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Happy reading!

Karyn Pilgrim, editor
Metropolitan Center
SUNY Empire State College

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Cultural Diversity: Life on a Cruise Ship

Lloyd Bailey

In September 2010, I had the opportunity to commandeer my first cruise; it was with Carnival Cruise Line's The Fun Ship, destined to the Western Caribbean for seven days. We had ports of call in Jamaica, Grand Cayman and Cozumel in Mexico. I was pleasantly surprised to discover that the ship was a floating version of the United Nations, with the crew coming from all different corners of the world. I soon unearthed the fact that such diversity was common throughout the industry. "A cruise ship is a culturally diverse workplace with employees from all parts of the world, including Asian countries, such as the Philippines and Indonesia, and Eastern European countries such as Poland and Romania, having to work together despite cultural differences and linguistic barriers" (Coles and Hall, p. 114). For the duration of my trip, I was treated and served by people of many different nationalities.

The cruise shipping industry is staffed with workers from more than 50 different countries, with different ethnic backgrounds, beliefs, customs and cultures. "Cruise ships are likely to be heterogeneous; that is containing a mixture of crew with different nationalities, of various ages, with different backgrounds and prior learning, and individual needs and aspirations" (Gibson, p. 91). I asked Sharon, a woman working at the home office of the Carnival Cruise Line, about implementing policies to govern or guide all employees and if this was difficult, so as not to offend anyone's culture or customs. She responded, "the ship is staffed by individuals who are from many different countries, with each possessing a different background, it is vital to the success of the overall operations that the ship crew works as a team, be tolerant and respectful of each other's culture and individual differences (…) Brand building is potentially a complex process for companies that employ a multicultural workforce. Cultural and language differences may inhabit the development of a shared understanding of the brand – the potential for miscommunication is therefore considerable" (Woodside, Martin p. 275). It is company policy that no one is allowed to discuss religion, politics or military actions to either guests or fellow crew members.

Employees are not very keen on speaking in their native languages while on board. I was told a story by Ralph, a Jamaican server who refused to speak patois (Jamaican Creole) with me when I'd run into him during breakfast, about a waiter who started to swear in his native language at a passenger who asked him for a drink. He didn't know that that passenger was married to a United States naval officer and spent several years in the Philippines, and understood what was being said. The passenger reported the incident and the waiter's employment was terminated upon the ship's return to the port. Ralph told me that native language was spoken only when in the company of likes and halted when others who didn't speak the same language approached.

Sharon continued to relay to me that there was zero tolerance for fighting, but Ryan, my waiter, told me of an incident onboard one of his tours where two crew members got into a fight and the incident was covered up by the manager on duty at the time, as it happened in the crew quarters. He said that one crew member accused another of tardiness resulting in a verbal assault that eventually led to both employees physically assaulting each other. The manager did not see the need to report this matter to his superiors,

because he felt the two employees had a lot of pent up tension between them and contemplated that this would not have solved the problem. Ryan told me that this turned out to be good judgment on the part of the manager, because, had this incident been reported, both employees would be looking at termination of their employment. The two eventually became friends.

Despite the employees' diversity, the crew recruiting process is uncomplicated. Carnival has instituted an orientation process for all new employees, known as Carnival College. During this period, which lasts for four weeks, employees are separated into groups randomly and mentored by more seasoned members of the crew. It is at this juncture that the company's policies are explained to all new crew members. Carnival's mission statement: "every member of Team Carnival must do his or her part to ensure that everyone enjoys a safe and comfortable work environment, fulfilling our vision, by practicing teamwork, showing mutual respect, true hospitality, having a devotion to quality and sharing a sense of pride in being the best" and their vision statement, "to consistently provide a quality cruise vacation that exceeds the expectations of our guests" are constantly communicated to the orientees during Carnival College. The new hires also are taught that patience and understanding are essential qualities for crew members to possess.

Fray, from Indonesia, told me that the biggest challenge he encountered when his employment began was communication with other crew members. His English had not been as good and as clear at the time and he felt that he was not being understood, or that he was not communicating as effectively as he would have liked. J. Greenburg in an article on diversity in the workplace, states that "perceptual, cultural and language barriers need to be overcome for diversity programs to succeed. Ineffective communication of key objectives results in confusion, lack of team work and low morale." Fray continued to say that he felt more comfortable communicating with both crew and guests as his command of the English language improved, with the help given to him by fellow crew members, the classes provided to him at the Carnival College, and his interactions with the guests that he served.

Living conditions onboard differ depending on what job a person performs. My dining room waiter, Ryan, told me that he shared a cabin with three other individuals who were from different parts of the world, that the cabins were small, and that they had to utilize between them a designated community bathroom. The entertainment manager told me that he had a cabin to himself and all the amenities associated with an individual cabin. "Most managerial positions and 'front line' positions are held by Americans, Australians, Britons and various other European nationalities but concede that ethnic mix of staff is becoming more diverse" (Dowling, p. 47). Employees are required to maintain the cleanliness of the rooms and to report any maintenance issue to the appropriate agency. Ryan continued that employees had little to no privacy, but that each cabin was outfitted with a television and that the staff had their own dining facilities with a special crew bar and lounge located close to their living quarters. Cooking in one's cabin was not allowed.

All crew members are contracted. These contracts range from six to 12 month periods of employment. Employees work long hours, often 12 to 16 hours per day. This can become physically and patience draining for crew members, required to maintain a smile and a pleasant attitude when dealing with passengers and fellow crew members. Although "the International Labor Organization of the United Nations suggested limiting the workweek to 70

hours" (Jennings, p. 264) and there are many organizations attempting to regulate the day-to-day operations of the cruise ship industry; the owners are countering these attempts by registering their ships in countries that are not interested in labor or wage protection.

To staff their hospitality departments inexpensively, the industry keenly employs workers from low economically developed countries, LEDC. "Cruise ship crews enjoy vastly different pay levels, usually with clear racial distinctiveness attached to the hierarchical divisions. The vast proportion of the crew is drawn from LEDC where pay rate expectations are low" (Cole, p. 160). "Of the 114,000 who work on cruise ships around the world, about 70 percent are hotel/catering staffing. They include cabin stewards, bar staff, waiting staff, laundry workers, cleaners, chefs and kitchen crew as well as receptionists and clerical staff. Also, within the group are sound and light technicians, social hosts and play organizers for children. All of these workers are usually directly employed by the cruise lines on fixed term contracts, usually for between six to 10 months at a time" (Cole, p. 103). With such a rotation, Crew members at different intervals of their contract work side by side. It is not uncommon to have a crew member close to the end of his or her contract, working with another crew member at the beginning of their rotation, most receiving pay below the minimum wage and needing to subsidize their income with the tips they receive from passengers.

In an effort to bring normality to the cruise ship industry, Congress mandated that all ships flying an American flag pay their employees at least a minimum wage. In his book, "Death by Chocolate," Ross A. Klein documents that "the requirement to pay minimum wages was extended to ships registered in the United States in 1961. However, Congress left intact the exemptions for foreign ships. This exemption was further defined by a 1963 Supreme Court decision that held that U.S. labor laws do not apply to foreign vessels engaged in American commerce, even if the owners of these ships are from the United States; it is in this context that the modern cruise ship industry developed and took hold" (p. 86). Ross also points out that to 'get around' paying minimum wages, American ship owners register their ships in other countries where labor laws are not as stringent as those of the United States. Therefore, their employees are not covered by the act passed by Congress in 1961.

The head office of the Carnival Cruise Line is in Florida, but its ships are registered in the Bahamas, Panama and Liberia. Referred to as "flag of convenience," it is clearly an economic benefit to cruise lines to register their ships outside the U.S. A ship registered abroad is governed by the laws of that country. "Flags of convenience countries are neither able to, nor necessarily interested in, regulating the ships they register. Countries such as Panama offer their flag for the revenue it generates in terms of the registry fees as a valuable source of hard currency" (Coles, Hall, p. 115). The authors explain that this became a common practice after the Second World War. The ship owners are trying to evade heavy taxes and regulations and, also, it prevents the employees from forming unions and frees the company of any restrictive crewing policies. "What attracts cruise lines to flags of convenience? Money, cheap registration fees, low or no taxes, freedom to employ cheap labor. As foreign corporations, they avoid virtually all U.S. taxes. Royal Caribbean Cruise Limited pays no corporate income tax and Carnival Corporation pays only tax on its land-based operations in Alaska through Holland America/Western" (Klein, p. 140). Flags of

convenience save the cruising industry millions of dollars annually, and rob the United States of millions, if not billions in taxes each year.

Registering ships has been proven to be very profitable for the countries providing flags of convenience as it brings a significant portion of the fiscal budgets. Additionally, it provides employment for many of their citizens. "Ship registry is big business. In 1995, Panama earned $47.5 million in ship registration fees and annual taxes – 5 percent of it federal budget – and another $50 million for maritime lawyers, agents and inspectors. The government operates 56 maritime consulates around the world from which a registration can be purchased. The consul can offer a discount of up to 50 percent for transferring of multiple ships to Panamanian registry and a complete waiver of fees for a year in some cases" (Klein, p. 95). Flags of convenience from sovereign nations are in the business for the money; they don't have nor want the fortitude to regulate the ships they register. "Although flags of convenience are responsible for enforcing domestic and international regulations regarding working at sea, they make no attempt to manipulate seafarers' identities via the enforcement of land-based immigration regulations to cruise ship employment. There are no real or perceived reasons for flags of convenience states to do so especially since foreign seafarers need never set foot for work on their sovereign soil; they are not considered a potentially destabilizing socioeconomic force to landed communities. Thus can distinct identities associating specific seafarers emerge in the absence of immigration rules designating some as more worthy than others" (Chen, p. 20).

This leaves me with a question: who is responsible legally for the millions of passengers and crew working and vacationing on the thousands of ships plying the different routes to places of interest in the Caribbean and other ports around the world? In their book, "Tourism and Welfare," Derek Hall and Frances Brown state that "flag of convenience ship crews are subject to the laws of the country in which the ship is flagged and in most flags of convenience countries employment laws protecting the rights of the workers are virtually nonexistent" (p. 103). As stated in an earlier passage, these flags of convenience states are not interested in enforcing any such laws. All cruise crew members and travellers are without any form of legal representation. Just because they board a cruise ship in a U.S. port, it doesn't mean that they are protected by the laws of this country's justice system. Crimes on the sea oftentimes fall in a "no man's land" of law enforcement. A crime can be committed by two people of different nationalities, on a ship registered in a third country, and in territorial waters of a fourth nation. This would not be covered by the laws of the United States, but the International Maritime Law, which is not as stringent as that of the United States.

Interestingly, the captain of a ship is under no obligation to report crimes as they occur at sea. If the incident occurs in international waters, it is considered out of the jurisdiction of the local police. If a crime occurs in a port, the individual who committed the crime is subjected to the laws that govern that country. The Federal Bureau of Investigation can investigate a crime committed on a cruise ship on behalf of an American citizen. In May 2010, the Orlando Sentinel reported that a bartender, who worked on Carnival cruise ship Freedom, was arraigned for allegations of raping a 14-year-old American girl vacationing with her family. The paper reported that the incident occurred in April 2009 while the ship was at sea. Upon returning to Fort Lauderdale, Fla., the parents petitioned the Federal Bureau of Investigation to pursue the matter. An investigation was conducted and

it was determined that they had grounds to substantiate the allegations. This is just one of the many incidents that occur on cruises on a regular basis.

With today's global village constantly shrinking, organizations witness a more diverse workforce and must take steps to better understand this phenomenon. If it is to remain successful, the establishment must adopt the notion of embracing diversity and realize the benefits to be derived from a diverse workforce. Cruise industries are doing an excellent job in amalgamating individuals from different parts of the world to live and work together efficiently and in harmony in spite of cultural and language barriers that can be an imperious to deal with. It is my concern though that flag ship countries reap the rewards without any accountability for what takes place aboard the cruise ships. Another concern that I have is the cloudiness that looms over the laws that govern these cruise ships.

In spite of these concerns, the cruise ship industry has been providing an excellent service to individuals who vacation aboard their vessels. And, even though their wages are menial, they have provided employment to thousands of individuals and the opportunity to meet new friends and life partners, learn another language, have priceless experiences, become aware of what other cultures involve, and travel to foreign shores.

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Mud Cloth and Cow Skin Sandals

Assita Calhoun

Born in the big city in West Africa, specifically the Ivory Coast, I had always wanted to visit my mother's native village known as Mali, just for curiosity. I often asked myself how life in a village would be like. On the eve of my 10th birthday, I was told by my mother that we would be visiting grandma over the summer vacation. I was so excited that I was counting the days by the seconds, unaware of what the surprise ahead of me would hold.

When dad drove us to the city to do our last-minute shopping, all my brothers and sisters asked for fancy stuff that you couldn't even wear in the village. I rolled my eyes at my spoiled middle sister, because dad was spending more money on her than anybody. She was dad's favorite. I turned around and whispered in my older sister's ear: "I wish she would get left behind at home and not come to the village with us." All I wanted was that my mom would braid my hair like the village people and buy me some mud cloths and sandals made out of cow skin. The irony is that I was asking for the attire needed for the trip ahead of me.

Our journey began on a Friday afternoon; we all jammed into dad's car like sardines in a can, to drive to the train station. It was a humid day. Once on the train, I was aggravated by this particular family with a dozen children ages 1 to 8. The younger ones were continuously crying and their faces were a mixture of tears and boogers … disgusting.

The other children were running up and down the aisle as if they were at a playground. I wanted to get out of that car but dad spent a fortune to get the tickets for all six of us.

We made it to the village 26 hours later. I was ecstatic to be there, and to meet the rest of my family members. A cousin of mine, about two months older than I, looked like King Kong, a real giant. At the time, I was 5 foot 3 inches and she was about 5 foot 7. She looked at me and said: "ehteh dhouminiqeh wah?" Meaning, in Malinke, a Madingo tribe dialect, you don't eat? I just ignored her smart comment, too busy admiring my surroundings.

Two days after our arrival, mom told us that we would be spending the night in the forest. I asked mom why. She looked at me and said, "Why do you have to be the one with the questions all the time?" I replied, "Well mom, if you don't ask questions, you will never know anything." She walked away from me, shaking her head and mumbling in Malinke. I was born in a family where you were not allowed to ask questions or say no to an adult. I was the rebel child; I've always asked questions and have sometimes said no, even knowing that it would result in a cruel punishment.

That night, we walked in the dark to the forest, my King Kong cousin and her older sister, another giant, leading the way with a flashlight and a mesh lamp. It had rained the day before so the ground was muddy. Suddenly, I felt something slimy on my forearm. I couldn't see at first and when I lifted my arm, found a big, fat, shiny centipede crawling on me. I screamed as if my world were ending. In one gracious movement, my King Kong cousin was next to me. She said, "Akhera de huh?" Meaning, what happened. I was frozen and couldn't talk. I have always hated wiggly bugs and reptiles. In one quick gesture, she grabbed the bug and popped it into her mouth. All I saw was the juice flowing

at the corner of her big droopy lips. She wiped it with the back of her hand and licked it. The next sound was me vomiting my insides out. I looked at her and told her to stay away from me. She just shook her head and said, "Doogoo bah dhen," meaning, big city people.

We finally made it to the secret place. A lot of other girls around my age were sitting there quietly and holding hands. They looked scared but no one would talk. About an hour later, an old woman appeared. She looked like she has been drinking, and could barely stand straight. She divided us in four groups and showed us the mud hut we would be sharing. I turned around to look for mom. She had disappeared. Fear took over me yet I kept my composure. The old woman came and left without saying a word. Everything was done in sign language. I didn't like this at all; I turned around and asked a girl next to me about what was going on. All she said was, "Shhhhh, do you hear anyone talking here?" I said, "All right, be like that. I am not going to give you anything from the city." She said that I would be leaving something from the city in the village forever, smirked, turned around and ignored me. I couldn't sleep after that, in the hut, but lay awake, too scared to even move. A thousand questions were flowing through my brain. Did my parents bring us to the village to be human sacrifice? Didn't they want us anymore? Would I see my friend anymore, and would I ever go back to the city? A few minutes later my mother was there next to me and she whispered in my ears, "Ahsserah," meaning, it's time.

I responded, "Mhoo sehrra?" meaning, time for what? She said that it's time for me to become a real woman. I asked, was I a man all this time? She shook her head and said, "Stay strong and please honor the family." Stay strong for what? What family honor is she talking about? She wouldn't answer. She just asked me to follow her. I should have run away that night, into the forest, and befriended a whole bunch of centipedes.

We walked about two minutes towards a weird looking hut. The smoke inside was so thick that it blurred my vision. My mother didn't come inside, but explained that I would be taken care of inside the hut. Inside were three old women beating a drum and chanting something foreign to my ears. I was instructed to go to the back room where another old woman was sitting on a dirty rock, chewing a huge stick, her eyes bloodshot, her nails long and dirty. She greeted me with a gummy, toothless smile. I was stripped naked for a ritual bath. The sound of the drums changed and I shivered with fear. While I was being bathed, the gummy woman stared at me like lion stalking her prey. I was asked to lie on my back, on top of a spiky mat, and to remain quiet. I did. Those women were scaring the devil out of me. For once in my life, I couldn't ask any question. My King Kong cousin older sister appeared with four other King Kong look alikes. I was captured like an animal, unable to move, and they sat on top of me, making sure that I couldn't move. The gummy old woman came closer. I saw her digging her dirty nails around inside a cow skin shoulder bag and pull them back out with something that looked like a scalpel. It was a dirty, ragged-edged scalpel. She held it in the air, spat on it and wiped it on her forearm. My eyes were ready to come out their sockets. Oh my God! I was going to be slaughtered.

The drummers had stopped and were doing some ritual dance; one approached me and stuck a torn rag down my throat to keep me from screaming. I said to myself, what's the point of that? I was going to die anyway. The gummy lady spun around for about a second, kneeled and I felt her touching my private parts. She mumbled something, poured down her throat

some more alcohol, looked at my private parts again, and let out a scream as if she saw the devil. And the next thing I remember was the dirty scalpel digging in my flesh. My genitalia were being removed without anesthesia, nor disinfectants. In less than three seconds. I could smell the fresh blood flowing down my thighs. To clean my wound, she poured a liquid that smelled like dead fish over it, then applied a burning mixture of herbs on the cut. It hurt so badly, I couldn't cry anymore, I was suffocating from the dirty rag in my mouth and the smell of the place overall. I was then told to stand up with no help.

