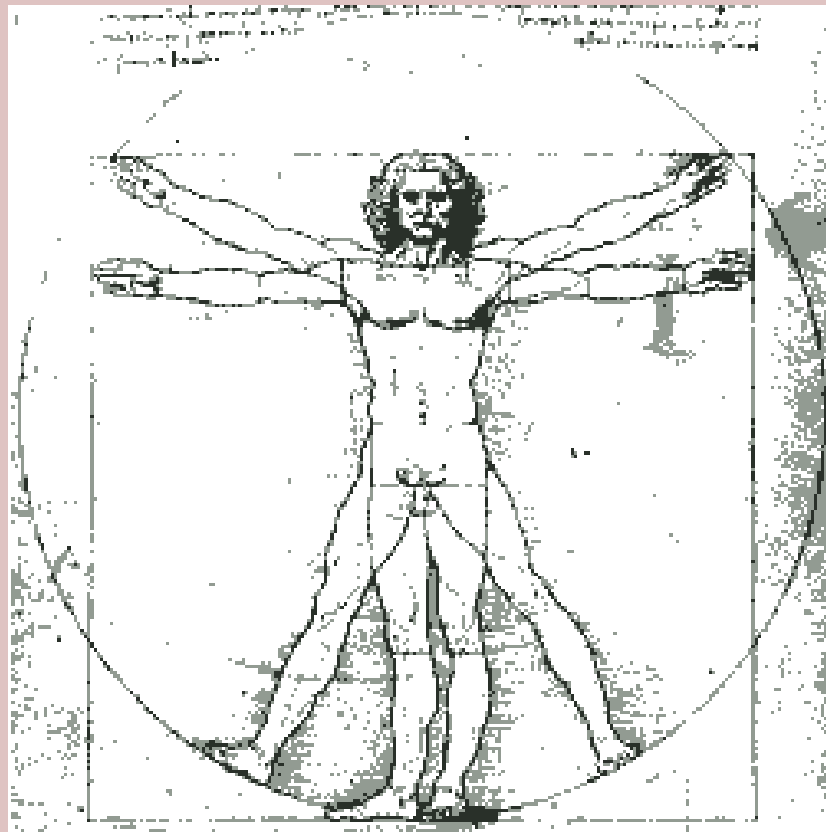


# The Underground

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## **Editorial Policy**

THE UNDERGROUND is a peer-reviewed journal that publishes the work of students whose creative endeavors reflect the issues of representation (i.e. PCA, Film, Gender, Fine Arts, Art History, etc.). The goal of this journal is to create an outlet which allows St. Lawrence students to share the results of their work with the rest of the academic community. All submission must be original and reflective of the learning goals of the above mentioned fields and of St. Lawrence University. The journal will be published online once a semester. Each submission will undergo an editorial process based on a series of blind peer reviews. Submissions may go through a series of revisions. Each submission must have a faculty sponsor. Professors can either recommend the work directly to the journal or the individual authors may earn the sponsorship by asking professors with whom they produced the work that they would like to submit. All submissions must reflect the feedback and critique of the faculty sponsor before they are submitted. All work must be submitted in an electronic copy. Students can only submit two pieces of their work per semester. Submissions can include written pieces (plays, research papers, creative pieces, etc) and visual art (photography, videos of performances, etc.). Submissions should be sent by the time determined and announced by the editorial board and should be addressed to Juraj Kittler (jkittler@stlawu.edu).

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## To the Reader:

W elcome, reader. THE UNDERGROUND is back this fall with its second volume of the journal. This year we have decided to expand the journal beyond the realm of PCA studies to include any field that deals with issues and analysis pertaining to representation. We strongly feel that this journal will embody the finest work regarding representation, while also promoting academic standing within the departments of PCA, Fine Arts, Film Studies, Gender and Sexualities Studies, and History. We are pleased with the expansion of this journal and the work we have received thus far. We hope to continue to receive a variety of remarkable submissions in the semesters to come. In this issue, John Vari observes the postmodernist works of Wes Anderson focusing on his irreal sensibility as a director. Abigail C. Moss takes a look into the history of news reporting in regards to the notion of objectivity in our social reality. Zach Choquette examines Roman Polanski's *Repulsion*, concentrating on the impact that isolation and sexual repression holds on the human psyche. Sandrine M. Millet looks at the historical function of art in the public sphere. Beth E. Spadaccini provides insight into the early development of colonial America's communication systems. Lastly, Jonathan Kalule Kabuye focuses on the evolution of rhetoric and its impact on the history of Western civilizations. Finally, we would like to congratulate all of our wonderful authors. We hope you enjoy their amazing and intriguing work.

Sincerely,

Jenae Nicoletta '12 and Zachary Choquette '13  
Co-Editors-in-Chief



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## “Have I been here before?": The Irreal Worlds of Wes Anderson

By John A. Vari '12

**Abstract:** Throughout his career, the American director Wes Anderson has produced several idiosyncratic films that, despite being made within the Hollywood studio system, appear to be the work of an independent and unique authorial visionary. However, both those looking for a recognizably Hollywood movie, *and* those looking for an unconventional independent film have criticized Anderson for his collusion of seemingly disparate sensibilities and ideals. At once, the director's films, such as *Rushmore* and *The Royal Tenenbaums*, synthesize the real and unreal, the ironic and sincere, and the authentic and synthetic into a pastiche-aesthetic that emphasizes the porousness of the borders that separate the incongruent worlds of reality and fantasy. On one hand, this aesthetic, at least to an extent, subverts the codes and conventions of traditional narrative cinema by self-reflexively directing an audience's attention toward the artificiality of the filmic world and its constructed characters; on the other hand, however, Anderson's films remain reliant upon, and indebted to, the studio system and its association with mimetic fictional films. Nevertheless, although various scholars have lamented Anderson's seeming inability to inject 'life' into his fictional universes, and although many have attempted to dismiss his films as 'smart' or 'quirky', perhaps the least problematic term with which to refer to the director's work is Brian McHale's conception of the 'irreal'. After all, the 'irreal' implies an intentional and conscious decision to occupy the neutral zone between a myriad of opposing styles, and the term's reliance on ontology, which McHale argues is the dominant of postmodernism, allows for the multiplicity of 'worlds' by raising questions of existence and being. Ultimately, by focusing on the irreal aspects of Anderson's films, one recognizes that the director's sensibility—of artificial characters, 'no-place' settings, and worlds-within-worlds—comes from his association with Generation-X, a generation of disaffected Americans who, facing an ever-changing, increasingly unrecognizable culture, as well as high-rates of parental divorce, unemployment, and suicide, are expected to eke out a 'meaningful' existence despite disintegrating notions of success, authenticity, and family.

**Key words:** Wes Anderson; *The Royal Tenenbaums*; irrealism; ontology; postmodernism.

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### The Unbearable Lightness of Quirky

I just want to make films that are personal, but interesting to an audience. I feel I get criticized for style over substance, and for details that get in the way of characters. But *every* decision I make is how to bring those characters forward (Wes Anderson).

Over the past two decades, an eccentric group of American filmmakers, driven by the success of independent cinema during the 1990s, have carved out a niche within the traditionally conservative Hollywood studio system. Working under the auspices of major studios including Disney and Universal, directors such as Richard Linklater, Sofia Coppola, Spike Jonze, and Michel Gondry have produced several idiosyncratic films that negotiate the paradox between the restrictive and conformist Hollywood studio system and the unique and

stylistic authorial visionary. Alternatively referred to as members of the 'Pizza Knights', the 'New New Hollywood', and the 'American New Wave II', these directors have not only gained the admiration of movie-goers for their auteuristic treatment of arguably tired cinematic forms, but have also garnered praise from the film cognoscenti for an ability to, as Stephen Galloway notes, "seamlessly work with the studios" (xxi).

Although the filmmakers who work within this tendency are widely varied and, at times, difficult to pin down, there is perhaps no director whose own style exemplifies the idiosyncrasies of this new cinema more than Wes Anderson. After all, Anderson, who has written and directed each of his six films, has retained an almost unprecedented amount of creative control over his projects, especially for a filmmaker working within the confines of the studio system. Supremely confident in his own knowledge of film history and technique, Anderson is, for critic Matt Seitz, the "most influential American filmmaker of the post-Baby Boom generation," and one who the "*Cahiers du Cinema* would have labeled an auteur" (2).

While the extent of Anderson's influence is debatable, there is no doubt that the director's critically and financially successful films, which synthesize an independent aesthetic with a high-budgeted Hollywood production, have not only afforded Anderson himself more authorial freedom, but have also inspired other major studios to fund the projects of filmmakers with similar sensibilities. Certainly, at the heart of the majority of these new films, subtle, subversive elements are at work. For example, in Spike Jonze's *Adaptation* (2002), the traditional three-act narrative structure favored by classic Hollywood films is scrapped in favor of an ironic, self-referential metafiction akin to the literary postmodernists of the late 1960s. In Michel Gondry's *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004), familiar themes of love and romance are explored, not through any linear or easily comprehensible storyline, but through a fantastical and neo-surrealistic frame-narrative. Similarly, in Anderson's own 1996 film *Bottle Rocket*, conventional notions of heroism and success are inverted by a group of flawed, aimless twenty-somethings who, like their creator, seem more concerned with upsetting the status quo of their elders than ever making 'good use' of themselves or their time.

These films, which seemingly refuse to adhere to Hollywood's own notions of ideology and narrative, exemplify, for critic Jeffrey Sconce, a recent trend toward a "metacinematic 'smart' film" (357). Identifying themselves as opposition to the supposed 'dumbness' of most Hollywood productions, these films often utilize what Sconce refers to as a "blank form" that brings together elements of the tragic and comic, the romantic and dramatic, and the realistic and surrealistic in a pastiche-aesthetic that attempts to subvert the familiar codes and conventions of narrative cinema (358). Still, while many films of this new cinema, which overwhelmingly emphasize sweeping tonal shifts and conflicting styles, utilize this 'blank form', Sconce is quick to point out that these films are not merely stylistic antagonists to classical filmmaking; rather, these films by directors including Anderson are, like those of the French New Wave, reflective of the sociohistorical environment of their creators. Made by and for 'Generation-X', these 'smart' films embody the disaffection of these youthful filmmakers and

their audiences, and work to “cultivate that sense of distance” through the use of an aesthetic that emphasizes “dispassion, disengagement, and disinterest” (Sconce 358-60).

Nevertheless, however helpful Sconce’s term may be in *beginning* a discussion on this new filmic tendency, the critic’s overemphasis on the transgressive power of the smart film ultimately renders the term inappropriate. For example, Anderson’s films share many more commonalities with independent cinema than with Hollywood cinema. Although there may be fleeting moments of subversion, the films themselves are not transgressive. Admittedly, the director’s films do possess a self-awareness, irony, and style that are, on one level, anti-Hollywood. Likewise, Anderson, who identifies both himself and his audience as ‘outsiders’, has built a career on producing studio-funded films that look and feel as if they are the singular vision of a cinematic auteur with no ties to Hollywood. Yet whereas the postmodern-influenced French New Wave films of Jean-Luc Godard and Francois Truffaut, or the transgressive cinema of Richard Kern or Nick Zedd, were an attack on Hollywood and its conventions from the *outside*, the films of this new tendency are produced right on Sunset Boulevard.

Thus, while many of these films do emphasize authorship and subvert the stylistic codes of blockbusters and romantic comedies, realistically, these productions cannot afford to sacrifice profits—or, at least marketability—in favor of a transgressive discourse. Therefore, although Anderson’s films, as well as those of his colleagues, remain indebted to the stylistic innovators of the French New Wave, ideologically, as James Mottram points out, these new films and directors are more closely linked to those ‘maverick’ filmmakers of the 1970s, such as Martin Scorsese, Robert Altman, and Francis Ford Coppola who, though certainly imprinted their own films with a personal style, produced recognizably Hollywood films (31).

Still, despite the commercial success of many of the films of this new tendency, such as Gondry’s *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, or Anderson’s *The Royal Tenenbaums* (2001), because so little critical attention has been paid to these filmmakers, it is not only difficult to define the exact parameters of this filmic movement, but also to even find a consistent term with which to refer to it. Over the past decade, the term ‘quirky’ has been applied—with reckless abandon—to many of these films, so much so that critics, such as Michael Hirschorn, have proclaimed that America seems to be “drowning in quirk” (2). Unfortunately, for noted film scholars and casual moviegoers, quirky has become a loaded, go-to term used to describe the studio-funded, yet idiosyncratic films of this new cinema, such as Jason Reitman’s *Juno* (2007), Jim Jarmusch’s *Broken Flowers* (2005), and Sofia Coppola’s *Lost in Translation* (2004). For example, writing for *AllMovie.com*, Matthew Tobey declared 2004’s *Napoleon Dynamite* to be a “quirky, offbeat comedy,” while *The Radio Times* similarly identified 2002’s *Punch Drunk Love* as one among many “quirky American comedies” (2). More than any other director, however, Anderson has been seen as the forerunner of this new, quirky sensibility, with both fellow filmmakers, such as Peter Bogdanovich, deeming him a “quirky and original director,” and

critics, such as James McDowell, arguing that Anderson's productions "provide [an audience] with the most consistent embodiment of the quirky" (4).

Yet despite this widespread overuse and applicability, quirky has remained slippery and under-defined. After all, what *is* quirky, and what purpose does it serve? For McDowell, whose "Notes on Quirky" provides the most encompassing, exhaustive overview of the term, the quirky is, in essence, a comic form marked by both an "understated style of deadpan" and instances of slapstick that often come about completely unannounced (3). Like the smart film, the quirky, which is the "ruling sensibility of today's Generation-X indie culture," functions to distance an audience's knowledge and emotional experience away from that of the filmic characters, as the "dry, perfunctory, excessively functional" tone, along with the use of incongruous, somewhat surrealistic moments of slapstick, ultimately downplay the drama and immediacy of the films—often to the point of absurdity (McDowell 4).

For marketing purposes, the quirky has come to suggest that a film is both desirably 'unique', but not *so* unique as to discourage those moviegoers who might be repelled by descriptions, such as 'strange' or 'avant-garde', that often apply to truly transgressive films. For film critics, the term has similarly allowed for both the distancing of a film from one norm—oftentimes, the intellectually inept blockbuster—and its relationship to another. Moreover, for many, designating a film to be quirky may, as McDowell suggests, provide the members of that film's audience with a "sense of belonging to a particular kind of interpretive community"—a community that is at, but not beyond, the margins (3).

Some critics, including McDowell, have deplored quirky films for straddling this line between the conventional and subversive, and often dismiss the upbeat tone of these films as an "inoffensive mode of comedy" that is evidence of a "timid and comforting safeness" on the part of the filmmakers (5). Similarly, characterized as being *too* safe or not unique *enough*, the quirky sensibility, for Hirschorn, means to be "odd, but not too odd" (2). Being *too* odd, he explains, would "take [an audience] all the way to weird, and there, someone might get 'hurt'" (3). Ultimately, in the eyes of its detractors, the quirky is a watered-down avant-garde that is evidence of a filmmaker who lacks the maturity, ability, or willingness to take its audience all the way to 'weird'. After all, while many quirky films *seem* to have the ultimate goal of subversion, oftentimes, these films, as Hirschorn argues, cannot get past their own immaturity, and thus, are unintentionally relegated to a sort-of purgatorial in-between—in the middle of conventional and transgressive, or 'normal' and 'strange'—that prevents those films from ever becoming *anything* interesting.

If the quirky does, in fact, occupy the zone between tradition and transgression—or between the real and unreal—then it is understandable why those looking for a recognizably Hollywood movie, as well as those looking for an unconventional independent film, would be equally dissatisfied. Predictably, critics have lamented the films of Anderson, which themselves fluctuate between the emotional and detached, the recognizable and surreal, and the overly stylized and simplistic, as pretentious, self-indulgent, and either lacking any 'real' human

emotion, or failing to go far enough in the quest for idiosyncrasy. For Maximilian Le Cain, while Anderson's films "may pretend to be about human situations," they are ultimately created to "merely show off the smartness of [the] director" (1). Additionally, Le Cain suggests that Anderson's own ineptitude and overreliance on unfamiliar, reflexive cinematic forms are the root of his films' "dramatic and emotional falseness" (2). Critic Peter Rainer argues that Anderson, who has proven himself to be "too smart for his own good," creates a "posed, mannequinlike" world in which there is "not a convincing character" to be found; "it's not just that Anderson doesn't let anything breathe," Rainer states, "it's not clear that there was ever any breath to begin with" (3). Much like the oft-deplored quirky filmmakers, Anderson, Rainer suggests, has not "figured out how to be askew and heartfelt as the same time," and concludes that if a "more frankly emotional filmmaker had been at the helm" of *The Royal Tenenbaums*, then the film would have been infinitely better (3).

While the associations of the 'smart film' with Generation-X that Sconce speaks of, as well as certain elements of McDowell's 'quirky' are applicable to Anderson's films, a new term must be proposed, it seems, as a way to shift critical attention away from the 'failed' aspects of the director's work toward the more successful aspects. After all, Anderson's films, along with many of the films of this new sensibility, should not be defined by what they fail to achieve, or by what they *could* do, but rather by what the films actually are, and what each sets out to accomplish. Therefore, if critics such as Le Cain and Rainer fault Anderson's films for both taking it too far and not taking it far enough, then this new term, in order to avoid the negativity associated with the quirky, must acknowledge the porousness of those borders that separate the incongruent 'worlds' of reality and fantasy, as well as the possibility to fluidly move between those worlds. In essence, not only would this new term recognize the simultaneous existence (and compatibility) of disparate realms and aesthetics, but would also acknowledge the conscious contradictions of the director by making clear that it is *not* a lack of ability or motivation that prevents Anderson from producing either a transgressive film *or* a Hollywood blockbuster, but rather, it is an *intentional* decision on the part of the filmmaker to occupy and negotiate a neutral zone that lies between and synthesizes a myriad of opposing styles and ideals.

