---

[16] Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company 1999), 64.

[17] Jeffrey Herf, *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda During World War II and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 100, 102, 108.

[18] Saul Friedlander, *Nazi Germany and the Jews* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers 1997), 90.

[19] Friedlander, *Jews, 90.*

uprising was to "create a socialist state run by the workers' and soldiers' councils that had sprung up all over the country as the old imperial system disintegrated. With the model of Lenin's Bolshevik Revolution in Russia before their eyes, they pressed on plans for a second revolution to complete their work."[20] The failed insurrection was led by Rosa Luxemburg, founder of the German Communist Party of Germany (KPD) in 1918, along with Leo Jogisches, Paul Levi, and Julian Balthasar Marchlewski, who were all Jews.[21] Friedlander argues that the prominence of Jews amongst the leaders of the failed revolution in Bavaria added further incentive to the already passionate anti-Semitic hatred among right-wing fanatics.[22]

Soon named Führer of the Nationalist Socialist German Workers Party, Hitler foresaw the role of Jewish involvement in Marxism and thus made it one of his chief topics during his speeches. By doing so, he exacerbated what was once mild anti-Semitism among the general public, which became more and more vitriolic. In *Mein Kampf,* Hitler emphasized that "if, with help of his Marxist creed, the Jew is victorious over the other peoples of the world, his crown will be the funeral wreath of humanity and this planet will, as it did thousands of years ago, move through the ether devoid of men."[23] From such passages, we can infer that Hitler saw the world in two dimensions: black and white. For him without total victory, there would be an utter devastation of the Fatherland and eventual decline of the rest of Europe.

Communism's purpose was seen as destructive to individualism, the class system, and ethnic nationalism, which according to the conservative Far Right was the greatest of sins. Without nationalism or pride of heritage, then the Nazis believed that the German race would come to an end. Hitler believed that the Jews who had no homeland and who were scattered across the nations of the world favored anti-nationalism on the grounds that they were always the minority. In essence, he believed that Communism offered Jews a way in which they could remain powerful through high positions, behind the mask of Marxism, which sees all men as equals in gender, race, religion, class, and heritage. Hitler viewed Marxism as the destroyer of culture and he believed he was predestined to fight against this "foreign disease". He concludes his third chapter by proclaiming "I believe that I am in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator: by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord."[24]

Among the chief concerns of the Nazi regime from its inception was the notion of Racial Purity. Their argument for this base ideal was the omnipotent driving force for the destruction of supposedly lesser-valued races. The idea that some races are in some way favored more than others played a monumental role in shaping Nazi governmental society in all facets.[25] The proponents of Social Darwinism argue that full-blooded Germans were inherently culturally superior and that this superiority legitimized German rule over Slavic and Polish peoples.[26] Indeed, in the immediate pre-war years the wars of different ideologies came to an abrupt end, with National Socialism triumphing over all other competing political doctrines.

---

[20] Richard J. Evans *The Coming of the Third Reich* (New York: Penguin Group 2005), 74.

[21] Evans, *Third Reich*, 57.

[22] Evans, *Third Reich*, 91.

[23] Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company 1999), 65.

[24] Hitler, *Mein Kampf,* 76.

[25] Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 65.

[26] Michael Burleigh, Wolfgang Wippermann, *The Racial State Germany 1933-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991), 25.

With the conclusion of the political takeover in Europe, a new conflict arose from the ashes of the Fatherland, which led to a racial war categorizing people into superior or inferior classes on the basis of Nazi pseudo-science. From the very beginning, the Party founders believed that the Germans belonged to a mythical master race that had existed from the dawn of humanity. The results of "scientific" analysis of the time legitimized the belief that the Germanic race was indeed superior and that the greatest threat to its continued existence would be interbreeding with lesser races such as the Gypsies, Jews, Poles, Roma, and Sinti, which would result in cultural deterioration of the elite.[27] According to Richard Weikart, "Hitler believed that these biologically unequal humans, just as other organisms, were locked in an eternal, inescapable Darwinian struggle for existence. The strong triumph and the weak perish."[28] This appropriation of the Darwinian creed of the survival of the fittest became the rationalization for the persecution of all those who threatened the Aryans. Hitler also believed that if the subjugation of the inferior were not to be achieved, the racial purity of the German elite would be destroyed and lost forever. Implementing laws that distinguish, separate, and persecute inferior races would preserve the master race from any threat, either domestic or foreign. Hitler may have believed that he was only speeding up the process of Nature in destroying the weak who are not able to adapt. The greatest fear of the National Socialists was that over time the racially "unfit" would multiply exponentially, rebel, and overthrow the Aryan race from power and authority, resulting in racial "degeneration."

When the Nazis finally acquired power in 1933, the first anti-Jewish labor laws were voted into law. The expropriation of Jews first began in the fields of education: drastic measures were taken on an unprecedented scale against Jewish professors, teachers and students, and thereafter against Jewish physicians, lawyers, bankers, soldiers, government officials, storeowners, media moguls, newspapers, theatre, and the arts. Non-Aryans were completely excluded from society because they were seen as corrupting the master race. Positions that once were held by Jews were now being offered to and bestowed upon Aryans. Prior to this time, 60% of the banks were controlled by Jews; 80% of lawyers and judges were Jews; some of the most popular newspapers and theatres were run by Jews; and successful chains of department stores were controlled by Jews. The success, power and influence of the Jews who dominated the socio-economical and cultural aspects of everyday German life was a reality too great for the Nazis to ignore.

A prime target of National Socialists had been the chains of department stores, "where since the nineteenth century people had been able to go to buy cheap, mass produced goods of all kinds. Many of the founders of such stores were Jewish." [29] The most prominent chains of department stores that were controlled by Jews were those of the Wertheims and the Tietzes, whose total stores numbered over 65 around the capitol city of Berlin. The Wertheim's controlled a modest seven shops whose employees numbered 10,450, with sales of 128 million Reichsmarks.[30] By 1928, the Tietzes owned 58 department stores whose employees numbered 31,450 and whose annual sales generated a staggering 490 million Reichsmarks. Richard J. Evans proclaims

[27] Michael Burleigh, Wolfgang Wippermann, *The Racial State Germany 1933-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991), 38.

[28] Richard Weikart, *From Darwin to Hitler* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2004), 7.

[29] Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power* (New York: Penguin Group 2005), 378.

[30] Evans, *Power,* 379.

that, "these department stores accounted for less than five percent of total retail sales in Germany up to the late 1920's."[31] The Nazis used this encouragement and exploited the continuing hatred toward the Jewish role in the German economy. The reality that a small minority of the nation controlled so much wealth and power was the driving force that led to the nationalism and persecution of all non-Aryan businesses.