She looked at me and said, "You are now a real woman." I replied back by saying, "I wasn't born with a penis. What do you mean by me being a real woman now?" I spat on her face as I was walking out of the dirty hut saturated with the stench of fresh blood. Mom was outside waiting for me. I stood for a second, looked at her, and said, "Why, Mom? Why?"

The old woman came out and told my mother that I was a devil child because I spat on her face. It felt like I was crying forever. Outside the hut, I saw the girl who said that I would leave something from the city in the village forever. She glanced at me and laughed as if she was attending a comedy show. A week later, all the circumcised girls walked back to the village wearing mud cloth attire and sandals made out of cow skin.

Female genital mutilation, FGM, is a ritual done to young girls ages 2 weeks to 15 years old. It is a practice consisting of partial or total removal of the girl's genitalia, just for cultural reasons. It is mostly practiced in some African countries, some Middle Eastern countries, and among the Aborigines of Australia. It is a very dangerous procedure and many girls have died from it. There are three types of female circumcision: Type 1, called clitoridectomy, consists of total removal of the clitoris. Type 2, called excision, refers to the removal of the clitoris or total removal of the labia minora. Type 3, called infibulations, refers to the removal of the clitoris, partial or total removal of the labia minora, and stitching together of the labia majora. Type 1 and type 2 are the most common, and it varies among countries. Type 3 is mostly practiced in Somalia, northern Sudan and Djibouti.

FGM carries serious short-term and long-term consequences. The immediate consequences include severe pain, shock, urine withholding and ulceration of the genital area.

The long-term consequences include cysts formation, abscesses and keloid scars. Not to forget urinary and reproductory tract infection, sexual dysfunction, infertility, difficult childbirth and painful sexual intercourse. Women who went through the infibulations, type 3, must be cut open before sex and childbirth. The constant cutting and restitching leads to additional suffering and makes childbirth more dangerous.

The WHO, World Health Organization, and other entities have joined forces in order to totally eradicate this atrocious act of human butchery. So far, these are the African countries where FGM has been banned: Benin, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt (Ministerial decree), Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria (multiple states), Senegal, Tanzania and Togo. I am glad that Ivory Coast, my country, is part of the FGM banned countries.

I definitely left something in the village forever: my flesh, and my rights as a human being.

On War and Shadows: Haunting of Vietnam

Maryann Carstensen

Having grown up in the Vietnam War era, the ethnology of Vietnamese people who survived the war piqued my interest. Texas born author, Mai Lan Gustafsson, was personally intrigued by the topic. As an Amerasian, having an American father and a Vietnamese mother, Gustafsson passionately immersed herself in the Vietnamese society to observe changes and developments that had occurred since the end of the war. She noticed that many people in Vietnam have not been able to move on. Apparently, they are haunted by the war's victims. According to a Vietnamese custom, dying was to be handled with reverence as opposed to the violence that was experienced during the war. Old age was revered; the body was to be unmarked, handled with care, surrounded by families for mourning and burial. Yet, because of the war, the exact opposite took place. Many innocent people were brutally ripped from their family's fabric. Their ghosts were angry because they were destined to spend eternity in hell, lacking the appropriate, traditional burial.

In her work, "War and Shadows, The Haunting of Vietnam," Gustafsson brings the readers into the heart of the Vietnamese home. In Vietnam, "the typical home features a main room that serves as a parlor for receiving guests and where the family gathers to eat or watch television" (14). Also in this room, an altar devoted to the memory of the dead is kept. The deceased hold a place of honor and reverence under that same roof with the living. The family takes an active part in paying tribute to their past ancestors; their altars are adorned with pictures, candles, incense, fruits, flowers and favorite meals, in accordance with the lunar months.

While there are dozens of different religions practiced throughout Vietnam, this particular belief is considered folklore. Because, fundamentally, it is a combination of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism, scholars refer to it as the "triple religion." Abundant in "spirits, genies, deities, the sacred souls of heroic historical personages, and the souls of the ancestors (…), [it now hosts] angry ghosts [that have] entered this world in bulk during the war (…) and have long been frightening the living." (12). Many people who admit to being haunted by these angry spirits exhibit behaviors reminiscent of ghost possession. They suffer hallucinations, changes in speech, involuntary motor movements, violent behavior, bleeding and sensations of burning.

The Vietnamese Ministry of Health refers to this illness as a public health menace, stating that the victims are haunted by the past preventing them from moving on into the new world economy. The informants, the people that the author uses as her sources, say that their afflictions are caused by the angry ghosts for many reasons – one being that the survivors should not be permitted to enjoy the post-war benefits since the deceased are deprived of those pleasures. The government "officially disavowed spirit possession of angry ghosts (…) [deeming them] as backward, superstitious, and ultimately dangerous" (29).

The author offers countless examples of the power of the belief in angry spirits. To give a couple: a family that had outgrown their ancestral home needed to move to a larger home. In addition to the family moving, one of the younger family members moved to Hanoi for school. While there, she experienced a

blurring of vision, paralysis and suffocation. Unable to concentrate in school, she returned home. There, her symptoms subsided. Further discussion with her family members brought to light the fact that when the family had moved from their original house, they left behind their family altar with the understanding that the new tenants would maintain the altar honoring their forefathers. Once they were reconciled and paid homage to the ancestors, the family was able to return to their new home without any ailments. Another example of the spirit possession is of a woman who was late for the lunch meeting with Gustafsson, interrupted by her deceased brother with an episode that included "explosions and a loud male voice rang in her ears, tearing the flesh of her chest and stomach with her fingernails. The damage was terrible and extensive" (25). In the first of these two stories, the neglect of the family forced the spirit of their grandfather into homelessness. He's become a "wandering beggar" in the spirit world, because he was "unanchored to any family's altar (…) such is the Vietnamese version of hell" (24). In the second story, the angry ghost was the brother of the woman whom Gustafsson met for lunch. He died of wounds during the war. The woman, a young, wealthy entrepreneur, told the author that her sibling was angered and jealous of her success.

Gustafsson interviewed many people from different walks of life in the post-war era. The stories "reveal the many behaviors [experienced] in Vietnam, including 'disorientation, uncontrollable impulses, speaking in gibberish, and aimless wandering' – all things associated with spirit possession" (39). The victims said they were aware of the "angry ghosts, [and the fact that] there was a connection to the dead in the symptoms of illness or abnormal behavior, [which] led them to classify their ailments as spirit induced" (52). Gustafsson explains that all of her informants "had sought, and were still seeking treatment (…) [however], the cure for their common problem was difficult to come by" (53).

The Vietnamese go to great lengths to ensure that deceased family members enter the "otherworld" peacefully in order to guarantee their transition from a living family member to revered ancestral spirit. In the best of circumstances, the ill or the elderly are able to die at home. Many forego medical treatment that would prolong life simply to ensure death at home. They want to die in a familiar setting in order to avoid feeling lost or disoriented when they die.

The funeral takes place three days after death. During this time the family members pray that the dead is allowed to be reborn as an ancestral spirit. The mourning process literally takes years, beginning with the men of the family chanting for several days and begging the deceased to return to the family altar. For 100 days, rice, hard-boiled eggs and incense are placed on the altar to feed the deceased.

Three years after the death, the deceased are exhumed; their bones are cleaned and reburied. "These acts of remembrance are further signs of devotion to the dead and they serve to keep the ancestral spirits contentedly in place" (57). It is for this reason that the Vietnamese perceive death of family members due to war to "virtually guarantee that the dead will become angry ghosts, con ma" (57). Naturally, without a corpse none of the burial rituals can take place. An angry ghost is one that for many reasons cannot pass to the otherworld peacefully. As death is considered the end of a long journey, those whose life is cut short are angered for many reasons: the pain of his or her death, the act occurring far from home leaving them unable to find their way to the family altar, and possibly of dying without having had children,

making it impossible to have heirs to properly tend to one in the afterlife. A dismembered body, too, is forbidden from entering the otherworld. With over five million dead in the war, some 30 years later their living family members are still searching for their remains in hopes of finding a piece of them and bringing it home to the family altar. They want to make amends for years of neglect and living as lost souls, offering peace and atonement to the angry ghosts. This, hopefully, can bring the haunted some peace as well.

During the time the author was investigating this phenomenon, 1996-1997, she found that throughout most Communist countries, "religion and the supernatural are deemed superstitious and backward" (69). Therefore, those suffering from the visitation of angry ghosts in Vietnam secretly sought the help of spiritualists for help with exorcisms. There were two ways to approach the spirits in the otherworld; either through a shaman who would become consumed by the ghost, absorbing all the pain and anxiety brought on during a possession, or the other, a medium that would fall into a trance in order to take on some of the qualities of a possession. Both were then able to communicate to the living family members the needs and the pain that their deceased family member had suffered. Sometimes, this brought some peace and enabled the living to make amends with the dead.

For a long time, these practices were forbidden by the government. The people involved were under constant surveillance. "All practices in which people interacted with spirits were banned after the Communists took over North Vietnam in 1945. Exorcisms, spirit calling possession trance, faith healing (…), virtually everything related to the otherworld was considered a 'manifestation of backwardness' by the (…) officially atheist Communist government" (86).

After the Vietnam War, the government tried to industrialize the country. Many changes took place. Farming communes were built in order to develop more productive lifestyles. With this in mind, the government felt a need to do away with anything associated with the otherworld, including the lengthy funeral rites. "The peasant represented the party's 'new socialist man' and was expected to let go of traditional practices like those involving [the belief in] the spirit world" (94). In an attempt to placate the people, the government erected monuments as a tribute to those who died in the war. The belief among the Vietnamese was that this practice of streamlined funerals was disrespectful and inadequate in caring for their dead and guarantying their destiny as angry ghosts.

Because the country's economic growth was slow, by the mid-1980s the government initiated "Renovation – an open-door and free-market policy in Vietnam designed to promote socioeconomic development and closer ties with the rest of the world" (107). This brought more personal freedom for Vietnamese people, which included previously banned practice of spiritualists. In addition to loosening the strangle-hold on religious beliefs, commune farming faded away and peasants were permitted to farm in their own lands. This added to the economic boom, however, also arose more vengeance in the angry ghosts. This was not a surprise to the local people as they had always attributed their good fortune to the happiness of the ancestral spirits. The jealousy of the angry ghosts naturally brought about crippling possessions. With better living conditions, those inflicted with spirit inflicted sickness could afford to seek a medium to find their angry ghosts, soothe their needs, and relieve their own afflictions. The government now permitted the use of mediums, seeing it as the only way to awaken old, prohibited traditions and preserve Vietnamese culture. Spirit practice

once considered superstition was now referred to as ‘parascience.’ These changes opened the door to some very flamboyant spiritualists. The skeptics who frowned upon the showiness of these spiritualists continued to employ the quiet, simple mediums whose track records had favorable results.

By 1997, the angry ghosts of the otherworld and the spirit sickness they caused was considered a “public health menace;” the government then began hiring mediums as state employees, ironically, all women. The author, in addition to her contacting many informants, had interviewed one of these state-hired spiritualists and found that she successfully located the bodies of over 800 dead soldiers. The Communist Party finally came to the realization “that the anger of the con ma threatens the peace of the community at the level of family, community and nation” (121). With this radical change, Gustafsson states that, by this time, most of her informants met with mediums and had found relief from their ailments.

As the author brings this ethnology to a close, she accepts the fact that many are skeptical of her study. Gustafsson is aware that many people reason the behavior of the ghost possessed to be a post traumatic stress disorder. Her argument is that PTSD is suffered by those who actually experienced trauma and not those related to the victims. She explains that the only way to be convinced of these experiences was to hear the victims’ stories in their own words.

In her conclusion, Gustafsson reminds the reader of the depth of Vietnamese tradition and explains that while those afflicted by the angry ghosts suffer from their periodic, painful possessions, this suffering is perceived honorable. Vietnamese believe that to suffer and sacrifice oneself for the nation is an honorable experience, whether it is voluntary (through war) or involuntary (bearing the sufferings of con ma). Therefore, “it seems likely that angry ghosts will remain plaguing Vietnam for some time, [for another] four of five generations, perhaps then Vietnam’s ghosts of war will be laid to rest” (137).

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Curl Up and Dye

Jayne Catricola

Being a hairstylist, I have seen many health conditions of the scalp. One of the most common is alopecia areata. It begins with small bald patches on the scalp that eventually grow larger. Because it is an autoimmune disease, the body reacts to hair as a foreign object, attacking each follicle until there is nothing left. Some people lose patches of hair on their scalp only, either in one spot or in multiple areas on the head. Some people are affected by a different type of this disease and experience hair loss in other areas of the body. Alopecia areata usually affects young men and women between 18 and 30 years of age.

Hair loss of any kind can be traumatic, especially for women. I know; I have alopecia.

I was diagnosed with this disease in February 2009 and was referred to a dermatologist. As he picked through my hair, I knew exactly what he was going to say:

"Ms. Clarke, it is a typical case of alopecia areata. With a little treatment you will have your hair back in no time."

The treatment lasted several weeks, during which I received over 300 painful injections in my head. Simultaneously, I took large doses of oral steroids and applied a topical solution to my scalp.

As my hair continued to fall out, my anxiety worsened. My attitude towards life and people was affected. I progressively found myself unable to deal with anyone or anything. I felt, for the first time in my life, consumed by self-pity and helplessness. I began to withdraw from my closest friends and relatives.

But, I had to work and earn a living. Each day I showed up at work, I put on a happy face and pretended I was okay. I heard a saying once: "fake it till you make it." I was doing just that. But inside I was overwhelmed, which was slowly affecting my work. Being a hairstylist requires more than just talent. It is a social career. Clients use the time spent in a hair salon as therapy. I have seen many mediocre stylists with good listening skills develop large followings. And so, after a long day of holding my feelings in and listening to the upsets of others, I would head home. I would cry most of the way. On some days, I had to pull the car over. I was too overwhelmed to work. Pretending to be okay took a lot of effort. It drained me. I am not really sure why I pretended, but, I guess, it was my way of maintaining the feeling of being in control of my disease.

Of course, my hair loss was becoming more and more noticeable. People would show their concern in many ways. Often they spoke without considering how or what they said, or that some things that they said may not be appropriate. Perhaps they are unaware of the hurt that their words caused. After hearing several "if I were yous" from my clients, friends and family members, I began to just nod my head as a way of response, and smile, while my brain screamed: "IT'S NOT YOU, SO SHUT UP!" Although I knew it would have provided a release for me if I did, I never allowed those words to leave my mouth. Holding it all in was, on the other hand, torturous. Lack of a kindred soul weighed on the already heavy emotional language I carried. How could I continue on this way? Something had to change. I needed to take control of my life. I headed back to the doctor.

The doctor prescribed an anti-depressant. He said that anti-depressants may take some time before they begin to work and that I shouldn't expect to see a change immediately. As the days went on, my feelings overwhelmed me. I continued to act "as if" but, in fact, I was getting worse. More and more often, I found myself entertaining thoughts of suicide.

Each day, I would check the bald spots on my head for any signs of life, but to no avail. As I showered, long locks fell helplessly down to my feet, entangling my toes. It was like a scene from a horror movie. For a while, I tried to accept my condition. I purchased many hair ties, wraps and caps in all colors. I wore make-up and dressed to impress. I did anything possible to shift my focus off my head. Soon enough the disease proved stronger than me. My thoughts were consumed by fear and anxiety. I was paralyzed, and felt ugly and useless. The steroids took a toll on my well-being, too. I was angry for no reason. I began to swell and get bloated. Not only was I losing my hair, bur I was getting fat as well. My thinking became distorted. How could my husband ever find me attractive? Who would want a bald hairstylist? I began to feel I was better off dead.

My husband maintained a positive attitude. He let me do whatever it was I needed to do to get through my illness. But, he did experience a breaking point as well. I remember one day he had come home from work. There I sat in my usual spot on the sofa, staring into nowhere.

"What have you done for yourself today?" he asked, somewhat impatiently.

"Nothing," I replied.

When he asked how long had it been since I showered, I responded, "I don't know."

He did. "My God, Jayne," he said and then yelled, "IT HAS BEEN FOUR DAYS! And you are still in the same bed clothes!" He continued with tears in his eyes. "What are you doing to yourself? It's breaking my heart to see you like this."

I just looked at him with a blank stare. My head was telling me he didn't really care about me. My head was telling me that he just wanted something from me. I stood up and went to the shower. I'd rather take a shower than listen to him.

Less than two months after diagnosis, I had completely shut down. I ignored my friends' calls, my parents and my husband, and could only deal with working one or two days at the salon per week. The rest of my days were spent in darkness, either watching TV or surfing the Internet. The more I isolated myself, the more I needed isolation. The lonelier I made myself the more alone I wanted to be. Images of how I would take my life would pop in my head at random moments. At times, I would experience a multitude of thoughts invading my mind all at once. There was no way to shut them off. I couldn't sleep. Every time I took a sleeping pill a thought would cross my mind to just shove them all down my throat.

Darkness, imprisoning me, all that I see, absolute horror, I cannot live, I cannot die, trapped in myself, my body my holding cell … (Metallica).

A few months passed in this manner. Then, I began to experience moments of strength. I began to search the Web for support. I came across a support site for people with alopecia areata. There, I read stories of anger, self-pity, depression and even suicide. I could relate, obviously. On one particular blog, titled Use of Steroids for Treatment, a woman wrote of how her life became a prison cell. How she lost

her life almost overnight because of the illness. Her raw, honest self-appraisal was freeing for me. I felt that I finally found a kindred soul. I responded to the blog with only an email address and asked her to please contact me. Almost immediately my email alert went off.

Strangely, she didn't introduce herself. I assumed her name was Nancy because of her email address: Nancy357. "How can I help you?" was all it said. I responded. I let her know how her story was similar to mine and asked her how she got through the illness and whether she was still taking steroids. I ended my message with a very personal question, which I at first hesitated to ask: "Did your hair come back?"