### Theorizing the 'Irreal'

With our movies, there's been a pitch that they operate at, tonally—what is and is not acceptable as real. And it's a tone that is not always immediately apparent. Some people get it immediately, and others don't find it. It's a conscious choice to make a reality *for* the characters to live in; the excitement is in building the whole world for them (Wes Anderson).

Although originally intended to describe a certain type of literary fiction that is aware of its own fictionalism, R.M. Sainsbury's notion of 'irrealism' is perhaps the least problematic term to apply to Anderson's films. After all, while the quirky implies an *unintentional* stumbling

upon of an 'in-between' sensibility, the irreal *intentionally* coalesces disparate 'worlds' – the real and unreal, ironic and sincere, or the artificial and simplistic – and never makes an attempt at verisimilitude. Conceived another way, irrealism is, as Brian McHale suggests in his book *Postmodernist Fiction*, the "condition of being in-between, amphibious – neither true nor false, suspended between belief and disbelief" (33). Thus, because the irreal foregrounds the simultaneous existence of multiple, paradoxical worlds, the sensibility often raises profound ontological questions about the possible worlds – whether real or fictional – that one *could* exist within (36). Essentially, whereas modernist fiction was dominated by epistemological concerns, such as what one knows and how one knows it, postmodernist fiction, McHale notes, is "dominated by ontology," and is concerned with the study of both human existence, as well as the nature of *being* (36).

Unlike reality, however, which is guided by "necessity," or traditional fiction, which is guided by "possibility," irrealism is defined by a "complex impossibility" (McHale 34). Interestingly, this 'impossibility' is one that does *not* focus on the limitations of the irreal world; rather, this impossibility, which effaces traditional boundaries, remains conscious of the incongruous, unstable relationship between the realistic and fictional. Ultimately, the impossibility of irrealism emphasizes the constructedness of real and imagined worlds, and is able to raise questions about how one reacts when faced with a multiplicity of worlds. Still, because of its reflexive awareness of its own fictionalism, irreal texts, such as Anderson's films, are absolved from any need to provide fundamental answers that critics argue the director's films lack because the main function of the irreal is *not* to think, but rather, "to think about" (Sainsbury 115). That is to say, while the majority of fictional narratives in literature and in film are about the search for an object, as well as the epistemological crises that arise around how to obtain that object, Anderson's irreal narratives, which focus on more fantastical, less obtainable desires, are content with merely talking about, or thinking *across*, those objects.

For example, in Anderson's *Rushmore* (1998), though fifteen year-old Max Fischer (Jason Schwartzman) seems to pursue first-grade teacher Rosemary Cross (Olivia Williams) out of a desire for a relationship, his search is for much more than a physical relationship; rather, the precocious teen is looking for both a woman who can provide him with sex, and one that can provide him with the very-abstract notions of motherly love and familial reassurance that his own deceased mother and overworked father cannot. Similarly, in *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou* (2004), the titular character, played by Bill Murray, though on a *Moby Dick*-esque quest for the fantastical tiger shark that ate one of his crewmates, soon realizes that his lengthy deep-sea journey is much less about revenge than it is about exploring his inner-self. However, because the irreal emphasizes surface and often privileges the artificial over the profound, the meaningfulness of either Zissou's excursion or Max's melancholic longing for a maternal ideal is relative.

Nevertheless, while Anderson, much like a literary irrealist, would happily proclaim that there are "no robust fictional characters," many critics still take issue with the director's use

of the unreal and lament his seeming inability to inject emotion and substance into his characters or believability into his fictional worlds (Sainsbury 116). However, while Anderson's characters may be depthless, despite what critics such as Le Cain and Rainer would argue, the director's films are *not* devoid of dramatic tension. Moreover, while those characters—in their motivations, personalities, and emotions—are intentionally artificial and exist solely in relation to Anderson's fictional worlds, those vivid, imaginative worlds ultimately challenge traditional notions of a stable, singular reality. After all, while the propositions that constitute both 'reality' and mimetic fictional worlds "must be *either true or false*," unreal worlds, as stated above, exist simultaneously, and are defined by their relationship to one another. So, while Anderson's unrealism does "borrow entities and properties from the ready-made world of reality," his films are comprised of what Umberto Eco terms "subworlds," which produce a "logical uneasiness and narrative discomfort" by juxtaposing multiple disparate realms that traditional narratives work so hard to separate.

Perhaps the most obvious juxtaposition in Anderson's films comes from the director's adoption of nostalgia as a mode. For example, although nostalgia is often considered a longing for an idealized past, in which the present and that past are distinctly separate, in Anderson's films, which seem to be removed from traditional temporal and spatial structures, the idealized past comes to exist in the present as a self-fabricated *pastness*. Here, the ontological crisis is not 'How *did* I exist?' nor is it 'How *do* I exist?', but rather 'How *could* I *have* existed?'. Much like the unreal itself, this question, which constructs nostalgia as an ironic reflection on the sorrow of an unfulfilled life as opposed to a longing for recovery, depends on the collusion of disparate worlds; at once, the 'necessities' of the past and the 'possibilities' of the future are invoked in the present, and the reality of the filmic character's world is brought together with an unreal speculation over the (im) possibilities of being.

If one is to accept the purgatorial in-between of Anderson's unrealism, in which the recognizable is combined with the fantastic, and an independent aesthetic is synthesized with a studio-financed Hollywood movie, one cannot fault the director's intentional desire to construct worlds in which everything—characters, settings, and emotions—is just a little 'off'. Likewise, if one is to focus on the dramatic tension in Anderson's films, as well as his use of nostalgia as a mode, one will notice that Anderson's 'flat', unrealist characters are heavily based on the perception of a generation—Generation-X—that is forced to come to terms with an outside world that is becoming increasingly unrecognizable, and, in ways, rather unreal itself. Thus, the director's sensibility—of quirky characters, 'no-place' settings, and skewed motivations—arises from a generation of disaffected Americans who, facing an ever-changing culture and plagued by high-rates of parental divorce, unemployment, and suicide, are expected to eke out a 'meaningful' existence despite disintegrating notions of success, authenticity, and family.

## Anderson's 'Irreal' Worlds

It's not really real life. It's something else. The way the movies are designed, especially *Rushmore*, there's a lot of stuff in it that's like that. Like the headmaster's office—it's like a crazy room. There's like 100 paintings on the walls, and all these little dogs, and every single article of clothing he's wearing is tweed: tweed shirt, tweed jacket, tweed pants, tweed tie. It's just slightly heightened strangeness. It's stuff that we happen to think is funny, but it's also a choice to *not* just do what is real (Wes Anderson).

The irreal desire to intentionally mix an independent aesthetic with a highly-stylized studio production is particularly evident in Anderson's stylistic choices. Each frame of every Anderson film is designed, constructed, and presented with art-gallery precision, so much so that critics often joke that one could recognize the director's films simply by viewing a single frame. By bringing together the wide-angled long shots and simplicity of cinematic realism with unnaturally calculated, often cluttered frames and uniform color schemes, Anderson is able to draw an audience into a world that *seems* familiar, while simultaneously distancing the audience from the artificial characters that the director often presents as relics from the past. Similarly, while the director's autoreflexive style does make submersion difficult for an audience, Anderson constructs vivid fictional worlds *for* his audience, and invites viewers to watch intently as those worlds unravel. Of course, if one is to focus merely on Anderson's irreal style, then one could easily dismiss the director's work as self-indulgent and as containing more style than substance. Thus, if the label of irrealism is to absolve the director from much of the unfair criticism his films have accrued and not just become a liability, then a demonstration of the director's style *must* be accompanied by a discussion of *how* the irreal aesthetic functions within Anderson's films.

The majority of Anderson's films closely follow characters that are, like the director himself, members of 'Generation-X'. Generation-X, or, as William Strauss terms it, the 'thirteenth generation', consists of Americans born over the twenty-year period between 1961 and 1981 (312). This period, as Joe David Bellamy explains, was a time during which the "American experience itself began to seem surreal" (4). With an embarrassing war in Vietnam and the assassination of several political figures causing national fragmentation and disillusionment; with a new drug culture and the proliferation of new forms of media leading to the loss of a shared reality and the compartmentalization of social relations; and with an increasing desire within individuals to sever ties with the hordes of strangers around them and forge 'relationships' with the disembodied personalities of popular culture, the reality of social interactions, familial relations, and political institutions – became unrecognizable.

A director like Anderson, who himself works at the margins of Hollywood, shares a sensibility about culture and society similar to many of his Generation-X characters, and although the director's films rarely – if ever – tackle political or social issues, those films often literalize many of the surreal aspects that typify the postmodern society. Likewise, Anderson

firmly believes that an unreal tone, which blends the ironic and sincere, as well as the real with the unreal, may be the most appropriate tone with which to engage the youthful moviegoers that regard the director's films much more highly than their elders.

The question that many of Anderson's central characters often pose to themselves—'What could I have been?'—is one that is similarly asked of Generation-X by their elders. To an aging 'Boom' generation, the members of Generation-X are a "lost generation," whose "low-test scores and high crime rates, suicide, and substance abuse" mark a postwar extreme for American youth (Strauss 317). Likewise, disparaging this younger audience as "ruined" and "wasted," nostalgic older generations have found it hard to suppress feelings of disappointment over how the 'thirteeners' are turning out (Strauss 318). Thus, those of Generation-X are, like Dignan (Owen Wilson) and Anthony (Luke Wilson) of *Bottle Rocket* (1996), "frantic, physical, and slippery" (Strauss 315). At every turn, these thirteeners have had to navigate through a social, political, and economic world that has been 'used up' by previous generations; Dignan and Anthony are *expected* to follow in the footsteps of their elders, but the opportunities—or, at least, the motivation—are nowhere to be found. Furthermore, schoolteachers have found thirteeners to be less intelligent, less committed, and less likely to succeed compared to the 'Boom' generation, while statistics have shown that the thirteenth generation will be the first generation in over 150 years to be less educated than its elders (Strauss 319-20).

Thus, the lack of opportunities and, understandably, the lack of interest in traditional notions of success have overwhelmingly transformed those of Generation-X into disaffected and dispassioned youths. This generation lives in a world in which reality is often supplanted by various forms of technology, and a world in which the sacrifices towards 'success' often outweigh the benefits. Although many of Anderson's characters would scrap laptops, iPods, and emails in favor of typewriters, record-players, and handwritten letters, the dispassion and disinterest that arise from a fractured society is prevalent in the director's style. While all of Anderson's films share similar stylistic characteristics, the 'Andersonian' aesthetic is fully realized—and at its most unreal—in the director's third and most successful film to date, *The Royal Tenenbaums*.

At the start of the film, Royal (Gene Hackman) breaks the news to his three prodigious children that he and their mother are separating. Sitting at one end of a dining table within the Tenenbaum home, the three children—Chas, Margot, and Richie—are centered within a medium-long shot facing the camera. As the children interrogate their father about the impending divorce, they speak directly into Anderson's camera; however, while the children do not technically break the 'fourth wall', this shot—in which the camera is addressed as if it were a person or an object—recurs throughout all of Anderson's films, and is particularly jarring. Because a static, forward-facing character is so closely associated with forms of presentation such as portraiture, musical performances, and soliloquies, the theatricality of these shots instantly withdraws an audience from the action.

Such self-conscious shots, which are absent in traditional narrative cinema, make it clear that Anderson's characters have been artificially constructed and intentionally arranged merely for the pleasure of the viewer. Similarly, while it has traditionally been the task of a filmmaker to reify flattened objects on the screen into 'human' entities, Anderson's films work to reverse the reification process and render the filmic characters lifeless. Placing his characters at the center of wide-angled frames, Anderson presents those characters as if they were posed for formal portraits, or as if they were handmade puppets. Not only does this create characters unable to portray real and complex human emotions, but the institutions within which these characters function are similarly paper-thin.

However, while Anderson's constantly sliding camera, frequent instances of crossing the 180-degree line of action, and absence of coverage shots produces a subtle disorientation, the director balances this with an independent, realist aesthetic that keeps his unreal films teetering on the brink between the familiar and unrecognizable. The first shot of the Tenenbaum children, as well as the reverse shot of Royal sitting at the opposite end of the table, are filmed as if one was watching the action unfold right before one's eyes. While the characters and their actions are certainly a little 'off', the camera remains static, as if it has been set-up and left to record the action. In this way, the long, straight-on shots and realist camerawork that seem to have been borrowed from an independent piece like Jarmusch's *Stranger Than Paradise* (1984) lend an air of realism to Anderson's films.

As the Tenenbaum children sit, each taking up exactly one-third of the frame, three wood panels in the background match the position of each child, while a candelabra rests between each young Tenenbaum. Likewise, in the reverse shot, Royal sits—exactly in the center of the frame—flanked by two candelabras, while a set of chairs on either side of him symmetrically define the frame's edges. While these shots are certainly meticulous, Anderson's posing of *everything* within the cinematic frame intensifies throughout *The Royal Tenenbaums* and is evident throughout all of his pieces. Later in the film, as Royal sits before Margot and Richie, the now-adult children and their father balance the frame at either side, while Chas stands, at the center of the frame, perfectly placed beneath a chandelier. Each of these shots is composed with such excessive precision and formality that is impossible to deny the director's aim for artificiality.

Despite this formality of Anderson's museum-like frames, oftentimes, the director's fictional worlds remain simple and unnaturally uncluttered. There is a purified neatness to the opening frames of *The Royal Tenenbaums*, as if the Tenenbaum home is—or, at least was—resistant to disorder and chaos. Even the cluttered and messy spaces within Anderson's work, such as the board game-filled closet in *The Royal Tenenbaums* or the headmaster's office in *Rushmore*, are presented with such calculation that everything, even the excesses, seem to be in order. Still, critics like Le Cain take issue with Anderson's meticulous framing and argue that the characters are often secondary to, and smothered by, the 'stuff' around them. Again,

however, if these worlds are synthetic to begin with, then one cannot fault the director for failing to create three-dimensional characters in pre-fabricated, two-dimensional unreal worlds.

Anderson's unreal style has the cumulative effect of engendering within members of an audience a sense of distance similarly felt by the director's disaffected, Generation-X characters. Firstly, the frames of each film are so painstakingly put-together, and the shots so precisely constructed, that Anderson invites the audience to examine the director's strategies of representation just as much as, if not more than, the worlds and characters his films are trying to represent. Each of Anderson's films begin in a manner that emphasizes both the theatricality of the production, as well as the director's own creative process; *Bottle Rocket* and *Rushmore* are bookended by the opening and closing of a curtain; *The Royal Tenenbaums* masquerades as a spurious novel, and, through Alec Baldwin's voice-over narration, is presented as the retelling of fictional events as they were once collected in a fictional text; and *The Life Aquatic* is presented as a film that is promised to be followed by a question and answer session with a fictional director. Even the characters within the films—playwrights Max and Margot (Gwyneth Paltrow), novelist Eli Cash (Owen Wilson), and director Steve Zissou—are all creators of doubly fictional worlds, and each character stresses that in Anderson's unreal worlds, fiction is almost hyper-artificial.

Secondly, Anderson's unreal style, similar to the deadpan comedy of the quirky, works to flatten and make dryly comic that which could easily be dramatic or tragic. An audience's first impulse is not to feel sorry for the Tenenbaum children through the film's opening, despite the impending divorce of neglectful parents; rather, Anderson's distancing style and matter-of-fact dialogue permit an audience to laugh because it recognizes that, outside of the fictional world, there is nothing at stake. After all, even the Tenenbaum children, who are often obsessively regarded and isolated by Anderson's camera, lack an adhesiveness that bonds one with the others. Although the Tenenbaum family is, at the film's start, on the verge of collapse, Anderson's distancing of the audience from the characters, as well as the characters from one another, make it seem as if there was not a 'family' to begin with.

Although many of Anderson's characters are, in comparison to both the 'characters' of reality and other works of fiction, rather flat and distanced, the director, as Liza Schwarzbaum notes, "never demeans [nor] makes fun of his dollhouse families" (2). Rather, Anderson remains committed to the individuality of his characters, and *all* of them—from Dignan, to Max, to Royal, to Zissou—are presented as genuinely 'good', despite their flaws and neuroses. Likewise, while there may not be much at stake for the viewer of the films, the director, who perpetually sides with his characters, allows them to both explore their own desires and try to make sense of the unreal universe.

In *Bottle Rocket*, Dignan and Anthony, like many of the thirteeners, find the criticisms directed towards their generation seriously overblown. Although the characters are presented as Peter Pan-esque figures in their refusal to grow up, both men are attempting to scrape together a worthwhile existence from the fragments available to them. Similarly, while the two

men are certainly aimless, there is a desire within both—a sort-of personal determinism—to achieve *something*. Stigmatized by their now-absent elders for being unmotivated and unsuccessful, Dignan and Anthony attempt to eke out an existence in a world in which permanence and consistency seem unachievable. Although Dignan’s ironic 75-year-plan (fifty years of which are simply labeled ‘keep working’) promises stability, that stability comes in the form of a life of low-level crime. For Anthony, who left school to voluntarily check himself into a mental institution, to be doing anything, even if it is to follow Dignan into that life of crime, seems better than doing *nothing*.