The idiosyncratic goal of Aryanization was to expropriate not only all Jews, but also all homosexuals, Gypsies, Romas, Communists, people with mental disabilities or illnesses, feminists, a-socials, Jehovah witnesses and any other minority group which played any kind of socio-economic role in the German nation. Its purpose was clear: it strove to exclude all alien races that are racially unfit, poisonous, less valuable, low class, or destroyers of racial purity from the national community. Aryanization was made possible through a series of legislative acts known as the Nuremberg Laws, passed during the Nazi takeover of the administration. The infamous Nuremberg Laws were series of edicts whose ultimate purpose was to denaturalize, exclude, and expel all non-Aryans. In October 1935, Section One of the Nuremberg Laws, known as the Law for the Protection of the Hereditary Health of the German People, was passed, explicitly separating alien groups deemed as racially unfit, from Aryans.[32]

This campaign of exclusion was further legitimized when the Law of the Protection of German Blood and Honor was initiated to prevent miscegenation between Germans and so-called alien races such as Jews, Blacks, and Gypsies. The Far Right vehemently believed that "interbreeding between races

would result in bastardization and a deterioration of racial value."[33] Sections One through Four of the Law of German Blood and Honor dictated the following:

> Section 1; Marriages between Jews and citizens of German or kindred blood are forbidden. Marriages concluded in defiance of this law are void, even if, for the purpose of evading this law, they were concluded abroad. Section 2; Sexual relations outside marriage between Jews and nationals of German or kindred blood are forbidden. Section 3; Jews will not be permitted to employ female citizens of German or kindred blood as domestic servants. Section 4; Jews are forbidden to display the Reich and national flag or the national colors. On the other hand they are permitted to display the Jewish colors. The exercise of this right is protected by the State.[34]

Mercy did not exist in any aspect of life when in dealing with Semites. Burleigh argues that Nazis envisioned Jews and others as the embodiment of evil who were capable of anything and everything including the greatest sin of all, which is the racial deterioration of the Germanic Nordic race.[35]

The second regulation under the Nuremberg Laws was The Reich Citizenship Law, which was passed on September 15, 1935. The Reich Citizenship Law deprived all Jews of their German citizenship and introduced a new distinction between "Reich citizens" and "nationals." The Reich Citizenship Law excluded all minorities from membership in society and expropriated their

---

[31] Evans, *Power*, 379.

[32] Saul Friedlander, *Nazi Germany and the Jews* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers,1997), 152.

[33] Michael Burleigh, Wolfgang Wippermann, *The Racial State Germany 1933-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991), 38.

[34] Jewish Virtual Library, "Law for the Protection German Blood and Honor," http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/nurmlaw2.html.

[35] Michael Burleigh, Wolfgang Wippermann, *The Racial State Germany 1933-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991), 36.

human rights. They no longer had the same rights in regards to education, public service, military service, professions, political possessions, ownership, personal freedom, freedom of religion, freedom of the press, or the right to petition. Article Two of the Reichstag Citizenship Law declared that "1. A citizen of the Reich is that subject only who is of German or kindred blood and who, through his conduct, shows that he is both desirous and fit to serve the German people and Reich faithfully. 2. The right to citizenship is acquired by the granting of Reich citizenship papers. 3. Only the citizen of the Reich enjoys full political rights in accordance with the provision of the laws."[36] The major effect of the Reich Citizenship law was that it made Jews and other minorities second class citizens who were politically powerless to stand up to Nazi persecution, while reserving full political and social rights only to full-blooded Germans.

Aryanization was so successful that within three months, 83% of the handicrafts, 82% of the monetary services, 50% of the individual businesses, and 26% of the industry owned by Jews were taken over by Nazis in Vienna alone.[37] After Aryanization was complete in Austria, only eight of the original 86 Jewish-owned banks remained unscathed, while the rest got liquidated into the Reich Bank.[38] This was the beginning of the end for European Jewry in the Fatherland. In 1939 Aryanization was further intensified, and with unrelenting speed. Evans proclaims that "[A]ll Jewish-owned businesses had disappeared in Vienna. Of the 33,000 Jewish enterprises that had existed in the Austrian capitol at the time of Anschluss [Annexation], some 7000 had already been liquidated" in May of 1938.[39] Five thousand of the remaining 26,000 were Aryanizied and the other 21,000 were completely liquidated into the national socialist movement.[40] Also by the end of 1938, a total of 44,000 of 70,000 Jewish owned apartments were Aryanizied as well.[41] As an immediate result of the decimation of the purportedly Jewish-controlled elements of German-speaking society, many Jews fell into severe poverty. By 1939 five to six Jewish families were living in one apartment room, with an obvious lack of plumbing, radio, telephone, kitchens, bathrooms, beds, and overall space to accommodate the needs of all residents.

A crucial precipitating crisis for European Jewry occurred when a European Jew named Herschel Grynszpan took action into his own hands. Grynszpan was a seventeen-year-old Jew living in Paris who had discovered that his parents, along with thousands of other innocent Jews, had been expropriated and deported from Germany to Poland. In an act of vengeance, Grynszpan purchased a revolver and marched towards the German embassy.[42] On November 7, 1938, he eventually came across a German diplomat named Ernst Vom Rath, and shot him. The bullet did not kill him instantly; he received a wound which would be fatal later that day. Joseph Goebbels, the Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, decided to make this Jewish assassination of a German diplomat into a major propaganda weapon that painted the incident as an assault by world Jewry on the Third Reich.[43] Immediately after the assassination of Rath,

36 Jewish Virtual Library, "Law for the Protection German Blood and Honor," http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/nurmlaw3.html
37 Saul Friedlander, *Nazi Germany and the Jews* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1997), 243
38 Friedlander, *Jews,* 243.

39 Friedlander, *Jews,* 243.
40 Friedlander, *Jews,* 243.
41 Friedlander, *Jews,* 243.
42 Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power* (New York: Penguin Group 2005), 580.
43 Evans, *Power*, 580.