Jayne, she responded, it is always my pleasure to share with people my experience with alopecia. After several treatments, I stopped taking steroids. They do more harm than good. I began to feel so much better about myself. I began to eat healthy and take no medications or apply any potion, lotion or cream to my scalp. I am happy to tell you, that after four years with alopecia my hair has started to sprout. I feel amazing and it has been a journey. I am including my phone number. Please call anytime."

I stopped taking steroids. They do more harm than good.

I have never called her, but we have chatted through email on several occasions. Nancy encouraged me to get off the "roids" and take control of my life. She told me stop pretending that I was okay. "The whole thing sucks, so why pretend it doesn't?" She made me smile. I had not smiled in a very long time.

My 40th birthday was closing in and I did not want to mark the milestone in sadness. I called my doctor and I let him know everything I had been experiencing. We decided to cease all medication, at once. He said the detox would not be smooth, but considering how awful I felt already it really didn't matter. I was ready. I wanted my life back. I wanted to work. I wanted to live.

Within days, I had the sweats and shakes of the detox process. I needed to keep busy. I also needed to feel I was in control of my situation. As I continued to read blogs and look at the stories of others, I realized there was only one way to find acceptance with alopecia. Shave whatever hair I had left. Could I really function as a stylist bald? Would people accept it? I already knew I was not going to wear a wig. I was not going to hide anymore.

It was a Friday and the salon was packed. I walked to my station and unpacked my bags. Then I asked another stylist to come to the back. As she approached, I knew it was my moment.

"I will shave some of the hair myself, but I need you to help me finish it."

"My God! For real? Are you serious?" she exclaimed.

Without hesitation, I picked up my shears and chopped the hair I had left off, close to my skull. I had lost about 50 percent of hair by that time. Within seconds, I was transformed into what looked to me as something out of "The Toxic Avenger." Big, bald patches mixed with odd shaped patterns of hair. I handed her the clippers and motioned that I was ready.

That moment was pivotal in my recovery.

I felt I owned alopecia. It did not own me. I was hopeful and laughed for the first time in months. I proudly displayed my bald noggin. I took

many photos. I joined a national support group, Alopecia World. I even started my own blog. Life was becoming good.

I still have to deal with ignorance. Alopecia is not widely recognized. Some people think I am going for chemo, but I am quick to correct them. It did take some time to get used to the stares. Indeed, bald women are not as common to come across as bald men. I grew very open about my condition, ready to share my story and my feelings that I had experienced.

Because of alopecia, I had turned down many opportunities for work. As I also am a paralegal with the Department of Education, I would only take jobs from schools that had known me before I fell ill. I was afraid I would be judged by my appearance by the potential new employers and didn't bother going to interviews.

Although I would have rather not worked in a new setting, life's unfortunate events made me do so. My husband was injured at work. I had no choice. I had to pick up the slack. One day, I received a call from a new school. Instead of saying I wasn't available, I told the woman on the other end of the line, straight up, "I would love to come in, but I have alopecia, which means I am bald. I prefer not to wear a wig. Is that okay?"

"Sweetie, please come however you like. We need a paralegal." There was not a sound of disapproval in her voice.

Nervous about how I would be received, I packed my resume. I needed a job, they needed a paralegal. By the end of the day, I had a full time position. My alopecia was for the first time a nonissue. As I walked through the halls each day, I was greeted with smiles and waves. It felt good to be accepted for who I am and not judged by my appearance. Almost as if it were a kismet, an incoming freshman also had alopecia. We would give each other a wink and a smile each day. Her mother approached me on a parents meeting night, just to thank me. She told me that I gave her daughter motivation and that each time she saw me without a wig, she knew she was going to be okay, too.

It has been a year since I have owned my alopecia. I have lost more hair here and there and I still suffer from depression. The difference however is that I deal with it. I speak to someone regularly about my feelings. I stay connected to my support groups and I blog often.

I was lucky enough to find the help and support I needed. I am so grateful for my life and for the people that helped me get it back. We can overcome anything when we know we are not alone.

Total War

Peter Davis

Over time, myth and opinion can evolve into belief and accepted truth. The August 1945 atomic bombings of Japan are a good example. Many believe that America committed an immoral act because of the resulting death and destruction. They insist that Japan was a defeated nation on the verge of surrender, that a diplomatic solution was within reach, and that the Japanese were seeking a way to surrender without losing face. Therefore, the bombings were an unnecessary act of revenge on the part of the Americans. In fact, the opposite is true.

Before the atomic bombs were even dropped, planning for the invasion of Japan, Operation Downfall, had reached a critical stage. A great and terrible slaughter was approaching, one that would dwarf the horrors and pain of the Pacific Island Campaign. Tens of millions of people were expected to die, and millions more would suffer. Despite the destruction of their navy, air corps (or so it was thought), the decimation of their armies, and the suffering of the Japanese people, the Japanese government refused to give up, clinging to the beliefs that caused the war and brought their nation to the brink of extinction.

The use of the two atomic bombs prevented the dreaded invasion of the Japanese home islands, saved countless American, British and Japanese lives, forced the Japanese government to surrender, and ended the war. In a world filled with terrible choices, it was the only moral choice America could make.

In the 19th century, Japan was a sophisticated, stratified, inward looking nation, uninvolved with most of the outside world. In this highly regimented world, the rules of society and decorum were detailed down to the number of stitches on one's clothing, where they might travel, or what dolls a child could play with (Bradley 23-24). At the top of Japanese society were the Shogun, his daimyo or aristocratic class, and their police/military force, the samurai (Barenblatt 98). This samurai was steeped in the noble tradition known as "bushido" or "way of the warrior." The tenets of bushido included honesty, trustworthiness and selflessness. Mass suicide was never a part of bushido tradition. The samurai were strategic, thinking warriors who valued life over death. By the 20th century, this samurai tradition had been replaced with a distorted, bastardized version by the militarists who ruled Japan until 1945 (Bradley 52).

In the later 19th century, the era of the Shogun was over, having been replaced by the emperor. Though the emperor had traditionally been a "minor" figure, his position had been elevated to that of a "living God," giving the Japanese people a central authority figure to worship, honor and obey (Barenblatt 99).

By the early 20th century, Japan had joined the modern world with its success in the 1904-1905 Russo-Japanese War. Commencing with their sneak attack on the Russian fleet anchored at Port Arthur, a pattern the Japanese would repeat in 1941, and their decisive victory at the Battle of Tsushima, the Japanese would force Russia, a larger nation with vast resources, to capitulate and accept terms favorable to Japan. Coupled with their 1905 invasion and subjugation of Korea, Japan became a world player, bursting with pride and confidence. Its leaders thought their nation to be blessed with the "Yamato Damashii," or Japanese spirit. This spirit along

with the "Kamikaze" or Divine Wind would always carry them to victory, no matter the odds or the opponents. In the minds of these self proclaimed "spirit warriors," victory was forever theirs, and the Kamikaze wind would always be at their back (Bradley 52).

Unlike true samurai, these spirit warriors distorted bushido teachings and adopted policies of unthinking obedience, brutality and admiration, not for life, but for honor in death. They taught that the most honorable way to die was to die for the living Japanese God, the emperor. To surrender in battle was shameful and dishonorable. To die for the emperor, even by suicide, was glorious.

Japanese children were steeped in these martial teachings throughout their lives. Unconditional obedience to the emperor and a strong, victorious Japan was a way of life. Upon joining the military, a conscript entered a world where the officers were treated as feudal lords and the average soldier was considered nearly worthless. It was a world of unrestrained brutality, violence and indifference to the suffering of others, particularly those considered to be the "lower races" (Barenblatt 17). The average soldier was regularly beaten, kicked and pummeled by his superiors. Lower-level troops were forced to face off and slap each other without mercy, all for the pleasure of the higher ranks. These troops were constantly taught that the emperor was their living God, and the military higher ups were his disciples, deserving of unconditional obedience. Compassion was weakness. There was no such thing as an illegal order. This atmosphere of violence and unthinking obedience to superiors produced a fighting force willing to go to any length and commit any act without question or conscience. The Americans fighting the Japanese in the Pacific Island Campaigns of World War II would bear witness to this savagery (Bradley 54-57).

As the century progressed, expansion by conquest seemed Japan's natural right and destiny. Japan looked to her neighbors and saw China and Korea as ripe for the picking.

When Japan surrendered in August 1945, they left in their wake upwards of 30 million Chinese dead. Included in this total are over 300,000 murdered in 1938 during the six-week Rape of Nanking, and over 500,000 murdered by Dr. Shiro Ishii and his infamous program of death, "Unit 731."

Years before Joseph Mengele and the Nazi Party carried out their murderous, sadistic experiments in the Holocaust death camps, Japan, under the supervision of Dr. Ishii, was carrying out a program of human experimentation in China using biological and chemical weapons. This program was known as Unit 731, and germs such as anthrax, cholera and bubonic plague were used to kill its victims. All of these weapons were banned under the Geneva Convention, which Japan was not party to.

In order to test and develop these bio weapons, Japan used local men, women and children as living guinea pigs. They also used American prisoners of war. These unfortunate people were imprisoned in bio weapon death camps, and infected with plague and other deadly toxins. Some were dissected alive. Some were frozen alive. Some were drained of their blood to study the effects. The Japanese would infect local water supplies, livestock, farms and give children infected candy. All of this was done with the blessing and support of the Japanese government (Emperor Hirohito was a trained biologist).

This 14-year reign of terror occurred between 1931 and 1945. With Japan's defeat, the program ended and over 500,000 people had been murdered. Now, documents reveal that Japan planned to spread plague on the west

coast of America using Kamikazes loaded with plague bombs. They planned to inflict plague on the Americans during the Pacific Island Campaign. Had the Americans been forced to invade Japan, would they have been attacked with these weapons? If so, the results would dwarf the scope of the hell known as Unit 731 (Barenblatt 188-191; Giangreco 115).

Unrestrained by the rules of war and common humanity, Japan had enslaved the Korean populace, and kidnapped as many as 200,000 Korean women who were forced into prostitution. Known as "comfort women," these women were forced to "comfort" the Japanese soldiers between 40-70 times per day. Chinese women also were forced into this program. By the end of the war, almost 90 percent of them had perished. In some cases, captured women were raped, murdered and eaten by hungry Japanese soldiers. The meat "tasted very good" (Bradley 86-88).

For the enemies of Japan, the death toll was increasing at a terrifying rate. The spirit warriors and their armies would show no mercy or restraint. Instead, they treated everyone, including their own troops, with contempt, brutality and indifference. Always victorious, and infused with the Yamato Damashii, they could do no wrong. Nothing and no one could defeat them. Not even the Americans with their massive industrial might. They were considered to be a society of lazy, mixed-race people, incapable of sacrifice, with no stomach for a protracted fight against the glorious Japanese Imperial Army (Bradley 109). After all, the Americans honored life, but as samurai the spirit warriors knew that honor lay in death for their living God, Emperor Hirohito. This concept would be put to the test with disastrous results for both the Americans and the Japanese. By late 1941, Japan's next target in their racist war of aggression and conquest was the United States of America. They would show no mercy, and steeped in the bushido tradition, they would never surrender.

By 1939, relations between the United States and Japan were deteriorating. As U.S. policy tilted away from Japan and towards China, Japan felt increasingly threatened and cornered. If the U.S. would only accommodate Japanese behavior in their Asian sphere of influence, compromise could be reached. But compromise would prove impossible. The Japanese emperor and his war council then set upon a strategy of attacking the United States in one massive lightning strike, crippling their Pacific fleet and the will to fight. Any plans beyond that would be "worked out." The spirit warriors would go to war against the world's largest industrial power lacking a coherent, long-term strategy, relying instead on their secret weapon, their Yamato Damashii. After all, it had worked against the Russians in 1905. Surely it would work again. Already having lost its moral compass, Imperial Japan also lost its sense of logic, perspective and reality. The winds of war began to blow. For the Americans, they were storm winds. For the Japanese, they were the divine, Kamikaze winds, propelling them to victory.

When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor without warning on Dec. 7, 1941, many Americans asked, "Where is Pearl Harbor?" Over the next three-and-a-half years, other exotic places with names such as Iwo Jima and Okinawa would be introduced into the American Lexicon. Thousands of miles from the heartland of America, these Pacific Islands would serve as battlefields where carnage, slaughter, death and destruction became the norm. The price of victory over the fanatical Japanese would be measured in American blood, and would serve as both a stark lesson and a chilling warning about the costs of invading mainland Japan.

In early 1942, Japan was on the march throughout the Pacific, and American forces were in retreat, lacking the necessary materials and manpower to go on the offensive. In April, the Japanese conquered the Philippines and captured over 75,000 American and Filipino prisoners. Many of them were malnourished, sick and starving. These prisoners were forced to march over 60 miles to a detention area in what became known as the Bataan Death March. In this forced march, the Americans and fellow Filipinos were subject to the cruelty and sadism the Japanese had become infamous for. Deprived of food, water and medical care, suffering was widespread, cruelty was commonplace, and between six and 11,000 prisoners died. Onlookers who tried to help the prisoners were killed. The spirit warriors contempt for life was on full display.

To regain the initiative, America adopted an offensive war strategy known as the Island Hopping Campaign. Sailing into harms way, America brought the fight to the Japanese Imperial Forces who had established themselves in island strongholds up and down the Pacific. In August 1942, the Americans defeated the Japanese at Guadalcanal, a part of the Solomon Islands. America suffered approximately 7,100 casualties, the Japanese around 30,000. The battle raged for nearly four months, and from that point on, the Japanese were in retreat. They would fight a defensive battle all the way to the doorsteps of homeland Japan.

As the war raged, the fighting became more desperate, and the casualty figures increased, both on land, and at sea. The 1944 battle for Peleliu, a part of the Palau Islands, lasted for nearly three months. America suffered almost 10,000 casualties, and only a few of the 11,000 Japanese defending Peleliu survived. In "D-Days," author Donald Miller quotes from the memoir of Marine veteran Eugene "Sledgehammer" Sledge, author of "With the Old Breed at Peleliu and Okinawa." "Sledge" described the fighting at Peleliu as:

> Savagery beyond necessity … The sounds of the fights in the foxholes were ungodly … The fighting was savage, Neanderthal … Time had no meaning, life had no meaning … We were out there, human beings, the most highly developed form of life on earth, fighting like wild animals. (180-181)

As terrible as Peleliu was, the worst was yet to come. In 1945, the United States would invade Iwo Jima, 700 miles from Japan, and Okinawa, 350 miles from Japan's southernmost island, Kyushu. In a desperate attempt to punish and turn back the American Navy, the Japanese unleashed the Divine Wind made real, the Kamikaze suicide attacks. For the glory of the emperor, Japanese pilots flew their bomb-laden planes directly into the American fleet, killing thousands of Americans, and damaging and sinking hundreds of ships. One of those ships damaged by the Kamikazes was the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Saratoga, home to thousands of sailors, including Aviation Seaman's Mate Second Class Max Weiderman, from Queens, N.Y. When interviewed about the war, the topic turned to the decision to drop the atom bombs on Japan. "Dropping the atom bombs saved my life," said Weiderman. Max survived the war, got married and raised a family. Today, Max and Adele are still married. They live in Scottsdale, Ariz.

The February 1945 battle of Iwo Jima raged for over a month. It was the costliest battle the Marines ever fought. In one month, the Marines "suffered one-third of the total number of deaths they would incur in all theaters in World War II," with overall battle casualties totaling nearly 29,000 (Miller 245). Iwo Jima is where the American flag was first raised on Japanese

territory in World War II. Photographer Joe Rosenthal's picture of the six Marines raising the flag atop Mount Suribachi inspired and rallied America, which by this point was growing weary of war and death. Filled with their Yamato Damashii, 21,000 Japanese defended Iwo Jima. By the end of the month-long battle, only around 1,000 survived.

The battle of Okinawa was the last major Pacific campaign of World War II, and "the scene of the greatest air-naval-land battle in history" (Miller 245). The battle lasted for three months and the casualty figures are staggering. The Americans suffered over 49,000 casualties, the Japanese well over 100,000. Nobody knows exactly how many Okinawans died, but the number is thought to be well over 100,000. Nearly 2,000 Kamikaze attacks were launched against the Americans, and on April 16, 1945, two Kamikazes struck the Essex Class aircraft carrier, U.S.S. Intrepid, killing 20 men. Radarman Second Class Ray Stone had served on the Intrepid since her commissioning in 1943, and felt his luck was running out. "The closer we got to Japan, the fiercer the fighting was. I felt I had used up six of my nine lives. So when the war ended I thought, 'Thank God.' I didn't think I was going to last much longer." When asked about the atom bombs, Ray replied, "It was the right thing to do, because it saved a lot of American and Japanese lives."

Others who were poised to participate in the invasion of Japan repeated this sentiment. Seaman Ed Coyne also served on the Intrepid, serving in flight operations and communication. An original crewmember, Ed saw action from the Marshall Islands to Okinawa, and was on board the Intrepid for the Sept. 2, 1945, surrender ceremonies in Tokyo Bay. When asked if the atom bombs saved his life, Ed replied, "Absolutely. A lot of lives were saved, including Japanese lives."

Felix Novelli joined the Intrepid in December 1944. As a plane captain, Felix prepared the aircraft for take-off and battle, making sure the pilots had a properly working airplane to take them into battle, and to bring them home. "We left too many guys on the bottom of the ocean. The war had to be stopped," said Felix. When asked if dropping the atom bombs was the right thing to do, Felix was clear in his reply: "Yes, it was."

On Okinawa, in approximately three months time, as many as 300,000 people were killed, wounded and lost. That averages 25,000 per week. Total American casualties numbered at least 73,000. Okinawa was the last stop before Operation Downfall, the invasion of Japan. If hell on earth could occur on one island with a large, but limited number of combatants, what would the invasion of Japan look like? President Harry Truman, fearing tremendous casualties, wanted to prevent "an Okinawa from one end of Japan to the other" (Miller 330). Millions of Americans would face tens of millions of Japanese soldiers and civilians on their home islands. Casualty estimates for the initial phase of the invasion were expected to be between one and two million. The Japanese government was prepared to sacrifice at least 20 million Japanese to the cause of maintaining the emperor and his Imperial Court (Giangreco xv).