Just as Dignan proclaims that he ‘learned more in the two months spent with Mr. Henry than [he] learned in fifteen years of academic study’, *Rushmore’s* Max Fischer is equally dismissive of, and unconcerned with, his academic career at Rushmore Academy. For Max, who is a member of, among many other clubs, the Astronomy Society, the Calligraphy Club, the Fencing Team, the Yankee Review, the Model UN, and the French Club, the activities that he participates in *outside* of the classroom are much more rewarding than any work he could do inside the classroom. Max is, like his Generation-X counterparts, “pragmatic, quick, [and] sharp-eyed,” and his confidence, as well as his ability to find pleasure and happiness, often places him in opposition to both the peers who cannot understand him, and the elders who refuse to accept his idiosyncrasies (Schwarzbaum 2). Still, despite Max’s arrogance and lack of couth, he is often able to understand others—classmates and adults—much better than they can understand him, and while there are feelings of panic and urgency that obviously underlie Max’s acting-out for attention, there is always the sense that someday, *something* will be alright for the young boy.

While the majority of Anderson’s films follow characters, like Max or Anthony, who are attempting to make sense of their unreal worlds, all of the director’s films focus, at least to an extent, on the dissolution of families, as well as the effect that dissolution has on the children within those ‘families’. For these characters, the breaking-down of traditional structures not only leads to a nostalgia for *any* family later in life, but, the fear and embarrassment of having these emotions exposed often force the characters into regressed, withdrawn states. As Strauss points out in his study of Generation-X, not only was this generation the “most aborted generation in American history”—one in three pregnancies were terminated—Generation-X was also struck by parental divorce harder than any other American generation (322). Likewise, while numerous surveys have found that nearly four out of five divorcees were ‘much happier’ after the end of marriage, the same surveys have found that the majority of children felt otherwise. Furthermore, for children of a generation facing the most “drastic increase in domestic dissatisfaction,” the family not only became smaller and more divisive, but, for many parents, the nuclear family was becoming a burden; between 1960 and 1980, the number of mothers with children aged five or under holding jobs jumped from 20 to 47 percent, while the number of “latchkey children”—those left alone after school—more than doubled (325).

Thus, for thirteeners, childhood was no longer an era of parental nurturing or welcomed suffocation, nor did thirteeners grow up with a “childlike awe” of their elders; rather, like Anderson’s characters, this generation witnessed the breaking down of the societal institutions that rigidly structured their parents’ lives, and often acquired an “adultlike fatalism” about the weakness of their elders. For Anderson’s characters, nostalgia ceases to be about any longing for something in the past because that something, like the family, never really existed (Strauss 323). Rather, while Anderson’s unreal nostalgia is, initially, a vain attempt to ‘restore’ a family that never was happy in the first place to a state of glory that never was, the nostalgic question, again, becomes not ‘What was?’, but ‘What could have been’, and, for many of Anderson’s characters, the ‘recovery’ of a past often takes the form of a desperate search for a ‘family’ in the present.

Forced to witness the disintegration of their own families, these deeply cynical and skeptical children populate Anderson’s filmic landscapes. Oftentimes, these ‘child-adults’ are incongruously intelligent and articulate, and, with social institutions collapsing around them, they are, at a very young age, forced to construct an identity outside of their unfathomable, yet inescapable families. In *Rushmore*, Max, whose own mother is deceased, believes that he has found a potential surrogate in first-grade teacher Rosemary Cross. Although Miss Cross is years older than Max, the young boy – well-beyond his own peers intellectually – finds himself more comfortable with the adults around him than with the schoolchildren who ostracize him. The only relationship Max is able to forge with his peers is one with a classmate nearly half his age, and even then, Max serves as more of a father-figure to the younger boy than he does a friend. Likewise, it is the disillusioned industrialist Herman Blume (Bill Murray), himself approaching fifty years of age, who often looks to Max for guidance, and, as Blume watches his own family fall apart, asks Max what the secret to life is.

In *Bottle Rocket*, Anthony’s adolescent sister, Grace (Shea Fowler), displays a cynicism that shocks and frightens her older brother; despite being more than half Anthony’s age, the inexplicably articulate Grace interrogates and criticizes her brother, chastising his aimlessness – ‘You haven’t worked a day in your life, how can you be tired?’ – as well as his choice in friends. While an audience is intended to laugh when Dignan asks what Grace ‘has accomplished in her life’, his exaggerated question is one often posed to Generation-X by its elders. Likewise, while the numerous track-and-field awards and set of hand-painted soldiers in Anthony’s childhood bedroom are remnants of a past youth, there is a sense that Grace has been ‘pushed out of the nest’ at a much younger age. She possesses, as does Max, a self-awareness and self-reliance that is out-of-place in an adolescent, and, with those around her contented with drifting along, Grace is left to scrape by on her own.

Again, the most extensive – and unreal – exploration of childhood and nostalgia occurs in *The Royal Tenenbaums*. As children of an insensitive, gruff father and a loving, yet fundamentally inattentive matriarch who would rather write a book on parenting than raise her own children, the young Tenenbaums, like *Rushmore’s* Max and *Bottle Rocket’s* Grace, are

transformed into adultlike children who learn very early to cultivate their talents and care for themselves. Each Tenenbaum child is, in his or her own way, prodigious; Chas is a 'preternatural' financial genius, Margot is a gifted playwright, and Richie is a promising tennis player. Although the young Tenenbaums are certainly children, the innocence, naïveté, and wonder that define childhood have been replaced by cynicism, boredom, and a sense of distance. Likewise, despite having the ability to finalize property acquisitions, receive genius grants, and win professional sporting tournaments, Chas, Margot, and Richie are largely unnoticed by their distracted mother and absent father, and rarely—if ever—treated as anything more than the burdensome offspring of a souring marriage.

While the opening moments of *The Royal Tenenbaums* focus on the success of the three children, the rest of the film, which is set after 'two decades of betrayal, failure, and disaster', focus on the characters' inability to recapture the success they once had as children. The now-adult Tenenbaums, who undoubtedly peaked during their adolescent years, are in a rut in the present. Chas, who has lost his wife to a plane crash, is consumed by paranoia that has turned him into an overprotective father to his two sons; Margot, who finds herself in her own failing marriage, spends her days soaking in the bathtub; and Richie, whose tennis career has fallen apart, aimlessly drifts at sea aboard a ship that has no clear destination. Although as children, the Tenenbaums were decidedly adultlike in their mannerisms and worldview, as adults, Chas, Margot, and Richie find themselves suspended in an arrested state of adolescence. Consumed by nearly thirty years of neuroses and unable to come to terms with the fact that their best years are behind them, the Tenenbaum 'children' often behave like the children that they never had the chance to be.

As Anderson's most unreal and nostalgic characters, the three Tenenbaum children perpetually exist in a curious state between childhood and adulthood, and, although 'living' in the present, each character acts as if the past twenty years had never occurred. The wardrobe of the characters—Chas' *Adidas* tracksuit, Richie's Bjorn Borg-like tennis outfit and headband, and Margot's *Lacoste* schoolgirl dress and loafers—are nearly identical to the clothes each wore at the height of their childhood success. Similarly, the music that the characters listen to, as well as the vintage 'stuff' they surround themselves with—Margot's portable TV, Richie's plastic-lens toy camera and fort-like tent existing as a world-within-world, as well as Chas' motorized tie-rack—all invoke nostalgia for 1980s Americana. Rather than accept the past as irretrievable, the Tenenbaums, driven by some nostalgic longing, want to go back—to return to a previous time, to return to the Tenenbaum home, to reclaim some of that past glory for the present. Yet Anderson's unreal nostalgia is not a longing for any actual—or even idealized—past; rather, the past that the Tenenbaums want to reclaim is, like the director's filmic landscapes, completely artificial. By investing the objects of their 'childhood' with the nostalgia-producing power that their family always lacked, the Tenenbaums, in a way, commodify nostalgia and Anderson presents this nostalgia not as a yearning for a time gone by, but a desire for nostalgic desire itself that stresses the corelessness of the Tenenbaum family, as well as the film itself.

Although Anderson's camerawork contributes to his unreal aesthetic, it is the artificial worlds that his characters populate—places that are, both temporally and spatially, neither here nor there—that intensify the unrealism of his child-adult characters. It is within these snowglobe-esque worlds that Anderson's production of a commodified nostalgia colludes with his unreal desire to create a sense of both the unrecognizable, yet strangely familiar. All of Anderson's films are set within 'no-place' worlds; *Bottle Rocket* is set in a suburban landscape that looks like Texas. *Rushmore*, which seems to take place in a small New England town, has the feel of one of Roald Dahl's slightly surreal children's books. Similarly, having left the security (and confines) of land, the characters of *The Life Aquatic* are somewhere in the middle of the Mediterranean, and there, time and space seem to have no bearing.

In an interview with Anderson for *Salon.com*, Chris Lee admits that, while watching *Rushmore*, he "couldn't place where it was supposed to be occurring" (1). "I had to look at Max's sneakers and the kind of car Mr. Blume drives," Lee states, "in order to figure out [the film] was set in the present day" (1). Yet for Anderson, who desires this sort-of unreal ambiguity, it is his task to "make the movie its own little world" and to construct "events and characters...a bit unlike anything [one] is likely to meet in real life" (2). Similarly, *The Royal Tenenbaums*, although set in New York City, takes place in a timeless, yet mostly retro Big Apple that is rather unfamiliar. European telephone booths line the streets, familiar landmarks and attractions such as the Statue of Liberty have been intentionally erased, and characters populate numerous fictional spaces, including the Lindbergh Palace Hotel and the 375<sup>th</sup> Street Y.

In the present, the Tenenbaum home, which, much like the three children, remains untouched by time, serves as a makeshift museum to the past 'glory' of the family. The bedrooms remain filled with the childhood treasures of Chas, Margot, and Richie; the family spaces are equipped with outdated furniture and yellowing hand drawings; and the edifice of the Victorian-style home seems to show the wear of attempting to keep twenty-years of the outside world from permeating its walls. Everything in the Tenenbaum house is, as Anderson explains, a "little surreal; it's not real-life, everything is exaggerated" (1). Once again, it becomes the 'stuff' within the home—not the notion of a family—that is infused with the nostalgia that engenders within the Tenenbaums the belief that maybe the past was not as bad as they remember, or, that maybe the past is actually recoverable; after all, the belief seems to be that if the Tenenbaum home can seemingly stand the test of time, and if the nostalgic objects of a bygone era still exist, then a happy, functional family *must* have lived there at one time.

However, when the Tenenbaums, or any of Anderson's characters, attempt to grasp this nostalgia and step back into their romanticized past, they are confronted by a sobering world that is just as bleak as the one from which the characters fled. The Tenenbaum children move back into their childhood home; Zissou tries to reconcile with his wife and a man who *might* be his son; and Max tries desperately to win the affection of Miss Cross. Even Royal, who is of a much different mold than many of the director's Generation-X characters, finds himself longing not for the family that he once had, but for the family that he could have had. Still, despite

these attempts to go back in time and rebuild a loving, functional family, all of Anderson's characters are forced to come to the realization that even in the director's artificial and unreal worlds, not *everything* is possible; one cannot, as Thomas Wolfe once wrote, 'go home again'. The past, either as it truly existed, or as it has been fabricated by the nostalgia-driven characters, is ultimately irrecoverable.

In fleeting moments of sincerity – Royal granting his wife a divorce; an optimistic Zissou carrying the newest member of his team on his shoulders; Max dancing with Margaret Yang – Anderson's characters come to terms with their past and finally look toward the future. It is in these succinct moments that the director's unreal style reaches a culminating point; however, this comes about not through any camera technique or 'no-place' setting, but from the momentary replacement of the unreal by the genuine, and the artificial by the authentic. Here, Anderson steps back from his creation and allows his characters to come to life; at once, the characters are, in a way, realistic, and the films become nearly cathartic. Very briefly, the audience is allowed to cross the barrier Anderson has placed between it and the characters and the viewer is permitted to press his face to the glass and get its closest glimpse at the unreal landscape. Although, by the end of the films, it is too late for the audience to 'enter' the filmic worlds, Anderson's unrealism, which is responsible for much of this distancing, also allows the audience to feel as if it could almost reach out and touch the characters.

It is only after confronting the burdens of their past, however, that Anderson's characters are free to explore the possibilities of the future. Likewise, only after relinquishing their nostalgia for a biological family that never was are the characters able to stumble upon a 'family' that will love and accept them. After all, every one of Anderson's unreal characters desires to fit in. Much like the director's films, the characters within them do not desire to be vastly different, but rather, quietly celebrated for their idiosyncrasies. In a world that has seemingly lost its familiarity and normality, Anderson's characters have searched endlessly for some form of stability; this stability, the director suggests, can be found in the company of others. The boys of *Bottle Rocket* gain acceptance from one another; in *Rushmore*, while Max finds optimism towards the future, Herman and Rosemary find solace in one another; and, in *The Royal Tenenbaums* each member of the Tenenbaum clan finds a 'family' outside of the biological family – Margot has Richie; Raleigh has his test-subject, Dudley; and Etheline Tenenbaum has the accountant Henry Sherman. Even Anderson, whose own parents divorced when he was a child, finds a 'family' in the troupe of actors that work on nearly all of his films. Thus, while the characters begin their quest through Anderson's unreal worlds wondering what could have been, by the end, each character ponders the question of what might be.

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## Trying to Achieve the Impossible: The Futility of Attempting Objectivity in News Reporting

By Abigail C. Moss '12

**Abstract:** This essay follows the history of objectivity becoming a normative ideal of news reporting in the United States. Though objectivity is an ideal, because of the number of human filters the information is passed through, objectivity remains unattainable. The social reality is a futile attempt to be objective with news reporting. This attempt may actually be holding journalism back from being as relevant in today's public life as it could be.

**Keywords:** objectivity; positivism; Comte; journalism; strategic ritual.

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Can the news be truly objective? There are many arguments that can be made to the negative. It is not a matter of whether the media is trying to be objective or trying to assert its opinions, it is about the idea that objectivity is simply not possible no matter how much anyone tries to obtain it.

In the mid to late 1800's, when the sensationalism of yellow journalism was at its peak, there was a movement towards more objectivity in journalism (Schudson, 1999, p 292). Assisting this movement was the telegraph, invented in the 1840's, which allowed news to be transported at an efficient speed not previously known. In 1848 New York newspapers, in order to take advantage of the speed of the telegram, organized the Associated Press, which would supply reports to all of their newspapers (p. 292). It was business logic that led these Associated Press reports to be written using no spin or writing techniques that would be considered biased; the reports had to be general enough for all types of newspapers to be able to use them (p 292). The price of each telegraphed word and the variety of papers receiving the report fostered a conveniently objective reporting style. Objectivity became the normative ideal that was intrinsically linked with the concepts of 'truth' and 'reality' (Wein, 2005, p. 3). Attempting to provide this normative ideal was *The New York Times*, a newspaper that started printing in 1896 on the premise that it would present a model based on information rather than a story model; in other words, *The New York Times* would become an antithesis to yellow journalism (p. 292). The printers of *The New York Times* must have believed in the existence and value of positivism to invest in that information model.

The sociological concept of positivism, developed by French sociologist Auguste Comte, was based on a "common-sense approach to knowledge: the only thing we can know something about is that which we immediately know via our senses; hence, it is only via the senses that

certain knowledge can be achieved” (Wein, 2005, p. 3). Telegraphs were comprised of just that—reporters wrote the basic facts.

After all, the news, as Robert Park writes, is written in facts about events, disconnected from a flow of historical progression, “A reporter, as distinguished from a historian, seeks merely to record each single event as it occurs and is concerned with the past and future only in so far as these throw light on what is actual and present” (1999, p. 12). Despite the fact that reporters telegraphed the basic, unelaborated facts, editors were still free to put their own spin on the reports that they received.

The process of selecting which stories will make it into publication can produce the existence of “gatekeepers,” or people who are involved in this selection process which can occur at many different levels of the newspaper editing process (White, 1999, pp. 66-67). David Manning White investigated one wire editor—named Mr. Gates—to find out on how he selected pieces to be featured in the newspaper. Based on this study, White “began to understand how highly subjective, how reliant upon value-judgments based on the ‘gatekeeper’s own set of experiences, attitudes, and expectations the communications of ‘news’ really is” (White, 1999, p. 68). An occurrence related to gatekeeping, known as agenda-setting, is another way in which bias can be studied in relation to the media. In 1972, McCombs and Shaw conducted a study that compared the opinions the media presented to the opinions of voters in an area and the findings showed a strong correlation between the opinions of the media and the opinions of the voters with little chance that the relationship is coincidental, “the evidence is in line with the conditions that must exist if agenda-setting in the media does occur” (McCombs & Shaw, 1972, p. 184). Not only does the media have a hard time of keeping its opinion separate from the news, but its opinion is not without influence over those who experience it.

Journalists do not, however, wish to make their opinion obvious in their reporting; they use all of the techniques available to them to claim objectivity. Gaye Tuchman, a sociologist who observed journalists in the newsroom, noted that there are three major factors influencing how journalists perceive objectivity: form, content, and inter-organizational relationships (1972, p. 661). Newspaper journalists are under a considerable amount of stress; they have fast-approaching deadlines and information to gather and form into a story. Because of this stress, they need “some working notion of objectivity to minimize the risks imposed by deadlines, libel suits, and superiors’ reprimands” (p. 662). So journalists employ those three previously mentioned factors to protect themselves. Through form, such as the use of quotation marks, they are able to disown opinions and give the ownership of those opinions to other people (p. 661).