Goebbels ordered vicious assaults on synagogues and on Jewish neighborhoods. The first measure demanded by the Ministry of Propaganda portrayed the Jews as collectively responsible for the death of Rath. According to Burleigh, the Jews were forced to pay one billion Reichsmarks to the Nazi regime for "recompensation."[44]

For the National Socialists this event now definitively justified any and all kinds of maltreatment of the Jews. This was the turning-point, after which time the Nazi regime felt justified in acting without remorse, mercy or humanity, and in ignoring international interference. According to Evans, "Hitler immediately issued instructions to Goebbels for a massive, coordinated, physical assault on Germany's Jews, coupled with the arrest of as many Jewish men as possible into leaving Germany, through a terrifying, nationwide outburst of violence and destruction."[45] The assassination of Ernst Vom Rath was significant for the Nazi regime because it provided the "propagandistic justification for the final, total expropriation of Germany's Jews and their complete segregation from the rest of the German economy, society, and culture."[46]

On November 9, 1938, the infamous pogrom of state-organized massacre known as "Kristallnacht" or "Night of the Broken Glass" was planned and ordered. Goebbels, with Hitler's administrative permission, decreed a "state of emergency" in which Party members, supporters, Schutzstaffel (Protective Squadron, abbreviated SS), Sicherheitsdienst (Security Service, abbreviated SD), and Gestapo (Secret State Police) were encouraged to believe it was their national duty to despoil, wreak havoc, loot, pillage, plunder, ransack, rape, ravage, strip, and depredate all Jewish synagogues, stores, banks, schools, law firms, businesses, and Jewish-controlled media throughout the nation. The total amount of damage done during the infamous Night of the Broken Glass – the reference was to the countless Jewish shop windows broken - is recorded in a preliminary confidential report by Reinhard Tristan Eugen Heydrich to Hermann Wilhelm Göring on November 11, 1938.

> The extent of the destruction of Jewish shops and houses cannot yet be verified by figures . . . 815 shops destroyed, 171 dwelling houses set on fire or destroyed only indicate a fraction of the actual damage so far as arson is concerned . . . 119 synagogues were set on fire, and another 76 completely destroyed . . . 20,000 Jews were arrested. 36 deaths were reported and those seriously injured were also numbered at 36. Those killed and injured are Jews. . . .[47]

More recent estimates claim that all synagogues were burned, 40,000 Jews were arrested, over 200 Jews died, 7,500 shops were destroyed, and estimates of total national damages reached as high as one billion Reichsmarks ($250,000,000 U.S. dollars in 1938).[48] The estimated damage of broken glass alone came to five million marks ($1,250,000 in 1938).[49] The result of Vom Rath's assassination in Paris was fully exploited to justify the expropriation and subjugation of the Jewish community in Germany: the action of one European Jew resulted in the suffering of an entire nation's Jewish population. All Jews were held completely responsible, whether or not they

---

[44] Michael Burleigh, Wolfgang Wippermann, *The Racial State Germany 1933-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991), 93.

[45] Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power* (New York: Penguin Group 2005), 581.

[46] Evans, *Power*, 581.

[47] William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc. 1960), 386.

[48] Donald D. Wall, *Nazi Germany and World War II* (Belmont : Thomas Wadsworth, 2003), 114-15.

[49] Shirer, *Rise and Fall,* 386.

were in any way involved. The whole Jewish population of Germany became the propagandistic scapegoat for Rath's murder and Jewish victims of the pogrom were held responsible to pay for the destruction of their own property.

Hitler fervently believed that it was the Jews who started World War II. During the war, the "propaganda of the Nazi regime repeatedly asserted that an actual political subject, an actor called Jewry or international Jewry, was guilty of starting and prolonging the war and that a Jewish international conspiracy was intent on exterminating Germany and the Germans."[50] The ideology behind Nazism was survivalism in a world filled with conflict. Jewry was seen as at the forefront of all problems both domestic and abroad. The conflict, if not settled or crushed, would in the minds of the National Socialists ultimately destroy the racially fit, risking the eventual destruction of mankind. Along with his senior officials, Hitler believed that the reason the World War II ignited was Jewish manipulation of capitalists in Europe and America and communists in Russia into fighting their wars for them. The Nazis constantly referred to the world as dominated by International Jewry whose fundamental goal was to destroy all opposition hostile to the interests of Jews. In this case, it was Nazi Germany that was the devil incarnate in the eyes of international Jewry. Hitler believed that the world was continuously struggling to defeat this monolithic system of corruption, but had always fallen short of accomplishing its goal. Thus his war was indeed targeted at the whole world, because he believed all global organizations were run by Jews seeking to extinguish the Germans' hopes of unification, growth, and racial evolution.

Jeffrey Herf, in *The Jewish Enemy*, argues that the Nazis fervently believed the Jews had successfully launched World War II in order for the National Socialists to be obliged to wage war on European Jewry.[51] In response to the threat of global war between Aryanization and Jewry, Hitler declared that "today I will once more be a prophet: if the international Jewish financiers in and outside Europe should succeed in plunging the nations once more into a world war, then the result will not be the Bolshevization of the earth, and thus the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe."[52] He clearly believed that defeating the Jews was in part a necessity for an ongoing evolutionary cycle of the strong prevailing over the weak.

The greatest challenge to the spread of Nazism was without a doubt the international presence of Jewry in politics, economics, and financial banking. National Socialism obsessively reiterated that the idiosyncratic goal of Jewry was to destroy the racial purity of the German people. "Reactionary Modernism" dictated that National Socialism must liberate technology from the supremacy of wealth from Jewish materialism. Nazi historian Peter Schwerber argues that only victorious racial superiority over the lesser-valued races could prevail against Jewish materialism; it was thought that whereas the Jews destroyed and distorted technology, the Master Race was ideally suited to it.[53] The laws of nature demanded Reactionary Modernism in the sense that all political,

---

[50] Jeffrey Herf, *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda During World War II and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 2.

[51] Herf, *Enemy*, 5.

[52] Stein, Dr. S. D., "Statements by Hitler and Senior Nazis Concerning Jews and Judaism." http://www.ess.uwe.ac.uk/genocide/statements.htm.

[53] Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 193.

racial, and economic opposition must be eradicated or mankind would suffer complete annihilation. Herf contends "Radical anti-Semitism rested on the belief that the Jews were a cohesive, politically active subject - that is, a group united on a global scale by racial bonds that transcended any allegiance to nation-states."[54] He further attests that this powerful international entity of Jewry led the Nazis to believe that it controlled and manipulated puppet states to serve its own evil interests.[55] Thus it was Nazi creed that the Allies, Britain, France, and the United States, only declared war on Germany because they were financially and politically motivated and funded by world Jewish leaders who wanted the destruction of the Germanic race.