By July 1945, Japan was a defeated nation. Its major cities had been turned to smoke and ash by the B-29 firebombing campaign. Countless thousands of Japanese civilians were dead, turned to ash and cinder. The Imperial Navy lay at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean. The army was decimated. The Japanese people were starving. The Imperial government's response was to publish pamphlets and articles extolling the virtue of eating grasshoppers, acorns, mice,

rats and sawdust. Even the zoo animals had been eaten. Still, the spirit warriors planned for more war (Bradley 416-417).

The Japanese plan to defend the home islands was called "Ketsu-Go" or "Decisive Operation." It was a plan for mass suicide. Ketsu-Go "proclaimed that Japan must fight to the finish and choose extinction before surrender" (Bradley 418). The emperor and his spirit warriors would sacrifice everything and everyone in order to maintain their power. They could poison the Americans with the cholera, anthrax and plague weapons produced by Unit 731.

The people would defend their nation with sharpened bamboo spears. They would strap explosives on their children and throw them under American tanks. The military had stockpiled over 12,700 aircraft; 18,600 pilots, many of whom were rated to fly at night; and large reserves of aviation fuel, to sustain a protracted Kamikaze-style fight against the Americans. The Imperial army had nearly 28,500 mortar grenade launchers, and 51,000,000 rounds of ballistic ammunition to fire on the Americans. On Kyushu, the first island to be invaded, over 917,000 Japanese troops were stationed at the time the war ended (Giangreco x).

America's Operation Downfall included contingencies, which would never be carried out. These included dropping at least nine atomic bombs on Japan's beachheads, more if need be. (The full effects and danger of radiation was still not known). Use of the rest of America's arsenal also was being considered, including the use of chemical weapons (Giangreco 111-112).

July 16, 1945 brought forth the successful melding of science, math, physics and weaponry when America exploded the world's first atomic bomb. Hopefully, using the bomb would force the fanatical Japanese militarists to face the truth and save the Japanese people from certain death.

On July 26, 1945, President Truman issued the Potsdam Declaration, calling for "the unconditional surrender of all the Japanese forces … The alternative for Japan is prompt and utter destruction" (Miller 336). The Japanese government flirted with negotiation, especially after the Soviet Union entered the war, but ultimately it ignored the warning.

On Aug. 6, 1945, Hiroshima disintegrated in the atomic fire. Three days later, on Aug. 9, 1945, Nagasaki suffered the same fate. Approximately 210,000 people died. On Aug. 14, 1945, five days after Nagasaki, nearly 2,000 planes firebombed Japan. Upon returning to their airbases, the American flyboys learned of Japan's surrender. On that day, the emperor spoke to the Japanese people, the Shinmin, for the first time. He told them that they had to "endure the unendurable and bear the unbearable." He never used the words "surrender" or "apologize," and he never spoke of the vast suffering he and his spirit warriors had caused.

The feared invasion of Japan never happened. Dropping the two atomic bombs ended the war. Twenty million Japanese would not have to die for the emperor and his spirit warriors. Millions of American soldiers would not have to storm the beaches of Japan. They would not be shot at, maimed or poisoned with plague. The west coast of America would not be targeted by Kamikazes carrying plague bombs. Ed, Ray, Felix and Max would regain their lives, a life without war. The Japanese people would be given the chance to rejoin the world. The war was over. America's sons and daughters could finally come home.

In "D-Days," author Donald Miller quotes historian Paul Fussell who was scheduled to participate in the invasion of Japan:

> When the atom bombs were dropped and news began to circulate that 'Operation Olympic' (the invasion of Japan) would not, after all be necessary, when we learned to our astonishment that we would not be obliged in a few months to rush up the beaches near Tokyo assault-firing while being machine gunned, mortared and shelled, for all the practiced phlegm of our tough facades we broke down and cried with relief and joy. We were going to live. We were going to grow to adulthood after all. (366)

America had stockpiled over 500,000 Purple Hearts for the invasion of Japan. Now, to the relief of millions, they would not be needed.

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Anorexia Nervosa: A Cross-Cultural Perspective

Heidi Feichtinger

Today, for many Western girls and young women it is not cancer, or losing a parent, or even nuclear war that frightens them most. According to research, the most crushing fate imaginable for some young women is to be fat (Delaney, 2008, p. 235). Ensnared in a society obsessed with female body image, half of our gendered population is centered round an endless quest to achieve the thin ideal. Our American culture supports this with billion-dollar industries that promote all varieties of diet books, gym memberships, weight-loss pills, surgical procedures, and last but not least, fashion fads that only look good on slender women; got "skinny jeans," anyone? If this pressure were not enough to make women check themselves twice in the mirror, measure their self-worth on a bathroom scale, or rethink "seconds" at the dinner table, then there is always the living room TV, Hollywood movies, those popular magazines that line supermarket check-out aisles, and friends, family and colleagues – all of whom also will affirm and support our culturally accepted thinness fixation and fat-phobia.

Yes, women are intimately aware of the complex issues of image, body size and disordered eating faced by their female gender. Sadly, most have known at least one woman whose body project became a nightmarish fetish – an idealized dream gone terribly wrong. For these women, life has become hijacked by an internal torment, made externally visible to others by food refusal and a dangerously shrinking body. Figuratively and literally "dying to be thin," this is the face of an eating disorder known as anorexia nervosa. In the United States and other traditionally Western societies, disordered eating is often shrugged off as the result of our modern culture, an inevitable embodiment of fashion models and movie stars. But what are eating disorders really about, especially in non-Western societies?

Many people, and myself included, are initially shocked to learn there is an emerging, worldwide epidemic of eating disorders. During the past few decades, the prevalence of this phenomenon has spread around the globe, with populations in East Asia, South Africa and South America suffering from anorexia at increasing rates. For example, in a 1987 study, only 4 percent of Japanese University students had disordered eating. Just 15 years later, in 2002, 50 percent of female students reported disordered eating and 18 percent were considered borderline anorexic according to National Institute of Health guidelines (Pike and Borovoy, 2004, p. 498). Another example is illustrated by several studies carried out in South Africa, which has shown that disordered eating amongst the black student population is equal or greater than their Caucasian counterparts (Szabo and Grange, in Nasser, 2001, p. 25). And finally, there are adolescent Fijian girls, whose culture has always valued big, beautiful women and who are now facing an outbreak of bodily shame and disordered eating patterns; one young girl's hopelessness is palpable as she tells Harvard researchers that "I feel sad, and I want to cry … I don't want to feel … overweight" (Becker, "Television, Disordered," 2004, p. 550). We used to believe that people belonging to a racial or ethnic group other than the stereotypic "Western, upper-class, Caucasian" population were protected against the ravages of disordered eating, yet the lifetime rates of anorexia in non-Western societies now match Western nations (Keel and Klump, 2003, p. 755).
What is going on?

There are many evidence-based theories that explain the pathology of anorexia, leading researchers to develop polarized arguments concerning its core etiology. The known risk factors span from genetics and aberrant physiology, to psychology and human development, to contributions of a sociocultural nature, making anorexia a very difficult illness to understand, let alone treat (Becker, et al., 2004, "Genes and," p. 82). Richard Gordon, Bard College professor of psychology, explains that eating disorders are most unique among all the psychiatric illnesses because of the degree to which social and cultural factors are influential in their development (Gordon, in Nasser, 2001, p. 1). Therefore, despite the importance and validity of other perspectives, the focus of this investigation of anorexia nervosa will be through a sociocultural lens.

When it comes down to it, the quintessential question we ask about disordered eating concerns its cause – which brings us to the purpose of this paper: is anorexia a Western-based disease, with its core etiology rooted in the sociocultural values and practices of such a society? Or, is it a common human response, triggered by certain elements universally found within vulnerable populations and then coded in culture-specific ways? Are there any features that are cross-culturally consistent? These are the motivating queries that give shape to this critique and drive its purpose towards reaching a greater understanding of the etiology of anorexia within a cross-cultural context.

The two models that will be used to explore anorexia from this perspective are the media influence hypothesis and the social change hypothesis. The first is a Westernization model, which argues that Western media are responsible for the rising rates of eating disorders in non-Western societies (Becker, et al., 2004, "Genes and," p. 84). The mechanism by which this theory is proposed to function is via the global transmission, absorption and adoption of Western images, values and attitudes. The second is a sociocultural transition model, which maintains that the underlying, universal cause of disordered eating is being enmeshed within an environment that is undergoing transition politically, socially, economically, or culturally. This model explains the reason why sweeping change can trigger the development of an eating disorder: the conflict that occurs between traditional values and modern expectations may influence a profound female identity crisis (Gordon, in Nasser, 2001, p. 3).

During the course of this paper, these two different arguments will be juxtaposed in an attempt to answer the pivotal question of whether anorexia is a Western-based illness that has spread by global diffusion, or whether there is a more universal, underlying factor involved in its etiology – namely, profound social transition and identity conflict. In addition, we will look at whether the stereotypic symptom of fat-phobia is a widespread feature, or whether each society's experience and symbolic meaning of the disease is as unique as the society itself. With this background in place, we now move into the body of this paper with an in-depth exploration of anorexia in several traditionally non-Western societies, including Japan, Fiji, Argentina and South Africa.

JAPAN

A country once believed immune to disordered eating, Japan has been mirroring the United States in its accelerating rates since the Second World War. As previously cited during this paper's introduction, some studies have shown that eating disorders are so common in Japanese youth that in a female student population in a classroom can be split straight down the middle with healthy girls on one side and eating-disordered on the other. Since Japan

has largely developed alongside the United States, can this phenomenon be assigned to the absorption of American ideals and the influences of Westernization? Or is this a hasty conclusion that does not consider cultural variability and the recent social changes that have been symbolically significant for Japan?

Kathleen Pike, a clinical research psychologist for New York state's Psychiatric Institute at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital, and Amy Borovoy, a professor of East Asian studies at Princeton University, have found that the rise of disordered eating in Japan is linked to major transitions such as recent urbanization and industrialization, as well as fundamental changes in the traditional Japanese family structure (Pike and Borovoy, 2004, p. 493-496). Specifically, Gordon explains that the traditional cultural and historical features of Japan, such as Japanese gender role development and a growing emphasis on individualism, have been critically impacted in recent years (Gordon, in Nasser, 2001, p. 5). Therefore, researchers argue that eating disorders in Japan are linked to the changing and conflicting messages young women receive concerning their female gender role. This is viewed as a direct result of the overall social transformation the country of Japan has experienced, rather than being an issue of infiltrated Western image-consciousness (Pike and Borovoy, 2004, p. 495).

To gain a better understanding of how a conflicted gender identity has led to the development of anorexia in modern Japan, a discussion concerning their traditional roles and culture is necessary. From early girlhood onwards, Japanese females are prepared and formally instructed on how to carry out their ultimate roles as mothers and domestic wives. It should be noted that the rise of industrialization and capitalism has increased the work demands placed on men and the educational needs of children, making women's domestic roles even more important to support this system. In Japan, motherhood is a girl's end-goal, her core identity as an adult, and an emblem of her having achieved maturity (pp. 502-504).

A critical point, too, is that in Japanese culture the transitional developmental period between girlhood and motherhood does not exist. There is no female adolescence. Girls are "infantilized" until they are grown women. Their sexual development jumps from using sanitary pads wrapped in cute, childlike wrappings, to their bodies being viewed in terms of mature, maternal reproductive function (Pike and Borovoy, 2004, p. 503). The concept of Shôjo (a "teenage girl") is actually taboo, as illustrated by the recent commoditization of these images in Japanese pornography, mass media and fashion.

In recent years, Japanese culture has been rapidly changing. Young Japanese women want more independence, emotional intimacy, social freedom, and a new adult identity that is separate from the traditional role of wife and child caretaker. Although motherhood has been the traditional path by which girls achieved maturity and independence, they are finding that, ironically, it is a socially isolating role that doesn't provide for other models of living a mature, adult life (Pike and Borovoy, 2004, p. 503). Although marriage brings social stability, entitlement and respect, it also is perceived as a "mechanism of entrapment" by many women (p. 506). Interestingly, marriage rates have decreased by 50 percent in the last 20 years (p. 508). Japanese women are now using their late adolescence and their 20s to create a developmental space between innocence and motherhood. They work, travel, explore their individuality, and have freedom from family responsibilities, all of which is the polar opposite of their traditional gender role (p. 506).

Interesting and concurrent to this social development is the emergence of the "culture of cute," the Hello Kitty culture that is stereotypic of the Japanese female lifestyle in recent years (Pike and Borovoy, 2004, p. 507). Pike and Borovoy explain that this female obsession with the "culture of cute" is significant, because of its psychosocial link to childhood (a time of freedom and indulgence), and illustrative of a current protest (against the social constraint and responsibility of traditional female roles) (p. 508).

A critical piece in the full comprehension of their challenge is how in Japan women also are expected to minimize conflict at all costs and be mute, necessitating that they endure discomfort quietly. This "conspiracy of silence" leaves them with no voice to protest their traditional roles or constructively express their modern identity conflict (Pike and Borovoy, 2004, pp. 507, 515). Researchers find that eating disorders serve as a vehicle for communication in a society that does not allow overt disagreement (p. 509). It can be reverberated that young Japanese women coming of age are confronted by ambivalent cultural demands and conflicting messages concerning their gender expectations.

During the course of their research, Pike and Borovoy conducted a survey of 75 anorexic women in Japan to assess risk factors, including sociocultural aspects, gender-role development, and the meaning of weight and body shape concerns, in an effort to tease out and affirm their hypothesis (Pike and Borovoy, 2004, p. 513). In summary of the findings pertinent to this discussion are the following statements. Among Japanese women, Pike and Borovoy found a very weak relationship between body dissatisfaction and disordered eating (p. 512). In addition, their "drive for thinness" was significantly lower than rates in the respective U.S. group, leading to the conclusion that while the desire to lose weight is significant in the etiology of anorexia, it centrality is minimal in comparison to Western women (p. 511). Furthermore, for those who were concerned with body size, the emphasis took on a different cultural meaning than the usual Western image-consciousness. Their "drive for thinness" is linked to the "culture of cute," symbolic of a desire for delayed maturation and traditional female responsibility, rather than the American "superwoman" image of power and perfection (p. 511). It signifies a route to a returned state of innocence, sameness and conformity and not the stereotypical Western pursuit of the impossible, thin ideal (p. 518). Clearly, anorexia in Japan is not about fat-phobia, but a means of communicating distress, attempting to regress into childhood and resist the things associated with traditional Japanese female adulthood (p. 511).

FIJI

Now, in contrast to the urban, modernized island of Japan, we move southeast to the island of Fiji where young women have experienced a sudden, unprecedented explosion in the prevalence of disordered eating. To provide a brief background, following a chronic period of significant social, political and economic turmoil, in 1995 television was introduced to the natives (Becker, "Television, Disordered," 2004, p. 539). Predictably, within just a few years, eating disorders became rampant among young Fijians. Researchers have since questioned whether Western media was directly responsible for the precipitation of Fijian anorexia or whether the new images served as an unfortunate model by which the youth recreated their value system and self-identity after being rendered vulnerable by sweeping social change.

To begin this investigation, we will first take an important in-depth look at the cultural background of the Fijian people. As stated a

moment ago, the island of Fiji was not exposed to Western media until the introduction of TV during the mid-1990s. Because of this historic isolation, the Fijians have ingrained a strong and long-lasting traditional culture. In sharp contrast to Americans, they value robust appetites and voluptuous body shapes, which are regarded as symbols of health and beauty. In addition to the absence of a cultural pressure towards thinness, Fijian girls have never learned that their bodies can be reshaped through dieting or exercise behaviors – this concept was completely foreign to them. And lastly, diverging from a Western society that conceives of identity in terms of physical appearance, traditional Fijians represent their identity through family and relationships, and the nurturing and feeding of the physical bodies. Anne Becker, a Harvard Medical School professor of psychiatry and medical anthropology, believes this combination of factors should have acted as a synergistically protective bubble against the development of eating disorders on the island (Becker, "Television, Disordered," 2004, p. 538, 551).

But unfortunately, the sweeping social upheaval that the Fijian people experienced during the last couple of decades of the 20th century damaged their traditional ways of life, which resulted in grave consequence for the island's youth. Becker explains that the development of "self" is highly sensitive to outside influence and during the critical stage of adolescence girls rely heavily on cultural resources to create, understand and symbolize whom they are (Becker, "Television, Disordered," 2004, p. 535). In the absence of a stable sociocultural sphere and without the steady influence of traditional role models, the Fijian adolescent girls had no choice but look toward the next available archetype for guidance on normative behavior (pp. 535-536). It is this background that characterizes Fiji perfectly.

Because of the island's recent social transition, young women were left vulnerable to the untimely new influence of the Western media images, which served as a resource for providing them with the much needed instruction on how to think, feel and act in their new and rapidly changing world (Becker, "Television, Disordered," 2004, p. 546). They began to idealize and symbolically emulate the much different world they saw on TV, one of perceived beauty, success and power. The contrast offered between the rich, happy, thin Hollywood stars and the impoverished, socio-culturally insecure, and voluptuous women of Fiji presented natives with a textbook recipe for disordered eating. Just as media exposure to violence has been shown to affect vulnerable individuals, so does the media in reference to body image for vulnerable women (pp. 534, 553-555).

Through research and interviews of 30 young anorexic women, Becker found that the Fijians explicitly wanted to emulate TV stars. But critically, their reason for desiring a thin body is interesting. It wasn't so much a matter of improving attractiveness, but rather, how it might boost their career opportunities, economic stability and social power. This thought process isn't surprising considering Fiji's recent social changes and economic expansion, and is supported by research that cites an inverse relationship between increased economic power and decreased body size (Becker, "Television, Disordered," 2004, p. 539; Becker, et al., 2004, "Genes and," p. 85). The jointed association between thinness and competitive socioeconomic positioning is illustrative of Fiji's concern over their place within the global economy, women's within the community, and girl's within the peer group. With the increased opportunity presented by recent modernization came an increased pressure to fit a new, physical standard. The end result is a conflict between traditional and modern gender image ideals –

and consequentially, disordered eating. Finally, further fueling their internal conflict is the pressure that girls now face to "integrate dual identities" – by adopting Western values and embodying that image for self-promotion in the new economy, versus the need to retain their traditional image in order to uphold the local tourist industry (Becker, "Television, Disordered," 2004, p. 553).

