

## Occam's Razor

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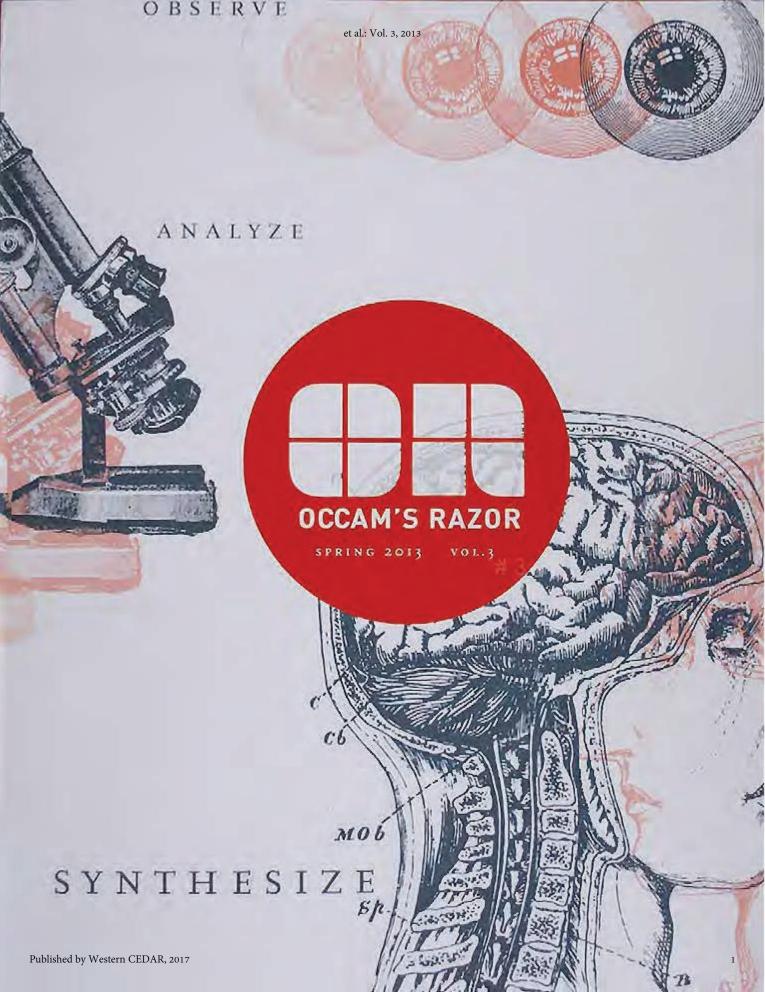
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## **OUR SINCEREST GRATITUDE TO;**

Chris Crow and Cameron Adams for having pioneered this journal.

The Faculty Senate for providing Occam's Razor WWU the opportunity to be formally introduced to the departments of Western.

Rebecca Marrall, for her continued support in advising the journal.

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The Western Washington University community, faculty, students and alumni, for not only giving the journal it's presence, but also it's future as the community's rising academic journal.

And to you, reader, for having explored the new ideas and scholarship of your peers that lie in this journal.

## **CONTACT**

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GLEN TOKOLA

## FORWARD

MOST STUDENTS, PAST AND PRESENT, know how satisfying it is to receive an A paper. We labor for weeks, days, and hours, cramming the last bit of creative energy into our papers. We read it over and over again until it is almost memorized, and then finally turn it into professors. Handing over a paper is like dropping off you kindergartener on their first day of class; you're thrilled for the achievement yet prepared for the emotional disasters that may lay ahead. Hopefully in the end, we get that paper back and leave the classroom smiling, calling our mothers to tell them how our hard work had paid off, beaming as we walk through red square. While telling your mother, friends, and classmates about an A paper is wonderful, the joy kind of stops there. The file sits for years, never to be looked at again. Notoriety for undergraduate academic writing is almost non-existent. Don't we all want to a little recognition for the hard work and time spent on our writing? That is exactly what Occam's Razor seeks to do.

Three years ago Chris Crow and I had a Spanish class together. We regularly worked together and soon found we shared a passion for writing. Before I became involved with Occam's Razor, Chris had already begun to plant the seed for a student writing publication in the minds of professors and organizations across campus. He used his knowledge of business marketing and applied it to his love for liberal arts. Chris set the goal of creating an academic journal where students would be recognized for their excellence in writing. Chris pitched this idea to me in class. As student who had been frustrated by the lack of opportunity to see their work recognized, I was immediately interested, but since I was off to Spain for my study abroad, we lost touch for six months.

In early 2011 I was walking home enjoying being back in Bellingham when I heard my name called. It happened to be Chris. We began talking and soon he told me of the strides he had made in making the journal happen. I was instantly excited to be a part of the team and was ready to do what ever I could to make it happen. By that time Chris had the backing of several professors, had multiple submissions, and was on his way to the Associated Students Activities Council to be recognized as a student club and

organization and to get funding. Not only did we get the funding but also a grant from the Dean in the department of Humanities and Social Sciences. We were on our way. Together we networked and edited. Bradley O'Neal joined the team as our graphic designer and formatter. By the end of May in 2011 we had a final project, the first volume of Occam's Razor.

Those first few months were rocky, mistakes were made, but we accomplished our goal. We went to print and produced an academic journal in less than six months. We had learned a lot in creating a publication and realized the obstacles we had over come and many more we had to face. At the end of the school year, Chris graduated and I became president and Editor-in-Chief. We went into year two just Bradley and I.

The snowball effect took longer than I expected but slowly, over the next few months, I found a team of amazing and dedicated students who shared my passion and were all able to bring something unique to the table. We had math, business, social sciences, humanities, graphic designers, and human resources backgrounds. We had different skills and different points of view but as with most projects that diversity was exactly what was needed. When ideas are able to bounce around and conversations ensue, success is at its most achievable.

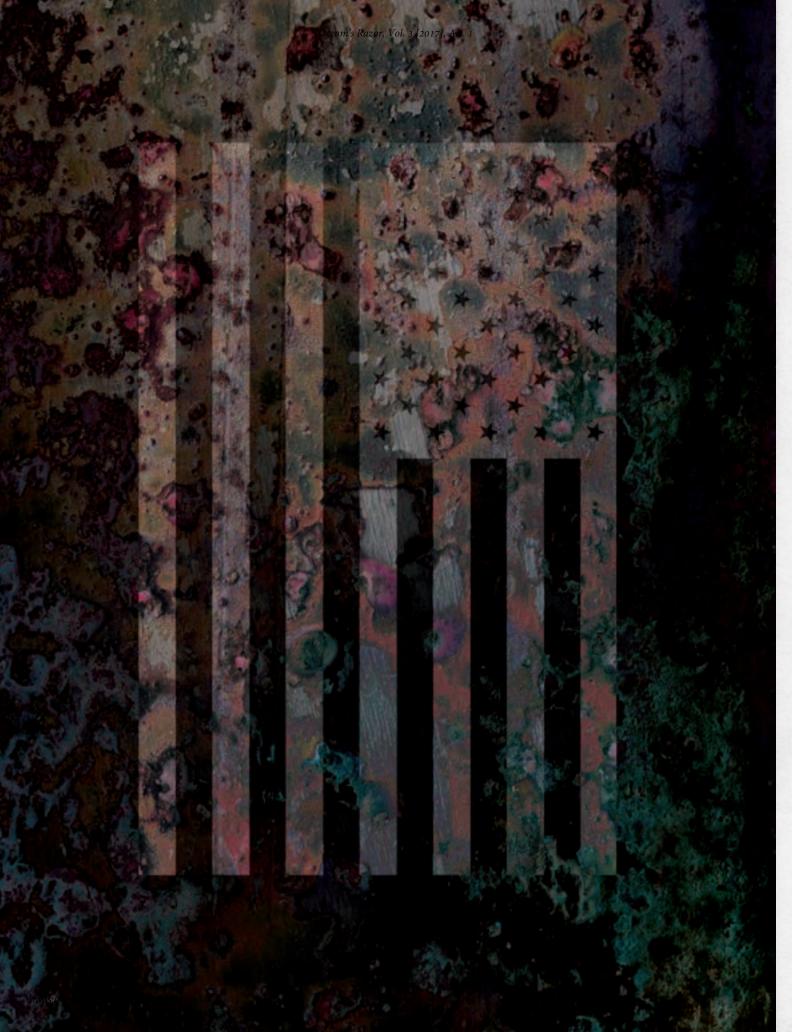
The success of projects like Occam's Razor does not rely on the ideas of one person but the support and minds of many in order to flourish and grow. When the time came for my graduation, I was fully confident that Occam's Razor would survive my departure. Those last few weeks were especially hard as I realized I was no longer needed and I could leave my kid at kindergarten and not have to worry.

Occam's Razor is based on the idea that students should have the chance to see their hard work and their excellence in scholarship and writing recognized. It is a gateway to communal exploration of ideas and topics. It is a chance to share with other students, faculty, and community members, and say, "look what I learned!" My goal is that Occam's Razor opens doors for discussion and promotes cross-disciplinary learning and collaboration.

When you read this year's edition I hope that you will gain some knowledge. I hope that you will read something that you did not know before. And I hope more than any thing that you appreciate the skill of the students at Western Washington University.

### **CAMERON ADAMS**

FOUNDER & FORMER EDITOR AND CHIEF



## REANIMATING IDENTITIES

THE ZOMBIE MANIFESTATION OF A DARKER AMERICA

MCKENZIE YUASA

**Zombies** are the soulless reanimated corpses of human beings; they wander the border between life and death, mindlessly obeying their carnal desires.