It was the young Jew's decisive act of defiance in 1938 that finally enabled the Nazis to envision the Judenfrei (free of Jews) German society, which began to become a reality in all facets of life. The assassination of Ernst Eduard Vom Rath fed the National Socialists the propaganda justification for the final, total expropriation of Germany's Jews and their complete segregation from the rest of the German economy, society, and culture.[56] The reality of Volksgemeinschaft (Racial Community) began to be fulfilled as all lesser-valued races were expelled, and expropriated from German life.[57] Arguably, the most portentous moment in the lead-up to WWII resulted from the assassination of an unimportant diplomat whose death was seen by the Nazis not as a loss but rather as a basis for promoting the decimation of the Jewish

presence in German life. In this chain of events, efforts to decimate the entire European population of Jews were set in motion.

The stage had been set for the final act. The third and final element of Hilberg's cyclical triad (Conversion, Expulsion, Deportation) was soon to occur. The Final Solution to the Jewish Question was now proclaimed in bold letters. But in the event, the solution would not be deportation but rather the attempt at complete annihilation of the Jewish population of Europe. Genocide and ethnic cleansing grew out of an uninterrupted chain of events that reduced and crippled the Jewish presence in Europe, involving practices on an unprecedented scale we should hope never to see repeated in any approximation.

---

[54] Herf, *Enemy*, 7.

[55] Herf, *Enemy*, 7.

[56] Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power* (New York: Penguin Group 2005), 581.

[57] Thomas Saunders, "Nazism and Social Revolution," in Gordon Martel, ed., *Modern Germany Reconsidered, 1870-1945* (London: Routledge, 1992), 166-67.

Primary Sources

Hitler, Adolf. *Mein Kampf.* Translated by Ralph Manheim New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999.

Jewish Telegraphic Agency Bulletin. "Anti-Jewish Laws and Regulations Already Introduced in Sudeten Districts: Very Few Jews Remain in Occupied Areas." Institut zum Studium der Judenfrage Collection. Stanford: Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, October 19, 1938.

—. "Passports of German Jews Declared Invalid: Identity Cards with Finger Prints for all Jews in Germany." Institut zum Studium der Judenfrage Collection. Stanford: Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, October 10, 1938.

Jewish Virtual Library. September 14, 2008. http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/nurmlaw2.html (accessed October 11, 2008).

Plank, Josef. "Churchill and the Great Republic: Seppla, Jews as an Octopus Encircling the Globe." Library of Congress. 1935-1943. http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/churchill/interactive/_html/wc0213.html (accessed December 1, 2008).

The Avalon Projecct: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy. Program of the National Socialist German Workers' Party. Yale Law School: Lillian Goldman Law Library. 2008. http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/nsdappro.asp (accessed October 19, 2008).

Secondary Sources

Burleigh, Michael, and Wippermann Wolfgang. *The Racial State: Germany 1933-1945.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Evans, Richard J. *The Coming of the Third Reich.* New York: Penguin Group, 2003.

—. *The Third Reich in Power 1933-1939.* New York: The Penguin Press, 2005.

Friedlander, Saul. *Nazi Germany and the Jews: Volume I, The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939.* New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1997.

—. *The Years of Extermination.* New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2007.

Herf, Jeffrey. *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, culture, and politics in Weimar and the Third Reich.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Hilberg, Raul. *The Destruction of the European Jews: Volume I*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003.

Jäckel, Eberhard. *Hitler's Weltanschauung*. Middleton: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1972.

Konrad, Heiden. *A History of National Socialism*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1935.

Saunders, Thomas. "Modern Germany Reconsidered." In Nazism and Social Revolution 1870-1945, by Gordon Martel, 166-167. London: Routledge, 1992.

Shirer, William L. *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany*. New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1960.

Wall, Donald D. *Nazi Germany and World War II*. Belmont: Thomson Wadsworth, 2003.

Weikart, Richard. *From Darwin to Hitler*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

Weitz, Eric D. *Weimar Germany*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.

IDENTITY ERASURE

Andrea Wharff

Preface

Before we can even begin to delve into the concept of identity erasure, we must first come to the base agreement that there is even an identity that can be erased, and if so, how this identity came about. So what is identity? Is it unique, innate, and is it even ours to begin with? Is this mysterious intangible thing we so eagerly call Identity REAL, or is it merely a fabrication of our imagination – created in an attempt to satisfy something within ourselves that craves validation and our place within/outside of this society.

My goal is for us to define Identity and the transformations it has undergone. Then we can perhaps determine whether or not this Identity has the capacity to be erased.

If indeed it can be erased, we will then try to determine if there is a possibility to somehow regain what it once was.

All this is to be explored within the following pages. My hope is that what I have found to be the most logical understanding of Identity and its place in this world will cause you to think. I do hope that you will find some truth in these words and our dialogue together; however, if you only take fragment of this discourse with you, let it be this… I want you to see the world in perhaps a more articulate way, and to approach the world and your way of thinking about yourself in relation to it differently.

Identity is an activity of self-discovery and becoming, and it lives only in its operating through us. Each and every one of us has participated and engaged in it; it's natural and necessary for us to find who we are through the activity of identity. Every action we take and choice we make is a constant creation of who we are. We are the summation of our experiences, culture, religion, ethnicity, nationality… the list goes on and on. Each and every one of us is completely unique and there is no one in the universe that is exactly like us, and there never will be either. The reason for this is because each moment of our lives is irreplaceable.

I Am Me, And Yet Ever Changing…

Let me clarify this a bit more… Life has no rewind button; each moment that we live is incomparable to any other lived by us or anyone else. No one else not even ourselves could possibly experience this second, the last, or the next just as we do, did, or will. If you take into account the differences in life experiences, background, location, culture, and every other conceivable thing that effects who we are, you will see that there is no possible way that anyone could experience the world exactly like us… not even ourselves. For example, let's say that hypothetically I build a remote control that enables me to travel back in time, or rewind time if you will. Even If I rewind time back one second, I still could not experience any event the same way I previously did, because although I am the same person, my experiences have changed and I have changed. If each activity, thought, and event becomes a part of my identity or shapes it in some way, then, the very act of traveling back and time, the thought of doing so, or the occurrence of such an even would inevitably change or impact who I am and my identity as

such. So, there is no way that I could possible experience that event in the same way as previous, because I am not the same individual, I have changed.

I am going to steal a concept from Heraclitus here and use his example: Heraclitus talks about a river that is ever-flowing. It is the same river however, it is constantly changing from moment to moment. Just as the river is the same river and it is continuously enduring through time, so we too endure through time – if even only for a blip in the vast expanse of history – and yet we too are constantly developing and changing from moment to moment. Even no, as you read these very words you are not the same person that you were before. Each word that you read is taken into you and has become a part of who you are and changed you forever.

Now do you see how there is no possible way that anyone could ever be just like you are at this exact moment? I don't think that people ever really take the time to think about just how unique they truly are.