TV has undeniably altered how Fijians regard their body and how body image may improve their odds of securing a job and a new, glamorous, modern lifestyle. In opposition to their historic customs, their bodies are now being experienced as "an anchor for identity," as well as a vehicle with which to reach a competitive status in a rapidly changing environment (Becker, "Television, Disordered," 2004, p. 540). Emulating TV characters is equated with power or, as one interviewee explained, getting "whatever I want" in life (pp. 544-545).

The results of Becker's cross-sectional two-wave cohort study from 1995-1998 confirmed the introduction of Western media as being influential in altering female youth identity and corollary to the rise in disordered eating (Becker, "New Global," 2004, p. 435). Although at first glance it appears that these findings indicate support for the media influence hypothesis of eating disorder etiology, Becker still comments on how striking their rapid development of anorexia was, especially considering the long-term stability of their deeply ingrained cultural traditions (Becker, "Television, Disordered," 2004, p. 540). So, can we not argue that perhaps, the primary contributing factor of anorexia in Fiji is the vast social change the islanders have experienced, which presented the community with a loss of traditional identity, which left the women vulnerable, which is compounded by the new model for thinness and success that Western media images provided? Regardless of the mechanism, just as anorexia in Japan does not correlate with the Westernized, American definition, nor does Fijian anorexia. It is linked to their own unique sociocultural experience, which involves concern over gaining socioeconomic power within their new, emerging society.

ARGENTINA

Now, we will take a quick look at Argentina, a country where disordered eating has spread like wild fire, from large urban cities, to remote areas including Patagonia. Oscar Meehan, a psychiatrist in Cordoba, and Melanie Katzman, assistant professor of psychology at Weill Medical College, explain that the stereotypic profile of an eating disordered woman matches no population more perfectly than Argentinean females (Meehan and Katzman, in Nasser, 2001, p. 149).

In a country where beauty, youth and attractiveness are inherently associated with thinness, almost half the women in Argentina believe that they are completely "invisible" without a perfect body. Inversely representative of their symbolic quest for increased social power are their "ever-shrinking" clothing sizes, with a U.S. women's size eight being the largest available (Meehan and Katzman, in Nasser, 2001, p. 153). But, despite the country's emphasis on bodily appearance, Mehan and Katzman argue it is not Western values that have caused near-epidemic rates of anorexia, but rather the country's own transition, dislocation and gendered oppression that has led to women's desperate search for solutions through food, diet and weight (p. 150).

At the crux of the country's social, political and cultural features, Argentina's psycho-historic foundation is reflective of confusion and mass identity crisis. In contrast to the way in which

Europeans colonized America to build a new life, the main interest of settlers in South America was to exploit the land and then return home, resulting in a culture of "fluidity and impermanence," the ambiance of which still remains today (Meehan and Katzman, in Nasser, 2001, p. 152). Because of this, writer Jorge Luis Borges explains, "Argentineans are Italians who speak Spanish, dress like French, and think they are English" (p. 151). Niva Piran, a professor of counseling psychology at the University of Toronto, asserts that Argentina's risk for anorexia is largely due to its failed development of a national identity, providing no safety net of continuity for its people to fall back on during difficult times (Piran, in Nasser, 2001, p. 163). Without a firm ground to stand on, Meehan and Katzman explain that Argentineans are deeply embedded with complex identity confusion (Meehan and Katzman, in Nasser, 2001, p. 151).

In addition, several other domains in Argentina predispose the women towards disordered eating. Without the development of a distinct, cohesive culture, elitist Argentineans historically identified with European civility, which through time became the dominant mood of Argentina. Economically, despite their immeasurably vast foreign debt and inability to be self-sustaining, their culture indulges in a high standard of living. Scholars argue that this seed of superficiality is symbolically reflected through the rising rates of eating disorders as they, too, are a surface-level form of communication and coping. Writer Silvina Ocampo reinforces that Argentinean female power and worth is derived strictly from their body (Meehan and Katzman, in Nasser, 2001, p. 156). As true of other patriarchal societies, women's bodies in Argentina are not respected entities. They are sexualized and objectified. Such attribution has been strongly linked to eating disorders (Piran, in Nasser, 2001, p. 164).

In essence, the stage has been perfectly set for Argentina to emerge as a nation of eating disordered females, due to their perpetual transition and subsequent need for coping mechanisms, their sociopolitical constraint, cultural emphasis on superficial beauty, and inherent identity confusion (Meehan and Katzman, in Nasser, 2001, p. 155). Although further studies would need to be conducted in order to avoid a premature conclusion, researchers find the influence of Western media images not the primary precipitator of anorexia in this country, but instead, a problem directly related to their innate and relentless social upheaval. Symbolic of their gendered oppression and confused sense of self, eating disorders allow Argentinean women a sense of power, or at least, quest in its experiential achievement (p. 157).

SOUTH AFRICA

As shocking is the recent rise of eating disorders among South African females. South Africa's tremendous social, political and cultural turmoil since the end of the Apartheid regime provides a sociocultural context for this development.

So, what is behind the rising rates of anorexia and disordered eating in South African women? According to Chris Paul Szabo, senior professor of psychiatry at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, and Daniel le Grange, director of an eating disorders program in Chicago, it is due to the dramatic changes that have transpired during the course of the last 20 years (Szabo and le Grange, in Nasser, 2001, pp. 28-29). This includes sociopolitical changes, evolving gender roles, inequality, shifting competitive environments, and an increased exposure to the effects of Westernization (Le Grange, et al., 2004, p. 441). This all-encompassing state of transition has left a whole community of people in the wake of needing to construct new lives and identities.

These changes have had a substantial impact on women, especially in terms of their gender roles and images. This is particularly true for adolescents, who rather than experiencing identity realization and integration are finding themselves confused due to the contradictory expectations of pre-and-post-Apartheid South Africa (le Grange, et al., 2004, p. 442). Szabo and le Grange explain that in their search for a new identity, due to the contradictory messages of being faithful to one's traditions versus the push for modernization, young women are left vulnerable to expressing their psychological tension through an eating disorder (Szabo and le Grange, in Nasser, 2001, pp. 28-29). Furthermore, it is the South African norm for women to equate success and wealth with restraint and discipline. A diet can serve as a symbolic quest for achievement (p. 30).

South American women receive mixed messages concerning how they should dress. In recent years, clothing companies have promoted the Western corporate "power dressing" look, while frowning upon their more "primitive" attire (Szabo and le Grange, in Nasser, 2001, p. 29). South African women are torn between aspiring to this new ideal and maintaining their strong ethnic pride. It appears that the central feature of the conflict that South African women experience is their having to choose between tradition and "liberation" – a proverbial leap into the void considering their social, political and cultural background. The transition from disempowerment to empowerment came with an identity conflict, and the pressures and expectations which South African women are struggling to meet. (p. 31).

At a surface-level, many have proposed that the emerging epidemic of eating disorders in South Africa is the result of Western media, but Szabo and le Grange maintain that it is really due to the deeper, more complex, and common effects of urbanization, political transformation, and changing gender roles (Szabo and le Grange, in Nasser, 2001, p. 31). Finn Skårderud, a psychiatrist and professor at the University of Oslo, Norway, agrees, stating that eating disorders are not a "Western contagion," but really "culture chaos syndromes" (Skårderud, in Nasser, 2001, p. 37). He maintains that rapid social change is psychosocially shocking and results in a heightened risk for eating pathology. This is due to the way in which change threatens self-identity by destroying traditional contexts and routines, learned boundaries and constructed known, leading to feeling unhinged from what was once regarded as reality. In this vulnerable, empty and fragmented space, the body is the perfect vessel through which to express symbolic messages – being physically concrete and directly associated with self-identity – which are the very things threatened during transition. Eating disorders can be understood as expressive of a problem, and simultaneously, a solution to that problem through the recreation of one's identity through the physical body (pp. 37-38). Skårderud concludes that for South African women, eating disorders aren't necessarily the result of Westernization, but rather, a universal response to social change and a means by which women can express, control, transform and transcend (Skårderud, in Nasser, 2001, p. 39).

CLOSING

In an effort to bring this discussion back full circle and provide further evidence towards the conclusions being drawn, the United States will be discussed briefly as an additional reference point.

Upon close inspection, the emergence of eating disorders, even in the United States, has followed the etiological model of the social change hypothesis. For example, during the 1950s and prior, women had specific (albeit,

oppressed) gender roles, and our culture admired curvaceous and healthy bodies like that of Marilyn Monroe. But with the social revolution of the 1960s, female identity and gender roles changed dramatically and have been evolving ever since (Gordon, in Nasser, 2001, p. 2). Although some say the image of feminine beauty was transformed by the 87 pound British model known as "Twiggy" (Delaney, 2008, p. 236), this media infatuation could arguably be the consequence of the new, sociocultural space women were occupying, and both, the vulnerability and need for, a new archetypal female image to match, the legacy of which continues today. Can it not be surmised that even in the United States, the increased prevalence of anorexia was preceded by social change and further compounded by subsequent exposure to strong images during consequential times of vulnerability and female image-concept reformation?

Although American's conceive of anorexia as a media-inspired fat-phobia, it is not a universal feature of disordered eating across the globe. A modern gender role conflict experienced in Japan and South Africa, a wish for better socioeconomic positioning in Fiji, or vehicle towards higher visibility in Argentina, in all of these examples, the meaning of anorexia is reflective of, and embedded within, each woman's unique social experience.

As gathered from the in-depth examples presented herein, although Western media does indeed play a compounding role in the development of anorexia, it is only secondary to the primary motivator, which is a profound social transition and the resulting from it female identity crisis. Richard Gordon agrees with this assertion and furthermore finds this hypothesis supported throughout time and across cultures (Gordon, in Nasser, 2001, p. 3). This highlights the physical body's vulnerability to, and dependency on, the larger sociocultural body. It has been suggested by numerous researchers that female eating disorders are a sort of "litmus test" – one of the most sensitive barometers of sociocultural change and the strain felt by a society (Rathner, in Nasser, 2001, p. 94-95).

When looking at the etiology and symbolic meaning of anorexia – and all illnesses for that matter – our vision needs to go beyond preconceptions, with the utmost sensitivity and respect for differences in the human experience. This might be the only way to better understand anorexia nervosa locally and abroad, and help women heal from the complex health threat that it has become.

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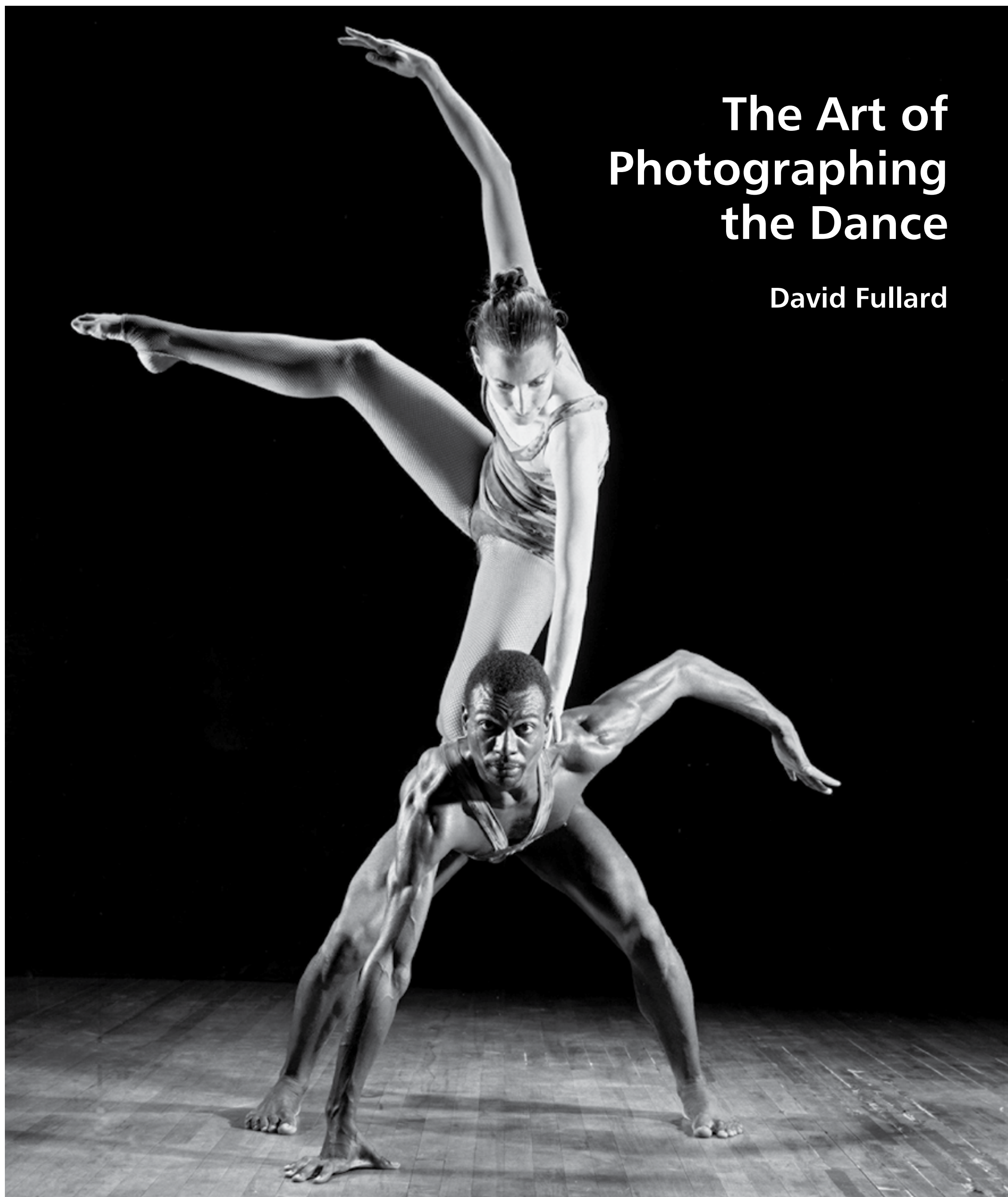
The Art of Photographing the Dance

David Fullard



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Eleo Pomare dance company 2010

It seems almost ironic that an art so alive with sensual, energetic and compelling movement should be photographed by means of the still camera. But in essence what this does is to set up a challenge to the photographer. The challenge is to capture the spirit of the dance in terms natural to the camera. Photographs depicting dancers must have the same power and energy that exists during the actual performance. The final print

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should vibrate when viewed by an individual. Glowing light tones and luminous blacks mingling in supple intermediate tones should almost stir up an erotic fever in the viewer. Photographers in the past, and a great many in the present, have photographed dance in a way that is nothing more than a technical accomplishment, in which the action is stopped and the performer is left in an uncomplimentary position in space. In my style of studio dance photography, it is sometimes necessary to freeze the action, and at other times a slightly blurred image is required to help convey the emotion of the choreography. Often, both techniques are utilized to show some of the body frozen in time and other parts in the flow of the movement.

I think it should be clarified that my particular work is more than an accurate record of the dance, it is a rejoicing, a celebrating of the dance art form through still photography. The major purpose of the work is for exhibition, but a large portion of the work is used to publicize dance in the form of press kits, newspaper and magazine articles, books, calendars and promotional material.

All of my work is created in the studio, alone with my subject. In order to do this, it is most important that the work be seen prior to the shooting in order to find the emotion that originally inspired the dance concept. The dance is seen not from the point of view of a spectator but from that of a photographer. While at the rehearsal of a performance, I also am able to observe the reflexes and

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idiosyncrasies of the dancer's personal style. Because the dance is photographed in the studio does not mean the choreography has been changed, but moments are selected that best convey the choreographer's intent and are isolated at their apex. It also is important to discuss the work with the choreographer in order to clarify any questions or problems that might occur during the photo session.

Good dance photography is more than an accurate record of the choreography; it involves capturing the quality and emotion of the movement. In order to do this, the dancer must be moving. The movement does not have to be violent, energetic or athletic, it may just as well be simple and quiet, but the important thing is that the dancer move and not pose. By photographing part of a series of movements and not just a specific movement, the dancer is able to "get into the emotion of the dance" and recreate what was seen in the performance. While being somewhat of a neurotic perfectionist, I will have the dancer perform this series of movements many times, photographing the movement from various angles and with different lighting until I have captured what Henri Cartier-Bresson defined as the decisive moment.

When dealing with the dance artist, there is sometimes a conflict between what the photographer sees as being the decisive moment from a purely photographic aesthetic and the correct technique that the dance artist has internalized and expects to see in the photograph. Photographic aesthetic involves moving the viewer (physically, mentally and

psychologically) via the imagery. Correct technique involves choreographic perfection. Both the dance and the photograph aesthetic are important and it would be foolish, as well as shortsighted, to undermine either philosophy.

Generally, I am able to capture both the correct dance technique and the essence of the gesture, enabling me to create the photographic aesthetic I am looking for.

Sometimes, when the correct dance technique is lost, but an extremely strong "essence of gesture" (also known as sensitivity, feeling, mood, emotion or attitude) exists, the young dancer will resist, and choose something where the technique is correct regardless of the mood portrayed in the photograph. The older, more experienced dance artist will always be able to relate to and accept the power and excitement of the essence of the gesture (and the pure photographic aesthetic) over pure choreographic techniques.

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On "Master Harold and the Boys"

Delia Garces

"Master Harold and the Boys" is a dramatic play written by Athol Fugard. It deals with the oppression in South Africa during Apartheid in the 1950s. The play takes place in a tea room where a white boy and a black servant have frequent interactions. These two main characters have a close relationship that goes beyond boss and employee. However, it is through this relationship that both love and hate is displayed; these emotions contribute directly to the controversial theme of this drama, racism, because of differences that exist between the characters and the dual relationship they have. The conflict exists in the disparities between the main characters' educational, racial and class differences, and in the dual relationship that they have. The climax of the play takes place when Hally finally reveals his true feelings to Sam. Furthermore, it is in the complexity of their relationship that we see how racism can control a person, and how bottled-up anger can change who that person is.