Journalists can still fail to be objective by getting a quote from a person with the same opinion as theirs and placing it closer to the beginning of the story and putting a quote from a person with a different opinion later in the story. Through content, journalists use “notions of social reality which the newspaperman takes for granted” (Tuchman, 1972, p. 661). For instance, the media only really gives news coverage to election candidates from the Republican

and Democratic political parties, ignoring the fact that there are other parties involved in the election. This selection represents a social assumption that journalists take for granted: there are only two parties that matter in this country. Virtually no one opposes this bias because it is a perception set by the media, a norm that, in fact, is not very objective. Inter-organizational relationships serve to reassure journalists that they are getting the right information from the right people, such as some who is high on the chain-of-command in an organization because that person is more likely to know the “facts” (p. 672). Through inter-organizational interactions, journalists learn about how to get what they perceive to be the most factual information and believe that their interactions “validate their news judgments and may be reduced to common sense. By ‘common sense’ the newsmen mean what most newsmen hold to be true or take for granted” (p. 674). This is a sense developed by journalists that is based on assumptions, allowing for a failure in objectivity to occur in the selection process of the sources that journalists use to write their reports.

A failure to be objective can have very serious consequences that society pays for without even realizing that the consequences are a result of the reporting. Reporting can even create news that soon becomes a social reality, such as the crime wave in New York City in 1976, a phenomenon observed by sociologist Mark Fishman: “I discovered something that made me wonder whether the entire news production process was *creating* the crime wave it was reporting” (1988, pp. 4-5). A feature on crimes against the elderly spiraled into a huge news theme, and news themes are not necessary reflective of a real pattern, “News themes allow editors to organize an otherwise confusing array of events into packages or group of interrelated news items” (p. 5). Did various crimes against the elderly actually occur? They did, but the public’s perception of these crimes is warped by the newspaper’s coverage of them as a collective wave. In terms of actually perpetuating the sense of crime, it is not without the realm of possibility that the news coverage contributed, “Even though one cannot be mugged by a crime wave, one can be frightened. And on the basis of this fear, one put more police on streets, enact laws, and move away to the suburbs” (p. 11). An objective look at the original events might conclude that there really was not a significant connection, but an editor on a slow news day loses objectivity.

Another way to lose objectivity is through adopting the policies of the newspaper for which the journalists and editors work. It is a method of conditioning that consists of reward and punishment, either experienced by the employees themselves or by those who they observe being rewarded or punished, “the professional norms legitimize the existing order by making it appear to be a naturally occurring state of affairs” (Soloski, 1999, p. 318). By rewarding certain journalists for their pieces, editors are teaching younger journalists what kind of stories to write if they would like to be printed. On the other hand, “reprimands help establish policy not only for the journalists who receive them, but for those who witness or hear of them” (p. 316). In this way, the editors’ influence over journalists seriously affects objectivity.

Objectivity is also severely affected by the source of the news, which can be delivered through sources who have their own agendas. Disgruntled by the spin and lack of objectivity in newspapers was Walter Lipmann, who wrote in his 1922 work, *Public Opinion*, about the social reality of how journalism was tainted by its reporting methods. Journalists did not go hunting for the news in every nook and cranny of their area, but instead staked out particular places of interest that were certain to produce some interesting news, such as police stations and the White House (1922, p. 106). Furthermore, journalists were not necessarily getting their facts through thorough investigation, but instead usually through whoever was doing publicity for the source of the news:

[The publicity man] certainly saves the reporter much trouble, by presenting him a clear picture of the situation out of which he might otherwise make neither head nor tail. But it follows that the picture which the publicity man makes for the reporter is the one he wishes the public to see. He is censor and propagandist... (Lipmann, 1922, p. 108).

Harvey Molotch and Marilyn Lester call these publicity men ‘news promoters’ (Molotch & Lester, 1999, p. 38). While the normative ideal is a view of the media as “reporter-reflector-indicators of an objective reality ‘out there’, consisting of knowably ‘important’ events of the world,” the social reality is one containing information that has been given to the reporters in neat packages of carefully filtered information by news promoters (pp. 39-40). The news chosen from these promoters, according to Bernard Roshco (1999), is based on three qualifications: recency, how recently the news was learned; immediacy, how fast the news was learned (an obsolete term in today’s world of instant communication); and currency, how relevant the news is (p. 34). Editors can manipulate these standards as a form of gatekeeping, “An editor...may decide to withhold information of assured interest because he deems publication impolitic or inappropriate” (p. 36).

Another way in which objectivity can be compromised occurs during wartime reporting. As of recent in United States wartime reporting, exemplified by reporting from Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom, embedding journalists has become a frequent practice. Embedded journalists actually travel with military units in war zones. In 2005, a group of scholars published a study that analyzed the effects of embedded journalism on wartime reporting by comparing the embedded journalists’ reports to non-embedded journalist’s reports (Pfau, 2005, p. 468). These scholars found that, overall, reports from embedded journalists tended to be more favorable towards the goals of the military, “Embedded reporters who experience the same stresses in combat as military personnel undergo changes in which the goals of the military and

those of the reporter become increasingly integrated or congruent” (p. 468). The camaraderie between journalists and the military units with which they travel can cause the journalists to frame a story in a way that reflects this congruency of their attitudes with those of the military. Along with this congruity, embedded journalists’ objectivity can be compromised by the fact that instead of having a broad view of all aspects of the war, they are only experiencing a small part of the war, “What is lost in the process is context, which requires the ability to step back from the micro content and view the war through more expansive lenses (p. 473). While it seems like embedded journalism would give an improved view of the war because of the journalists’ intimacy with the action, it actually seems to counteract the ideal of objectivity. The next question to ask is whether or not this is a bad thing or not.

Davis Merritt (1995/1999) argues that objectivity should not be the normative ideal that it is and takes a different approach to improve the state of journalism. Merritt makes the point that, for years, newspaper have strived for objectivity as the ideal and have simply been “telling the news,” causing the public to lose interest in the news and for journalism to compromise its symbiotic relationship with public life:

Our profession’s very existence depends on the viability of public life. A public that does not attend to public affairs, that retreats deeply into private life and concerns, has no need for journalists and journalism, for such a public cannot and will not heed either the news or the needs of public life beyond its most immediate surroundings (p. 372).

Because of this dependency on the existence of an active public life, Merritt (1995/1999, p. 372) argues that it is necessary for journalism to become more invested in the public life and less deliberately separate from it. In its attempt to be objective, journalism can unwittingly encourage completely polarized points of view; by trying to provide a balanced point of view, an ‘A’ point and a ‘Z’ point, journalists can ignore the complexity of the issue and exclude other, not quite as polarized, opinions: “More often than not, ‘A’ and ‘Z’ provide a falsely simplistic frame, for many of the other 24 letters would provide nuances reflecting the whole array of opinion” (p. 375). In this way, objectivity can actually alienate readers and exclude them from the public arena that the newspapers are trying to create; investing a little more in the story could possibly provide the complexity and nuances that are currently missing from news reporting.

The information the public absorbs as news is filtered through so many people with so many different opinions that objectivity becomes a normative ideal doomed to stay an ideal rather than to become a social reality. It may be in journalism’s interest, as Merritt suggests, for journalists to drop the pretense of objectivity and work towards

improving public life. If being objective is impossible, than striving for it could function to waste the efforts of an enormously important news source, separating it from a public arena on which it depends.

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## Trapped in the Paranoid Claustrophobia of the Human Psyche: An Insight to Roman Polanski's original psycho- thriller "Repulsion"

By Zachary Choquette '13

**Abstract:** This paper examines the 1968 psycho-thriller *Repulsion*, created by contemporary film director and auteur Roman Polanski. It notes his perforated personal life in relationship to his early works, as well as the frameworks of his socio-political upbringing. The paper will discuss the technique and style of Polanski's cinematography through his specific lens, and how his careful planning of the *mis en scene* creates a tarrying *deigesis* to expose the audience to. The main argument lies with the psychological deterioration of the feminine protagonist. Through a combination of sexually repressed memories and desires, and a complete elimination of interaction with a social medium, our protagonist's trauma conforms into a tumorous psychological rot ultimately leading her to insanity. Sociological references to human isolation and the family structure are touched upon, as well as the power of the Freudian psyche on the human consciousness. Ultimately the paper argues that through complete social isolation and a repressive sexual consciousness, a tumorous psychosis is created.

**Key Words:** *mis en scène*; sexual repression/repulsion; human isolation; Freudian theory; trauma.

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Roman Polanski is undoubtedly one of the most controversial contemporary filmmakers in the recent memory of cinematic history. With an exceptional career in cinema full of a profound variety of filmography, Polanski has accrued a reputation as a seasoned actor, director, producer and writer. His mastery of cinematography and the *mis en scene* are unparalleled; however his off-screen reputation precedes much of his work and consideration as a recognizable auteur. The name Polanski has become synonymous with his riddled, and for lack of better words, downright haunting and portentous personal life. Although popular culture may overlook his works for his personal life, Polanski's innate ability to encapsulate his audience through a specific lens and absolutely engage, disturb, and horrify is impossible to describe in words. The sheer unnerving cinematic *diegesis* he creates is terrifyingly simple, yet so exceptional and intuitive, because it draws the audience into an unconscious psychological joyride down the unknown winding roads of sanity and madness.

Before delving into the horrifying confines of Polanski's psycho-thriller *Repulsion*, it is necessary to illuminate a few brief aspects of Roman's past life experiences. A keen film critic would find allusive connections through these experiences in relationship to Polanski's works as a filmmaker. Born in Poland in 1933, Roman was raised in Krakow, an austere communist community predominantly populated by the Jewish Pollack ethnic group. Individuality was rare to come by in this social and political framework, but Polanski held grand aspirations and crafted a creatively imaginative world of fantasy, contradictory to his oppressive concrete

environment. World War II displaced Polanski and his family, and Roman was forcefully imprisoned within the ominous dark walls of the Krakow ghetto while his parents were sent to Jewish concentration camps. This imprisonment exposed a young Polanski as a subjective witness to the brutal inhumanities under radical Nazi control.

If we fast-forward time, Roman survived the grim lifestyle of the Krakow ghetto and pursued his dreams as a film student, and subsequently began shooting films in Paris, London, and the Americas in the late fifties and throughout the sixties. *Repulsion* was shot and written by Polanski in London in 1965 and we will analyze this piece in greater detail later in the essay. At the height of Polanski's career so to speak, with several movies under his belt, he married up and coming actress Sharon Tate in 1969. A strange but love filled relationship ensued, with Polanski and Tate expecting a child in mid-August 1969. Two weeks from her due date, Sharon was entertaining guests at Polanski's Benedict Canyon home in California, and was brutally stabbed sixteen times by constituents of Charles Manson's "family" cult worshippers. Polanski was in London at the time and returned immediately upon hearing the devastating news. Polanski admitted that for months after the homicide he fell into a deep paranoia of suspicion of his own friends and colleagues.

If we fast forward again to March of 1977, Roman was photographing 13 year old Samantha Gremier for a photo-shoot for French Vogue Magazine. Polanski was arrested for allegedly sexually assaulting Gremier and an outrageous American sex scandal was the ensuing consequence. Blown out of the water by media, reporters and the courtroom setting, Polanski was indicted on six counts of criminal behavior, one including the rape of a minor. Consequently, Polanski was court ordered to a 90 day psychiatric evaluation at Chino State Prison in California. Before the judge on the case could make a definitive ruling and sentence Polanski, he fled to safety in France mere hours before his sentence was to be heard. Currently, Polanski is still overseas free from the ravenous scrutiny of the American media, and has continued his storied career as a filmmaker with the 2010 piece *The Ghost Writer*, which has won eleven awards across Europe. As a first year film studies student, the opportunity to study Polanski and his works has been an absolute roller coaster ride. His life and his works as a filmmaker are eerily similar and downright uncomfortable but fascinating.

My admirations seem to be somewhat confused however, as there is a decisive difference between his mainstream works and his eccentric, deeply odd and offsetting pieces. Chinatown aside, Polanski's strengths as a cinematic master of the *mis en scene* seem vigorous and much more robust in his absolute absurd, alienated Eastern European sensibility. His mainstream Hollywood films, and more so latter day pieces just don't seem up to par with the beauty of his cinematic style and signature in films like *Repulsion*, *The Tenant*, *Rosemary Baby*, and *Knife in the Water*. Throughout the four films we viewed by Polanski (*Repulsion*, *The Tenant*, *Rosemary's Baby*, *the Pianist*), a strikingly profound commonality arises in each work; through Polanski's unique vision and cinematic style, he creates an alluring diegesis in his works, utilizing the notion of physical space to implement pure internal chaos. His characters as well as the viewing audience becomes psychologically lured and trapped through Polanski's ability to instill confinement through self-imposed cinematic techniques. *Repulsion* and *The Tenant* exude this ability to the extent of an uncomfortable but addicting viewing experience as both protagonists psychological deterioration increases through the hellish confines of a claustrophobic apartment setting, much like the fragile chambers of the human psyche. This aspect of Polanski's signature style can be found in *The Pianist* as well, with the isolation and

impending paranoia of a Jewish man's struggle to maintain identity and human interaction amongst a German S.S. controlled Jewish ghetto. Though this film was produced in 2002, much later than his other "apartment" works the theme of psychological detriment from human isolation is strikingly apparent.

In addition, *Rosemary's Baby* illustrates an unsettling, hellish thematic morality through a devilish cult, secret room and character development. Polanski also utilizes his mastery of self-imposed psychological turmoil through the immersion of characters within the mechanics of plots, which are often larger and more complicated than the protagonists themselves. This choreography of knowledge can be clearly found in *Rosemary's Baby*, and even in *Chinatown*. The apparent similarities in Polanski's films are intriguing to unravel and look into, but when paired with his life experiences, his works seem much more enriched. His oppressed childhood in a Jewish ghetto exempt from a familiar family structure can be clearly paralleled in his powerful and horrifying thematic use of human isolation and its ramifications on the human psyche. From a sociological and perhaps psychological perspective, Polanski indoctrinates the negativity of a socially dysfunctional family structure, as well as the internal psychological imprisonment of human isolation. Although this is a prevalent theme throughout Polanski's film noir, no piece illuminates this dark and frankly disturbing element better than his 1965 original psycho-thriller, *Repulsion*.

Roman Polanski wrote, directed, and appeared (cameo of a spoon player on the London streets) in his second film *Repulsion* in the city of London in 1965. This early piece happened to be his first film accompanying the English language as well as his first piece outside of his native homeland Poland.

*Repulsion* entails a plethora of cinematic discourse in which Polanski exudes brilliantly: its realistic tendencies as a film exposing the horrifying capabilities of the human condition; engaging closed form relying on pictorial and architectural traditions; deeply artistic dispose of character and camera proxemics; the mastery of subjective photographic camera work in deep focus; the symbolic lighting schemes; and utilization of



**Figure 1:** Opening credit roll across our plagued protagonist's glossy eyes foreshadow the innate madness about to unfold before our very eyes.

significant metonymy and fetishism. Polanski has created a beautifully dynamic but horrifying piece that remains a pioneer in the psycho-thriller genre. His combination of Freudian theory and masterful puppeteering of the *mis en scene* is similarly artistic to the likes of the works of Kubrick or Hitchcock. After viewing this film twice, the development of a central thesis is clear: The psychological strain of sexually repressed impulses and traumatic experiences, and complete lack of outward social/communicative interaction with the outside world, creates an

alluring but descending tumorous spiral down the Freudian psyche, all through the dreamlike trance of our protagonist's (Carol) progressively horrifying psychosis.

Our story begins with the credits rolling in the twitching trance like the retinas of our main protagonist Carol, played by the Belgian beauty Catherine Deneuve. Immediately, Polanski provides us with the feeling that this beautiful young manicurist isn't exactly all there. Blank faced, blinkless, and distant, her eyes burn the notion of some sort of mental instability.



**Figure 2:** Carol's mental well-being is questioned in the beginning of the film as her distorted reflection rivals her spiraling psychosis.

Similar to Hitchcock's spiraling eye credits in *Vertigo* (1958) (Hayward 250-251), Polanski functions a metonymic symbol for the whole film through the emanating credits in the eyes of our protagonist. Illustrating subliminally that hallucinations or psychological fantasies are an imminent reality.

The conclusion of the credits stamps our tickets down the psychological terror train that Polanski paints through the perspective of Carol. She works as a

manicurist at a hip London Salon, which would be expected considering her natural beauty and alluring physique. Unbeknownst to the black and white infused nightmare about to unfold, the viewer's investment into this strikingly interesting fifteen-minute beginning is rather easy. We as viewers are only exposed to what Polanski shows us through the constructed world of the camera lens. Feeling pulled into the film, we are informed that Carol shares a London flat with her sister and her "money hubby" boyfriend Michael. After that point, the notion of psychological dysfunction becomes relevant with the realization of Carol's innate confused distaste/fascination for men. This is specifically indicated through her uncomfortable social presence with males and the cosmetic items of Michael - especially his razor, which resurfaces later as a symbol for her repulsion of masculinity. As Bill Krohn writes, "Although the hallucinatory episodes don't kick in until fifteen minutes into the story, Polanski and Brach let us in on Carol's secret in the opening minutes through strange behavior that the people around her notice but fail to interpret: she is slipping into adult-onset schizophrenia" (Krohn, 70-73). As the plot unfolds and Polanski expands our choreography of knowledge with cinematic helpers, we can clearly see Carol is not mentally healthy, and perhaps her sister is knowingly ignorant of her condition. The behavior portrayed by Carol is quite childlike, and with almost no dialogue, Polanski provides us with constant screenshots of her zombie like trance staring off into nothing.