Activity

As I suggested earlier, identity is an activity we constantly engage in; it happens every time we think, act, or don't act and is a constant reoccurring of self that is rebuilding and evolving every moment, and this is exactly what it is intended to be. We were meant to engage in this activity, and to recognize it as such: as AN ACTIVITY. It actually does move, or breathe; indeed, it lives only in its activity through us, and through our engagement in this activity. It is important to recognize it as such; anything else is an abomination to the very nature of our existence, for only when we recognize

identity in this way – as an activity – can we truly open up the space for its activity.

Through our recognition of identity – as an activity – we are consciously taking into account the very nature of the activity itself, meaning that our recognition of the nature of the activity becomes a part of us, and changes us by making us aware of what we are doing and becoming. It is this awareness of self and self-activity that then opens up the space for identity. Aware self-activity is at the very heart of identity. So when we come to recognize identity as it was meant to be – as an activity – we then are able to truly engage in identity and for the first time recognize something important about who we are.

~ Identity the Stranger ~

The Monster

Present day society has oversimplified and yet complicated the very definition and purpose of identity and twisted it into something that it was never intended to be. In doing so, we have lost a great deal of our selves for the sake of this new "Identity". Much like Dr. Frankenstein's monster, we have created a whole new meaning for identity. Identity is no longer recognized as an activity of reoccurring and becoming, but rather we have constructed an entirely new creature out of social parts empty and devoid of meaning… and given it life.

We have named this monster Identity, and Identity is nothing like its counterpart identity. (I know this may all seem a bit confusing, but bear with me). Identity is a

living, breathing thing that we are seeking to find, as if it were simply present in the world waiting for us discover it. It is that person that we hope to be. It is that ultimate us that we are striving for. It is the end result of a life's pursuit. And we believe that once we find it, we will somehow be complete and fill some aching void yet inherent in our being. It is this monster that plagues our society; twisted, manipulated, and misunderstood, identity has now become Identity… and it is an abomination that must be destroyed for both its' sake and ours.

Who Is Dr. Frankenstein?

Now when I say that society has Frankensteined identity, I do indeed mean that society has done so, however, I would like to now elaborate a bit more what I mean by that. I have come to find that all the while behind the scenes, silent surreptitious powers have motivated the mutation of this "Identity". Just as Dr. Frankenstein gave life to his creature, so have these powers fed and influenced the creation of Identity. All for the sake of power, control, and even comfort, four key tools have been used in the creation of Identity: media, technology, government and religion.

MEDIA:

Today, we live in a consumer-driven society, where our men and women starve themselves and get plastic surgery so that they may fit some sort of cultural ideal. Both our men and women are buying into the cookie cutter Identities that they are continuously being exposed too. Every day, we are bombarded with words and images telling us what to think, how to act, what to wear, how to vote… I don't think that many of us actually realize just how much of an effect the media has on us.

The monotonous ramblings of commercials and the deafening silence of images linger in our minds as constant reminders of how we should present ourselves in the world. It is this all-too-frequent mental

constipation that clogs our minds and in essence desensitizes us to our selves and brainwashes us into aligning with the media projected images and standards.

As human animals, we are naturally social creatures and therefore need social interactions. Hegel depicts this interaction between the self and the other beautifully in his Phenomenology of Spirit. In this text, he talks about self-consciousness in terms of self awareness. One can only become self-aware through the translation of self through the other. In other words, we can only be aware of our selves by seeing ourselves through another person: We present ourselves in the world. The other sees us and interprets us. The we see our selves in relation to the other, for without the other, we could not see ourselves in relation to any other conscious / sentient being and could therefore not be self aware. We need the other in order to understand ourselves in this world, for there is nothing else that is comparable to us, and it is through comparison that we may be aware of our selves.

However, in our society that comparison is misunderstood. Instead of understanding ourselves in relation to others, we attempt to become others, and in doing so, we loose ourselves. The media and all of its projected images tell us that in relation to the other – this actress, actor, singer, model or artist – we are unworthy of notice and pale in comparison. In short, we are too ugly, too fat, too bold, too shy, too conservative, or not conservative enough. What ever the case, we are not good enough and must therefore logically – at least in our minds – be strange outcasts in our own society, unable to participate in its intricate social hierarchy – or at least not at the level that the media tells us that we should. We are inevitably trapped within the media's grasp, or rather those behind the scenes of the media who are in charge of its projection and project it thusly in order to further their power, domination, and control over the masses and see themselves as somehow superior to those that they subjugate.

TECHNOLOGY:

Technology has allowed us to become advanced in areas of science, electronic communication, and warfare, but it has also alienated us from ourselves. Through the use of technology, face to face human interaction has been exchanged and replaced with text messages, e-mailing, AOL instant messaging, and the occasional phone call. We rely so heavily on technology for our communication that we have all but eliminated the need for human interaction… but what we have forgotten is that human interaction is a basic need.

Donna Haraway describes this technological-scientific human relationship very clearly in her essay, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century". Haraway depicts technology and science as being interconnected and gives birth to the term technoscience – unhyphenated for that very reason. In her essay she talks about technoscience as already interpelating us in its discourse and labeling us as cyborgs. And in fact I think that she is right.

Every time you use a computer you are becoming involved in its discourse and using the device to enhance your self. Every day technoscience allows us to be in multiple places at once and do many other things that our simple organic bodies could never do on their own. In fact, technoscience is so much a part of our lives that it indeed is a part of us. We are cyborgs, influenced by technoscience everyday and in every way imaginable – from the food we eat to the language we speak it flows though us and influences every fiber of our being.

I see technoscience as having removed us from our selves. It strips us of our humanity and alienates us from genuine human contact, often times without us even realizing it. Technoscience has captured our humanity and replaced it with a cold metallic processor, by removing us from face to face contact unaided by technoscience.

GOVERNMENT AND RELIGION:

It should come as no surprise that I should mention government and religion as a tool of social shaping and monitoring, for Big Brother and or a deity is always watching. I mean, think about it, in terms of government: you have a driver's license or Identity card, a birth certificate, your fingerprints have been scanned into government computers, you have a social security number, credit cards, bank accounts, etc… All of these things are used to track and monitor you as a citizen, student, or what ever labels you are subjected too. Governing bodies are in place to maintain order and enhance productivity, however they have a tendency of manipulating, extorting, and controlling their citizens. For example: children are required to attend school until the age of 18; it's the law. In terms of religion there is always some sort of code of behavior that is instantiated into the society that will achieve, encourage, or otherwise affect their being. For example: Catholics, and Mormons have a code of ethics that they must adhere to in order to get to

heaven, or they risk being sent far from God. However, in both cases whether governmental or religious affiliation, both are means of control and methods of securing power.