The play develops around the two main characters, Sam and Hally. Sam is a 45-year-old black man who works for Hally's parents as a waiter in their tea room. Hally is a 17-year-old, white, middle-class boy who attends private school and supervises his mother's business. Willie is the other black employee that works with Sam. Willie is practicing to win a famous dancing competition. There are multiple conflicts in this play that stem from the relationship between Hally and Sam. One conflict lies in the father-son and boss-employee relationship that they have. The other conflict exists within the barriers that separate them which are educational, racial and social class differences. From the relationship aspect, both situations are complicated. As a father figure, Sam is forced to play many roles. He helps Sam with his homework, plays with him, makes sure he eats, and takes care of him. This is a role that Sam had embraced with love, as he understood that Hally's father was not fulfilling his duty. We see this when he tells Hally: "That's not the way a boy grows up to be a man! But the one person who should have been teaching you what that means was the cause of your shame" (p. 58). On the other hand, as an employee Sam is supposed to take orders from Hally and do as he says. This has to be uncomfortable for an older man to take orders from a child he has helped to raise. However, due to the friendship they have, Hally is a bit lenient with Sam sometimes and he allows him to call him Hally, instead of Master Harold. Other times, he plays the role of boss very cruelly. For instance, when Willie and Sam are talking about dance he tells them: "Act your bloody age! Cut out the nonsense now and get on with your work. And you too, Sam. Stop fooling around" (p. 13). Hence, their conflicts lie in the dual relationship roles that they play for each other. Sam, as an employee, also plays the role of Hally's father and friend simultaneously, while Hally plays devil's advocate as friend, boss and son.

Other conflicts exist that delve deeper into the main characters. These conflicts appear as barriers of separation that clearly define each character. Hally is a teenager in the process of getting a middle-class education, while Sam is an unschooled but educated and responsible man who has a lot to teach Hally. Hally initiates an intense conversation with Sam about finding a great man who would benefit all mankind, a man of magnitude. During their "man of magnitude" conversation, Fugard

displays all the wealth of knowledge Hally has acquired through the books he has read. His educational level is something Hally brags about throughout the play. He tells Sam after this extensive conversation: "Tolstoy may have educated his peasants, but I've educated you" (p. 23). However, in Sam we see another level of education that surpasses that of Hally. It is an intellectual kind, one that values life. Besides learning through listening to Hally and eventually challenging him with homework, Sam shows him the beauty in life through a dance contest. He tells him that they have to "learn to dance life like champions instead of always being just a bunch of beginners at it" (p. 46). Through his story, he is teaching Hally an important lesson about the value of life. Hally still has a lot to learn.

The social differences that exist between Hally and Sam, of middle and working class status, are deepened by racial differences. Hally is a white boy in apartheid South Africa who has been raised with racism and is living with it. As a result, he has learned to be prejudiced, a behavior that he has embraced fully. During the kite scene he tells Sam: "I mean seriously, what the hell does a black man know about flying a kite?" (p. 29). Later in the scene, he proceeds by telling him, "Little white boy in short trousers and a black man old enough to be his father flying a kite. It's not every day you see that" (p. 31). Apparently that seems strange to him because of the racial disparity. On the other hand, his color did not matter to Sam at the time. Instead, Sam's concern was to make a sad and hurt little boy feel better. Obviously, Sam is aware of Hally's racial feelings because he asks him: "Why is that strange? Because the one is white and the other is black?" (p. 31). Hally's response is: "I don't know" (p. 31). He lies; he knows very well how he feels and what he means by his words, but does not want to admit to it. Sam has no choice but to deal with it. He realizes that he lives in a racist country, but he stills believes change is possible.

The climax is at the end of the play when Hally finally unleashes his true feelings on Sam and spits in his face (p. 56). Hally is totally transformed by suppressed anger and vents on the wrong person. After this derogatory and insulting gesture, Sam is extremely angry and disappointed in Hally and tells him: "The face you should be spitting in is your father's … but you used mine, because you think you're safe inside your fair skin … and this time I don't mean just or decent" (p. 56). The climax is resolved through Sam revealing his feelings to Hally. By doing this, he hopes to educate Hally about his behavior. Once again, through his fatherly advice, he lets Hally know the real meaning of his action. This is why he tells him: "You don't know what you've just done … Master Harold. It's not just that you've made me feel dirtier than I've ever been in my life … I mean, how do I wash off yours and your father's filth?" (p. 57). In other words, Hally's harsh words and his final spitting action have abruptly ended the close relationship that they had. It was one that Sam had worked long and hard to build. Sam reminds him of this friendship by telling him the real reason why he made the kite for him. When Hally was a little boy, he went to Sam for help with his drunk, crippled father and Sam was there for him. However, Hally has forgotten the special bond he had with his friend and in a moment of anger, throws it all away. Sam refreshes Hally's memory by describing how there was: "A crowded Main Street with all the people watching a little white boy following his drunk father on a nigger's back!" (p. 58). After this, Hally finally admits his love for his father, regardless of his handicap. Basically, his behavior was a display of bottled up anger and resentment towards his father. Unfortunately, he took it out on the wrong

person, his friend. Sam acknowledges his feeling by advising Hally: "You love him and you're ashamed of him. You are ashamed of so much! And now that's going to include yourself. That was the promise I made to myself: to try and stop that from happening" (p. 58). Here we see Sam's true affection for Hally reflected in his desire to make him a better man. This is a task he feels a failure at due to Hally's behavior. Still, Sam shows care, love and compassion for Hally. Even after his demeaning gesture, Sam warns Hally to be careful of his actions so he does not wind up sitting alone on the white's only bench. In his final words, he advises him: "You don't have to sit up there by yourself. You know what that bench means now, and you can leave it any time you choose. All you've got to do is stand up and walk away from it" (p. 60). In other words, there is hope for change and all we have to do is choose to do the right thing, and walk away from racism.

Through the relationship of Hally and Sam, we see how two people can bond, but also how racial, social and educational differences can set them apart. The playwrights' intention is to get us to think seriously about racism and how we can let it control us, or alternatively, how we can choose to control it. Hally had inadvertently learned to be prejudiced, but had still managed to build a close relationship with a black man. Sam, on the other hand, understood his place in the world, but was determined not to be limited by it. Sam truly embraced the role of father that he played with Hally. Unfortunately, Hally had not fully appreciated the meaning of their relationship. In the end, Sam truly wanted Hally to become a better man. In order for that to happen, Hally had to be freed from the racial boundaries that were binding him. Sam unfolds the truth of Hally's options by making him aware that he can choose to simply walk away.

Reflection on Wangechi Mutu's Art

Wendi Gueorguiev

Wangechi Mutu appears to be a rising star in the art world. Her solo show, "Hunt Bury Flee," at the Gladstone Gallery, has caught my attention in more ways than one. According to Artnet.com, her work resides in no less than 12 prominent museums and sits in the famous Saatchi Collection.[1] Mutu's surreal figurative pieces at the Gladstone Gallery, composed of paint, ink and mixed media materials on skin-like Mylar, continue much of her approach from the past 10 years. They are a visually compelling synthesis of collage and assemblage techniques, reminiscent of the work of Dadaist Hannah Hoch, Romare Bearden and Chris Ofili; a distinctly Postmodern feminist interrogation of representation and meaning; and raw, poetic explorations of experience in relation to culture, femininity, race, identity, sexuality, the body and beauty.[2] Mutu's images clearly evidence her stated feeling that "[f]emales carry the marks, language and nuances of their culture more than the male" and how "[a]nything that is desired or despised is always placed on the female body."[3] I feel like I can relate but what I will be exploring here is how her colorful, intriguing work uses concepts and approaches that have been utilized for quite some time in contemporary art.

Pluralism

Mutu is both an heir and a contributor to the still-growing critical project of inclusivity and pluralism in the art world. The valuation of pluralism in American society and culture at large can be seen as a shift in collective perceptions that has been developing slowly from the '60s onward. It is a product of prolonged and concerted cultural, social and political activism by artists that has taken the form of collective and individual direct action, critical art practices and thought, and the creation of alternative exhibition spaces and art centers. Mutu, a woman who also is Kenyan-born and raised, a person of color, and an immigrant to the United States, proudly owns the pluralism she personifies and sees there is still a long way to go in terms of the perceptions and the inclusion of diverse identities. Mutu uses her formal talents and conceptual training to examine and express the intersection of experience and the values of culture and society.

Feminism, Representation and Meaning

Among Mutu's interests are the concerns of feminism and how representation and perception are related to issues of femininity, race and cultural identity. Along with pluralism, these social and political themes, and her conceptual and formal approaches to them also are deeply rooted in contemporary art, and, in particular, Linda Nochlin's early '70s feminist, constructivist theory and Postmodern methods of critique. Nochlin explicated how the very terms of both visual representation and traditional discourses of art and culture were constructs that predetermine meaning, and perpetuate oppression and exclusion. Mutu's literally and conceptually layered visual metaphors appear to fill Nochlin's prescription for a practice of art that could reveal the myriad of constructs as a strategy for enduring social and political change.[4]

Nochlin's ideation of the nature and power of constructs fed into the Postmodernist approaches of the late '70s that tackled issues related to visual representation and meaning

Figure 1

through photo-based figurative imagery. Mutu's practice carries the Postmodern intentions, methods and critiques largely intact. Her fantastical images of female figures, built in part by the collage of found images from print media such as pornography, fashion spreads, advertising, National Geographic magazines and books on African art, are thoroughly Postmodern in their appropriation of existing imagery as a means to express perception and experience by examining and playing with received visual terms of representation and their precoded meanings.[5]

The Political

In light of Mutu's intrinsically pluralist identity, her work is inherently personal but expands to the political as she is conscious, in the words of Martha Rosler, "of a larger, collective struggle."[6] And while her work is firmly political, it would not be categorized as "activist art" according to the criteria presented by Jennifer Gonzalez and Adrienne Posner in their essay "Facture for Change: U.S. Activist Art Since 1950." Though her work is a socially and politically engaged, Mutu does not employ tactics that mark true activist art, such as the use public space, collaboration, viewer participation, or the utilization of "coalition politics."[7]

Beauty

Mutu's work is engaged on multiple levels with the issues bound up in societal and cultural conceptions of beauty. Notions of beauty have long been a site of valuation and contention

throughout Modern and contemporary art practices and criticism. Margaret Morgan, in her essay "Regarding Beauty," traces the philosophical origins of the definition of beauty as well as its shifting status in cultural practices. According to Morgan, beauty, which has been associated over time with a spontaneous "sensate pleasure" in response to harmonies, balance and order, has often taken a fall in art, sometimes due to rebellions against "bourgeois notions of propriety and taste," and frequently in the pursuit of "truth" which was often accompanied by "the ugly … raw … common … everyday" realities of life.[8] For me, Mutu achieves in her multimedia collage work an intentionally paradoxical beauty. From a distance, her images are striking and formally beautiful. Her imaginative and masterly use of color, composition, line, form, light, texture, pattern, and rhythm produces in me an immediate sense of visual pleasure and interest. This beauty in Mutu's work could additionally be construed as deliberately seductive. I was lured near to take a closer look that revealed vastly not-beautiful realities. Mutu's images are monstrous figurative distortions built out of a collection of disparate, incongruous images that form disturbing and often grotesque juxtapositions in an attempt to convey the "truths" of life and experience. Her female figures are grossly disfigured by the photo-based imagery collaged upon them, which in turn appears to represent, in concrete form, the destructive, uninformed assumptions and projections, found in Western popular culture, that are piled high upon women, peoples and cultures.

Conclusion

Mutu's work echoes the developments of the contemporary period to such a degree that I could wonder how her art and approach could be seen as original or innovative. Her subjects are not new. The Postmodern feminist approach is now decades old. Her surreal utilization of collage and assemblage dates back to the Cubists and Dadaists of the early 20th century. In essence, Mutu uses methods and concepts that have been employed by artists for decades and her approach could actually be seen as quite derivative. What sets her work apart is the substantial and abundant evidence of her formal talents and imagination. She is able to construct powerful visual metaphors that seem fresh and communicate nebulous, experiential states directly and lyrically. During our visit to Gladstone, I connected with her richly worked images, and especially "Three Huggers" (2010) (Figure 1) that portrays a woman clinging precariously to a wounded tree while even her own hair turns against her. I was delighted to experience a resonance on multiple levels. Mutu's visual voice is distinct and knowing, the Postmodern method is still effective, and the issues she works with remain acutely vital.

Figures

Figure 1 Wangechi Mutu, "Three Huggers," 2010. Mixed media ink, paint, collage on Mylar, 92 1/2 x 54 x 1 inches (235 x 137.2 x 2.5 cm). Copyright Wangechi Mutu. Courtesy Gladstone Gallery, New York.

Notes

1 "Artnet: Wangechi Mutu: Museum and Public Collections." 2010. http://www.artnet.com/usernet/awc/awc_history_view.asp?aid=424756505&info_type_id=10 (accessed Nov. 27, 2010).

2 "Saachi Gallery: Selected Works by Wangechi Mutu: Artist Information: Articles." 2010. http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/artists/wangechi_mutu.htm (accessed Nov. 27, 2010).

[3] Quoted in "Saachi Gallery: Selected Works by Wangechi Mutu: Artist Information: Articles." 2010.http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/artists/wangechi_mutu.htm (accessed Nov. 27, 2010).

[4] Sam Gathercole, "'I'm sort of sliding around in place … ummm … :' Art in the 1970s," in A Companion to Contemporary Art since 1945, ed. Amelia Jones, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 70-73.

[5] "Saachi Gallery: Selected Works by Wangechi Mutu."

[6] Quoted in Gathercole, "Sliding around in place," 63.

[7] Jennifer Gonzalez and Adrienne Posner. "Facture for Change: U.S. Activist Art Since 1950," in A Companion to Contemporary Art since 1945, ed. Amelia Jones, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 213.

[8] Margaret Morgan. "Regarding Beauty," in A Companion to Contemporary Art since 1945, ed. Amelia Jones, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 164-165.

Besa: An Albanian Tradition and Pride

Orhan Hajrizi

Growing up in a typical Albanian family and living together with my parents and grandparents, I heard a lot about Albanian traditions; however, there was one specific principle – Besa – of which everyone in my family spoke with admiration, huge respect and, to some extent, with fear as well. As a child, I learned fast that if I made my parents give me Besa, they would do what I asked; there was no doubt that it would come true. As I grew older, I began to wonder, question and come to understand why this specific expression had such importance in our tradition, in particular for the older generations, and how it developed so strongly over time to become known worldwide, as one of the most specific Albanian customs and traditions.

Besa is a long held tradition of the Albanian people and represents their code of honor. It is a virtue that has characterized the Albanian people for centuries. It means faith, trust, hospitality, commitment, honor and self-sacrifice. Because of its specificities, the word Besa does not have an exact translation in any language, including English; nevertheless the closest word to describe Besa in English is "oath" or "truce." Besa dictates a moral behavior so absolute that nonadherence brings shame and dishonor on oneself and one's family. Simply stated, it demands that one takes the responsibility for the lives of others in their time of need,[1] be it friend or enemy. According to the code of Besa, an Albanian will lay down his life for another in need and protect anyone in danger, regardless of all religious and political affiliations.

I will just recall a story my grandfather told me as a kid about a family in his village. While a young man was watching after his cattle in the mountain owned by his family, an unknown stranger without asking for permission, passed through the land and they entered into a fight. The stranger stabbed the young shepherd and killed him. After running from the scene, as it was getting dark and fearing the revenge of the shepherd's family, he stopped at the nearest village and knocked on the door of one of many houses, asking for shelter, food and protection of the owner over the night, based on Besa.[2] The guest explained to his host about the fight and killing the young man, while the host gave his Besa that in case someone came after him, he would protect him by all means, even if he and his family had to die.

Hours later, villagers came by the house and notified the owner that his son was found dead in the field, stabbed with the knife. The host understood that he was hosting the killer of his son and despite the sadness and pain, he told the stranger not to worry for his life, because he gave his Besa to protect him from everyone. He asked his wife to continue preparing the dinner and after that to prepare his bed. In the morning, after they had breakfast, the host accompanied the stranger to the border of his land, shook his hand and told him that from now on he was his enemy. The host gave him his Besa for another day until he would return home, after which he would always be hunted until his son would be revenged.

Our neighboring countries in the Balkans always knew about the importance of Besa in the Albanian tradition; however, the world learned about Besa only after World War II. Albania was the only country in Europe where there were more Jews after the war than there had been before the war. Very few in the world know that

famous scientist Albert Einstein escaped to the United States, only after Albanian King Leka Zogu issued him an Albanian passport in 1935. He stayed on the Albanian coast for three days in the royal mansion and then, equipped with a new Albanian identity, continued his journey toward the free world.[3]

Almost 50 years after, this fact has inspired Norman H. Gershman, a U.S. photographer to begin his journey of finding out how come Albanians predominantly Muslim, saved Jews. In his book about Besa, he searched for families that rescued Jews during World War II and found out that Albanians not only helped Jews, but they accepted them in their families as guests, giving them Albanian names and protecting them until the war ended and left their homes safe.[4] Gershman explained that there is no evidence of any Jew ever being turned over to the Nazis by an Albanian and the honor of helping someone in need is so prized, the Albanian people actually fought over who would take the Jews in.[5]

The last century marked some of the greatest inventions in the history of humanity that brought huge changes to the world, especially in terms of communication, movement, traveling, etc., which resulted in learning about each other's cultural and traditional values as well. Globalization has affected nations' traditions, in particular younger generations who gradually ceased to practice their traditions, but nevertheless remembered them through different stories that have been passed by the elders. Albanians were part of such changes too and many old traditions became distant through time, but not Besa. Although times have changed, Besa still remains a strong value and principle in our tradition. It's inconceivable for an Albanian to break his Besa.

Besa is a message to the world about brotherhood and compassion for those in need and is unique to the Albanian people. This code of honor remains a key value of our society, although its application changed due to different circumstances; nevertheless from what I read and learned about Besa, I remain amazed with the weight and power it maintains.