Carol is the anthesis of her sister; a sexually repressed, childlike, arguably mute younger woman lacking the desired femininity of her sister, who is a healthy and proficient homemaker and sexual partner. This can be defended by the fact that Carol, fails to perform simple tasks in the kitchen requested by her sister, and by the auditory sexual enterprises Carol hears thundering at night while she lays in bed with that signature blank stare into nothingness. “The actress (Carol) sensitively portrays a young woman whose gestures and facial expressions all communicate her inner revulsion at sex” (Krohn, 70-73). Polanski wisely chose Deneuve to play Carol, as her poorly spoken English emphasized the vocal dysfunction, in addition to her visual femininity desired by popular masculine culture, although her character is repulsed by sex. Polanski’s piece illuminates some interesting aspects of gender polarity and his perspective of the sociological context of femininity in the sixties. “Repulsion also looks forward to later developments resulting from the explosion of feminism in the Sixties—films where the relationship between the woman and the enclosed space she inhabits” (Krohn, 70-73). It appears as if the objectification of women as a homemaker and sexualized object apply to Carol’s sister, however Carol’s inability to sustain a healthy cognitive thought process on her sexuality provides for a sinister psychological torture. Throughout the film, a young male suitor, Colin, attempts to woo Carol though what appears as a caring and desired attempt to formulate a relationship with her. However her internal sexual confusion /fascination deters her ability to communicate with him, and often their interactions end abruptly and awkwardly, much to the connection of Carol’s childish social skills. The small, intimate kiss Carol share with Colin is done so though her notorious blank stare, and is followed by her compulsive and almost obsessive cleansing of her face to rid the masculine contact. Repressed sexuality is a prevalent theme that surfaces continually through this film.



**Figure 3:** This screen shot is full of signifiers: Rotting rabbit carcass symbolizes Carol’s deteriorating mind, as well as women’s sexual objectification as pieces of meat. The razor is a male phallic symbol, and ultimately a murder weapon. The faint view of the telephone signifies the lack of outside human communication.

After this interaction, Carol goes to work the next day and is sent home upon her slicing of a customer’s finger. The finger is portrayed as resembled a man’s, and she lost control and cut it out of an uncomfortable impulse. At this point in the film, Carol has the flat to herself, as her sister and Micheal have left for an extended holiday vacation. It is at this point where Carol’s fractured psychosis and repressed sexual desires and fantasies become an organic nightmare within the isolated walls of the apartment. Her condition has reached the point of no return. Polanski’s utilization of the oblique apartment architecture in juncture with wide

camera lens shots, deep focus and variable depth create an always changing yet claustrophobic physical/mental prison for Carol, completely out of context with the outside world. As Carol's schizophrenic psychosis progresses, Polanski's cinematography matches the instability of Carol's mindset. Camera shots seem to make the apartment an always changing, sometimes on large scale, sometimes on a low scale. This social isolation raises a psychological question: What does complete human isolation hold on the human psyche? Well, not only does this movie assure that you will never want to be alone in an apartment again, but it portrays the damaging repercussions of the the human mind in complete isolation.

A popular folklore cliché says, "home is where the heart is", and can usually be associated with family, friends and warm solace. If Polanski put a spin on that, and he most certainly does through the latter half of the film through isolated entrapment, it would be, "home is where you're about to lose your damn mind". With the apartment completely to herself, Carol begins the process of a pervasive psychic rot, and we as viewers fall subject to



**Figure 4:** This family picture seems to be the root of Carol's psychosis. A repressed memory of a dysfunctional family, and perhaps a youth molestation cause both Carol's mind, and hallucinations to crumble around her.

Polanski's trapping mis en scene that never leaves the dark confines of the flat for the remainder of the film.

The impact of the auditory function plays a dire role in this film, as Polanski introduces simple sounds, like clocks ticking, phones ringing, flies buzzing and water dripping to instill the unstable consciousness of Carol; as the film progresses, we fail to realize the reality or fantasy of the sounds as her psychosis

begins to spiral out of control. Simple sounds like a clock ticking raise alarm for an impending rape scene, and through these basic sounds Polanski creates horrifying suspense out of everyday situations. We continue to almost aimlessly follow Carol, from her perspective, wandering around the apartment in a surrealist nightmare where our only concept of time is sourced from a deteriorating rabbit carcass, a tub overflowing with water, and by potatoes sprouting in the kitchen. The decaying carcass is arguably the most significant symbol in the movie, with multiple reasons. It signifies the deterioration of Carol's mind, and as time progresses, it worsens. It can also be linked to the objectification of women as pieces of meat, to be abused and used at anytime by men (McIntyre, 2011).

Polanski's ability to manipulate shots in the flat suits his ability to portray the uneasiness and disturbing mental degradation of Carol. Alone, she begins to hallucinate or even fantasize men in the dark of night ravenously taking advantage of her, and violently raping her silently in her bed with the only sound emanating from the steady tick-tock of a clock. However, she continually wakes up on floor spaces in the apartment where we as viewers did not see her fall asleep. We become invested into trying to judge the reality of what Polanski is giving us, "instead of watching Carol for signs of incipient madness, we watch her for occasional signs of sanity, which are always contradicted by what she does next" (Krohn, 70-73). The mental walls of Carol's psyche begin to disintegrate much like the tangible walls around her. Cracks appear in the walls, apparent hands appear from the hallway voraciously grabbing her breasts, and the walls become soft like puddy. As Carol's psychosis escalates into pure unadulterated madness, the isolated flat becomes a scene straight out of a gothic horror. She becomes imprisoned, chained to the dungeonous confines of her immediate surroundings. Or is she? Or is her repressed mind that is imprisoning her? "And why her fractured mind revolts at the idea, all the while, outside, a tolling bell calls nuns in a neighbouring convent to prayer, perhaps symbolising a straightforward purity that poor Carol, trapped in the disordered mess of her flat and her mind, can only yearn for" (McIntyre 2011).

At this point, Carol is mentally unstable and fully psychotic, and with the introspection into an old family portrait, her hallucinations intensify. Symbolic perhaps for the dysfunctional family, or even more so the lack thereof of a supportive family structure. One can't resist to speculate a possible molestive premise as the picture illuminates Carol in the background exempt from the family staring angrily towards what appears to be a father figure. Freudian concepts of the human psyche can be applied here as a psychological aspect of *Repulsion* as a film. Polanski uses

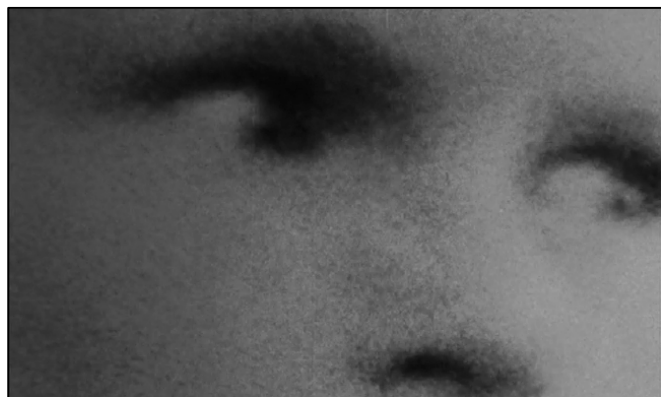


**Figure 5:** Point of view of the landlord being butchered to death by Carol's frightening face. The razor is a phallic symbol and the use of it as a murder weapon re-iterates Carol's repulsive and ultimately violent nature towards men.

a Freudian stylized approach, which can be explained through Freud's theory of the subject. Freud said that we strive to fulfill our needs and desires (including and especially sexual ones) and suffer pain if we fail to do so (Hayward 312). This can clearly become applicable to Carol's state of repressed sexuality and the negative psychological ramifications it holds on her mental well being. This film is an absolute engaging and horrific dive deep into the Freudian "Id" through a woman's sexually repressed desires. The Id is the uncontrolled repressed part of the psyche which the ego attempts to control, much like the ongoing battle between Carol and her mind to remain stable. Neoclassical psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan provides a unique perspective

to Freud's primal repression in the unconscious. He perceives repression as an opening up of the unconscious, which emerges as a result of the repression of desire (Hayward 316). Lacan provides a valid point as Carol's innate repulsion is a hybrid of fear and desire for a recognizable sexuality, continually isolating herself and eliminating human interaction exponentially builds the framework for these repressed desires into her unconscious to become malignant. The drastic locked repressive desire effects are seen through Carol's schizophrenia. Female sexuality, to some degree of another, has been expelled to the Real Order. We know that sexuality and death are in the realm of the Real; in the realm of the inexpressible... thus female sexuality becomes perceivable as hallucinatory because unspeakable, as close to death because of her surplus of enjoyment (Hayward 322). So according to Freudian theory of the self and Lacan's view on primal repression, we can hypothesize that because of Carol's inability to determine and express her sexuality in the "Real," her feminine sexuality becomes perceived as hallucinatory, to the extent of enjoyment. This explains her hallucinations of hands grabbing her, and several men raping her in the deep of night. Her repressed sexual desires create a tumorous hallucinatory environment to comfortably satisfy her pent up sexual fantasies, but it comes at the expense of her mental stability and ability to knowingly determine fantasy from reality.

Plunged into madness beyond the point of return, Carol begins to fall into a cycle of merciless murder, first with her stalking suitor Colin whom she brutally bludgeons with a candelstick, which is one of the many phallic symbols strategically placed in the shots by Polanski. Carol proceeds to submerge Colin into a tub of water, much like she submerges her



**Figure 6:** Ending shot of an extreme close up of Carol's eyes. Paralleled to the opening shot of her eyes, this indicates the underlying cause of her repressive psychosis had something to do with her dysfunctional family.

trauma deep in the watery depths of the Id. Shortly thereafter, the one task Carol was to perform while her sister was away was to pay the landlord rent. The greasy fellow appears outside the door one day and allows himself in, and decides to lay Carol in exchange for the rent. Arguably one of the most frightening scenes, the landlord engages towards Carol, and she appears mesmerized and shows not intention of resistance. As he draws near she slits the back of his neck (with a razor, another male phallic symbol), and continually butchers his corpse as blood paints the flat. Its conflicting to determine which is more disturbing, Carol's ability to brutally murder two

men blank faced and emotion-less, or her careless obliviousness of two mutilated bodies laying contorted in the apartment.

As the film begins to unravel towards a scary ending with Carol in a catatonic state of hysteria under the bed, her sister's sexual groans emanated through the flat. She lay there childlike, thumb in mouth, to be found by her sister and Michael along with the repulsive state of the apartment. This is symbolically relatable to the repulsive confines of Carol's mental well-

being, and the apartment as a metaphor for the isolated human mind. Within the last twenty minutes of the film, extreme discomfort and feelings of cathartic purging accompany the viewer as the full scale psychosis is portrayed by Polanski's camerawork. The apartment appear huge and empty, the walls moving and contorting with each shot and the unique use of lighting detracts our ability to tell night from day. We literally become a part of Carol's madness, and I myself as a viewer felt extremely uncomfortable. Polanski's ability to terrify with simplistic stylized camerawork is unrivaled and it literally taps into your mental state of mind. The ending shot pans across the carpeted bedroom, and zooms into a extreme close up of Carol as a child, and even more so to her piercing icy stare. Polanski creates this repulsive feeling for the audience, as we stare at the ending shot in vacant awe, much like the majority of the film. This is suggestive that her past traumatic experiences may be in direct correlation to her repulsive nature towards men, which ultimately led to her psychological demise and subsequent homicides.

The psychological strain of sexually repressed impulses and traumatic experiences, and complete lack of outward social/communicative interaction with the outside world, creates an alluring but descending tumorous spiral down the Freudian psyche, all through the dreamlike trance of our protagonist's (Carol) progressively horrifying psychosis. Roman Polanski is hands down a terrific master of cinema and throughout the likes of his works we explored in class - *The Tenant*, *Rosemary's Baby*, *The Pianist*, and *Repulsion* - there are commonalities that staple Polanski's trademark in them. Polanski constructs attractive worlds that we subconsciously become entrapped in whether we choose to or not. His inept stylistic abilities provide for an enlightening and downright disturbing viewing experience. His absolute mastery of the mise en scene in his early works create a perfect framework for an outstanding horror genre. "Horror films are linked to the unconscious they can represent what other genres repress. The horror film represents all that our society represses ( including the Id drives) and to have taken this genre seriously would have meant dealing with the suppression of the Id, a repression of certain unspeakable desires ( sexual and psychological). The psychological thrillers of the 60's suggest that the monster is repressed in us and not external...our id, our own other, took the form of an alien monster outside of us (Kauffman 31-34)".

Roman Polanski is undoubtedly a cinematic genius and it is a travesty his life's reputation has essentially trumped his recognizable status as an auteur. His 1965 piece *Repulsion*, stands amongst the 1960's pioneers in the horror/psychothriller genre and instilled fear and terror into people in theatres worldwide. This piece simultaneously is full of aesthetic addiction and innate discomfort, a skill mastered by few, and perfected by the likes of renowned filmmakers like Kubrick and Hitchcock. Through a psychological joyride down the maelstrom of an attractive female, we uncover the deepest dungeons of the Freudian concept of the self, illuminating a disturbing feeling of immense cathartic nausea, while drawing you into the alluring gaze of a schizophrenic beauty. Roman Polanski has created a cinematic signature of tapping into the human subconscious to reveal the exercising internal demons that plague our pathology. As far as psychological thrillers go, Hitchcock's *Psycho* may still be recognized as the greatest; but *Repulsion* will continue to turn viewers stomachs and psyches upside down through simple visceral disturbia, because its sheer unsettling horror has yet to be touched.

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## Art in the Public Sphere

By Sandrine M. Milet '12

**Abstract:** Art today and in the past has been a medium used to express individuality, perspective and social realities. Art in turn has the ability to foster reflection and create conversation, which is why it is likened to a public sphere, a place where opinion is shaped and exchanged. This idea of an open forum, or public sphere, dates back to Ancient Greece, and it has evolved today due to the changing nature of Democracy, and therefore the way art functions in society also changes. By examining Ancient Greece, Renaissance Venice, and eighteenth century Philadelphia, I look at the ways art has functioned in terms of the public sphere and how Democracy has changed the role of art in society up to the twenty first century, where it began as a tool for maintaining order and establishing beliefs, to now an object of commoditization.

**Key words:** art; history; public sphere; democracy; propaganda; commodity.

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Just like newspapers, forums and other categories of mass media, the visual arts can be seen as another form of public expression and opinion, or public sphere. According to the German philosopher Habermas, the public sphere is “a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens” (Habermas, 1964, p. 198). Therefore the public sphere is a physical or virtual space where public opinion is shaped and exchanged, and where in a utopian society, all personal interests are left behind. However, the public sphere has changed over time, from the agora in Ancient Athens, to the public sphere in today’s global megalopolis. Using Fernand Braudel’s history of “longue durée”, which observes history through the lens of long term structures, instead of events in history (Braudel, 1980, p. 27), I will explore the ways in which art functions and has changed over time in the public sphere, starting with Ancient Greece in 350 B.C.

When we think of Ancient Greece, many people immediately look to the agora as the public sphere. The Agora was in the center of Athens and was at the core of Athenian democracy, bringing together people from the different city-states. This was the center of commercial, political and civic life. However, art was a very important part of the agora and the public sphere and there are three types of art that are useful in examining art’s function in this realm, and they are theatre, fine arts, and architecture.

According to Arnott (1989) and Aylen (1985), Greek theatre was where Athenians portrayed religious beliefs, the current state of the society, and everyday issues that Greeks dealt with. For example, the role of women in Greek society in *Lysistrata*, gender issues in *Ecclesiazusae*, and the power of the unwritten law in *Oedipus the King*. The theatre also reflected

the sense of community and closeness of Athenians when actors would make jokes targeting specific citizens in the audience (Arnott, 1989, p. 8). This echoed the small city-state mentality of Greece; a community, a nation separated into city-states, called *polis*, of around 5000 citizens. Aristotle explains that the small size of the city-state was purposeful so that the communication among citizens was effective and so that people among the polis could get to know each other. Therefore, just like “every state is a sort of partnership” (1.1252a), Greek theatre was also a partnership or community and reflected this societal value.

However, Greek theatre was not only a place and a medium for actors and playwrights to express their opinions and reflect upon Athenian society, but a place for audience members to express themselves as well, and it was used as a medium that portrayed the public sphere. Arnott stresses that Greek theatre was focused around the actor-audience relationship. The audience was an active participant, free to interject and show displeasure or contentment (1989, p. 11). Because of this, the theatre was an experience for both the audience and the actors. This was reinforced by the open structure of the arena, which consisted of a stage surrounded by an audience. Since plays were performed during the day, this allowed the actors and the audience to mutually see each other and to feed off of each other’s responses (Arnott, 1989, p. 10). However, Greek theatre was very much controlled by the government since all plays were financed by the state through tax deductions (Arnott, 1989, p. 23).

The Fine arts were another medium of the public sphere where artists were expressing the concerns of the times, which were the heroic, the ideal, and the philosophical. Art was also being used to demonstrate power visually (Boardman, 1993, p. 5). According to Boardman, just like theatre, art reflected the present situation in Greece. Art was not a creation of the Greek State, but a “creation of the Greeks” (ibid., p. 2). The author explains that just like playwrights, artists behaved as individuals with city-states and rich aristocrats doing the majority of the funding (ibid., p. 150). Therefore, the government controlled the Fine arts in order to ensure that art was helping the progress of Greece. Boardman explains that art served a public function by demonstrating status and warfare, by making political statements, honoring heroic men and including statues of females to show the improved social and economic role of women in Greece (1993, pp. 8 and 157). All of these things were used as propaganda for Greece.