Laws and commandments are put in place as a means of control and enforcing conformity. Now, of course any governing body will tell you that it is for your protection or for the sake of your immortal soul, however the enforcing of conformity, even if for the sake of my protection and/or soul, is detrimental to the activity of identity. For it is through conformity that we end up achieving the same thing as with the media… a closing and or narrowing of the space in which the activity of identity is possible.

Of course, not only do the government and religion seek to keep the peace, they also seek to reinforce their place in the society as lords − via the lord and the bondsman example. By subjugating the citizens and followers to their power, they serve to confirm themselves and their status in relation to the citizens and followers. So for the sake of control and power the government and religion establishes laws, commandments, and institutions that encourage and enforce conformity among the masses, therefore allowing us to voluntarily continue to close the space in which the activity of identity is possible, and securing Identity's place in our society.

~ The Erasing ~

The combinations of all four of these aspects of our life systematically reduce the space in which we are able to clearly participate and engage in the activity of identity. So as we willingly allow the power and ability to control our daily lives slowly shift over to the various lords in our world that serve to manipulate us into subjugation,

we loose our selves to their Identity. Identity slowly erases our capacities for identity and we are slowly but surely becoming lemmings and willing prisoners to our society, instead of engaging in the health translation of self. We are being erased, and all too soon what little is left of us and our ability to know that will be lost.

So how do we escape their tyranny? Do we act like Henry David Thoreau in *Walden*, and run away to the woods and try to cut ourself off from society and the evil lords? To deny social interactions is to deny our nature! So how then do we deal with the problem of Identity? Well, by reading this you have taken the first steps. To be aware of our situation and circumstance I believe in indeed the first step in regaining our selves. We must we aware of how we are relating to the influences in our society and how they are relating towards us. Through this understanding we become more aware of where we stand and we begin to slowly open up the space for identity to re-emerge, for the narrow space in which the un-aware bondsman is entrapped is far too small to enable him to engage in any activity – he can only conform to the Identity that the lord has set out for him to take on.

Once you and I become aware of our current situation, it is up to each and every one of us to take on the task of truly engaging in the activity of identity and take off the old guises that Identity has told us to wear. It is up to each of us to consciously make the decisions that will guide and direct us into the becoming we wish to be engaged in. However, we must constantly remind ourselves that this is an ongoing becoming and there is no ultimate end result with which we should hope to be, but rather we should choose the ongoing process that we feel suits us best. So cast off the shackles that you so unknowingly and yet willingly put on. Now is a time for rejoicing for we have the ability to cast off the mental shackles tyranny. It will not be easy by any means, it will be an arduous, unending journey, but it is a practice worthy of your engaging.

Annotated Bibliography

Bradbury, Ray. *Fahrenheit 451*. **New York: Ballentine Books, 1950.**

Bradbury introduces us to a society in which people fear their government. Much like the critically acclaimed movie "V for Vendetta", Bradbury takes us to a science fiction world where the people are not allowed to think for themselves. Any material that is seen as unfit for the public is destroyed by the local firemen. In this society firemen do not put out fires, they start them. The government takes on the role of "Big Brother" and dictates what those in this society can and cannot do… and one thing that the people in this society cannot do, is think freely and remember the creative and emotional past of their culture.

Hegel, G.W.F. *Phenomenology of Spirit.* **Tr. A.V. Miller. Oxford. Clarendon Press, 1977.**

Hegel made a profound effect on Western Philosophy though the writing of this text. He introduces us to the idea of "the lord and the bondsman" where he talks about self-consciousness. Hegel discusses how it is possible to have self-awareness through the translation of self through another; one can only have self-awareness through the reflection of themselves through the other. In fact that even those in power, like the lord, still rely on those that they dominate (the bondsman). I think that Hegel's profound example plays a major role in both personal identity, our social identity, and our identity in relation to society.

Huxley, Aldous. *Brave New World*. **Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc. 1969.**

Huxley introduces us to a completely different science-fiction society in which individual identity is completely annihilated for the sake of the whole. The citizens of this strange "utopia" are genetically

engineered to fit into five different class types: Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, and Epsilon. The first group are designed to be the leaders – they are the most intelligent and physically fit, while each of the subsequent groups are designed with lesser intelligence and physical prowess than the class before them. Each group serves a certain function in the society and is groomed to serve their communal obligations. All of the emotions that we supposedly hold dear have been successfully eradicated from this "brave new world". All strong emotions have been eliminated, human relationships limited to emotionless encounters, and they are brainwashed in their sleep. Simply put, Huxley presents to us a world in which the people are formed to fulfill a purpose within the society and maintain the supreme power of the few; they are doomed to live an existence of constant stimulation, casualty, non-emotion, and consumerism.

Idiocracy. Written and Directed by Mike Judge. Performers Luke Wilson, Maya Rudolph, and Dax Shepard. 20th Century Fox. 2006.

Idiocracy is a science-fiction comedy. This film begins in the present day, where an Army librarian Joe Bauers and a prostitute named Rita are put into a hibernation pods and forgotten about for 500 years. After the "Great Garbage Avalanche of 2505" they awaken from their 500 year sleep to a new world of stupid people. Generally when you think of evolution, you expect the subject to evolve – you know, survival of the fittest… However, the exact opposite has happened to this society. While those of higher intelligence were responsible about procreation, those of lesser intelligence procreated at a staggering rate. By the time that Joe and Rita awaken from their hibernation, the unintelligent people of the world have outnumbered and overpopulated the world. The new society is completely stupefied: the big businesses have bought out the FDA, CDC, FCC, and even government. Everything has been degraded to hill-billie, white-trash, ghetto, imitation of our current society. It is a comical warning that shows us a perhaps extreme version of where our society is heading. "Lead, Follow, or Get Out of the Way!!!" We must lead, or at least follow, but we cannot be lazy and do nothing.

Into The Wild. Screenplay by Sean Penn. Dir. Sean Pen. Perf. Emilie Hirsch, Marcia Harden, William Hurt, Jena Malone, Catherine Keener, Vince Vaughn, Hal Holbrook, Kristen Stewart. Paramount Vantage, 2007.