Below is an example of Besa in action:

A boy went out for hunting in the forest and he saw above him flying an unusually big eagle holding a snake that landed in the hill. The boy noticed the eagle flying in its nest. The boy climbed the hill and saw the little eaglet playing with the snake that was pretending to be dead. The snake moved and tried to kill the eaglet. The boy took out his arrow, killed the snake and left for home taking the eaglet as well. While on his way home, suddenly he heard above him the sound of eagle wings.

Why did you take my eaglet – the mother eagle asked?

The eaglet is mine, because I saved it from the snake, which you didn't kill," the boy answered.

Give me back my eaglet and in return I give you my Besa to give you the sharpness of my eyes and the energy of my wings. You will be the most powerful, and you will be called with my name!"

The boy returned the eaglet to its mother. When the eaglet grew, it was flying all the time above the boy's head who then was a man.

Amazed by the man's virtues, people voted him the King of Hunting. He was called Shqipetar (Albanian), which means the Son of Eagle and his kingdom was named Shqiperi (Albania), which means the Land of Eagles.

This story is a good illustration of Besa, a feature unique to Albanian people that other nations acknowledge and envy. Throughout history, Albanian Besa also was considered a sort of constitution or rule of conduct for behavior of Albanian people.

The inherited custom of Besa presents an important part of our tradition and cultural treasure, which enabled Albanian people to survive as a nation through centuries of occupations by others. For 700 years of foreign rule, Albanians were forced to convert to different religions, but until now, there has never been any religious tension. This is so because the custom of Besa knows no religion or other distinctions, but only the honor and obligation to protect others in need, which helped all Albanians, come together and protect one another. If only such a custom would have been a part of every nations' cultures and traditions, there is no doubt that history would not know of Crusades, World Wars, Holocaust, Srebrenica, Rwanda, Kosovo and other human sufferings to come.

Footnotes

[1] Gershman H., Norman "Besa: Muslims who saved Jews during the World War II," p. 12, Syracuse University Press, 2008.

[2] Centuries ago, while transportation means were not developed yet, traveling was difficult and it took days to reach a destination. It was Albanian custom to admit any stranger knocking in your door and asking for a shelter and food over the night. It was obligation of the host to protect the guest with his life until he would leave safely his property. In case something happened to the guest, it was the obligation of the host to revenge him and clear the name of the family ashamed for not being able to protect a stranger.

[3] Rescue in Albania: How Thousands of Jews Were Saved From the Holocaust, by Lawrence Marzouk, available at: http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/main/features/18790/?tpl=299&ST1=Text&ST_T1=Article&ST_AS1=1&ST_max=1.

[4] Gershman H, Norman "Besa: Muslims who saved Jews during the World War II," Syracuse University Press, 2008.

[5] The Jewish Chronicle- Besa, Albanian Muslims took vow to save Jews, by Toby Tabachnick, available at: http://www.pittchron.com/view/full_story/1796256/article--Besa-Albanian-Muslims-took-vow-to-save-Jews--photographer-says.

Eyes to See

Nechamie Margolis

It started with a question.

"Will you write a book about Grandpa?"

We were staying at our country house in Tannersville, N.Y. My mother was sitting in a hammock. Tears whispered down her cheeks. She clutched the phone tightly.

"Write a book about Grandpa. Before he's gone."

I stared at her. "When he's__"

"Gone," she repeated. "I just spoke to Jeanie. The doctor gives him six months. We need to hold on to him for longer."

I waited until she had gone back into the house and then curled myself up in the green hammock.

Suddenly, I was no longer a 25-year-old mother of one, but a 6-year-old child tumbling with my seven siblings into my grandparents' low rise house in New Orleans. Grandpa meets us at the door, opening his arms wide and we rush laughing into his arms, fighting over who gets to pull his blue suspenders, then waiting to hear that delightful ping as it bounces against his generously sloping stomach.

"Attention," he says in a tone that carries a trace of his former army training, "welcome to our home. Now, all "ch" children, line up on the right, and all "non-ch" children, on the left." We form haphazard lines, Yudi, Lakey, Raizy, Shneur on one side, Chaya, Rachel, Menachem and me on the other, divided by those of us who had the Hebrew guttural "ch" in our name. We laugh at his pronunciation. It amazes me that after 20 years of having a daughter who became religious and eight Hasidic grandchildren, he still has a hard time pronouncing my name. "Chamie," he says, "come sit on my lap." I snuggle up against him. I don't have to say anything. He doesn't try to make me talk when I feel like observing, never tells me that big girls don't suck their thumbs, never asks me why I looked so sad like all the other grownups love to do.

I ask him why people think I look sad. "You have beautiful eyes," he says looking into mine. "They are deep brown with flecks of green. You have thinking eyes." He pats me on the head. "With your thinking head and your thinking eyes, you can do just about anything."

I look into his eyes so similar to mine and smile.

Visits to New Orleans turn into a small wonderland. We camp on the living room floor, jump on the beds as much as we want, and take trips to Toys "R" Us to each buy the toy of our choice.

"Thanks for coming," my grandfather says as we leave, stuffing a $20 bill into my hand. "Buy yourself something you want and don't need."

My family visited my grandparents every year. After I got married, I continued the visits with my husband and then my baby. I had spoken to my grandfather a few months before I heard the news of his diagnosis.

"I wish I could visit," I said wistfully.

"Why don't you?" he asked. "Do what's best for you, but I would love to see you soon."

I was noncommittal. It was too hard to bring my active 2-year-old into the senior complex my grandparents lived in, and I would have to travel without my husband.

"I'm just going to have to wait until you come here," I said. When I hung up, I tried to erase the uneasy feeling of disappointment I had sensed in Grandpa's voice when I told him I wasn't coming.

I hunched closer to myself in the hammock. Wondered if the obstacles I had felt so insurmountable really couldn't have been worked out. Wondered if Grandpa had sensed something was wrong and I had ignored his cues.

I thought of my mother's idea. To gather the threads of my grandfather's life, weave it into a narrative, and memorialize him. I didn't feel capable of the project. I thought of my grandfather encouraging me to write. The writing pieces I'd emailed to him. His responses were short and succinct in his signature style, but he always gently pushed me to write more.

"I think you write wonderfully," he told me on more than one occasion. "Any time you want to take a formal training, the money is there." I was hesitant to tell him when I'd found a course that cost several hundred dollars. His emailed response was instantaneous. I'm sending out a check today. Enjoy your course.

He'd believed in me enough to pay for my writing. Here was an opportunity to finally repay him.

Grandpa loved the idea of the book. I was scared of the challenge and relieved when he vetoed a phone interview. At age 87, his hearing was very poor. My slightly mumbled Brooklyn accent was difficult enough for him to understand in person.

It seemed too difficult to visit for a long enough time to gather information.

Then a hurricane warning blew my grandparents my way. They arrived winded and out of breath from their hurried escape.

Grandpa walked in practically on tiptoes, unsteady on his feet.

"Neuropathy," he said in response to our questioning looks. "It's hard for me to walk. I can't feel my feet making contact with the ground."

He looked small inside his dress shirt and suit, having come directly from his office to the airport.

I could overhear Grandma talking to my sister in the next room. "Glad you got out on time," said Rachel.

"Yeah," said Grandma vaguely. "It was a long flight."

"Why are we here?" she asked a moment later. "There was a hurricane warning, Grandma," Rachel said patiently.

"I'll be darned," Grandma opened and closed her purse, rifling through her wallet trying to find something familiar. "I knew that, I just forgot."

"It kills me to see her like this." Grandpa made his way to the couch, sighing heavily. "I'm not sure what will get me first, her dementia or the cancer."

The predicted hurricane never happened; instead, we had a whirlwind of interviews.

My mother manned the camera and I typed as he spoke. My siblings gathered around. Grandpa sat hunched in our maroon rocking chair, rocking as he went back into time, his green eyes rheumy and clouded behind his large plastic glasses.

He talked about his years in medical school. When I edged the conversation towards his childhood he evaded the questions.

After three days of interviews he called me into the living room. “Chamie,” he said haltingly. “I’ve been avoiding talking about my childhood for a reason. There is so much trauma and pain that I wanted to protect you. I need to tell you though, because if you want to really know me, you need to know about my childhood.”

“I can handle it. I want to know as much as you’re willing to say.”

Grandpa adjusted his chair, placing a small cushion behind his back. “My first memory is at the age of 3, running through my cramped New Orleans home, hanging onto my mother’s skirt, and stopping short at the sight of my papa lying dead on the floor, a bullet wound in his head.”

I stopped typing to look at Grandpa. He was in another world.

“The event was so horrific, I blocked it from my mind. My mother blocked it from her mind as well and papa was never mentioned in the house. I grew up feeling there was something horribly wrong with me, that I didn’t have a father. My mother wanted to protect me, to ensure I would never leave her like my father did. I was her baby and she held me tight.”

He then added that if there had been an Olympic award given for low self-esteem, he would have won it.

His light quip sent out a clear message. Sympathy and pity were not welcome. I typed, barely paying attention to my fingers, my gaze following Grandpa.

Inside though, my thoughts were churning. I hadn’t known about his early childhood trauma, didn’t know the fears and anxieties that plagued him. I had only known the kind, sensitive, highly successful psychiatrist, always ready with a funny quip, delighting in being the center of attention.

My grandfather’s life was ending.

And I was just beginning to understand him, I thought. I was just beginning to really know him as he allowed me to enter into his hidden past.

“If you could give your children and grandchildren one final message what would it be?” I asked.

“Just do it,” he said.

I stared at him. “Grandpa, just do what?”

Grandpa smiled. “First, I’ll tell you a story and then I’ll explain. Remember the swimming pool in our old house before it was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina?

I nodded.

“Well, I don’t know if you know this but there was a time I was terrified to swim. That changed when your Uncle Larry was 6 years old and we were at a neighbor’s swimming party. When Larry begged me to play in the water with him and I refused, he said, “don’t worry dad, I’ll catch you!” He imitated Larry’s sweet high voice.

"The next day, I hired a swimming instructor. I started babbling about my overprotective mother, stifled childhood and years of psychotherapy. He interrupted me with a casual, 'Just get in the water, Doc. No one learns how to swim by talking.' It was a pivotal moment in overcoming my fear and in my psychiatry career. Talking and analyzing could give insight into life, but true change came from just doing it."

"Did you learn how to swim?" a neighbor asked. Stopping by to borrow some eggs, she was drawn into the story.

Grandpa smiled. "I learned how to swim the width of the Olympic-sized pool in Tulane University. The day I swam across, the entire swim team stood around and applauded. I built a pool in my backyard to celebrate the victory over a lifelong fear. That night I created a 'Just do it' list."

"What was on your list?"

"Most are too private to share," he said mischievously, "but I'll share a few. They included public speaking, ballroom dancing, running a 10k race and acting."

"Acting," I interrupted. "You love to act. You always flew in to act in my father's puppet show videos and you played a part in 'West Side Story.'"

"Yes," said my grandfather. "And I was so afraid of forgetting my lines, I planned that if I started to mess up, I would fall onto the floor pretending to have a heart attack. The play would be ruined, but at least I wouldn't be embarrassed! I did fine though. In fact, I got more applause than the lead part because so many of my group therapy patients showed up to give me a standing ovation."

Grandpa looked so happy remembering what he called his finest hour. I couldn't bear to think of the time when I wouldn't be able to laugh and share and talk with Grandpa again.

I mentally shrugged off the pain. Grandpa continued talking.

"It took me three years to cross off the 36 things on my list, but I did them all despite the fear. And that is my message to you all. Write your own list and just do it despite your fear."

There were new surprises every day. The more my grandfather bared his soul, the more our bond intensified and deepened. He had achieved success by most standards with a loving marriage and family, flourishing career, and acclaim in the psychiatric community. Underneath though, he had battled the same twin demons of despair and insecurity plaguing me.

The hurricane warning over, Grandma and Grandpa returned to New Orleans, leaving me with pages and pages of interview notes.

I arranged the information into chapters. I spent many hours Googling the cheapest way to produce the book. I sent out emails to every member of the family asking them to write a letter sharing their favorite memories and life lessons learned from Grandpa. Wikipedia became my favorite source for researching information about New Orleans in the early 1900s. I hired a graphic designer. In fact, I did everything but sit and write the story of his life.

There wasn't time to wait out writer's block. I felt as if I was fighting a ticking clock guzzling hours and days of Grandpa's life while I procrastinated.

"Nechamie, I'll be happy to help you edit anytime you want," my mother said seeing me sitting for hours in front of the computer.

"I haven't written anything yet." I pounded the computer keys harder than I intended.

"This job is too hard for me. I can't do this. You'll have to find someone else."

Mom got serious. "Nechamie, you have to do it. Grandpa asks me for updates every time I speak with him. I've never seen him want something so much."

I called a mentor for help.

"I can't do this," I finally broke down in tears. "It's the final goodbye. I write this book and that's it, it's the end. I somehow feel that if I can just push off writing this book, I will push off his death."

"Then don't write it like an obituary," my mentor said. "Write it as a celebration of his life."

I thought of the gleam in Grandpa's eyes when he told us his stories. The laughing and crying our family had shared as he told them. The energy that emanated from him as he reviewed his life, instead of sitting apathetically on the couch, thinking about death.

Perhaps the book was making him live.

Perhaps, I could present him with a small slice of eternity by capturing some of his soul on paper.

I wrote as if possessed, for five or six hours a day. I started with a short prayer. "G-d," I said. "I don't have time to make this perfect. Please help me get it right the first time and let the words flow on their own accord."

Two months later, I visited my grandfather with a sizeable packet of writing. My mother babysat my little son, while I spent precious hours with Grandpa reviewing the material for accuracy. The cancer was eating away his life; we no longer took leisure walks around the park discussing everything from psychology to music to the daily news. He fought to keep his eyes open, pausing frequently to let the pain and nausea wash over him before continuing. A yellowish tinge crept into his skin and for the first time in his life he refused the cheesecake I brought to snack on.

The cheesecake didn't taste nearly as good eaten alone.

In his good moments he told me more stories of his life. Sometimes, we sat silently holding hands. When he was sleeping, I spent hours crouched on the floor searching through eight decades of pictures, letters and memories in the old cedar chest.

The book enabled me to ask him personal questions. How are you affected as your wife of 60 years begins to vanish and is replaced by the ghost of Alzheimer's? Is there anything you regret? Are you afraid to die?

He wasn't afraid, he said. He had lived a good life without regrets. He was ready to let go of this world.

I wasn't ready to let go of him.

Before Passover, while most women were scrubbing floor tiles and banishing leavened bread, I was adding the last editorial touches, calling the graphic designer every 10 minutes and scanning pictures.

"Grandpa's doing pretty well," my aunt said when I told her I wished I had more time to make the book even better. "It doesn't look like his death is imminent. I think you have time if you want to do further revisions."

Instinct told me otherwise. Minutes after sending the file to the printer, only two hours before Passover, my mother received a call from her sister.

"Grandpa's doing really badly," she said. "We don't know if he'll make it through the week."

I cried for two days. Begged G-d, promised anything for Grandpa to live long enough to see the book completed. Felt an exultant sense of release two days later when Grandpa was doing somewhat better. The doctor said he was holding on. Waiting for something.

The printer rushed the job, sending me a bound copy of the book that arrived the day after Passover.

Two days later, I was on my way to New Orleans. I traveled alone, holding only the book. I couldn't stop looking at it. My grandfather's smiling face was on the cover, with 200 pages of text, interviews with his patients, pictures and letters of love from friends and relatives.

It was hard to see Grandpa's deterioration. His skin sagged, his legs looked thin in the good pants he insisted on wearing. A sallow yellow color dominated his face and the whites of his eyes. One eye kept closing on its own accord.

"Chamie," he said, voice raspy from medication. "So good to see you. I'm so glad you came."

I handed him the book. Relief at finishing the book in time tinged with sadness that I was finished, wondering if I had done him justice. He read it alone in his room.

"It's hard to read," he said later. "It has all the people and the life I'm going to miss when I'm gone."

He took my hand into his. "When I was younger, I dreamed of being famous one day and having a book written about my life. I even thought of the title." He squeezed my hand. "I never dreamed I would have my own personal biographer."

I stroked the book cover. "Grandpa, I finally thought I could do something for you, but you ended up giving me a greater gift. The gift of knowing you."

Years ago Grandpa had given me a gift of seeing myself with different eyes. Now, he had given me his final gift, of seeing him with different eyes.

Two days later, Grandpa went into a coma. He passed away six days later.

Before he died though, he asked me for a pen. With his limited energy he inscribed my book.

To my beloved granddaughter Chamie,

You found more in me than I knew was there.

Love, Grandpa.

I Had a Dream: Amiri Baraka's "Dutchman"

Magdalena Negron

Amiri Baraka, also known as LeRoi Jones, wrote "Dutchman" at the time of major political and cultural changes in the United States. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 granted African-Americans equal rights to those of the white population by banning racial segregation and discrimination. The "hippie" movement emerged in the early '60s to become the decade's most significant cultural phenomenon and adopted many of the unconventional ideas of the Beat Generation, comprised of various individual thinkers and writers of the '50s, and of which Baraka was a member. Transforming those ideas into a mainstream fad essentially made many of those individual thinkers and writers feel as if they had been stripped of their uniqueness. The play reflects on those political and cultural changes and on how they affected the consciousness of men and women of the time, both black and white. It is a sincere and an exceedingly graphic investigation into the social psyche of the '60s and an attempt by the writer to establish his own identity in the face of those changes. Very likely, Baraka's "Dutchman" had an enormous effect on his audience. The play, with its honest language and its alarming message, has the controversial quality of a revelation; it abruptly invades and crashes all convictions and beliefs to leave the reader faced with the realization that his and her own identity remains unresolved or even forsaken.

"Dutchman" should be read as an allegory in order to be correctly interpreted and fully understood. The literal reading of the play forces a conclusion that Baraka's only intention is to portray racial persecution. Lula, a white woman in her early 30s, meets Clay, a 20-year-old, African-American man on a subway train. After what feels like 10 minutes of flirting they get into a fierce argument over racial issues and Lula, angered, stabs Clay twice in the chest. Clay dies of his wounds on the spot. However, the many symbolic images and metaphors that appear in the play point to the direction of the interpretation. The first appears in the stage instruction, right at the beginning. The play takes place in the "flying underbelly of the city" (Baraka 1), on the subway "heaped in modern myth" (Baraka 1), with Baraka implying that "Dutchman" is a metaphor and it should not be taken word for word.