Art in Athens was also closely tied to religion. For example, Greek plays were an organic part of big religious festivities and the fine arts showed the interest in divine power (ibid., p. 5). This interest shifted to the focus on human behaviors of the gods, which artists expressed in human terms (ibid., p. 8). This led to artists’ examination of the ideal. Even art that focused on the military power of Athens, such as the temple of Pallas Athena, which dominated the Acropolis, was religious in nature because Greeks believe that gods were responsible for their victories (Murray, 1993, p. 25).

Finally, architecture is the ultimate medium in Greece that is important to look at. Architecture was also concerned with aesthetic ideals, which can be seen in the buildings and houses that were simple, with modest ornamentation, and basic configurations (Millett, 1998, p.

213). These aesthetic ideals reflected the well-ordered society that Athenians strived for, that political and moral ideal. An example of this would be a “Stoa”, which is an open building that gave Athenians shade and ran alongside the agora. Stoas were places for people to meet, discuss, gossip, fulfill business transactions and even admire art (Millett, 1998, p. 215). The Stoa Poikile once held paints of Athenian victories and hung Spartan shields captured in battles on its walls.

To end with Greece, art in Ancient Athens can be examined through the lens of a public sphere, and is a medium that can give us insight into its society and the issues that plagued its’ inhabitants minds. In theatre, playwrights and actors made social commentaries and exposed the closeness of the Greek culture, while the audience openly expressed their opinions. In fine arts and architecture, artists were dealing with political, moral and aesthetic ideals, which stemmed from religious beliefs. Art also demonstrated the concern of creating an ideal city-state, showing its power and glory, which were all main aspects of Ancient Greece society.

So how did the arts evolve in the public sphere throughout history? Did cities change the way they used art in the public sphere or was it a continuation of Ancient Athens? The next influential city that deserves examination is Venice during the Renaissance. During the Renaissance, Venice was a leading city in the world and as such it became an ideal to emulate and imitate for other European nations. To an outsider it was a utopian dream and a “cosmopolitan and fabulous place” (Finlay, 1980, p. 17). Because of its great importance in history, it is useful to look at how art functioned in the public sphere in Venice. Venetian art was a main foundation of the Renaissance, and an aspect of Venice that historians today look to for a better understanding of the city and its culture.

Frederick Hartt summarizes that art in Renaissance Venice was a reflection of the people, the architecture and the lives of Venetians. Hartt adds, “the art of the paintings and sculptures present an image of the reality experienced in everyday life - the contact, conversation, and conflict between people that constituted the drama of the piazza” (Hartt, 1969, p. 21). Hartt continues to explain that piazzas were a vital aspect of Venetian life, and that art portrayed visually issues discussed in the public sphere. However, today historians speak of the “myth of Venice” which is a reflection between the reality of what Venice was and what it portrayed to be to others (Finlay, 1980, p. 19). So did the art show the true reality, or what Venice wanted to portray?

Venetian rulers knew the influence they had over other nations and cities, and that they were being regarded as a political ideal. But how could they maintain this prestige? They did so by using the Machiavellian concept of appearances becoming the reality. Edward Muir (1979, p. 18) explains that the Venetian government realized the political capabilities of art, and that it could be used as both a teaching tool and a propaganda tool. Hopefully they believed that Venetian society would be a reflection of these images, and vice versa. Therefore images were going to be used to manipulate people’s perceptions and to establish control.

For example, Deborah Howard asserts that Jacopo de Barbari's *View of Venice* wasn't an accurate map of Venice, but a manipulation of the space. He makes Venice look like a dolphin, which was attributed to Neptune, Venice, Mercury and the Resurrection, and enlarges the piazza San Marco, emphasizing the role of civic space in Venice. Howard writes, "such realism induces the spectator to overlook the artful manipulation of the space and adjustment of the layout of the framing buildings, that serve to reinforce the ideological content" (Howard, p. 101). In addition, Gentile Bellini's "Procession in the Piazza di San Marco" was a painting that portrayed the Piazza San Marco as an ideal place, trying to preserve the beauty, but Finlay clarifies that the painting "is misleading...San Marco was as bustling and commercial as the Rialto" (Finlay, 1980, p. 19). Just like de Barbari, Bellini also manipulated his images.

Since the Venetian elites understood quite well that art had the power to influence others, it remained under the control of the State, similar to city-states in Greece, because that amount of power could never be in the hands of the people, especially if it could contribute to the image of Venice. Therefore Muir states, "the capacity of the visual arts to convey beguiling impressions entranced Renaissance rulers...and artistic patronage became an arm of government" (Muir, 1979, p. 18). For example, from time-to-time the government commissioned churches. In 1630 the Senate decided that the Doge shall in name of the commonwealth "build a church in this city and to dedicate it to the most holy Virgin, calling it Santa Maria Della Salute" (Senate, 1630, p. 415). In addition, artists were chosen and paid, or awarded by the government. For example, Sanudo explains how the Council of Ten voted Titian as the painter of the hall of the Great Council and that he was awarded the "usual expectation" (Sanudo, 1513, p. 456), that is money.

How else did the Venetian government use art to establish control and power? Muir argues that the art in Venice was used to justify conquest of foreign territory, to show political dominance and alliances, and to demonstrate the history of the city (1979, p. 19). For example, in 1515 the Council of Ten writes to the sister of the King of France, Madame d'Alencon in order to give her "a picture with the image of the glorious Virgin, as excellent and perfect as possible" (Consiglio dei Dieci, 1515, p. 406). Here art was used to forge alliances. Edward Muir also discusses in length the extent to which the Basilica of San Marco had political intentions with its purposeful symbols and decorations. According to Muir, "no building in Venice was more splendidly embellished or richer in political intent than the Basilica of San Marco, at the heart of the Republic" (1979, p. 19). The Basilica also has the image of the winged lion of San Mark. This widespread image is a political one that shows the dominance of Venice. Rosand articulates, that it is "an icon of the Republic even more fundamental to the self-identity of Venice" (2001, p. 47).

The Ducal Palace is a monument in Venice dedicated to the Doge that glorifies the history of Venice through the ornamentation of its halls and ceilings. According to Muir the huge canvases on historical and allegorical subjects "must have served to exhort earlier generations of aristocratic magistrates to emulate the virtues of their forefathers" (Muir, 1979, p.

23). The purpose of the Ducal Palace was also to show the relationship of Venice to Rome and Greece. David Chambers asserts that Venetians wanted to show their power through their monuments and art, especially when they commissioned renowned artists. Sanudo argues that “one can therefore compare the Venetians to the Romans” (Sanudo, 1493, p. 16).

Therefore art in Venice was used to show its political dominance, to maintain the Venetian ideal, or the “reality” that it presented to others - the reality of the public sphere. Because of this the government controlled the arts and used it to its advantage. Although not much changed between art and the public sphere between Athens and Venice, in a short 300 years later, art and the public sphere started to change drastically overseas.

Philadelphia is the next leading city during the eighteenth century that I am going to use in this analysis to explore the role of art in the creation of a democratic society. The thirteen colonies were founded on Quaker ideas of simplicity, the notion of refusing luxuries, and during the first centuries of the colonies, Americans were too busy settling and building a country that they didn’t have enough time and money to spend on the arts, or entertainment. An example that shows the refusal of luxury is when Benjamin Franklin openly expresses his disdain for a silver spoon that his wife buys him for his breakfast (1784, p. 90).

Jefferson speaks on this issue and says that paintings were “too expensive for the state of wealth among us”, but that architecture was worth studying. Therefore portraiture was the main style of art that flourished in the United States, in its leading cities like Philadelphia. Portraiture was used as a “tribute to man’s innate creativity” (Goodrich, 1967, p. 8), and prestige. For example, Charles Willson Peale painted citizens and leaders who were important figures in the American Revolution (Sellers, 1980, p. 22). Peale even opened up a public museum in 1784 where he had hundreds of portraits that educated the people on his history and created patriotism. In this museum he tries to convince Thomas Jefferson to fund his museum, to receive government patronage, which would enable him to turn his collection into a national museum, but Jefferson refuses. Yet, Jefferson in a letter published on March 27, 1790 in the *Pennsylvania Packet of Dunlap’s General Advertiser* argues that the government shouldn’t meddle in what he considered to be public affairs.

However, Peale wasn’t the only one who saw that art could be used as an ideological tool, a tool to record history. John Trumbull, a prominent American painter during the 1800s, also saw art as a tool to advance society. Trumbull was the leader of one of the most important associations of artists, the American Academy of Fine Arts in New York, and therefore his ideas didn’t only represent his private ideas, but ideas of the public sphere. Trumbull writes to the U.S president John Quincy Adams that art should be used as a “historical record of important events and an evidence of our advance, not only in political, naval, and military greatness, but also in those arts of peace which embellish and adorn even greatness itself” (1826, p. 68).

Therefore he thought that the arts and government should be heavily interconnected. He believed that paintings should be hung in the President and representative’s house and that artists should get government patronage. Trumbull states, “I wish to call the attention of the

government to the fine arts...by very simple and inexpensive means" (1826, p. 66). Trumbull also looked back in history to Athenians and Venetians, and to the way they used art as a governmental tool of advancement (in Dunlap, 1918, vol. 2, pp. 66). However, the United States rejects these old notions, and Trumbull's view of the arts doesn't prevail.

On the other hand, there was another prevalent perspective on how the arts should be viewed in the colonies, one that stuck in the United States, and William Dunlap represents this opposing view. Dunlap declared that he felt that artists should be free and that they are looking to be esteemed for their abilities as an artist. William Dunlap explains, "the artist-man who possessed the genius, skill, and knowledge which entitles him to that name- will look to be honored and esteemed by his fellow-citizens" (Dunlap, 1826, p. 10). He then compares artists to merchants and farmers, who aren't looking to be protected, but are looking to gain money from the people. Therefore he asserts that as the wealth of the colonies increases so will the status of the artist. This idea of the arts in democracy becomes widespread idea and reflects ideals of Philadelphia at the time, and thus reflecting the public sphere of Philadelphia.

As artists become more autonomous art started to be looked at as a commodity for consumption. Alexis de Tocqueville addresses the fact that when art is reduced to a commodity, then art begins to be produced in mass quantity but with less quality. Tocqueville writes, "aristocracies produce a small number of great paintings, whereas democratic countries produce a multitude of minor ones" (1835, p. 534). As the wealthy increase in the United States, there is more demand for the arts, or for the appearance of arts. Art becomes more "imitative", where instead of bronze statues you have "plaster casts" (Tocqueville, 1835, p. 534). Consequently Alexis de Tocqueville examines an important aspect in the United States. Can art coexist with Democracy? This question is what leads us to the discussion of art in the public sphere in the modern world.

Today's modern society is based on the ideals of democracy, which seeks the balance between individual self-interest and public interest. Under the principles of democracy voices are heard and people's opinions are expressed openly. The interests of the people in the global megalopolis at the turn of the century was of "principle, a matter of their independence and freedom" (Leach, 1993, p. 117), but merchants were considered with their image and that "they, not their employees or other workers, were the true populists and that consumption, not production as the new domain of democracy" (ibid., p. 117). Although this quotation deals with the ideals of the merchant, William Dunlap in Philadelphia explained that artists were to be looked at as merchants, and this idea prevailed in the United States. Therefore this view of the artist is important in understanding the artist in the modern day world. Joni Cherbo explains that artists are still treated today as "craftspersons and professionals" (2000, p. 4). Consequently, as de Tocqueville warned, art is now being viewed as a commodity.

However, art being looked at as a commodity was also a reflection of society and the changes occurring in that society. As Smiers points out, under democracy and economic globalization there aren't any constraints on what can be consumed (Smiers, 2003, p. x), and art

is one of them. In addition, after 1880 businesses started to create a commercial aesthetic that emphasized the moving and selling of goods in volume (*ibid.*, p. 131). This aesthetic became evident in fashion, in advertisements, in television and radio.

Art as commodity is due to the fact that it is primarily driven and supported by the marketplace, just like in Philadelphia. Unlike Ancient Greece and Venice, the government doesn't largely maintain art by providing funding. In addition, because of capitalism, art in the modern city is looked at as a piece of real estate, or a commodity. Bolton writes, "contemporary works of art are discussed like real estate investments; gallery owners trade artists make deals in the style of corporate raiders" (1998, p. 24). Today in big cities there are hundreds of galleries and large auction houses such as Christie's and Sotheby's that buy the rights to images. Not only are galleries and auction houses contributing to art as a commodity, but large corporations controlling the art realm as well (Smiers, 2000, p. 47). In addition, according to Joni Cherbo, the arts and entertainment represent the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest export in the United States (2000, p. xiii).

How has art kept up with the ideals of the modern society? Since artists and merchants saw the importance of the consumption, reproduction became an important factor of art. It started with the invention of lithography, then to photography and later to film (Benjamin, 1979, p. 385). Mass reproduction of works led to an increase in audience, but according to Walter Benjamin this reproduction of all works caused the most profound change in the public (1979, p. 386). For example, the mass reproduction changed the way the public views the arts because when art becomes a commodity, the less significance it has in society. Benjamin explains, "the greater the decrease in the social significance of an art form, the sharper the distinction between criticism and enjoyment by the public" (*ibid.*, p. 400). The public has changed too. The new mass participation of art, an ideal of democracy, allows people who are uneducated, lazy and tired to look at art, whereas Benjamin explains the art really needs concentrating (*ibid.*, p. 405).

Mechanical reproduction and commoditization of art in the modern city has ultimately changed art. Alexis de Tocqueville mentioned during the nineteenth century a decrease in quality as quantity increased, and this still holds true today. Walter Benjamin points out that with reproduction, art has lost its "authenticity and domain of tradition" (*ibid.*, p. 387). Art no longer has that aura once attributed to it, and instead is looked at as a good that can be exchanged.

To conclude, art in the public sphere has changed drastically from Ancient Athens in 350 B.C to today's megalopolis, but drastic change didn't occur until Philadelphia. Throughout all the cities, art is used as a means of maintaining a system. It confirms the truths of a society, but also can create the reality or myth of the public sphere. Images reveals to us "the state of mind and social tempers" (Clark, 1964, p. 60) of cities in our past, giving us insight into what was being talked about in the public realm. However it seems as if art has lost its value in society as it becomes a commodity so prevalent in society.

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## Communications Systems in Colonial America: Examining the Development of Newspapers and the National Postal Network

By Beth Spadaccini '11

**Abstract:** Built around the desire to shape the nation, early American newspapers had the intention to educate. Thomas Jefferson believed that newspapers were the key to creating transportation networks and increasing education, therefore cementing the nation. Although they did provide reason to establish new and better modes of transportation, which were in turn used by the postal system to deliver the news, newspapers focused more on gossip than educational materials. And early American postmasters and printers served as gatekeepers and thus controlled what was viewed as news. Dictated by the interests of these individuals, newspapers failed to serve the purpose of virtual town meetings and instead were impersonal.

**Keywords:** newspapers, postal networks, nationalism, Thomas Jefferson, colonial period.

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Before the Declaration of Independence and the drafting of the Constitution, early American Journalist Thomas Paine outlined “‘the essence of liberty’ as self-governance by informed and empowered citizens” (McChesney & Nichols, 2010, p. 1). In the introduction to their book *The Death and Life of American Journalism* Robert W. McChesney and John Nichols explain that to be informed Americans needed a medium in which they could gain access to the ins and outs of the government and its officials. In colonial America, that medium became the newspaper. The free press protection in the Bill of Rights created a “diverse, competitive, skeptical and combative media system for a nation that would rest power with an informed people rather than an enthroned magistrate” (2010, p. 2). The authors’ beliefs echo those of Thomas Jefferson before his term as President. Jefferson, much like Paine, also believed the residents of the (then) young nation needed to be informed in order for the United States to be self-sufficient and completely break free of English rule.

In order for all citizens of the growing nation to be informed, there needed to be a national system through which news could be delivered. The postal service, during its early years of existence, would take on that role. Not only did the post office play a large part in distributing news, but postmasters were also influential in regards to what made the news, as letters and international transmissions came first through the postal system before being passed along to the intended recipient. Postmasters served as gatekeepers. Therefore, both the creation of newspapers and the early American postal service play significant roles in the shaping of the nation. In fact, “the post office and press *together* constituted the most important mechanism for the dissemination of public

information at least until the Civil War, and the intelligence thus communicated affected many spheres of life in the growing nation” (Kielbowicz, 1989, p. 2). What follows is an examination of the journey of both institutions; early news media and the postal service, why they were created, how they interacted and the problems they encountered along the way.

### **The Need for News in Colonial America**

Early American newspapers were essential in communicating vital information necessary for the success of the Republic. The first American newspaper, *Publick Occurrences* (1690), proposed first that “the Memorable Occurrences of Divine Providence may not be neglected or forgotten” (p. 1), meaning that each citizen could be reminded of their responsibilities as such. It also proposes keeping citizens within the loop of public affairs both home and abroad, though most newspapers originally featured only foreign news; domestic news was buried well within its depths (*Publick Occurrences*, 1690, p. 1). Either way, as the first American newspaper, *Publick Occurrences* (1690) set to establish that in the news there would be truth, as its authors sought to cure or charm the “spirit of lying” which was prevalent in early America. However, its failure is an example of the role censorship played in early journalistic practice because “authorities suppressed *Publick Occurrences* in 1690 after its inaugural issue” (Kielbowicz, 1989, p. 14).