This movie is based on the non-fiction book *Into The Wild*. It recounts the life of Christopher McCandless and his attempt at rejecting our consumer driven, constantly regulated life. McCandless cuts all ties with the established world; he cuts up his credit cards, driver's license, social security card, and gets rid of nearly all of his money. He attempts to change the discourse of American living by responding to our consumerism in an unexpected way – he cuts all ties, lives off the land, and lives on the periphery that is somehow within the center of Western thought. He attempts to radically expose himself to what natural life has to offer. This attempt at experiencing life without domination, but rather as a free spirit traveling to the "beat of a different drum" was a success in that he shed light on the problem of society – that we are far to instantiated within technology, media, culture, and dominated by the government. We are formed so exactly and within the guidelines of what is socially acceptable that at times it feels inescapable. But McCandless proves that it is possible, and reveals to us some remarkably insightful perspectives that can only be shared from the radical, naked exposure to life.

Lasn, Kalle. *Culture Jam: How To Reverse America's Suicidal Consumer Binge – And Why We Must.* New York. Harper, 2000

America, is not really "the land of the free, and the home of the brave", but rather the home of commercialism and big brand names. Kalle Lasn discusses how institutions utilize their power, the way TV designs programs and structures the line-ups, ect… and reveals why we must change the way that information flows in our society. Lasn reveals the big brand name's hidden agendas and analyzes

our fixation with brand names and icons. He seeks to de-market our society, which has fallen into the pitfalls of consumerism and resulted in a judgmental TV addicted generation of the culturally dead.

Maalouf, Amin. *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*. New York: Arcade Publishing, 2000.

Each of us are unique and what makes up our identity is likewise unique. No one in the world has the same identity as I do or you do, and it is because of this amazing intrinsic uniqueness that creativity and conflict arises. Because of our differences we can come together to do either great or terrible things. Some of the most amazing music, art, and literature ever written have been the meshing and molding created from differing identities. Likewise, wars have been started over simple cultural, racial, personal, gender related, and religious differences. History catalogues the great and terrible things that we have done to each other that have arisen out of deep passions heated and fueled by our differing identities. Maalouf takes us on a journey into ourselves and makes us reflect on the history of our world past and present.

Marcuse, Herbert. *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1964.

Marcuse lays out a roadmap for us, and teaches us just how this whole capitalistic system really effects our identity. He explains how we are all merely cogs in a machine that serve a function; we are only valued in that we are means to an end…the product. We are treated as a means to an end, rather than an end in its self – which is completely unacceptable according to Kantian Ethics. In this ceaseless cycle of production, we loose sight of what we want, we loose our alone time, we find no joy in our work, for we are being treated as machinery and not human beings. This process serves to alienate us from our work, because we are judged by our output and capacity to produce in an assembly like fashion; we work on a specific stage in the development of a product, rather than working on the product in every stage from start to finish – specialized station in the process and not master or craftsman that is skilled in all stages from start to finish. However, not only that, but we also alienate us from ourselves. Since we are being viewed as a cog in the machine, we begin to adopt that view of ourselves, because what we do is not a personal, artistic, or creative thing, but rather a mundane, monotonous repetition for the sake of the product – indeed there is no room for personal flare or individuality, it would be counterproductive to the machine. SO, we must remain the cog – it is this which inhibits personal growth and individual identity; they are sacrificed for the machine.

Olson, Eric T. *The Human Animal: Personal Identity without Psychology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

For hundreds of years philosophy has coalesced with psychology to create a philosophy of mind that had interpreted human identity via the mind and its inter-workings. Olson attempts to look at personal identity through the removal of psychology and examine the human animal without creating the philosophical problem that psychology often creates. When Descartes created the mind / body problem in his *Meditations on First Philosophy*, it seemed as thought there would be no possible way for philosophy to overcome it, so with the entrance of psychology, some philosophers thought we had found the end-all to this mind/body problem.   For those who do not particularly accept the psychological approach, Olsen may be their end-all answer. Olsen presents us with a philosophy of personal identity that outstrips psychology and overcomes the mind/body problem.

Orwell, George. *Animal Farm*. London: Secker and Warburg, 1945.

Animal Farm is an allegory that depicts the dangers of totalitarianism. Similar to some of the other sources that I have utilized, a strong central government quickly begins to dictate all aspects of life. In this society, everyone is equal, pulls their own weight, and serves the collective…but even though

everyone is equal, "some are more equal than others". In this novella, Orwell unfolds for us a depiction of how government, if it abuses its power, can take over the lives of individuals and stamp out their identity and re-label them. The government in Orwell's story eliminates individual identity by convincing people that the preservation of the whole is more important than the individual…and that if we all work together, we can make life better for everyone. The governing body, somehow convinces its citizens that this is only a temporary project and that they can eventually not have to toil so intensely forever. However, they truly have no intention of easing the work for the citizens; they plan on milking them for everything that they are worth, and in doing so, they preserve the power of the few and the domination of the many. Individual thought and identity is dangerous to the regime and those in power…it cannot be tolerated.

Pearce, David. "Brave New World? A Defense Of Paradise - Engineering". <u>Brave New World</u>. 1998. BLTC Research. 1 May 2008 http://www.huxley.net/index.html

In this critical analysis of Huxley's <u>Brave New World</u>, Pearce discusses the impossibility of paradise-engineering, the use of drugs to subdue or improve society through instant gratification, amorality, false desires and happiness, tyranny and totalitarianism, the nature of man, stereotyping and classes, the nature of "utopias", what went wrong, and consumerism. Pearce uses Huxley's piece as a means of social analysis. Huxley is extremely insightful, and although BNW is not intended to be a prediction of the future, it is meant to be a reflection of the direction that society is heading and to some extent currently exemplifying. Pearce takes Huxley's reflection and expounds on the parable-like story. Is this what we really want to be? A society of Instant gratification, that is incapable of producing anything of intrinsic intellectual value is a society void of humanity.

Postman, Neil. *Amusing Ourselves TO DEATH: A Public Discourse In The Age Of Show Business*. New York: Penguin Books, 1986.

I belong to a generation in which all your problems can be solved in thirty-minutes with a few commercial breaks. Television has regulated our lives in to manageable thirty-minute blocks, which in turn has created what I like to call, the fast-food mentality. We have handed sovereignty over our lives over to television, and we have begun to expect TV-like results out of life. Politics, religion, work, business, education, and media must bend to our perception of how things are supposed to work – we want everything quickly, instant gratification has become all to convenient and we are addicted to it. In fact, when we don't get the instant satisfaction and gratification that we feel should be required of all things, we get irritated, frustrated, and/or confused… *I want my cheese burger! Its taking forever! This is unacceptable, I was waiting five minutes for my Whopper and fries!* With this instant gratification mode of life, we have successfully handed over our lives to the media, which governs our every waking moment; we have successfully handed over control to Big Brother and do not even realize it. However, just because this tyranny over our identity is not as obvious Dictators of the past, does not mean that it is any less dangerous, in fact, it may be even more dangerous. Big Brother has become a shiny bright TV screen with lots of adds and commercials; he has changed the bleak dictated discourse to that of mindless dribble and giggles – which has turned us into the culturally dead; drones doomed to walk in the shadow of a decadent, gaudy, dictator shrouded in smiles and products.

Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden*. Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1854.

Walden, or as it may be known in other versions, *Life in the Woods,* is one of the most insightful non-fiction books that I have come across in my studies. In this book, Thoreau isolates himself from society – although he is not completely alone, he moves himself closer to the periphery so that he may understand the center – in order to gain a clearer perspective of society. Thoreau moves out into the woods and is visited a few times by some slightly confused and curious friends of his. In his observations of society from the exterior, he offers information about the economy – which is the longest chapter in the book, and I think the one item of greatest importance to us. You see, Thoreau
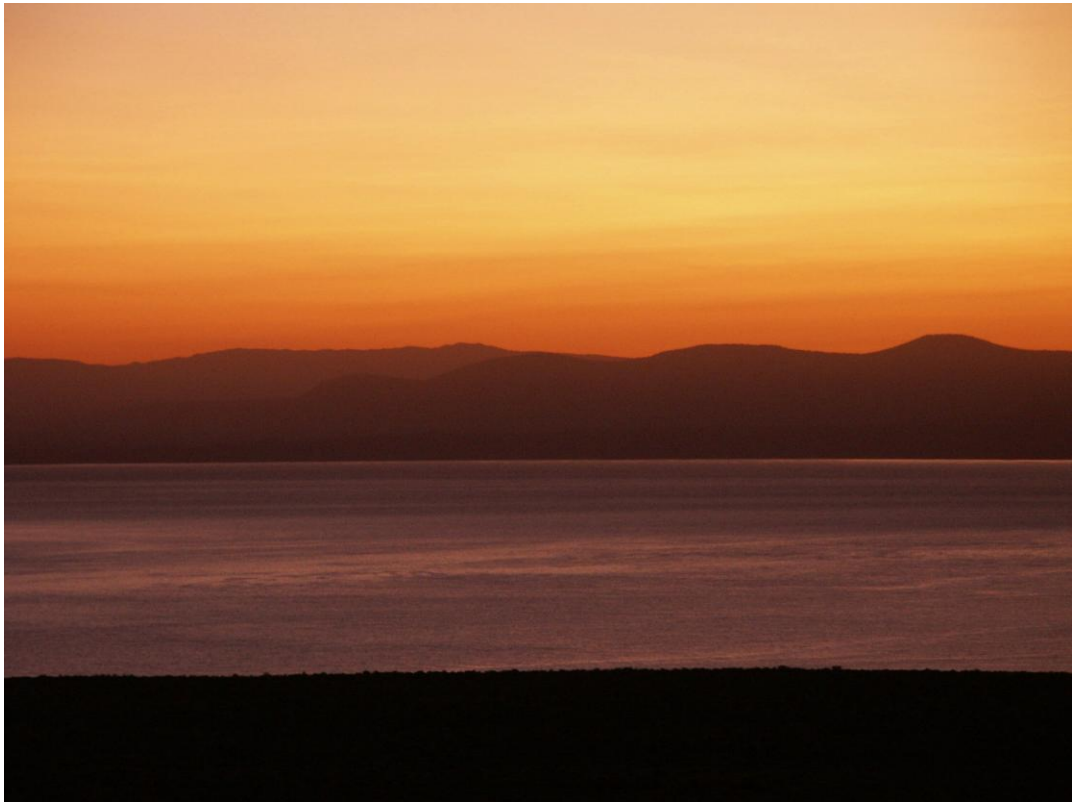
calls for a return to the simpler things in life. He feels that our current economy – even more so today, since this was written in the mid 1800's – has complicated our existence and our identities within that existence. Everything in life revolves around money, and we in turn go through the motions: we get a job in order to survive and live (comfortably), and we live in order to work. In this cycle, we often loose sight of the more important things in life, like our identity, relationships, nature, ect. The economy has turned us into robots and alienated us from the simple joys of life, that are often free form monetary burden. Simplify, simplify, simplify your life.

V For Vendetta. Screenplay by Wachowski Brothers. Dir. James McTeigue. Perf. Natalie Portman, Hugo Weaving, Stephen Rea, Stephen Fry, John Hurt. Warner Bros, 2006.

V For Vendetta is a fictional film in which a hero is created by an corrupt government. Our hero was tortured and experimented on by the military. The government in his society created a biochemical agent that killed tens of thousands around the world, and created a state of perpetual chaos. This unsteady climate was the perfect environment for fear, and it was through fear, that a new regime comes to power. This new government rules with an iron fist, controlling the media: newspapers, TV, movies, magazines, books, ect… Anything that is deemed unacceptable by the government is banned and added to the list of illegal material. Art, music, and theater are all directly controlled by the government – each piece must be reviewed and authorized by the government to ensure that it is acceptable material for distribution, so obviously everything that makes it to the public is censored and encourages positive feelings toward the government. Individual identity is irrelevant in this society. Everyone is just trying to get by with as little trouble as possible. As long as they shut up and do what they are told, and think what is deemed acceptable, they will be fine… but the second that they deviate from the cookie-cutter citizen, they are "black-bagged" and never heard of again. "Strength through Unity, Unity through Faith".

Vonnegut Jr., Kurt. "Harrison Bergeson". The Magazine of Fantasy and Sicence Fiction (1st release). 1961.

"Harrison Bergeron" is a short story about a dystopian society in which everyone is finally equal…forcibly. If you are beautiful, then they make you wear an ugly mask. If you are intelligent, then they medicate you in order to stupefy you. If you are an amazing dancer, then they place weights on you that cause imbalance. Everyone is made to be equal and monitored by the United States Handicapper General. In this story, our hero is a man of exceptional intelligence, strength, and good looks. Because of this, he is forced to endure the complication of multiple handicaps: glasses that give him headaches, alterations to his appearance, up to 300 pounds of weights strapped to his body, and headphones that play distracting, obnoxious noises periodically. However, in the end, our hero takes on a heroin – a beautiful and talented ballerina – together they strip away their handicaps and make a statement on TV. In the end they both die… but this tragic short story, is so powerful, that it has stayed with me since I read it about 6 years ago. This story always makes me grateful for my talents, and grateful that I can use them. I don't think that we really realize just how much our talents shape our identity, and how different our self-perception would be if we were forced to conform to the extent that those in Harrison Bergeron's society were.

thresholds