Humans are always threatened by these unnatural abominations that relentlessly seek to satiate their hunger for human flesh. Recently zombie texts have made a rapid movement from the margins to the mainstream media, which indicates that audiences find some aspect of zombies very compelling. World War Z (WWZ) by Max Brooks is one popular zombie text that features a global apocalypse in which the "walking plague" infects millions of people and nearly causes the complete collapse of civilization. Subtitled An Oral History of the Zombie War, Brooks creates an alternate post-apocalyptic world wherein he has compiled the individual accounts of people with first-hand experience in the zombie war. In the introduction of WWZ, Brooks claims his book is an effort to maintain a narrative that would otherwise go unmentioned in favor of "clear facts and figures" used in official government reports (1). He argues that by ignoring the "human factor, aren't we risking the kind of personal detachment from a history that may, heaven forbid, lead us one day to repeat it?" (Brooks 2). The recent boom in zombie apocalypse literature and movies would arguably stem from a cultural fear, a way to address the tensions and anxieties that undermine the optimistic American identity. In this essay I plan to explore how

## THE ABJECT

The abject refers to the human reaction (horror, vomit) to a threatened breakdown in meaning caused by the loss of the distinction between subject and object or between self and other. The primary example for what causes such a reaction is the corpse (which traumatically reminds us of our own materiality); however, other items can elicit the same reaction: the open wound, shit, sewage, even the skin that forms on the surface of warm milk.

zombie texts reveal fears that are inherently American and why those fears are important, with a focus on *WWZ*.

In her essay The American Gothic, Marianne Noble argues that American Gothic literature works to reveal the counter narratives to the optimistic dominant national narrative by representing the culture's deepest fears (169). Gothic literature accomplishes this unveiling by exploiting the uncanny feelings associated with the abject of our cultural identities. Noble introduces Julia Kristeva's theory of the abject, and how we form our identities (personal and societal) through negation (170-171). It is important to note that Noble adapts Kisteva's theory of abjection from the individual to encompass the psychoanalysis of an entire culture. The abject is often repressed, especially in America, and the rhetoric that is left is a self-delusion of optimism. America as a nation tends to focus on positive cultural qualities such as freedom of speech and equality; however we generally refuse to acknowledge the negative aspects of our culture's identity. Slavery, Native American genocide, exploitation of domestic workers, and gender inequality are all examples of historical events that have been denied at times because they exposed the fractured nature of a nation that proclaims itself to provide equal opportunity and justice for all. Gothic literature unveils these darker aspects of a cultural identity as it is experienced by individual people (Noble 169-170). Zombies in particular are adept at exposing societal and individual aspects we reject from our cultural identity.

The resurgence of zombie apocalypse texts reveals American cultural anxieties about global capitalism, displaced people and the threat they pose to our 'lives,' in addition to how we form our cultural and human identities. WWZ is one example of a zombie apocalypse text that reveals these anxieties. Set a little over a decade after the most devastating worldwide conflict in history, Brooks as the narrator has compiled a collection of stories from various individuals about their experiences with the zombie apocalypse. The fact that these stories are individual accounts of a worldwide event makes them a good candidate for being a part of American gothic literature. We are able to see how the larger cultural psychological history is experienced by individual people, something that Noble names as a defining aspect of American gothic literature (Noble 170). In WWZ's introduction, Brooks defines humanity by negating the lack of a "human factor" seen in zombies. By Brook's definition, zombies are the abject of humanity; they represent what people

dissociate themselves with in order to construct their identities. *WWZ* provides a series of stories that unveil many of the cultural anxieties felt by Americans, one the most notable of which is a transgression of physical and geographical boundaries.

Zombies represent a transgression of the boundaries between the living and the dead, and in a global apocalyptic setting they also pass over geographical boundaries. It is their static existence between the margins of life and death that makes zombies so uncanny. In WWZ we also see a crossing of geographical boundaries that reveals the political anxieties felt by Americans. These zombies are not confined to just one country, and the impression that Brooks gives the reader is that this outbreak began in rural villages of China. The global nature of zombie apocalypse texts can be attributed to two main anxieties. The first anxiety deals with global capitalism, while the second considers the impacts of displaced people.

Global capitalism, and its virulent nature when considering advances in

technology, is an anxiety associated with how economic spaces are changing. Consider the country that is attributed as the source of the outbreak: China. As a country that has grown tremendously through global capitalism and its economic relations to America, it's not surprising that China would be the target of anxieties that Americans have about global capitalism.

After centuries of foreign oppression, exploitation, and humiliation, we were finally reclaiming out rightful place as humanity's middle kingdom. We were the world's richest and most dynamic super power, masters of everything from outer space to cyber space. It was the dawn of what the world was finally acknowledging as "The Chinese Century" (Brooks 6).

The speaker of this quote from *WWZ* is a doctor who examined one of the first victims of the plague. Here he laments the regression of China's power at a time where they are at their most influential. China surpassing America in terms of economic power is a current fear and concern felt by many American's. Brooks' use of China as the epicenter

of the outbreak reveals how deeply ingrained America's relative economic mastery has become for our cultural identity and threatens that definition by creating a representation of the abject as zombies.

Americans are deeply unsettled by the recent struggle our economy has had, especially at the benefit of other countries, for example oil dependency in the Middle East and manufacturing labor in China. Stephanie Boluk and Wylie Lenz in their essay Infection, Media, and Capitalism: From Early Modern Plague to Postmodern Zombies comment on the relationship between infection stories and anxieties about capitalism. The use of China as the source of a plague arguably alludes to the tensions associated with "contemporary social changes that those with a vested interest in the socioeconomic status quo perceived as worrisome and in need of containment" (Boluk & Lenz 129). The significance of zombies as plague enhances the association with mindless consumption and its infectious and destructive nature. Since they are already dead, zombies do not require human flesh as food, yet they crave it and seek

As monsters of the id, zombies unveil the anxieties about capitalism struggling against itself and bringing about its own cyclical demise

it out with avarice. "Zombies are pure desiring machines—they are creatures composed entirely of excess desire" (Boluk & Lenz 136). In WWZ many US citizens attempted to survive by fleeing north to the cold, rural areas of Canada and Alaska. One of the interviews mentions about the belongings people chose, "hair dryers, Game Cubes, laptops by the dozen...I think most people were just afraid of losing them, that they'd come home after six months and find their homes looted" (Brooks 123). Not only are zombies monsters of consumption, but they reveal the sorts of material possessions that American culture values enough to bring it on a desperate move for survival. Ironically it is the refugees' lack of preparedness that causes most of them to die, rather than from zombie attacks. As monsters of the id, zombies unveil the anxieties about capitalism struggling against itself and bringing about its own cyclical demise. Continuing to use China as an example in WWZ, China is named at the beginning and the end of the zombie outbreak. As the last country to declare Victory Day, China serves as both the catalyst and the conclusion of the zombie apocalypse. Capitalism is an aspect of the American identity that causes a lot

of political strife, yet it is undeniably a part of our cultural identity. By placing zombies in a country on the advent of its economic supremacy, Brooks incites anxiety about the cyclical nature of consumerism and capitalism.

America is often defined as a melting pot which is thought to welcome all people and cultures, yet the second anxiety exposed in WWZ concerns the effect of displaced people, their status, and securing geographical borders. WWZ was published in 2006, just five years after the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center in New York. The post 9/11 consciousness is more receptive to the anxieties posed by zombies that spread the plague by transgressing political boundaries, and present a threat to the living. Jon Stratton discusses in his essay, Zombie Trouble: Zombie Texts, Bare Life, and Displaced People about how "the possibility of widespread destruction and devastation which 9/11 brought into the communal consciousness found a ready narrative expression in the zombie apocalypse which over thirty years had honed images of desperation subsistence and amoral survivalism to a fine edge" (269). As a result of 9/11 and the amplified interest in securing borders, "there has been an increasing anxiety in western countries over the numbers of displaced people attempting to gain entry across their borders" (Stratton 266). The term "displaced people" includes refugees, asylum-seekers, and immigrants both legal and illegal. Zombies work as a representation of displaced people because of the similar circumstances of

living in between borders or not being a part of the dominant cultural definition. The issue of displaced people ties the zombie metaphor to an anxiety that harkens back to American historical roots of slavery and colonialism. The resulting problem of "legal personhood" has been a defining factor of the American identity.

Displaced people are the abjects of society; they simply do not fit into the culture and are viewed as a foreign element. Governments are often loath to admit the existence of displaced people, especially illegal immigrants, since an admission of their physical existence gives rise to their problematic legal existence. Zombies, as the livingdead, can be read as a representation of the anxiety of who can be defined as a 'person.' When people such as slaves or illegal immigrants do not have a legal citizenship they become a brainless group not legally recognized by the government, and yet the same government attempts to control them. The contradiction of actual vs. legal existence is displayed in the early chapters of WWZ where many national governments, not just the US, fail to give the threat of zombies due consideration because in order to effectively try and control this 'other' social group, they would have to admit its reality.

In *WWZ*, the former White House chief of staff defends the administration's first reaction as "What we did, what every president since Washington has done, was provide a measured, appropriate response, in direct relation to a realistic threat assessment" saying also that "Can you imagine what America would have been like if the federal government slammed on the brakes every time some paranoid crackpot cried "wolf" or "global warming" or "living dead" (Brooks 59). This quote exposes the speaker's viewpoint on how the United States has attempted to resolve possible conflicts in the past, his diction first sounds rehearsed like a public statement. His actual feelings in the second part of the quote reveal how he fears the destabilization of the US government. If WWZ government officials were to really address the zombie threat, it would require a new system, which would then require a restructuring of social order that interferes with the current definition of American society. As a result, attempts to control zombies and 'other' social groups are still made because they make the dominant society uncomfortable, and to allow their existence without interference means a breakdown of social order and boundaries, but no concerted effort is made.