This inaugural newspaper may have failed but its structure was one that was mimicked by the newspapers that followed. Both the *American Weekly Mercury*, which served as Philadelphia’s first newspaper, and the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, established by Benjamin Franklin as the *Mercury*’s competitor, featured news of wars abroad which even four months after the fact (the average length of time it took for news to be printed) had an influence on American merchants and trade. In fact, despite their differences as competitors, both Bradford and Franklin expressed similar sentiments in New Year’s poems. Bradford says: “Tis true I take no Paint to please/Those who nigh News inquire/Who ever would for secrets tease/and with mean scandal tire” (Bradford, 1735, lines 21-24). These lines explain that he does not waste his time reporting on local news and scandal, but rather on international affairs, which have a significant effect on the country (e.g. *Mercury*, 1719, p. 1).

The original intention of news was to educate; not to educate through gossip, but through policy and informed opinion. However in certain circumstances it was also used to instill a sense of nationalism within American citizens. “The press had been a key factor in helping to “foster a consciousness of the status of colonials as provincial citizens in an extended empire” (Landsman, 1997, p. 34 as cited in Thompson, 2007, p. 32). But Benjamin Franklin sought to break down the colonial ideology while using his role as a printer and his satirical nature. Thompson (2007) argues:

By reprinting English insults of Americans, the colonial press could use its influence to rupture the imperial unity it had helped create. In reminding his correspondent of this fact, Franklin was taking advantage of the paradox of English nationalism as it manifested itself in works that dealt in stereotypes of Americans. Such "othering" attacks, when read by American colonists in the mass media, could lead them to develop and embrace a shared American identity in opposition to the British identity that was being denied them (p. 32).

Though his intention may not have been primarily to educate, he was still instilling important values within his readership. A sense of nationalism was undoubtedly just what the nation needed to attract its attention to this new medium. And as Richard Merritt (1963) claims:

The life span of many newspapers is indirect evidence that the colonists were willing to accept, or at least to read, the news and opinions offered. And, while individual pamphlets, such as Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, might and did attract immediate attention, possibly even leading to direct action, the newspaper reflected and helped to shape colonial perceptions, attitudes, and interests more persistently and over a much longer period of time (p. 369).

Arguably, the success of newspapers would not have been possible if it had printed only gossip or scandal; there needed to be a larger purpose.

Prior to his presidency, Thomas Jefferson spoke highly of American newspapers, while also advocating for an educated public. He said: "Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter. But I should mean that every man should receive those papers and be capable of reading them" (Jefferson, 1787/1984, p. 880). Jefferson saw newspapers as a building block for the young nation, because a "communication infrastructure that supports democratic dialogue and accommodates the views and behaviors of citizens underpins the life of a democratic system" (Fraser, 1993 as cited in Kakabadse, Kakabadse, & Kouzmin, 2007, p. 4).

The need for news in rural areas would lead to the creation of transportation systems, while simultaneously enhancing public education by keeping citizens informed. In one of the many letters he wrote as president, Jefferson (1806/1984) explained to Congress early on that, "by these operations new channels of communication will be open between the States; the lines of separation will disappear, their interests will be identified, and their union cemented by new and indissoluble ties" (p. 529). Essentially, these networks would cement the federation and allow for a free exchange of information.

However, while newspapers may have brought the nation together literally with the creation of roads and waterway transports, they also placed distinct barriers between the general public and the men who were in control of the nation. The slanderous tone of American newspapers was far from what Jefferson had imagined.

He had hoped newspapers would be restrained to “true facts and sound principles,” but realized the readers weren’t interested in what could be proven (Jefferson, 1807/1984, p. 1177). After becoming president and thus becoming the subject of public scrutiny, Jefferson came to the realization that his early notions were utopian; ideal. Twenty years after his letter which placed newspapers before the government, Jefferson (1807/1984) instead feels “that the man who never looks into a newspaper is better informed than he who reads them; inasmuch as he who knows nothing is nearer to truth than he whose mind is filled with falsehoods and errors” (p. 1178). The gossip-ridden fallacies Americans called news had become the social reality.

Similar to Jefferson’s early views, John Nerone (2006) explains, “The newspaper system was originally supposed to support a national public sphere that would allow public opinion to form naturally. Newspapers were expected to operate as virtual town meetings,” while being impartial and impersonal (p. 161). This is again ideal. When politicians began creating and using newspapers to reflect their own views (e.g. Kelley, 1973, p. 222) the lines of impartiality and impersonality were almost completely erased. According to Michael Warner (1993):

Print discourse became routinized as a feature of the political world because it was seen as impersonal in a way that was now normal and normative. All these shifts in perceptions of print were...at the same time shifts in the way political discourse was conducted, as well as shifts in the conventions of individual rhetoric and self-perception (p. 33).

Impersonal was no longer defined in the way it was originally intended; its definition changed as the purpose of newspapers changed. The reality was that even printers used newspapers to advance their own material interests (Hamilton, 1830/1968, p. 403). And, as Nerone (2006) points out, “on the one hand newspapers were imagined as neutral passive forums for public debate; on the other, newspapers were the tools available for party conflict” (p. 161). Partisanship essentially ruined any hope for neutrality, or possibly even for truth, in early American newspapers.

This is the reality. Though the newspapers undoubtedly do what Jefferson (1806/1984) claimed they would in cementing the nation (cf. De Tocqueville, 1835/2004, p. 601), they are reporting on everything he (and other) had wished they hadn’t (e.g. Franklin, 2004, p. 81). Thus, newspapers brought the nation together not as an ideal Republic, but as a gossip hungry, uneducated, mass.

### **The Role of the Post Office in the Distribution of News**

The idea of the postal service was one developed in Venice in the later stages of the fifteenth century (around 1480), when “the growing need of diplomatic envoys for information enhanced newsgathering and contributed to speeding up the flow of news” (Infelise, 2006, pp. 34-35). With its creation, the circulation of news became more

regular, more accessible. “When establishing the American post office, known in its early days as the ‘constitutional post,’ the rebels recognized the need for a conduit for both public (newspapers) and private (letters) correspondence and the need for both types of communication to be free from British control” (Desai, 2007, 563). As a result, the postal service was especially crucial in the development and delivery of news. In fact, the “chief value of inter-state communication by land rested in the postal system” (Adams & Harbert, 1986, p. 14). And, coinciding with Jefferson’s views of how newspapers could cement the nation, the transport of news in Early America via the postal system also played a key role in educating the public. As the nation expanded so, too, did its reach.

Similar to the ways in which Franklin preached nationalism in the press (e.g. Thompson, 2007, p. 32), the ritual distribution of newspapers via the postal service created a sense of independence amongst the colonials. As mentioned above, colonists originally developed identities as British subjects but the development of postal networks, roads and other transportation routes allowed them to rely more on each other and less on Britain; it encouraged the formation of their own nation.

Because of these things, newspapers and the postal network were indefinitely linked. Kielbowicz says: “Through the formative years of American journalism, the post office performed two services indispensable to the press: it brought information from which editors compiled the day’s report and it carried publications from print shop to readers” (p. 1). This relationship began to grow following the failure of the nation’s inaugural newspaper, as the post office began to play a role in other publications. As newspapers were not ‘subject to specific rates or regulations,’ most printers used the post office to serve their needs (Kielbowicz, 1989, p. 13). They did so because: “post offices were information clearinghouses...[they] delivered newspapers, often for free, but sometimes at exorbitant rates...advertisements often were left at post offices for insertion in local papers and for transmission to out-of-town publications” and also because “printers who obtained coveted postmasterships earned extra income that helped sustain their publications” (Kielbowicz, 1989, p. 13).

However, problems existed with the postal system that hindered not only its success, but also its credibility. In terms of communication via land, “the post furnished another illustration of the difficulties which barred [national] progress...more than twenty thousand miles of post-road with nine hundred post-offices, proved the vastness of the country and the smallness of the result” (Adams & Harbert, 1986, p. 14). As Kielbowicz (1989) points out:

Policymakers and administrators decided on a particular mix of transports to move the nation’s mails, decisions that impinged on the circulation of news. Improving speed, for instance typically reduced the volume of information a transport could handle. Usually, too, decisions about postal vehicles expanded or contracted a newspaper’s circulation area (p. 2).

Thus, the citizens were at the mercy of the postal system, which often failed to meet their needs. In turn, it failed to establish a fully educated Republic, as not everyone was privy to the same information.

In many instances, the postmaster (such as Andrew Bradford) was also the printer and thus controlled any and all information, which passed through the post office. He was the “gatekeeper,” a term coined by Kurt Lewin referring to the “individual or group [who] is ‘in power’ for making the decision between ‘in’ or ‘out’” (White, 1950/1999, p. 66). And as competition and partisanship bled into the postal networks, postmasters in cooperation with publishers projected their messages onto audiences. “Information carried by post [to these audiences] had a fragmenting tendency by permitting individuals with kindred interests in thousands of communities to develop specialized national associations along political, occupational, religious, vocational, and ideological line” (Kielbowicz, 1989, p. 6).

### **Conclusions**

In theory, the original ideas surrounding early American newspapers and the postal system worked to create a unified nation, as Jefferson had imagined it. However, these systems would have been more beneficial to the structuring of a successful nation had they been used in the ways originally intended. Competition and partisanship essentially spoiled the wholesome American-ness, which backed them both. Rather than educating, newspapers fell victim to slanderous gossip, despite warnings from early printers and journalists. The gossip, which was extremely perishable, and could not be used to maintain the cohesiveness of a nation. The postal service, too, had its flaws. It focused more on commercial aspects than it did on the need to spread the news to every inch of the nation. However, it would be hard to imagine what the modern day American media system would look like without its commercial aspects. Many argue that commercialization has everything to do with free speech and freedom of the press; media organizations should be able to appeal to certain markets more than others. But that doesn't cement our nation. That breaks our nation and essentially put us back at square one.

It would be interesting to see further research which examine the “what if's,” to have a scholar speculate as to what would have happened to newspapers without political influence. Where would the postal system be if printers and postmasters had remained separate and not relied on the other position to gain the upper hand?

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## Rhetoric, Public Opinion, and the Creation of Modern Western Society

By Jonathan Kalule Kabuye '10

**Abstract:** Public opinion and the use of rhetoric have changed over time. In this paper I will attempt to show the evolution of rhetoric in our society, mapping its change through the history of Western civilizations. Rhetoric is the use of language to mould and create the public sphere, and its ultimate product is public opinion. In this paper I attempt to critique the time period from ancient Athens where public opinion was reserved for an elite few to the America today, where rhetoric is used to manipulate the public opinion which is now the most important tool in what we consider democracy.

**Key Words:** rhetoric; public opinion; Habermas; history.

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Public opinion and the use of rhetoric have changed over time. In order to understand how the history has changed one must be able to critique it in a manner that allows for the larger picture to be observed. This is done through a form of methodology that allows for the whole vision of history over a longer period of time, while denoting the importance of the smaller parts of the bigger picture. In Habermas' work on the structural transformation of the public sphere, the notion of the public sphere allows for the discussion of what the public sphere holds dear. He describes it as the 'realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is granted to all citizens' (Habermas, 1962, p.350). The notion of a public sphere that grants freedom to express and public opinions has shifted over time.

Rhetoric is one of the small components that may allow people to critique society and that of the past. In order to understand the ever changing public sphere and the components that make it up today, we must change our state of mind. One must be able to think in a way that brings together changes and interactions that go on in the world (Ollmann, 2003, p.12). 'Dialectics restructures our thinking about reality by replacing the common sense of notion of "thing" (as something that has a history and external connection with other things) with the notion of "process" (which contains its history and possible futures) and "relations" (which contains as part of what it is it ties with other relations) p.13). Looking at the gradual changes in rhetoric and public opinion will help us understand how the world today has become a fragmented consumer based society in which everything is ultimately for sale. These changes have occurred over time due to shifts in public opinion and the use of rhetoric to try and sway the masses. In order for one to understand these shifts and changes that have ultimately led to

the fragmentation of the public sphere and individualization of our personal lives, one must look at history in a manner that shows how changes evolved and came about.

History is restructured because it takes the historical significance of not only the moment but how it relates to everything else, how it is connected to the future and past all at once. This allows for it to become real and alive. Since history itself is complex and is always intertwined in a web of more history, it is important to look at the multiplicity of time. Fernand Braudel looks at history from three vantage points. There is the short history for example September eleventh 2001. There is also *moyenne durée*, which is the mid-range history, that may be a period of forty years, for example understanding the history of America's foreign policy in areas of the Middle East from their independence from the British, that would inevitably lead to such an attack on the Twin Towers. The final is the *longue durée*, which is the most important since it describes the long history and allows for the historian to look at what they are studying, by understating the bigger picture. These three ways of analyzing history allow for one to take the abstract and make it concrete, since the time period that will be used to analyze the history will also allow for the historian to compare, contrast and make connections depending on how much time they are looking at. History must be viewed as a large churning machine with small parts. The small parts all come together to make the machine work, so they are of great importance. Though they are important, over analyzing them without looking at the entirety of the machine does not help. In the case of the history of public opinion and rhetoric, the *longue durée* begins with analyzing the importance of rhetoric in Athens, which could be called the birth place of democracy. Athens view of rhetoric highlights the discourse that was being formed about the importance of a tool that could ultimately be used to shift and control large groups of people.

In Athens rhetoric was viewed with two schools of thought. There was Plato (ca. 428/427BC-348/347BC) who understood the power of rhetoric but was cautious of its misuse, and Aristotle (ca. 384BC-322BC) who viewed rhetoric as a tool, with dialectics that could be used to find the truth. To begin with, Plato was weary of rhetoric since he saw it as inherently subjective. People could use rhetoric in a manner that would not garner truth but could instead sway people in a direction that ultimately deceives them. The art of persuasion was widely considered necessary for political and legal advantage in classical Athens, and rhetoricians promoted themselves as teachers of the fundamental skill. In Plato's *Gorgias*, Socrates claims that while rhetoricians give power of words, they are not instructors of morality, which means they can use this tool for bad instead of good (Plato, 1979, pp. 19-20). Morality was of great importance in Athens, since the Athenians were in search of virtue. In the discourse between Gorgias and Socrates, Gorgias is asked to explain what rhetoric is and he says that it is "the power to persuade by speech jurymen in the jury court, council men in the council chamber, assembly of men in the assembly in the chamber, assembly men in the assembly, and in every other gathering' this is where the power comes from which you will hold every other profession as salves" (1979, p. 19). To Gorgias the power came in being able to influence politics which inherently influences the public sphere. Gorgias sees this as a positive since it makes the trade

the most important. Since rhetoric was used in all forms of government to influence the council, it can be seen why it is dangerous, especially if Plato viewed rhetoric as a tool that was not used to garner the truth or enhance morality in others.

Morality and the truth was the ultimate goal in the debate, and Plato saw rhetoric as a craft or a tool that may have had the objective of getting to the truth or inspiring morality. Socrates goes on to ask Gorgias if “rhetoric of persuasion, and that its whole business and the sum in this or can you mention any broader power for rhetoric that can produce persuasion in the soul of interest?” (1979, p. 20). Socrates is dealing with the fact that rhetoric is a craft of simply persuading without teaching anything. He asks Gorgias if teaching is actually a form of persuading, which he believes to be true (1979, p. 20). If teaching is a form of persuading all teachers are persuaders. Socrates asks “whoever teaches anything, does he not Persuade” (1979, p. 20)? The problem with rhetoric solely is that it persuades without teaching anything. Socrates claims that there is actually substance to what is being taught by other teachers in a more concrete field such as arithmetic. There is a lack of substance in what is being said or written by a person whose sole profession is to persuade. Socrates goes on to describe how “persuasion comes from conviction without knowing the person can simply persuade groups that know nothing of the subject matter” (1979, p. 22). Nothing is being taught in rhetoric, which it is why it may be useless and also dangerous. If nothing is being obtained by the listener from the use of rhetoric, then rhetoric is a powerful but dangerous tool that can simply be used to manipulate.

Socrates argues that nothing good comes out of rhetoric since it “is the craftsman of persuasion which yields conviction but does not teach about the just and unjust” (1979, p. 22). This tool does not teach what is right and wrong and is actually more effective if used in front of an ignorant audience rather than one full of experts. Socrates claims that “Since the rehtor is teaching to such a large crowd, he cannot help but produce conviction since he cannot teach such great matter to such a large mob in such a small time constraint” (1979, p.22). Ultimately nothing is taught when persuasion is the only tool, and this may be dangerous since rhetoric persuades people to make decisions about what they do not know. If an influential group is persuaded into a decision that serves a special interest, the truth is not obtained and a horrible decision may come about. Plato was critical of the use of a craft that would not garner knowledge or teach. This view was different from Aristotle’s who viewed rhetoric as a tool that could garner knowledge and wrote on how it could be mastered and used.

Aristotle did not care much of Plato’s view on the dangers of rhetoric, but simply saw it as a tool that could be used in a very powerful manner. Quite the contrary, he had positive view about how it could actually help get to the truth. According to Aristotle “Rhetoric is the counterpart of Dialectic. Both alike are concerned with such things as come, more or less, within the general kin of all men and belong to no definitive science” (1354a). To Aristotle rhetoric and dialectics were symbiotic. Aristotle believed that rhetoric deals with the general while dialectics deals with the specific. He also believed that rhetoric could be used to find the truth through persuasion, and was a useful tool for men that held the same beliefs. In his theory of civic discourse Aristotle delves into the mechanisms that come together to persuade an audience:

ethos, pathos, and logos. Ethos means that you're convincing through your own character. The person you are in the society may help your argument. Pathos is by appealing to the audience emotions, which can be done through exaggeration or flattery. Logos is the use of reasoning to persuade the audience. Together one could master the art of rhetoric that was of importance. To Aristotle rhetoric was a tool that could be used to create and foster knowledge. His view on rhetoric was more popular since Athenians used frequently rhetoric in their form of government. These were the differing viewpoints on rhetoric at the time, and although the Athenians believed in the power of persuasion, Plato's views on the republic ultimately shaped opinion and the use of rhetoric in another empire more than a thousand years later.