Read as a metaphor, "Dutchman" criticizes African-American assimilation. With the Civil Rights Act came a change in social construction, as many opportunities until now unavailable to the African-American population became by law a shared, common good for all races and both sexes. Young African-American men and women became drawn to the lifestyle and privileges of the white population. Baraka noticed this phenomenon, this shift in consciousness of his fellow African-American brothers and sisters who now seemed to desire to identify with a lifestyle of their past oppressor. This wonder is brought forth through Lula's words addressed to Clay: "boy, those narrow-shoulder clothes come from a tradition you ought to feel oppressed by" (Baraka 18). Baraka evidently feels unsympathetic with what he observes. Further in the play, the reader comes across even more furious language, which implies that author's feelings regarding his observations are not only unsympathetic, but that he feels deeply and intensely angered. He calls his fellow men the "well-known type" (Baraka 12), the "middle-class, black bastards" (Baraka 31), who "sit there dying the way [white people] want to die"

(Baraka 31). Baraka seems profoundly disgusted with African-American willingness to assimilate. In his point of view, young African-Americans sell out their souls for a golden promise that, he believes, cannot be delivered. It is because, although by law they are now free people, in the consciousness of the white people they will forever remain inferior because they are black, they are niggers.

To communicate his message even more loudly, Baraka sets his play on a subway train. The metaphorical meaning of the subway is that it creates an illusion of forward movement, change and direction. Baraka essentially means to portray the construct of the ambitious, hungry consciousness of the time, men and women living the illusion of change and growth, while in fact their lives, like a subway train, remain running in a circular, repetitive manner. This pattern, according to Baraka, cannot be broken. The subway, the "flying underbelly of the city" (Baraka 1), is a monotonous existence that contrasts with the life of the city above, its vigor and its colors, and its opportunities that are not available to the lower social classes. Baraka speaks of detachment and segregation, the upper class-middle class separation and the doors that remain shut in between. For the African-Americans it is not only their social status, but also their skin color that keeps the lock on the door. Baraka's strong belief is that, in the perception of the white society, they are inferior even to the "ignorant cowboys" (Baraka 25) and the "lying Americans" (Baraka 18), the ignorant and the liars worthy of the upper-class lifestyle because they are white, a lifestyle that African-Americans are destined to remain excluded from. Yet, black men and women now hope that through proper education, right manners and suitable dress code they will be able to define a new future, to one day cross that gate to the thriving city above, to the lifestyle they desire to attain, which is expressed in Lula's words addressed to Clay, "I know you like the palm of my hand" (Baraka 17). This lifestyle, like apples that Lula keeps eating and passing to men, so that she resembles the biblical Eve, lures the appetite of youth. Bitten, they bring one closer to the knowledge of racial duality, as in the Garden of Eden the bitten apple revealed sexual differences and sexual duality of the world to the consciousness of humans. In "Dutchman," this revelation is portrayed by Lula's and Clay's fierce argument, portraying the inability of white and black people to find a common ground, as if doomed to remain eternally separated.

"Dutchman" carries autobiographical elements that likely mirror the psychological struggle of many of his contemporary African-Americans unwilling to be swept by the current beliefs and trends. The play is essentially an effort of the author to redefine his beliefs, articulate his standpoint, and establish his identity in the face of changes that he observes happening. Prior to writing "Dutchman," he is known by his real name, LeRoi Jones. He is married to a white woman with whom he publishes a literary magazine. He also is involved in the Beat movement. However, the current trends and the fact that the Beats now have become too popular for the individual to protect his or her uniqueness affect his psychology very distinctively and Baraka begins to long to detach himself from the pull of the modern demons. He creates Lula and through her words he "condemns himself" (Notes on Drama). He destroys that part of himself that is weak and prone to the pull of the desires of modern consciousness. "Dutchman" is, in a sense, a public execution of a person he no longer desires to identify himself with. LeRoi Jones, as Clay, dies from Lula's hand, soon to be reborn as Amiri Baraka. In real life, Baraka leaves his wife and the downtown neighborhood and moves to Harlem. He gets passionately involved in the Black Nationalist movement that

stands in opposition to modern white culture and its alluring promises. For many years, he will preach to the masses of the importance of remembering one's own identity, one's own roots and story.

"Dutchman" is a work that deeply moves and inspires. It is a tragic vision of one man that becomes a nightmare to many, causing them to contemplate the meaning of their lives and to re-examine their underlying motivations. Although I don't fully agree with Baraka, believing that every person is free to choose his or her life and that no one has the right to be a judge of that choice, I understand and feel sympathetic with his point of view in the context of the time and the changes that he observed. I do admire the fact that Baraka is not a sellout. He is a man of a very deep sense of dignity and self-worth, an inspired intellectual whose insight and creativity deserve the most substantial praise.

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Photographs

Katia Ruiz

Gay Pride parade,
New York City, 2010

Beautiful Before She Knew It

April Simmons

I know a story of a life lived without purpose … the story of a woman lacking the passion to "do." Memories of broken promises and shattered pieces of her heart create a permanent disappointment in her life. Her reflection resembles a mountain that has become worn from years of trampled footsteps and her expression remains as still as the moon on the clearest summer night. I know a story of an isolated dream … a dream without the motivation and the power to make it real. Behind that dream, there exists a silent cry that only comes to life in the late hours of the night. Her cries represent sorrows that beat upon her heart and questions that provide no answers. I know a story of "joy" … a joy that exists in everything else but is never felt within … a "joy" that has no home because of a woman who is unable to find where she belongs … a "joy" that is only dreamed of and still, those dreams turn into nightmares. I know a story of a broken soul … the story of sinful thoughts that take away from such angelic expressions. Expressions become "expressionless" as her heart becomes numb and almost immune to the bruises she has endured. I know a story of "a story" filled with lies, insults and fragmented sentences … sentences that remain incomplete because so many pieces of her life can't be found.

But above all the stories that one can feel and above all the stories that I know …

There exists a story about miracles that have presented themselves so vividly in the reality of her life. There exists a story about a second chance given and the beauty of letting go and allowing fulfillment into her world. There exists a story about chasing dreams and setting goals because her dreams won't die unless she lets them. There exists a woman who is able to smile at her scars because they represent her strength and remind her of all her capabilities. There exists a cry of joy from being able to accept her wounds and move on from them. There exists a cry from laughter because her happiness never felt so good. There exists a soul that belongs to a woman who is now able to give herself a name because she knows exactly who she is and is able to tell others exactly where she has been. There exists a love that is greater than the most powerful blow to the heart. This love has conquered obstacles and created happiness just because it is able to be felt. This love is a love that must be learned because it doesn't come as easy as it sounds. This love is the love she felt when she learned to love herself …

The Thing About Us Is

Laurence Zaitschek

"The struggle of people against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting."
Milan Kundera

As a child, before I even knew why, I was on the side of the American Indian. Of course, now I clearly know why, but it interests me that my instincts as a child were right. It is a subject that is alive and relevant in 2011 and one that should be pushed by scholars to the forefront of our contemporary national psyche. Indeed, our right to govern, the legitimacy of our laws and judicial processes and, of course, the validity of our education system should be considered alongside the very real and innate mistrust of those things by both Africans and Native Americans. We must confront the past and start to teach our children the truth if any good is to ever come from the past sufferings of so many people. Our past must be reinterpreted for future American generations to move forward.

Clearly, we have not moved forward as a nation. Our country is more polarized than ever. I suggest that we go back and do the painful but cleansing work of an historical inventory. Then we can at last move forward together, maybe even humbly for once.

We must find the strength to reset a 400-year-old clock, lest we commit ourselves to continued bloodshed and the hateful rhetoric that has spurned so many acts of violence. America is by far the most violent industrialized nation in the world. There are 90 guns for every 100 Americans, making us the most heavily armed society in the world. That is 270 million guns. That is 30 percent of all the guns that are known to be in the world (Geneva Graduate Institute, 2007). And we start young as well. A multiyear analysis of 26 leading industrialized nations showed that U.S. children have a homicide rate five times higher than that of all of the other countries combined (U.S. Dept. of Health, 2003). We have even created the colloquial term "gone postal" for when another sad product of American gun culture blasts their way onto our television sets. And while mass shootings occur all over the world, they are nowhere near as frequent as they are here in the U.S. From April 2007 to March 2009, 90 people were killed in mass shootings here. The worst mass shooting in recorded U.S. history took place on April 16, 2007, at Virginia Tech with 32 dead (Times of India, 2009, April 4).

Right wing extremist manipulation of an already sketchy, vague "constitution" written by people who owned other human beings, has incited such violence, and made gun accessibility as easy as scoring a dime bag. Further, I don't go for the argument that those were different times and that's what rich white people did in 18th century Virginia; own slaves. The founding fathers of our faltering republic knew it was morally wrong to own other human beings. Evidence of that is crystal clear in any surface level research of these men. Fact is they did it anyway, it was too comfortable. And if African-Americans did not resist and rise up, and white northern business interests didn't take precedence, African-Americans would probably still be enslaved today. The founding fathers were not great men, with a great vision; they were committed to their beliefs of course, but they were self important, aristocratic, hypocritical slave owners. Lie to yourself if you want, but I say we should move on.

Sadly, it seems that effective change is nearly impossible. The Becks and the Limbaugh's are culpable. They incite violence and it is only a matter of time before something one of them says is the fuel for another massacre. There is a thin line, in my eyes, between First Amendment protections and insight to violence. For me they have already crossed it. While the rest of the First World has long accepted a woman's right to reproductive freedom, America's 2009 response was the murder of Dr. George Tiller. While many mentally balanced Americans were appalled by Tiller's murder, there were and are too many that see it as a justifiable action. Therein lays the problem. The further right we go, the further back we go. Back to a time where those who applaud Dr. Tiller's murder would like us to go: about 33 B.C.

I could go on, but I will move on instead.

It has all been said before of course, but as I focus my thoughts, and work out themes for my writing, I repeatedly come back to the cruel reality of that which motivates me so passionately. Any notion that our America was founded on the practice of enlightened, democratic ideals was sadly rubbished for me the second I started reading about the North American slave trade and the deceit that characterized the American expansionist era and the despicable brutalization of the Native American.

My opening thoughts were general reflections on today's America. But to understand America's history of violence and why we can't get away from it, I think it is good to start at the beginning. Thus, I almost chose Columbus for this paper but that's Spanish colonialism and violence; our predecessors. I spent time this past summer out in Wyoming and Montana and would like to look at the Sioux Indians, the greatest warriors amongst native tribes, and surely the tribe that best resisted the violent and duplicitous white Euro-American. Sadly, as it is said, a leopard doesn't change its spots!

Cultural Superiority

Conquering nations and their citizenry often find ways to justify their misdeeds. By broadly categorizing and demeaning different cultures with terms like inferior or uncivilized, imperialists have justified their aggression for centuries. This self aggrandizing world view was probably developed by the British, but it has certainly been fine tuned and mastered by their American offspring.

Dangerously, the mindset of cultural superiority always by its design overlooks the truth. The true essence of the clash of cultures that occurred during the white European take-over of North America is far more intricate and complicated than to be conveniently deemed a battle for civilization or cultural superiority. Firstly, the idea of white European cultural superiority should itself be questioned. When compared to the vastly older, infinitely more peaceful and developed cultures of many of the Native American tribes, it is easy to see it in the complete reverse. The fact that many tribal societies were matriarchal is a good example of their advanced state. In many human societies throughout time, it was the introduction of a patriarchal system that actually led to the degeneration of those societies. Bartolome de las Casas, a young priest at the time of Columbus' arrival on the American shores, is in many cases our only reference point as to what was going on at the time, and what the clash of cultures looked like. In his seminal writing, "A History of the Indies," Las Casas makes clear the barbarity of European culture. He also laid out the beauty and decency of the communal culture of the natives. Many natives often pleaded with Las Casas and the other priests on the island,

not to send them to heaven, as they were so fearful of meeting the vengeful and cruel god of the Europeans.

In fact, white European culture, or civilization, as it was referred to in the 17th century, was characterized by murder, maiming, robbery, theft, rape and a whole host of other central qualities that hardly can equate to human progress. Yet in the falsified name of human progress they lay the groundwork for the mentality and behavior of the future United States of America.

Power and might was the source of why things happened the way they did. The colonizers took the land because they could. No degree of moral reasoning can be used to disguise the abject barbarity of the colonization of the Americas and the near genocide of the American Indian.

The nascent American nation developed finely upon the technique of force in the name of progress.

A brief account

The United States signed over 400 treaties with the Native Americans. And as a point of fact, they broke every single one of them. When questioned about their abuse of legally binding treaties, the United States government often invokes the power of eminent domain, a law it made up, which gives it the power to take land whenever it wants to.

In the springtime of 1868, a conference was held at Fort Laramie, in present day Wyoming, that resulted in a treaty with the Sioux. The treaty was to bring peace between the whites and the Sioux. The treaty allowed for the Sioux to rightfully maintain and settle in their ancestral homeland of the Black Hills.

After the infamous, and soon to be deceased, General George Armstrong Custer reported back to Washington that the Black Hills were alive with gold, prospectors poured into the area illegally. By 1875, despite the treaty, there were thousands of white gold prospectors in the Sioux's Black Hills scratching and clawing like zombies for even the slightest hint of that precious yellow metallic element. Uninterested in keeping them out, the U.S. government did what it always does; it tried to revise the treaty and buy the Indians off their ancestral homeland. Many Sioux opposed any treaty with the duplicitous white man, and many like Sitting Bull fought on until the end. Eventually many Sioux were forced to "come in" to the reservations. Survival and hunger were the reasons. The U.S. government used them as powerful weapons.

What political chicanery lurked behind the Laramie Treaty? The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 was a signed legal agreement between the U.S. government and the Lakota Nation that guaranteed Lakota ownership of the Black Hills, as well as other land and hunting rights in South Dakota, Montana and Wyoming. It secured the ancestral Black Hills to their native peoples and closed off the entire Powder River Basin to white intrusion.

But gold in the Black Hills was going to be taken out one way or the other. The peace commissioners sent by Washington to persuade the Sioux misunderstood, as they always had, that for the Sioux this was not about the ownership of a resource. It was about control of their ancestral homeland. This was about their very existence. Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull were amongst the few Lakota leaders left living outside of the white man's reservation at the time.

In late 1875, President Ulysses S. Grant sent a message to all western tribes, but in particular the Lakota. Be on a reservation by Jan. 31, 1876, or risk being considered hostile.

Around the same time, Sitting Bull put out a message for all Lakota to gather with the purpose of discussing the dilemma of white encroachment. Entire families responded to the call based on the reputation of the leader who sent it. They overwhelmingly saw their participation at the gathering as a necessary contribution towards the good of their people. They arrived by the thousands. Initially people gathered at Chalk Buttes, Mont., but eventually moved to Ash Creek, in the Little Big Horn Valley.

At the same time, top U.S. generals had begun their plans to invade the Sioux territory and force the natives from their land. The Fort Laramie Treaty was going to change whether by agreement or force. By springtime they were on the move with their troops. Generals Crook, Reynolds, Reno, Terry and of course Custer took the fight to the Sioux.

Lakota resistance to white encroachment climaxed in that summer of 1876 with the military defeat of Custer and the Seventh Cavalry at the legendary Battle of Little Big Horn. Eventually out of room to run, Crazy Horse handed in his rifle in 1877. The same year the U.S. military took the Black Hills by force, redrawing the boundaries of the treaty, pushing it further to the east.

Sitting Bull went up to Canada, only to return in 1881, older and running out of fight. The last armed resistance flared up at Wounded Knee in 1890 which led to the famous massacre.

Wounded Knee, S.D., was of course the sight of the last U.S. military massacre of the Sioux Indians, which took place in the winter of 1890. The Sioux, led by Chief Bigfoot were headed for Pine Ridge Reservation to be united in squalor with the rest of their people. Chief Bigfoot and 300 Sioux men, women and children were shot dead at Wounded Knee, ironically by the same Seventh Cavalry that Crazy Horse, Gall and so many other great Sioux leaders defended themselves against so gallantly at the Battle of Little Bighorn in the summer of 1876.

The massacre at Wounded Knee can historically be viewed as the final scene in a 400-year history of murder and unparalleled violence.

The perseverance of a great nation

Importantly, the great Sioux nation survives today as one of the most cohesive Native American tribes. Currently, more than 30 percent of Sioux still speak their native tongue. A resilient sense of identity and culture is the result of the verbal passing down of history, which is a very Sioux tradition.

The years 1877 to 1890 were quiet, reflective years for the Sioux. It was the time between Crazy Horse's killing and the Wounded Knee Massacre. There is little said about them and little was written. The question most likely being asked amongst the Sioux during those sad years was whether white Euro-Americans only wanted native lands or whether their real goal was the total eradication of their native culture and identity. That is what I think anyway.

The Sioux say that the English word negotiation means trickery! The Fort Laramie Treaty was revised to suit the needs of white gold proprietors. Trickery! It also was an assault on Sioux culture. Trickery!

Some its articles stipulated the following:

- Under Article 4, the building of schoolhouses only if enough children could be induced to attend, and agree to an education based on white Euro-American "values."
- Under Article 8, If the head of the Sioux household agreed to be a farmer, he would be allotted a piece of land and seeds with which to farm. He would be taught to farm. The Sioux were hunters. The whites did not want them to hunt anymore.
- Under Article 14, as an incentive, $500 was offered for the people who grew the best crops, thus dangling the carrot again (Marshall, J. M., 2007).

When a Sioux agreed to give farming a go and signed for his land, a strange and perverted ceremony was enforced:

He was taken to a field where a plow awaited him.

He was told to bring a bow and arrow.

He was told to fire one arrow and then drop the bow and pick up the plow, thus signaling his full conversion to white America once and for all.

As a child, before I even knew why, I was on the side of the American Indian. For that there is always hope.

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