Stratton discusses the theory of bare life, which in its social context describes the lives of people who live "on the margins of social, political, cultural, economic and geographical borders are lives half-lived. Denied access to legal, economic and political redress, these lives exist in a limbo-like state that is largely preoccupied with acquiring and sustaining the essentials of life" (Stratton 267). While I argue

earlier that zombies do not in fact require food to survive, the connection of a "limbo-like state" is undeniably similar to that of a zombie which exists somewhere between life and death. How American society chooses to identify and deal with abject social groups has been a source of anxiety over our history. One choice is to attempt to assimilate displaced people into the dominant culture. Assimilation is especially important when considering America's colonial history. The process of colonization is made through an imposed act of identity negation by the dominant culture onto that of the native or 'other' people. Essentially saying that the marginalized group is no longer a true member of the group they once belonged to, while still simultaneously differentiating between the colonizers and colonized. This exercise of social control only creates an ambiguous identity where zombies are able to be resurrected as an expression of the bare life of displaced people. The zombie also presents the fear that these displaced people will eventually overwhelm us, thereby upsetting social order.

Zombie apocalypse texts expose much about the construction of the

American identity, and conversely what the abjects of that identity are. WWZ in particular expresses the large scale concerns seen in an increasingly modern and globalized community. Zombies have an uncanny ability to breach the borders between what our culture wants to see, and unveil the positive and negative characteristics that our culture actually embodies. By documenting the first person accounts of the zombie apocalypse, Brooks creates a gothic novel that explores the darker facets of the American ideology, its cultural significations, and illustrates to readers why zombies are so fascinating as uncanny monsters.

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## DARK CITY

## MEMORIES ALL ALONE IN THE MOONLIGHT

REBECCA ORTEGA

et us envision a world in which an individual can be one person one day and a complete other the next. The term "self-identity" is but a farce, designed to pacify individuals into carrying on with their lives harmoniously with the inhabitants of the city that surrounds them. In this world, an individual's short-term memory is limited to 12 hours per day, and his/her long-term memory is but a fabrication, a stereotype modified ever so slightly as to give the rest of the population unique enough childhood and adolescent recollections so that it will not suspect its experiences are formulaic and shared by all. This sort of world is what director and writer Alex Proyas proposes in his 1998 film, Dark City.

The metropolis in the film thrives in continual night, but each time the clock strikes 12, the entire city falls into a deep, paralytic sleep. Next, members of an alien race known as "The Strangers" move people from one location to another, and set up their lives like a movie set,

injecting synthesized memories into each individual's frontal lobe. These citizens are but the subjects of an experiment designed by The Strangers, who have the power to "alter physical reality by will alone" in a process called "Tuning". Near extinction, the aliens hope to determine the nature of the human soul by shuffling identities and memories between people in an infinite number of trials. The film's protagonist John Murdoch, who unknowingly resisted this process, grapples with piecing together a lost self-identity after waking up at a murder scene, which he is evidently "responsible" for. John's only savior is Dr. Daniel P. Schreber, the one

human The Strangers ever allowed to participate in Tuning; he is hell-bent on taking back the city. All the while, The Strangers desperately hunt Murdoch, wanting to know why he rejected treatment, and more importantly why he suddenly developed the ability to Tune. Dark City proposes a world in which memories are what define us as a species, yet the doctor's clandestine uprising and John Murdoch's reaction to Tuning serve as reminders that any alteration of our physical environment is destined to yield adaptation over time. Dark City explores the circularity of time and experience to exemplify how "normalcy" follows us on this loop, only shortly behind and destined

to catch up with us if we are ever to advance too far ahead.

Within the opening scene, one becomes acutely aware of the under-lit sets, abundance of night shots, and sepia color treatments, all reminiscent of classic film noir. These key elements function as a means to bridge the 4th wall and envelope the viewer within the city and its standards. With the stars always in the sky, an audience has no concept of the amount of time that passes during the course of the film's action. By achieving this effect, Proyas assimilates the audience into a world in which one lives an oxymoronically "eternal" 12 hours that are unconsciously reset like a

stopwatch. Moreover, the stereotypical film noir themes set up expectations for the plot of the film, down to the murder, which seamlessly flow into a heavy-handed sci-fi. In doing so, every anticipation an audience has for the plot is unraveled and warped, leaving the audience as disoriented and as distant from the norm as Murdoch is when he awakens from his failed Tuning treatment. Why doesn't an audience resist this deviation from the assumed path the plot should take? Why, especially in regard to the unknown passage of time, do these go virtually unnoticed until the credits

Throughout the film, the image of a spiral is employed as a symbolic representation of why this is so. This swirl first appears carved into a prostitute's torso at Murdoch's murder scene as the mark of a serial killer, to which the overseeing inspector reacts with the line, "Round and round she goes. Where she stops? Nobody knows." In one light, this line portrays the multiplicity of identity in a serial killer case, how each victim fits in a very specific trope. However, in another, the inspector has commented on the tendency of an individual to seek familiarity, to repeat actions. This would explain why an audience so willingly expects a classic noir film and delays its awareness of the passing of time with the assumption that the sun will eventually rise. However, familiarity with comfort is not what has driven us as a species; innovation is what has ensured our survival. The second most prevalent spiral lives on Murdoch's fingers in a tight circular clockwise turn. Being that Murdoch

Dark City explores the circularity of time and experience to exemplify how "normalcy" follows us on this loop, only shortly behind and destined to catch up with us if we are ever to advance too far ahead.

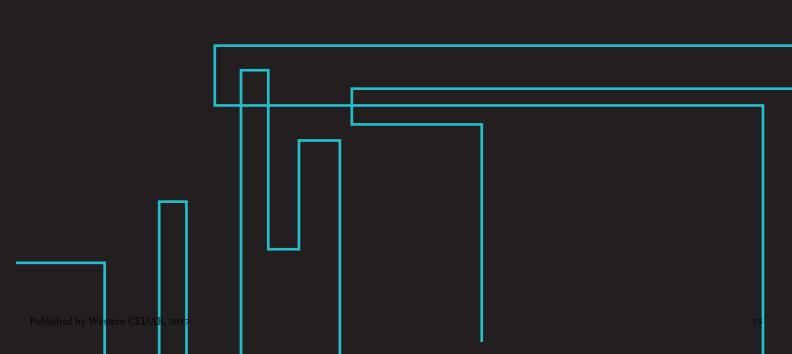
is quite literally the odd man out, one sees that while man naturally seeks what he is experienced in, it is also ingrained in his identity to push the boundaries of his repetitions, to toe the line of normalcy in favor of novelty. A viewer delays disbelief or discomfort in regards to time and genre because the deviations from the two are eased into so subtly, appealing to his/her very nature. In a broader sense, a change in our physical or technological environment is much more likely to be accepted if there is a solid foundation of relatability that an individual or group can identify.

The motive for this tendency to seek the new and interesting is of course a question to consider. The Strangers seek to know what makes up the human soul, what drives man to thrive where they continue to perish. It is

my opinion that the answer to this question is a quest for self-realization, an ongoing endeavor to fully grasp the root of identity. For example, John Murdoch's one ambition after he realizes that his memory is but a fabrication is to find the illusory Shell Beach that The Strangers have chosen to represent childhood and adolescent nostalgia. In addition, his first place of refuge is with his uncle in a building known as "Neptune's Kingdom". These two instances seem unrelated, but when one learns that "Murdoch" means "the sea", one realizes that he is searching for himself at the most basal level. Unfortunately, try as he might to navigate the city's transit system, there is seemingly no feasible way to reach Shell Beach. It is merely an entity that he and everyone else shares, but can never physically realize, just as the very essence of being may not be

graspable in itself. Dark City portrays the Strangers, who use human corpses as vessels, as the extreme exemplar for where humanity is headed should obsession with the soul continue. Man shall innovate in the hopes of reaching higher understanding of the self, but in doing so distance himself further from the primitive spark that gives his species its name.

In Dark City, Dr. Schreber has seemingly come to this aforementioned conclusion, which is why he is determined to save the metropolis. At the film's end, Schreber says that "the only place home exists is in your head", meaning that an individual's assumed identity and an individual's unique approach to life are what make him/ her quintessentially human. Because of these differences, mankind is able to seek variety within itself, in a vessel



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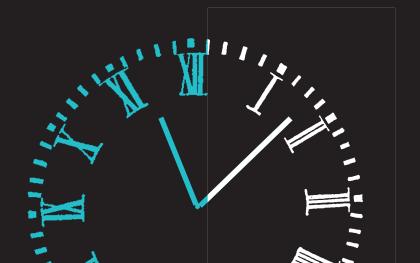
that is more than familiar enough to accept. In doing so, each individual finds strength within by forming unconscious bonds with those around them. The Strangers are incapable of such things, as they share a hive mind: they are essentially one being. Thus, it's logical that the doctor fears the nightly Tunings, for they prohibit such bonds from forming by cutting the human experience down to but a few hours, shuffling identities constantly. The doctor worries, just as stirring many distinct colors together for long enough creates a single sickly hue, that continual Tuning will make the city's people no better than The Strangers themselves, thus condemning them to the same fate of extinction. Murdoch,

representing all members of the City, overcomes The Strangers by using their own Tuning powers against them. When faced with adversity, as a species mankind will utilize whatever is available to it to prevail against all odds.