Venice saw itself as Plato's utopia. Venice was a city of merchants that ideally wanted to keep their private lives away from the governing state. Unlike Athens in which rulers were not meant to be merchants, Venice was built by merchants. Apart from the economic interests of the merchants Venice attempted to create a combination of Plato's and Aristotle's republic. It was the republican views that would influence rhetoric and public opinion within the city state. They took Aristotle's view when it came to economics and Plato's view on rhetoric. Venice was run by a noble class of about three hundred families. The three hundred families were the class that attributed to founding Venice and remained the rulers of Venice through the golden age. The ruling class tried to create the normative ideal of how Venice should be run and be as a society. The normative ideal consisted of a Venice in which public opinion did not matter. The rulers would simply control the Senate and govern the city in social cohesion in order to show strength and unity. In fact, according to De Vivo, 'debating was to be locked behind closed doors and disagreements hidden behind the government' (2007, p. 20). Rhetoric was respectful but was dealt with delicately since the Venetians believed it to be a powerful tool that could be easily misused. Ideally, rhetoric and public opinion was meant to be kept out of political discourse and the public sphere.

Rhetoric was viewed as a tool that could enhance eloquence. Although it was meant to be used in offices, there were still schools that taught rhetoric. According to De Vivo, the government began funding public schools that insisted on modern orators being part of the curriculum (2007, p. 20). Sanudo 'described classes of patrician teenagers engaged in making orations and counter orations' (De Vivo, 2007, p. 21) It can be safely said that there was respect for rhetoric, although it was ideally kept away from the realm of governance.

The government of Venice had a different take on the use of debate. According to De Vivo, in Venice the "Ambivalence concerning eloquence has a parallel in the attitude towards debating in councils. In all communities speech is at once a means of cohesion and an instrument of disagreement, but in Venice the danger was greater because debating threatened the unity at the very heart of the state" (2007, p.25). The Venetian government attempted to restrain debating in the council through rhetorical restrictions and strict rules created over time (De Vivo, 2007, p. 25). They attempted to stifle rhetoric, since it was through rhetoric that debate could be formed. Persuasion was seen as a tool that could bring about disunity and ultimately lead to arguments, or something that could be used to convince without actual facts and

knowledge. During the meetings of the Great Council, the Venetian government wanted the individual to get the information and use critical thinking in order to deduce a decision. Once the decision was made there was a secret ballot in which they could vote without the fear of being influenced by someone else knowing how they voted. In Venice debate was not completely banned but kept to the minimum when it came to actual voting (De Vivo, 2007, p. 25). Speeches were reserved for special occasions and discussions, avoided as much possible (p.25). In fact Martin Sanudo, who was an influential politician brags that during his lifetime, only addressed the council three or four times (p. 25). The ruling class was a group that wanted to maintain unity at all cost and keep the public from knowing anything that was actually going on. The normative ideal was to keep public opinion at a minimum while stifling rhetoric that could lead to debate and arguing. Politics was meant to be kept in the council and public opinion was not meant to exist, although the social reality was different.

In the normative ideal there was meant to be two main agoras - piazzas. The Rialto was meant for business, while the San Marco next to Docat Palace, was meant for politics. In reality one affected the other. Robert Finlay claims that a commoner complained in 1553 that Venetian partisans 'were not above using their status to gain an advantage in business negotiations' (1980, p. 15). In fact "Sanudo frequently witnessed men soliciting votes in court yard of the Ducat Palace" (Finlay, 1980, p.27). Politics and the realm of personal interest were inevitable and even though debate and persuasion were meant to be kept out of the great council it still found its way in. According to Finlay, in the Great Council "Partisans moved from seat to seat with messages and gossip. If admonished to remain silent, they signalled to one another whom they supported or opposed" (1980, p. 27). Gossip among the public was also common and even though people were not meant to know what happened in the great council, they would often hear the news. Ideally Venice had a unified governing body which it tried to maintain, but realistically there perfect republic still was imperfect. Despite its flaws, the normative ideal still helped create the myth that was Venice which inherently affected how the society saw and governed itself. The use of rhetoric and public opinion went onto change in the next constitutional monarchy. As time passed from Venice there was a change in public opinion that allowed for the use of rhetoric to become more important, not only changing how future cities were governed but also how the people viewed their own personal liberties and what role they played in the democracy.

London is where views of Public opinion began to evolve and change. Public opinion became the vocal point for change in how the public was perceived by the governing body, and how the public perceived themselves in their place within democracy. To begin with, the English society in the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> century changed the secrecy of the Venetian government gradually turning opinion into the norm. The secrecy of government, parliamentary discourse, and debate was the norm before the seventeenth century, but it was in the middle of the seventeenth century that this shift could be seen (Kittler, 2009, p. 126-27). According to Zaret, in this period "Social historians noted the shift from norms of secrecy to open appeals to public

opinion emerging as the normative ideal of communicative practice in England” (as cited in *ibid.*). Public opinion was now the normative ideal and was important in the democratic process. Zaret claims that it was the new political thinkers headed by John Locke who attempted “to uphold democratic conceptions of political order that presuppose the existence, rationality, and normative authority of public opinion” (*ibid.*). Republicanism was now intertwined with public opinion. It was now believed that in order for there to be a true republic, the public would have to be involved. It was John Locke’s liberal political philosophy that spear headed the move towards public opinion.

John Locke had been a key philosopher in advocating for public opinion. He strongly believed in citizens rights. According to Locke, “A state of equality, wherein all the power and jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another, there being nothing more evident than that creatures of the same rank promiscuously born to all the same advantages of nature and the use of the same facilities, should also be equal one amongst another without subordination or subjection” (Locke, 1691, p. 34). This meant that the individual citizens had rights, which meant that the government worked for them. The idea of the government working for the individual was from the theory of social contract. According to Knowlton and Parson, Locke believed in a limited state which left citizenry the ultimate right to select their rulers, judge conduct and if need be replace them (1995, p.33). Public opinion now became a tool to legitimize the careers of politicians. Locke believed that the citizens had the right to know about what their government was doing, thus leading the government to do what the citizens deemed important (Knowlton and Parson, 1995, p. 33). If citizens would now have individual rights, and the government they voted in was working for them, public opinion would be crucial in order to articulate their positions with the policies of the state (cf. Habermas). The idea of public opinion would now be taken by entrepreneurs and philosophers like William Penn to the New World which heavily depended on it. The New World would now take individualism and public opinion to the next level and rhetoric would now play a crucial role in the swaying masses.

The immigrants who moved to the United States from England in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century came with the notion of public opinion. According to Frederick Tolles (1682-1763), the English immigrants also came with the protestant religion that would help garner a nation that would respect and love rhetoric (1948, p. 13). Protestantism believed in the power of the individual (Tolles, 1948, pp. 4-5). The individual Protestant had power, since it was him or her who read the bible individually, and thus could deduce meaning. This was different from Catholics that were read to by priests in a manner that was irrational and emotional. The Catholic Bibles were chained to the pews and read to them in Latin. This meant that the Protestant ideals respected preaching and sermons. This was a form of rhetoric since the preacher would attempt to sway and convince the congregation (Tolles, 1948, pp. 4-5). According to Kittler, Philadelphia got acquainted with rhetoric ‘from their early childhood in their churches listening to the long sermons of their preachers’ (2009, p. 334).

Sermons were critical, and rhetoric was heard and used from early stages of life. The Quakers took the sermon one step further by allowing everybody to be a preacher. In Quaker churches, they would sit and pray and if the Holy Spirit were to come over one of them, a Quaker would be encouraged to get up and give personal testimony. The individual's rights had now evolved from London's views on personal freedom, and were now deeply rooted in religion. Rhetoric was so important in preaching that a preacher named George Whitefield became a celebrity because of his use of the tool. According to Peter Kalm "Whitefield... travelled through almost all the English colonies in North America. His delivery, his extraordinary zeal, and other talents so well adapted to the intellects of his hearers, made him so popular that he frequently especially in the first two years got an audience from eight to twenty thousand" (1779, p. 22).

The crowds he attracted were a source of an experiment done by Benjamin Franklin, who had been an admirer of Mr. Whitefield. Franklin believed that Whitefield " had a loud clear voice, and articulated his words and sentences so perfectly," walked back during one of his speeches and attempted to see how far he could move while still hearing Mr. Whitefield's sermon (1784, p. 121). He then calculated that "he might well be heard by more than thirty thousand" (Franklin, 1784, p. 122). Religion is political in nature, which is why rhetoric was important in shaping not only the minds of the people but also the government. Rhetoric was now a tool that was praised in all facets of life, and since religion was an important part of life it can be seen how the Quaker and protestant ideals began to shape the Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary America.

America was a land that gradually came to believe it was the new Athens. America believed itself to be the hub of democratic-republican views. Since post-revolution America was like Athens the rhetoric was also similar. According to Kittler 'Oratorical skills were at the heart of the great ancient societies such as Athens or Rome whose luster colonial Philadelphia aspired to match some day in the future' (2009, p.334). In 1809, the prominent editor Joseph Dennie pointed out that "from Athens to this America, Oratory is a sort of government genius, moulding man" (1809, p.2). Philadelphia was also a place where the "institutions of their representative government promoted the method of verbal rational argumentation in the process of persuasion and decision making" (Kittler, 2009, p. 334). This meant that persuasion became an imprint tool to government that could be used in political debate. It was put in American institutions, so that rhetoric would simply become part of politics. All policies and decisions were being influenced by rhetoric. During Thomas Hamilton's 1834 sojourn in the United States, Hamilton claimed that "In America the power of persuasion constitutes the only lever of political advancement" (1830, p. 244). This was a shift from England, where rank and family name were the keys to social success. In America, politicians depended highly on their oratory skill, which were used in order to gain political advancement. Americans thought highly of rhetoric, which can be seen when James Abercrombie said, "The correct and graceful reader or speaker, possesses a power little short of that ascribed to necromancers and magician"

(1806, p. 2). Abercrombie understood the power to persuade which is why there were schools in the United States that were to teach the young the art of persuasion. Young men would be “Shaping their education with a view to the bar, elementary instruction on the cardinal topics of rhetoric” (Dennie, 1909, p. 1). Due to the importance of rhetoric, it can be seen why there were schools that would help people learn the art of rhetoric. This is because American’s political career depends on it.

The advancement of one’s political career that would ultimately lead to Congress depended on rhetoric. Just like in ancient Athens and Rome, rhetoric was involved in most facets of life in Philadelphia and America. Since public opinion was now the normative ideal and rhetoric could be used to sway the masses, problems were bound to arise for a culture and political system that solely depended on persuading public opinion. Thomas Hamilton critiques what occurs in the walls of the American government during the post revolution period. It is important to note that he was visiting America from England after their independence from Britain, which may be the reasoning behind his harsh critique. Hamilton observed that speeches in congress were longer as politicians would be “speaking against time” (1830, p. 247). This was due to the fact that speeches would be used for re-election, meaning that the longer the speeches were the better, since prominence was to be upheld. This meant that speeches could go on for eighteen hours or longer (Hamilton, 1830, p. 247). Debate and arguing became the norm in Congress as politicians tried to bash each other with words and prove themselves the winner in arguments. This would lead to disagreement and ugly partisan politics in which the government could be frozen due to the fact that no one could agree.

This was a significant shift from the unity seen in Venice. According to Hamilton, “The style of speaking is loose, rambling and inconclusive, and adherence to the real subject of discussion evidently forms no part, either of the intention of the orator, or expectation of his audience” (1830, p. 248). Nothing was being said in the Congress and debates would go around in circles. Hamilton also discusses how these debates would be selfish as “each individual acts for himself, and is eager to make or discover some opportunity of lavishing all his crudities of thought or fancy on his brother legislators” (1830, pp. 249-250). In order to win politicians would also “turn the whole current of debate into some new unforeseen channel” (Hamilton, 1830, pp. 249-250). The culture in America was centred on individualism. The private interests and hope for re-election was now in the political sphere and was leading to a fragmented political state that only dealt with the interest that could further one’s political career. Rhetoric had now become such an important tool in American politics. In order for the speeches to get to the public that politicians wanted to convince, speeches were now published like they had been in Athens and Venice.

Politicians would print their speeches in long pamphlets in order to immortalize themselves or get more esteem from the American public that would read them. A speech could just be made to be published. Hamilton said that “next step of orator is to circulate his speech in the form of a closely printed pamphlet of some hundred and fifty pages” (1830, p. 248). The actual speech at the time may not have mattered or even been that great or listened to, although the publication of the speech is what eventually would get to the American public making it more important that what was actually spoken. Publishing of speeches was also done

by Mr. Whitefield, who Benjamin Franklin claims spoilt his fame by doing so. According to Franklin “his writing and printing from time to time gave great advantage to his enemies; unguarded expression and even erroneous opinions, delivered in preaching, might have been afterwards explain’d or qualifi’d supposing others that might have accoman’ d” (Franklin, 1784, p. 122). Speeches were now being analyzed and rhetoric entered a symbiotic relationship with what was written and printed.

Public opinion had led to an age where rhetoric would become a useful and extremely important tool in London and then Philadelphia. As public opinion became the normative ideal, the use of rhetoric became more apparent. This was a change from the Venetians of the past, in which secrecy was the normative ideal. The move towards a culture centred on public opinion would ultimately lead to the co-modification of politics and eventually a consumer nation. What the public wants it gets and now since everything would become co-modified the splintering of the public sphere and personal opinion, would be used for economic marketing.

The explosion in public opinion would eventually lead to a culture in America that turns everything into a form of entertainment. Public opinion in America has become an economic market where ratings in order for advertisement are all that matter. Everything has become entertainment from the news, to politics. Entertainment has now encroached into all forms of discourse. When trying to find a symbol of America’s obsession with entertainment, Neil Postman uses the, city of Las Vegas, Nevada, as a “metaphor of our national character and aspiration, it symbol a thirty-foot-high cardboard picture of a slot machine and chorus girl” (1985, p. 3). This is because the city is devoted completely to entertainment, like the American public discourse. Postman claims that ‘people are on the verge of amusing themselves to death’ (1985, p. 4). The America that was viewed by Thomas Hamilton in the political sphere is now part of every facet of life. Politicians and journalists have now become career makers now pay more attention to their haircut than their message to the voter (Postman, 1985, p. 4). According to Postman, “in America God favours all those who possess both a talent and format to amuse, whether they be preachers, athletes, entrepreneurs, politicians, teachers of journalists” (1985, p. 5). Everyone is trying to persuade the masses and entertain, since now it is a commodity that can be sold. Rhetoric has come from a form of persuasion into commodity for sale. Whoever can convince the American public that they are the most entertaining can garner the most respect, money and influence.

Television, which was a tool that created a common public sphere, now splinters the public with different programming that is targeted towards small groups. Television changes the mode of communication and since it centred on “discourse conducted through visual imagery” it has now changed the way in which politicians can persuade the American public (Postman, 1985, p. 7). Aesthetics can now be used as a form of persuasion, as the journalists, political figures and role models of today have become increasingly pleasing to the eye. News has now become sensationalized as “things that may not have been such big news is today huge due to the medium in which they are being spread” (Postman, 1985, p. 7). In order for ratings to

stay high news has to be a spectacle. Discourse changed with the invention of this new medium and the public discourse also began to change. More channels today give us more choice, but also allow for each individual to be targeted individually. According to Eluihu Katz, “with the rapid multiplication of channels, television has all but ceased to function as a shared public space” (Katz, 1996, p. 10). Technological determinism is a theory that advocates that technology is the driving force of changes in cultural structural forces, which in turn are changing the American culture into one that is segmented. Americans live in culture where everything is co modified, and in order for it to be co modified, the economic market must drive everyone apart in order to create a consumer base that will encourage continued economic growth. New markets must be invented due to capitalism, and this means that the public must be split, through new forms of rhetoric such as consumer targeted advertisement and new forms of entertainment.

Due to the splintering of consumers a new form of community is created. We live in an age of “branded communities” (Kalman, 2005, p. 1). This is a term used to describe people that are like minded and identify with a specific brand and share particular traits (Kalman, 2005, p. 1). In America today individuals now have more in common with people who share their interest in certain brands. This is due to the marketers breaking up the consumers into target groups that can be used to garner product loyalty. According to Katz, there are four groups of consumers that are ‘the brand prospects, non committals who choose out of convenience or habit, brand admirers who truly prefer the brand, and brand enthusiasts who both prefer and refer’ (2005, p. 2). Ultimately the job of the advertisers is to move the consumers towards becoming brand enthusiasts (Kalman, 2005, p. 2). These brand communities are created by the marketer in order to get more consumers. The fragmentation of the public leads to the fragmentation of the Nation-State. Today in America, a person may have more in common with someone a thousand miles away. The splintering may lead a culture that is isolated and finds it hard to communicate. Public opinion today has created a culture in which everything can become a commodity for sale. The art of persuasion has become a marketing tool that differentiates consumers and creates new markets. America today is a fragmented consumer society, which may be good or bad depending on the person judging.

Rhetoric and public opinion have changed over the lounge duree. Rhetoric has come from great importance in the political sphere of Athens to its demonization in Venice. Public opinion has shifted from being repressed to becoming the normative ideal. Ultimately over the longer history shifts and changes in public opinion have led to the modern society in which fragmentation and segmentation are created through consumerism. The society we live in has been formed by theories of the public sphere and whether we live in a better society is up to the individual to choose.

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