However, could this victory simultaneously belong to an individual who is not Murdoch, the archetype for humanity? Could this victory possibly belong to the doctor, who is a secondary character? After all, Dr. Schreber injects memories into Murdoch that reflect his presence throughout Murdoch's life, implying that the doctor is quite literally a part of him. Interestingly enough, by simply searching "Daniel P. Schreber"

in a search engine, one discovers that outside the context of the movie. David Paul Schreber was a renowned German judge in the 1800s before suffering a major psychotic break and being admitted to a mental institution, in which he eventually died. The incidence that sparked the break was when he woke up, wanting to "succumb" as a woman would. He was so taken aback that he was convinced the thought had originated from an external source planted telepathically by divine or medical power, and that he was destined to come back as a woman to conquer the intruders and liberate his psyche (Schreber 2000). The judge's plight was quite obviously inspiration for the film, but now one

The ability of one individual to adapt is the key for an entire species' survival.



must question the very scale of the film itself. As a viewer, one assumes the treatment applies to a metropolis full of thousands of people. But what if the city itself was a symbol for a single mind, with streets that twist and turn through the convoluted surfaces of the frontal cortex? The city is trapped in the skull, inescapable without the penalty of death, just as the inspector suffered when he breached the city walls. Each experience can influence oneself, but it is the sum of these parts, just as the inhabitants together make the city, that establish one's identity as a whole. Seen in this light, Murdoch may be but the doctor's own personification of the still logical portion of his fractured psyche triumphing over this great mental deviation from the norm. Murdoch does not leave the city, but uses his own Tuning powers to make Shell Beach, to create daylight for the rest of the metropolis' people. While heavy-handed, this speaks to the fact that the ability of one individual to adapt is the key for an entire species' survival.

Dark City preaches the fate that awaits mankind if it should continue to strive for meaning within universal networks of thought. The film warns against ignoring the experiences that shape an individual, for it is these memories that instill within him/her the drive to go on. While the concepts of full identity loss and eventual extinction serve to stiffen audiences in dystopic terror, Proyas proposes that perhaps what makes us human isn't as contemporary as the soul, but as primitive and basal as the will to prevail over all circumstances and the innate ability to find community in the identities and memories that we claim as our own.

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## the Relationship between

## VIEWER and FINE ART

CAMERON **DEUEL** 

aintings of violence are hung on the walls of museums throughout the world, seen as displays of artistic mastery rather than portrayals of destructive behavior. An example of this is seen in Domenico Fetti's "David with the Head of Goliath," an Italian Baroque painting thought to have originated in 1620 (The Royal Collection 2007).



The text displays a tremendous representation of power and, simultaneously, lack thereof. The posthumous gaze of Goliath towards David and the sword suggests an envious dynamic. David is situated upon Goliath's head as if presenting a hunting trophy, which perpetually dehumanizes Goliath. The frame that is formed between David and the sword emphasizes a celestial bond between him and an otherworldly higher being due to the illuminated sky, which makes up the focal point of the text. The image inherently creates a hypertextual

relationship for the viewer, especially since the iteration of David and Goliath is popular enough to be universally understood from the Biblical legend. "David with the Head of Goliath" is obviously an interpretation of that story, meaning the image exists hypertextually since it's existence would not be possible without the original text.

The story of David and Goliath acts as a powerful metaphor, suggesting the victory of an underdog over a powerful giant. Qualities of this perception can be seen in articles such as Oliver Falck's "Routinization of innovation in German manufacturing; the David-Goliath symbiosis revisited," "Goliath in David's Clothing: The Oppressed Militant and the Mighty Victim in the Rhetoric of Self-

Defense." by Amanda Davis and Dana Cloud, and Rich Thomaselli's "David & Goliath." While this understanding is widely accepted, this essay will abandon any allegorical connotation of the text.

Although this piece allows for various interpretations, "David with the Head of Goliath" is universally viewed as fine art. Fine art is able to depict graphic violence without generating distaste because the audience views fine art as removed from reality due to the space in which it appears, the understanding of how the image was produced, and the belief that fine art represents a subjective reality. In this essay, the image will be properly defined as fine art and compared to photography to show the difference in reactions to violence based upon the medium in which an image is displayed. Photography is widely believed to showcase an objective reality because the photographic image is created directly from "real life," while fine art is understood to be an interpretive presentation of an artist's imagination. Within this discussion, the role of production of fine art is examined alongside the production of photography, ultimately explaining the difference of how audiences interact with both

## VIEWPOINT

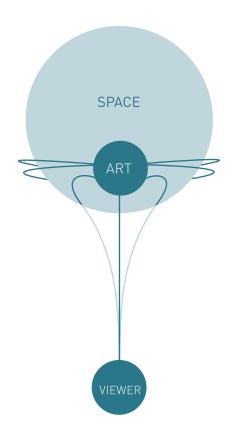
The object, space, and spectator's perspective all intertwine to create a viewing experience.

fine art and photography. The production of fine art is perceived to be an artist's rendering of their own imagination while photography suggests a distinguished view into reality. Additionally, the space in which the image is seen can alter the perception of the audience. When fine art shows violence, the audience ignores any tastelessness by using the space of the exhibit as an indicator of historical importance. In doing so, the audience is desensitized from any present violence. However, since photography is seen as reality, images of violence are off-putting for an audience.

Fine art can be simply defined as works that are "worth preserving and viewing," deriving from the imagination of the artist (Helmers 63). Fetti's artistic rendition of the famed Biblical story was acquired by King Charles I in the 1600s, proving that the work holds value (The Royal Collection 2007). Additionally, this piece is thought to have come directly from Fetti's imagination because "the possibility that this painting may have been a workshop copy, [...] seems highly unlikely. The handling of the paint is spontaneous and applied in a self-assured manner" (The Royal Collection 2007). Finally, Helmers warns, "painting is an art of

spatiality," suggesting that viewers "consider the temporal and spatial implications of context: the ways in which the meaning of a single image can alter dramatically due to placement, context, cropping, and captioning" (63-4). Fine art is implied through the space in which it is viewed, which alters the perception of the viewer based on their surrounding.

There are three elements of fine art; "the spectator, the space of viewing, and the object that is viewed" (Helmers 65). The relationship between these elements establishes a framework through which the spectator views the object. David Carrier argues that fine art is aimed towards an ideal spectator who "would view [the piece] as a sacred work" (21). Fetti's interest in painting Biblical scenes suggests his ideal spectator to be Christian. Charles McCorquodale notes, "Baroque represents Catholic supremacy at it's height," giving "David with the Head of Goliath" a large audience of ideal spectators (7). Helmers paraphrases Matei Calinescu's concept of rereading, by noting, "even before we enter the space of exhibition, we have



developed 'certain expectations' about what we will see" (77). The space itself creates expectations for the perception of the spectator upon viewing the images within the display.

Conversely, photography is "thought to work by twinning denotation and connotation, matching the ability to depict the world 'as it is' with the ability to couch what is depicted in a symbolic frame consonant with broader understandings of the world" (Zelizer 3). The combination of denotation, showing the literal contents of the image, and connotation, any meaning built from the contents of the image, gives the audience a greater understanding of the photograph. The audience of photography tends to comprehend the image as a direct representation of reality wherein the photographer is a recorder of truth, rather than an artist who created an image based on imagination. By depicting the world "as it is,"

the photograph tends to hold more gravity because viewers see an objective reality. These photographic images "are expected to offer only fragments of understanding, and thus direct their viewers elsewhere to understand what it shown" (Zelizer 6). Since photography exhibits reality, viewers are given license to consider the time before and after the image was captured. This generally occurs when viewing an upsetting image, when "contingency and the imagination may constitute a particularly useful stance for those needing to establish meaning" (Zelizer 6). Contingency occurs when an image contains an element of impossibility or uncertainty because an audience needs to cope with unfamiliarity by attempting to force the image to make sense. Imagination builds from contingency when an audience speculates about the image with "an uneven regard for what is actually shown" (Zelizer 6). These instances can only be attested to photography due to the assumption that the image reflects an objective reality. Fine art

can similarly include an audience into the discourse of the image, "the ritual process of viewing allows the spectators to re-imagine the past and create stories about the images" (Helmers 67). When fine art spectators view art, they feel as though they have witnessed history and build upon their knowledge of the nuances within the image. Reactionary measures to both photography and fine art yield a similar path towards ignorance since neither fully faces the intensity of violence head-on within the medium. For example, "a black-and-white photograph of a naked female corpse killed by the Nazis becomes an art installation years later, featuring a beautiful nude woman sleeping erotically under pastel strobe lights" (Zelizer 6-7). Reverting back to Helmer's argument about spatiality, fine art allows graphic violence because the space in which it appears suggests more sophisticated inhibitions. The reception of "David with the Head of Goliath" is similarly diverted in the interest of deconstructing any violence by

hiding behind artistic license. Rather than viewing the image as a bloody decapitation, the connotation of the image is focused around a glorified, religious anecdote, meant for display.

In discussing the role of the production of the image, Cara A. Finnegan believes, "another equally important moment in the life of a photograph is reproduction" (204). Perception of an image can be altered by how and where it appears, separate from the original source. While fine art holds value based upon the internal expectation of the audience by simply being in the space of an exhibit, the image may begin to lose impact when it is re-appropriated into different formats. "When [images] are transported into other fields of visual display [...] it becomes clear that subjunctive notions of the world 'as if' it were a better, more coherent, gentler, more equitable place than it may be" (Zelizer

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16). For instance, when "David with the Head of Goliath" is reproduced on a postcard, the audience is further desensitized to the image. Fine art is able to be repositioned indifferent formats because of the understanding that they do not directly reflect reality. If photographs of prisoners from Guantanamo Bay were published, their re-appropriation into formats like posters or mugs would be unlikely because they present an unsettling reality. "We need to understand, not only where images 'come from,' but also what they are made to do in the contexts in which we discover them" (Finnegan 204). Using "David with the Head of Goliath" in the format of a postcard, the image becomes secondary to any attached message, thus, the understanding of fine art is lost through lack of exhibit.

The interaction between an audience and fine art is heavily shaped by how they understand history. The act of "looking is always framed by past experiences and learned ideas about how and what to see" (Helmers 65). Spectators assess their role by including themselves in the text as a separate entity that attempts to label their interpretations of the text into categories. These categories range from "using, owning, appropriating, keeping,

remembering, and commemorating" (65). This ensures that an audience views the death of Goliath as a commemorative action rather than the death of another human being. Alternately, photography allows an audience to view death, which "has also been associated with mourning and grief, where gazing on pictures of the dead can help mourners come to terms with their loss" (Zelizer 25). Again, photography is presumed to show reality, or "as is" compared to the subjective intentionality of fine art, which is perceived to be constructed from the imagination of the artist. Photography is both "belonging to the past but engaged in the present [and] creates a temporal moment of 'having been there'" (Zelizer 25). Since "David with the Head of Goliath" is fine art, such connectivity is lost and ignored. If the text were a photograph, the decapitation would be considered an unsettling image, especially under the context of a celebrated death. Furthermore, violence within fine art is overshadowed by the belief that it contributes to history instead of reflecting reality.

While fine art can be defined as worth preserving and viewing, the most influential component comes from the understanding

that the image is derived from the imagination of the artist. When viewing fine art, the spectator relates to the object being viewed based upon the space in which is appears. The relationship between these components creates further distance between the spectator and the content of fine art by transferring power from the image to the method of viewing in the space of an exhibit. Photography differs because it implies reality and, in doing so, allows an audience to search beyond the image based upon what the photograph presents. Through connotation and denotation, the viewer is able to examine the time surrounding the image, basing their assessments on how the contents of the photograph interact with one another. Instead of examining the objective reality of a photograph, the subjectivity of fine art only allows the viewer to be included as a separate entity. However, outside of the exhibit, fine art is seen as even further removed from reality as the spectator feels wholly disconnected from the image. While fine art may contain the same components of a photograph, the inescapable connotations of the medium force spectators to denounce any connection to their immediate reality.

Violence within fine art is overshadowed by the belief that it contributes to history instead of reflecting reality.



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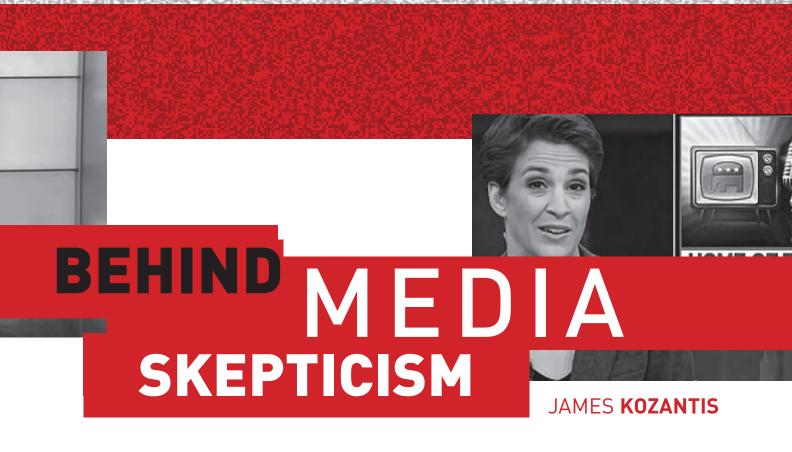
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# THE DRIVING INC. FORCE

aith in the media is down across the board. A recent gallop poll shows that 60% of people do not trust the media, including broadcast, print and online news sources, to report the news fairly, accurately and fully (Morales 2012). This poll, and other studies like it, also show that Republicans don't trust the media with half the frequency Democrats do, with 58 percent of Democrats saying they have a great deal or fair amount of trust in the news media, while only 28 percent of Republicans gave that response. This paper examines what role the media itself has in perpetuating the idea that the media is not to be trusted. If this is the case, there are significant consequences. Obviously, this could influence the opinion of the news media and lead to an under-informed populace, but more importantly, devoting news time to critiquing the media leaves little time to covering major issues.

This paper looked at news shows across the political spectrum to see if negative accusations towards the media are correlated with political affiliation. This paper separated negative comments toward the media into two categories: claims of bias and claims of inadequacy. The latter is considered less harmful to the media's image, because it simply posits that the media did something wrong, rather than the former's claim that the media is incapable of being honest and



therefore accurate, because they have some form of bias. Further defining these, this paper did not count individual comments, merely instances. So, when, for instance, Bill O'Reilly said, "But now the press is working in concert with the Obama administration. No longer do we have a skeptical media when it comes to confronting power," for the purposes of the paper, that would count as one instance of claiming bias, despite him claiming it twice. However, if he launched a claim in two different segments, that would be two separate instances. This paper also examined whether the comments are about the media in general, or about a specific outlet, the latter of which is less harmful to the media's image because it's not necessarily representative of the media as a whole, whereas claims about the media in general are inherently meant to represent the media as a whole. Finally, this paper examined whether the comments are said by the host of a show or the guest of the show. Claims by a guest on a show don't have the same weight as claims by the host of the show, because viewers trust the host more.

Examined in this paper are The O'Reilly Factor with Bill O'Reilly, a conservative-leaning political news show, and The Rachel Maddow Show with Rachel Maddow, a liberal-leaning political news show. Additionally, this paper compared the

findings from these two shows to The Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer, an apolitical news show, to see if either a conservative or liberal news show varied too much from a neutral median on negative comments toward the media.

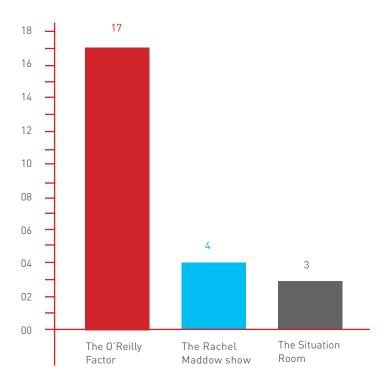
This paper examined the fourteen episodes of each show that directly follow the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, remembering that each minute the news shows spent disparaging the media is a minute they didn't cover the important political aftermath and policy impact of the shooting. This paper examined the following fourteen episodes so each show would be equally represented in the paper.

## **FINDINGS**

For The O'Reilly Factor, this paper found instances of negative comments about the media 17 times in the 14 episodes counted, compared to four in The Rachel Maddow Show and three on The Situation Room (Figure 1).

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## **NEGATIVE CLAIMS AGAINST MEDIA (BY SHOW)**



**fig 1 {** The O'Reilly Factor lead all shows in negative claims against the media with 17 in the 14-Episode period.

Breaking down the results further, this paper found that more often than not, on The O'Reilly Factor, negative claims against the media were that of bias and about the media in general (Figures 2 & 3). Phrases such as "liberal media," were used often, with more specific comments such as, "Obama's pals in the news media," even once referring to the media as the President's "stenographers." All of these fall into those two categories, as they claimed the media has a bias in favor of President Obama, and all theses claims didn't name a specific organization or point to a specific instance.

Examining the other two shows, this paper found almost the opposite. Most negative claims against the media on The Rachel Maddow Show and The Situation room were that of inadequacy (75% and 100%, repectively) – the media did something wrong, or didn't cover something adequately enough.

When the media did something wrong, the claims would be directed at the specific outlet. This was the case, many argued, when The Journal News, a small newspaper in suburban New York, published the names and addresses of all the gun owners in the area. Because the gun control debate was very heated at the time of publication, this story stirred up a lot of controversy – and news coverage. The O'Reilly Factor covered this in two segments in two episodes, amounting to four negative claims against the media, including two claims of bias and two claims of inadequacy. The

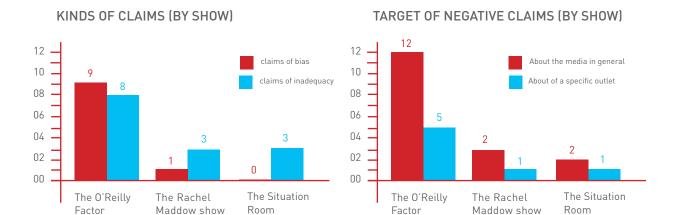


fig 2 & 3 { The O'Reilly Factor led the shows in claims of inadequacy and bias, while having most of those comments directed at the media in general, a category the Factor also took a large lead in.

### CLAIMS BY O'REILLY AND MADDOW COMPARED TO THE SITUATION ROOM

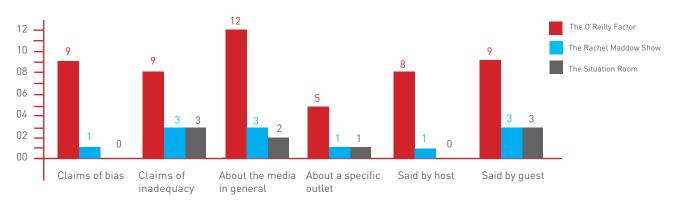


fig 4 {
The Rachel Maddow Show was fairly consistent with The Situation Room, leading only marginally in a few categories. The
O'Reilly Factor lead The Situation Room in all categories, including and especially those most harmful to the media's image.

Rachel Maddow Show, interestingly enough, did not cover the controversy. The Situation Room covered it in one episode where one guest claimed The Journal News used poor ethical standards when publishing that story – a claim of inadequacy.

All across the board, The O'Reilly Factor led in the categories identified as most harmful to the media's image, claims of bias and against the media in general. Although nine of the 17 negative comments about the media on The O'Reilly Factor were said by a guest, the eight said by the host Bill O'Reilly still lead both shows by a large margin. Rachel Maddow only gave one accusation, which was against a specific outlet, and Wolf Blitzer gave zero. When you compare The Rachel Maddow Show with The Situation Room, this paper's neutral median, The Rachel Maddow Show only deviates from that median in two out of the six categories, and only by one instance for each. So, generally speaking, The Rachel Maddow Show stayed on par with the neutral media outlet (Figure 4). The O'Reilly Factor always had well more negative claims about the media than The Situation Room, as few as four more and as most as ten more in certain categories (Figure 4). Not only did The O'Reilly Factor lead the charge against the media, it did so incomparably.

Researching where the public gets negative ideas about the media is a difficult task; it can't be proven why someone thinks what they think.

## **DISCUSSION**

To the benefit of The O'Reilly Factor, part of the "Be Accountible" section of the Society of Professional Journalists code encourages the sort of content this paper found in The Factor. The code reads "[e] xpose unethical practices of journalists and the news media." Although this can apply to The Factor's coverage of The Journal News' gun map, as they brought a discussion, about the ethics of such a story, it does not apply to the majority of their accusations. This part of the code applies best to claims of inadequacy. As discussed previously, most of the negative claims made about the media in The O'Reilly Factor were about the media in general, and only two out of the five negative claims about a specific outlet were paired with an actual event. This is not exposing unethical practices; it is leveling accusations. The SPJ code reads, "[d]iligently seek out subjects of news stories to give them the opportunity to respond to allegations of wrongdoing." Although The O'Reilly Factor did seek out the editor of The Journal News (who refused an interview), the show made no

attempt to seek out any members of the "liberal" or "mainstream" media when it leveled the fifteen other negative claims at them. These issues are highlighted best by The O'Reilly Factor, but even the few undefended accusations that fell into the more harmful categories on The Rachel Maddow Show and The Situation Room are too many and violate the SPJ code.

Negative claims against the media could easily be motivated by economic concerns. The O'Reilly Factor, and other media outlets, such as Republican talk radio, set themselves up as alternative to the "mainstream media," further creating a competition between the two outlets. A recent Public Policy Poll shows that Fox News, the network on which The O'Reilly Factor airs, is the most trusted news network (Polling 2010). According to their press kit, Fox News is routinely placed in the top ten in terms of viewership (Fox News Corporate Info 2012). So it seems The O'Reilly Factor is winning the competition it created, and that is correlated with a high number of negative claims toward the media.

However, the right of the public to receive information is at stake in these cases, The O'Reilly Factor and otherwise. In the Journal News example, the public has a right to know of examples of poor journalism. However, when there are no actual events, no examples of the media doing wrong, they are just accusations. These not only don't foster the public's right to know because they don't give any information, they also fail to foster the public's right to know because the news networks aren't covering the more important issues when they devote time to accusations.

This paper found the conservative-leaning show led the liberal-leaning show and the neutral show in number of negative claims against the media by a large margin. Researching where the public gets negative ideas about the media is a difficult task; it can't be proven why someone thinks what they think. However, there has been a lot of correlative research on the topic. A study by Jonathan S. Morris called "Slanted Objectivity? Perceived Media Bias, Cable News Exposure, and Political Attitudes,"

found that people who perceive bias in the mainstream media (a direct relation to this paper's "claims of bias" findings) use Fox News as their main source of news (Morris 2007). Also, the study found that people who a have "low opinions of the news media as an institution" (a close relation to this paper's "claims of inadequacy" findings) use Fox News as their main source of news. This study found no correlation between people who use CNN, the network that airs The Situation Room, or MSNBC, the network that airs The Rachel Maddow Show, with people who perceive media bias or inadequacy. The findings from Morris are consistent with the findings of this paper, but they are admittedly slightly different. This paper looked at what ideas news shows present to the viewers, whereas Morris' study looked at where people with certain ideas go for news. Still, there is a correlation

between people who view Fox News and people who believe that the media is either bias or inadequate, and The O'Reilly Factor had the greatest number of negative claims against the media by far. These findings together suggest a correlation between the amount negative claims against the media by a news show and the ideas the viewers of that show hold.

### CONCLUSION

This paper found that comments most harmful to the media's image were mostly said on The O'Reilly Factor, a conservative-leaning political news show. When compared to a neutral mean, MSNBC's The Rachel Maddow Show was not far off, with only one instance more than The Situation Room, and only more than the mean by one in three categories. The O'Reilly Factor was not comparable

to the neutral mean, beating it in every category, especially those most harmful to the media's image.

That media skepticism is found most frequently in viewers of Fox News only bolsters this paper's findings (Morris 2007). There is a negative correlation, then, between how often negative claims about the media are made on a news show and how likely viewers of that show are to trust the media. These attitudes toward the mainstream media are very dangerous to democracy, as the press plays such a pivotal role in a well-informed electorate, and The O'Reilly Factor is perpetuating those attitudes at a rate unmatched in liberal-leaning or neutral news shows.





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## BOARD **ERSHIP** DEUTURISTIC ADING PARLIAMEN FUNKADELIC

JOSHUA BIRD

In his 1994 essay Black to the Future, cultural critic Mark Dery coined the term "Afrofuturism" and defined it as such:

"Speculative fiction that treats African-American themes and addresses African-American concerns in the context of 20th century technoculture - and, more generally, African-American signification that appropriates images of technology and a prosthetically enhanced future" (Dery 180).

While critics argue that Afrofuturism actually first came into the public consciousness during the early part of the 20th century through the works of African American writers such as Pauline Hopkins and George Schuyler, Afrofuturist music was pioneered by Sun Ra during the late 1950s. Influenced by jazz music, African culture, and the impending Space Age, Sun Ra's music contained Afrocentric elements that would have a profound influence on black musicians, as well as writers and artists, for years to come. One such influence was George Clinton, a fellow musician who once said of Sun Ra, "this boy was definitely out to lunch - same

place I eat" (Heron). Clinton was the mastermind behind the 1970s funk collective Parliament-Funkadelic, and his artistic vision included extensive elements of science fiction. Through the use of their heavily Afrofuturistic lyrics, album artwork, and extravagant stage show, George Clinton and Parliament-Funkadelic used their music to unify the black community. With this unity, they sought to elevate African Americans everywhere to a rightfully deserved equal status.

To fully understand Clinton's vision, it is important to be aware of the group's history. The roots of Parliament-Funkadelic can be traced back to The Parliaments, a doo-wop barbershop quintet based in Plainfield, New Jersey, that was conceived and constructed by George Clinton himself. Featuring bizarre and yet socially conscious lyrics, The Parliaments struggled during much of the 6os and were marred by obscurity and mediocre record sales for several years. The group finally found success in 1967 with the release of the single, (I Wanna) Testify, and with the

group's newly acquired fortune, George Clinton assembled a five man backing band that was dubbed Funkadelic (a portmanteau of funk and psychedelic) to complement the five vocalists. Due to a dispute between Clinton and Revilot Records, he temporarily lost the rights to The Parliaments name, which led to the Funkadelic moniker being used for the entire ensemble until the 1970s.

In 1974, Clinton ushered in a new era with the revival of the Parliament name and from that point on, Parliament and Funkadelic both operated under the leadership of Clinton while using the same group of assorted musicians. While the two acts were essentially the same band, they could very easily be distinguished by their respective brands of music: Parliament featured more mainstream music driven by vocal harmonies, lyrics that dealt with compelling social issues and catchy horn arrangements, while Funkadelic was characterized by a more experimental, guitar based sound that placed emphasis on solos and skilled instrumentation (Clough). From then on, the two groups

Coming to you directly from the Mothership. Top of the Chocolate Milky Way, 500,000 kilowatts of P. Funk Power"

operated and toured concurrently, usually under the name Parliament-Funkadelic or simply P-Funk.

While Funkadelic's music certainly has science fiction elements to it, Parliament's work was completely engrossed in Afrofuturist themes. The seeds of George Clinton's scientific but artistic vision were sown on Parliament's March 1975 effort Chocolate City (Fig. 2), the first track of which opens up with Clinton's half-spoken, half-rapped first verse, "What's happening CC [Chocolate City]? They still call it the White House, but that's a temporary condition too. Can you dig it, CC" (Clinton)?

The album's theme was influenced by Washington, DC, a place where migration from the South made it a predominantly black community. During the early 1960s, Washington and D.C. were essentially two distinct places: the former was "the White House, monuments, slick museums and ornate embassies", while the latter was "neighborhoods, playgrounds, stores and churches" (Carroll). In the aftermath of the riots which followed the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., the black community splintered into many different and often conflicting neighborhoods so that there were "multiple" DCs. With the release of CC however, "black Washington coalesced around an idea voiced by the glib tongue of a funk maestro, an idea that momentarily fused D.C's divisions with a vision" (Carroll). Clinton realized that

there was power in solidarity, and he used the idea in the title track (and the album as a whole) to suggest that black migration to the inner city was actually a positive thing and he even proposed that the United States itself could eventually become a chocolate city one day:

"Tell 'em to make sure they got their James Brown pass. And don't be surprised if Ali is in the White House. Reverend Ike, Secretary of the Treasury. Richard Pryor, Minister of Education. Stevie Wonder, Secretary of Fine Arts. And Miss Aretha Franklin, the First Lady. Are you out there, CC? A chocolate city is no dream. It's my piece of the rock and I dig you, CC" (Clinton).

This speculative utopia that Clinton envisions is important because this kind of speculative fiction has actually been extensively explored in other works of Afrofuturistic art, which firmly cements Chocolate City in the genre. The most notable example of this is Sutton Griggs' novel Imperium in Imperio. Published in 1899, the book imagines a separate African American state within the United States, much like Clinton's speculative Chocolate City. While Griggs' work isn't considered "true" Afrofuturism because of the time it was published as well as its content, Clinton's lyrics on Chocolate City represent the birth of his vision, and would anticipate the most socially conscious, Afrofuturistic piece of work that Parliament-Funkadelic would ever create.

December 1975 saw the release of Parliament's magnum opus, entitled Mothership Connection. This work embodied many of the aspects of Mark Dery's definition of Afrofuturism, as it not only addressed African American themes in the context of the twentieth century, but it "appropriated African American images of technology and a prosthetically enhanced future" (Dery 180). This album was markedly different from Chocolate City and other Afrofuturistic art at the time because of the very direct way in which the theme was ingrained in the work. Consider the following lyric spoken by one of Clinton's alter-egos, The Lollipop Man (the first true character of the P-Funk mythology) from the first track on the album, "P. Funk (Wants to get Funked Up)":

"Good evening. Do not attempt to adjust your radio, there is nothing wrong. We have taken control as to bring you this special show... Welcome to station W-E-F-U-N-K, better known as We Funk. Or deeper still, the Mothership Connection, home of the extraterrestrial brothers... Coming to you directly from the Mothership. Top of the Chocolate Milky Way, 500,000 kilowatts of P. Funk Power" (Clinton).

In this passage, it is easy to see how the lyrics embody many of the aspects of Dery's definition of Afrofuturism. Not only have these aliens "taken control," but they refer to themselves as "extraterrestrial brothers... at the top of the chocolate Milky Way." This clearly represents the African American, as well as science fiction elements espoused by Dery.

While Mothership Connection contained many lyrics with science fiction themes, it also featured something equally significant: an album cover that presented George Clinton himself emerging from a flying saucer. This was one of the first times in mainstream culture that an African-American had been featured in space, and Clinton explained his decision to do so as such: "we [Parliament-Funkadelic] had put black people in situations nobody ever thought they would be in, like the White House. I figured another place you wouldn't think black people would be was in outer space. I was a big fan of Star Trek, so we did a thing with a pimp sitting in a spaceship shaped like a Cadillac" (Hicks). By "working with a shared set of mythological images and icons such as space iconography, the idea of extraterrestriality, and the idea of space exploration" (Corbett) as cultural critic John Corbett put it, Clinton defamiliarized the way in which African Americans were perceived by the public following the civil rights and Space Age era.

This defamiliarization is much more important in the context of Afrofuturism than simply featuring an African-American in outer space. In Kodwo Eshun's critical essay Further Considerations on Afrofuturism, he thoroughly explained the evolution of the perception of black people: "Afrofuturism uses extraterrestriality as a hyperbolic trope to explore the historical terms, the everyday implications of forcibly imposed dislocation, and the constitution of Black Atlantic subjectivities: from slave to negro to coloured to evolué to black to African to African American" (Eshun 299). With the release of Mothership Connection, George Clinton took that subjectivity one step further, from African-American to equal citizen. On the second track of the album, entitled Mothership Connection (Star Child), Clinton as Starchild (another alter ego and famous P-Funk character) proclaims that The Mothership "ain't nothing but a party." But more importantly the Mothership itself can be interpreted as a sort of salvation for African Americans. As Starchild also says later in the song, "you have overcome, for I am here" (Clinton), signifying that black people in America have reached Eshun's threshold of African Americanism, that is, the status of equal citizen.

There was one more way that P-Funk reaffirmed its Afrofuturistic message: through their elaborate, grand stage shows. During the height of their career (1975-1979), Parliament-Funkadelic's live show was nothing short of a musical phenomenon. Live shows featured many musicians, all of whom would be dressed head to toe with the most ornate, outrageous costumes and props imaginable, all of which would contribute to the ever growing P-Funk mythology. Shows during this time in the band's history climaxed when a huge spaceship (dubbed "The Mothership") would land on stage amid smoke and dim lights, at which point George Clinton would exit the ship as his alter ego Starchild from Mothership Connection to rousing applause and cheering (Gutkovich 64). The audience's reaction to Clinton is a perfect representation of his quote "you have overcome, for I am here" because his personification of the Starchild character is representative of African Americans coming together and acting in concert for a common purpose. This clearly meets Eshun's threshold of African Americanism, that is, it further cements the status of African Americans as

equal citizens. These elaborate props and costumes would help the audience become completely consumed in the alternate universe of Afrofuturistic P-Funk mythology.

P-Funk's Afrofuturistic theme has profoundly influenced the contemporary African-American music scene. In fact, P-Funk was the primary influence of the rap movement gangsta-funk (G-funk), and remains to this day one of the most sampled acts in rap music, which itself has become an important cultural phenomenon. A good example of this is Dr. Dre's critically acclaimed 1992 album The Chronic, which prominently features Parliament-Funkadelic samples on nearly every song. Since rap music has entered the mainstream, P-Funk has been able to transcend its original predominantly African-American demographic and permeate to white pieces of cornbread like me.

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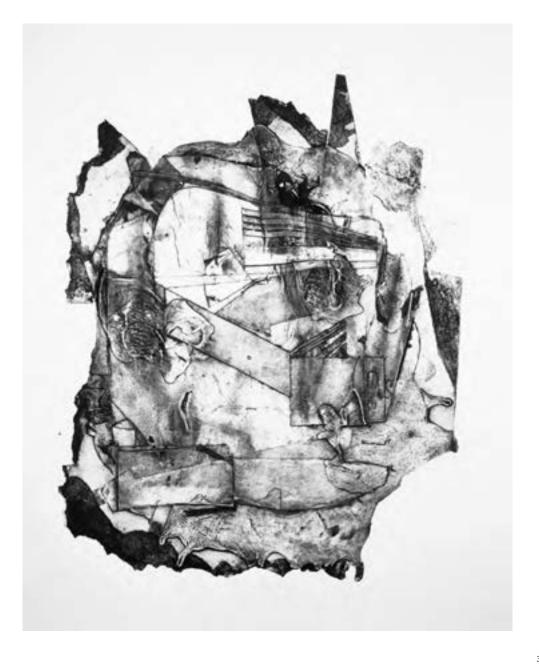
## BFA SHOWCASE

The following artists have been selected from Western's Bachelor of Fine Arts program, which allows students to continue their artistic development as they ready themselves to enter the professional art world.

Each artist has developed an artistic identity through the exploration of various media, themes, and processes. The following images are a sample of larger bodies of work that each student has produced throughout their time at WWU.

# **DREW MILLER**

Utilizing collagraph printmaking techniques I create black and white prints and sculptures. The plates I print from are conglomerations of past rejected materials including old collages, cardboard, latex paint, and various adhesives. I am interested in processes in which materials transform and take on new forms. This type change occurs when an inked-up plate runs through the press, leaving a visual record of its previous state that is both familiar and alien.





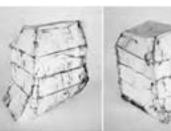


2 3













**Spring** Collographic print, 36" x 30"

**Molt** Collographic print, 20" x 27"

**Dud** Collographic print, 21" x 19"

**Pack** Paper sculpture, 4"x 6" x 4.5" 5 **Twin** Paper sculpture, 4"x 6" x 4.5"

# **JOE RUDKO**

A photographer by training, Joe Rudko has always been interested in work that refers to the perception of truth in the visual. Working with photographs, albums, and other found items, Rudko acknowledges the physical aspects of the objects with which he works. Ripping, cutting, and folding surfaces, he reacts and extends the found material with paint, graphite, and photographic spotting pen. Through this collage process Rudko has developed a system of inquiry; in which improvisations and conversations engage with raw material, rendering interpretation vulnerable and unstable.





2





3 4



5

# Object no. 8 (fern) 2013. found photograph, photographic

spotting pen, on paper. II x 15"

Object no. 13 (film box)

2 **Object no. 13 (film box)**2013. found photograph,colored pencil,
on paper. II x 15"

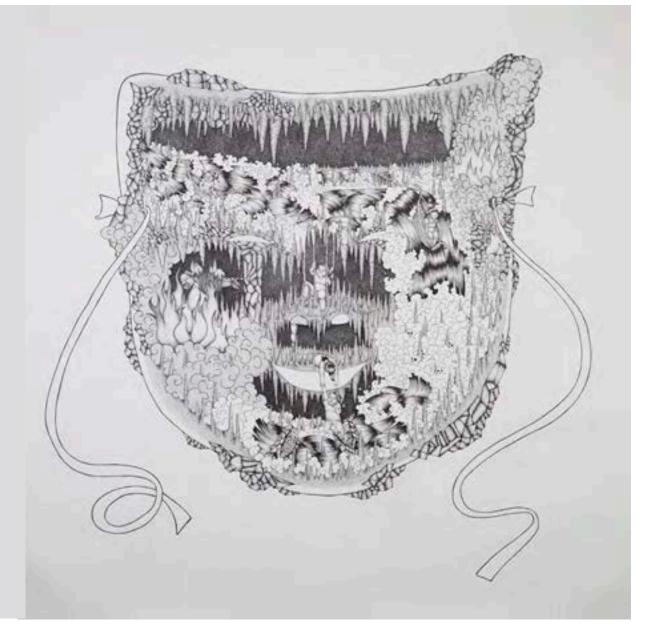
# Object no. 17 (vista point) 2013. found photograph, colored pencil, on paper. II x 15"

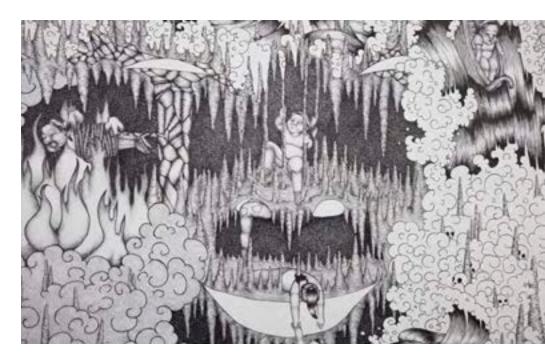
# Object no. 18 (flood) 2013, found photograph, acrylic, on paper., II x 15"

# Object no. 2 (grass) 2013. found photograph, photographic spotting pen, on paper. II x 15"

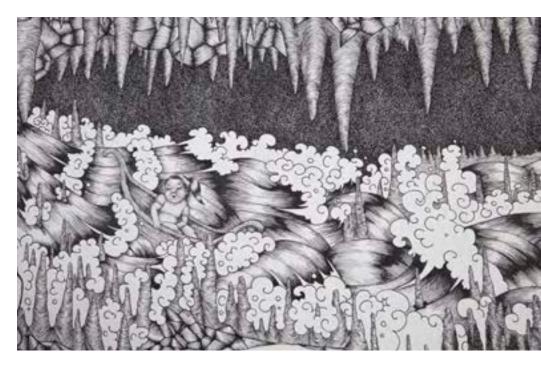
### **TESSA ASATO**

I create large-scale drawings of stylized self-portraits that capture drama and humor inspired by Buddhism. I approach my drawings through pen on paper, and make small scale-drawings that ultimately compose into an abstract large-scale drawing. My process in creating these drawings is very meditative and allows me to focus and tune out distractions around me. The rich detail in my work illustrates a meditative quality, but not intended to strike viewers as a didactic Buddhist teaching. My work is open to all interpretations just like in Buddhism.





detail



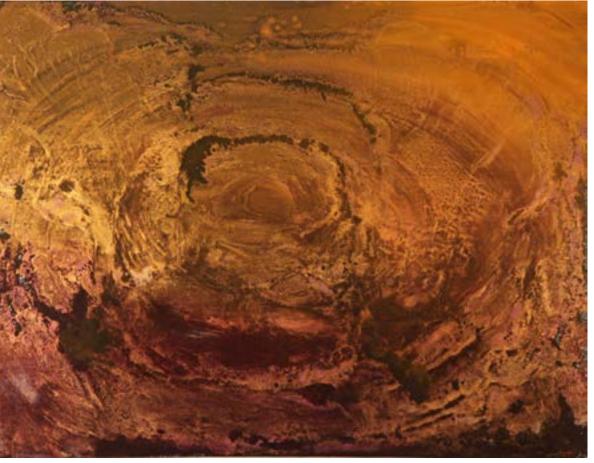
detail

<sup>1</sup> **Hell Mask** Micron Pen, 42"x42". 2012

### KIM BALLA

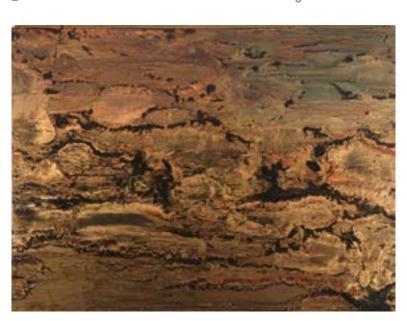
I use an alchemical process of approaching paint. I use the paint and chemical materials in a way that is similar to a geological process that would take years to come to life. I paint by using and manipulating the chemical properties of paint. I think about how the paint can move and change itself and how I can manipulate that change.

To me, the process is the most enthralling part of my work. I am interested in experimentation in order to get patterns and textures that are unfamiliar to me. In thinking about paint in an alchemical way it allows me to create these unfamiliar textures. After countless hours of trial and error, I have finally discovered an exciting process which creates iridescent atmospheric-like pattern. By mixing various painting mediums I have developed a blend of liquids that chemically react with each other to create unique patterns and contours. With a focused flick of the brush I can change and manipulate these eroding contours. I control the chemical properties of paint as I mix oozing liquids into one another and watch as the forms magically appear and change before my eyes. I observe as my brush moves through the liquid surface signaling a reaction, which I have come to know and harness as my own. While I direct the watery flow into a finished composition I become mesmerized watching the twinkling sediments as they emerge and submerge in the pooling liquids. This process of glazing and manipulating the watery chemical layers assists in creating a deep other worldly surface.











4

#### 1 Untitled

36 x 48 in. oil, acrylic, metallic pigment on panel, 2013

### 2 Untitled

18 x 18 in. oil, acrylic, metallic pigment on canvas, 2013

#### 3 Untitled

24 x 36 in. oil, acrylic, metallic pigment on panel, 2013

5

### 4 Untitled

36 x 48 in. oil, acrylic, metallic pigment on panel, 2013

### 5 Untitled

48 x 48 in. oil, acrylic, metallic pigment on canvas, 2013

# COMMUNITY, CULTURE

and

# IDENTITY

in an

# AGE OF GLOBALIZATION

KATIE WIGGINS

As we move further into the age of globalization, we are seeing changes not only at a global level but at individual and communal levels; changes that we cannot wholly identify but that we recognize in ourselves. We are adapting to a global world, one that is affecting our identity and culture and, as we attempt to hold on to this identity and still converse with a larger world, we ultimately are forced to reshape our identities. Some may wonder what this will mean for the future and to what extent it affects us as individuals and communities. To answer this, I argue that we can use our own history to better understand the world around us, even in a time of shifting ideas and global changes.

The American Revolution was a period of profound change for colonists in New England. The 18th century was rife with conflict, expansion and global immersion for New Englanders and it forced small scale communities to interact with a larger world in new ways. The small immediate community was the most important structure for the colonial Americans and was ultimately a significant motivator for joining in the Revolution. The colonists participated in the Revolution to protect their local autonomy and maintain their traditional communities through a revolution but, in doing so, they actively opened their community to a larger political entity and became a part of a larger network of communities, losing the same autonomy they originally fought for while shifting their concept of community and identity.

New England communities were largely influenced by the church and family. Piety was expected of every member of the community and was enforced by "moral surveillance." This surveillance was an expected activity by the minister and/or selectmen. This surveillance ensured the morality of the community by keeping social checks on individuals and families. This focus on morality and piety was an attempt to reach perfection and maintain unity within the town. Churches represented the highest authority within the town and dictated moral, social and political behavior.

New Englanders worked vigorously at maintaining a self-contained and sufficient community. To ensure that they met the needs of the entire community, they used town meetings as the primary means of government. These town meetings were the center of political power for the town, and kept power localized and focused on the community and communal needs. These meetings encouraged cooperation among the villagers and used spheres of influence to ensure that problems were being solved and consensus among villagers was reached. Most town meetings only discussed town problems, rarely integrating any larger colonial issues and "no political pretext existed for mobilization, or even communication, that cut across all the communities of the colony." These communities did not communicate with one another and rarely saw a reason to. Though the town meetings added a certain democratic aspect to the community, it kept the community closed as they could handle any internal problems within the town at these meetings and rarely

sought outside help as they simply did not need that help.

These communities operated on a cooperation and self- and community-policing approach to maintaining social order and. These communities were concerned with their local affairs and maintaining peace within their immediate community. We have seen how isolated and autonomous these communities were and we will now look at the conflicts the communities were facing before and during the Revolution that forced a shift in their community and culture.

As tensions began to build between Britain and the Colonies in the 1760s and 1770s, most communities were still relatively unconcerned with what was going on outside their borders: "opposition to British policies outside Boston was at best an intermittent event in the life of most towns. They preferred to be left alone."

The small immediate community was the most important structure for the colonial Americans

However, with the creation of the Boston Committee of Correspondence in 1772, Bostonians had a way of reaching some of these communities and make them aware of the growing problems between the colonists and the British-placed royal governors. In December of 1772, the small community of Concord, Massachusetts received their first letter from the Boston Committee of Correspondence detailing British grievances and their attempts to enslave the colonies. This alone may not have been enough to encourage Concord to join against Britain, but the Boston Committee of Correspondence continued to keep towns up-to-date on all of Britain's threats against the colonies and encourage communities to share their sentiments.

Soon, towns began to follow Boston's lead and make correspondence committees with the express purpose of communicating between the individual communities. With this new development, small communities were suddenly made aware of provincial politics and the growing problems with Britain. As these communities continued to reach out to one another, a steady network was being created among them. They were entering into a larger world, being introduced into, what they considered, global issues and their role in them. It came to their attention that in order to protect their own community, liberty and freedom, these communities

These men became tied to one another; an identity was forged that was not a reflection of their original community.

It was a new experience of community, of common identity through common experience.

would have to take an active role in this network. Britain's direct interference with town politics resonated within the communities and provided the push necessary to encourage large scale communication and cooperation among communities, even among rural communities previously uninterested in provincial politics.

The communities began to mobilize as they prepared for war. With this mobilization, communities made physical networks with warning systems designed to help protect the individual towns. The most notable example of this is probably Paul Revere and the "midnight riders" as they have been popularized. These communities relied on one another and were forced to cooperate in order to accomplish the larger goal of protecting their towns and autonomy. The known community grew larger as the colonists not only shifted their awareness to a larger scaled political entity, but they recognized the relative authority of that entity and cooperated within it to make a working system.

With the first shots of the war fired at Lexington and Concord, it became apparent, to both the British and the colonists, that this was a war that could and would be fought and that the colonists had a better chance of winning than previously imagined. The colonists' very way of life was being threatened, and they were willing to fight to secure their traditional society. The colonists joined the war efforts in order to maintain their community and their autonomy over their community. But Lexington and Concord were only the beginning of the war and the next eight years would pose challenges that would put different types of pressures on communities. These pressures would cause a shift from localized to centralized power; a shift that would change the very nature of the concept of community and open the colonist's minds to the idea of a broader community and their place within that community.

War changed how the communities and individuals within the community communicated. Large groups of men, both elite and non-elite, would leave the community to participate in the war and would return with a "worldly" experience that many would not have had before. Some Now that these communities had begun working with one another, they had to realize that, in order for a community to work at a larger scale, "the people must cede to it some of their natural rights in order to vest it with requisite powers."

traveled farther than others, though each would have been exposed to different individuals from different communities. War caused a shift in ideas of authority: men on the front lines formed their own community; one that tied them to the militia rather than their homes. "For the first time there was an American military force not tied by command, finance, or recruitment to a particular province or state," these men became tied to one another; an identity was forged that was not a reflection of their original community. It was a new experience of community, of common identity through common experience. This was a new unifying experience that occurred at multiple levels of society. The elected (elites) would become part of a unified political culture, as they continually came together to coordinate the war and as members of the Continental Congress to discuss the war, how to win it, and how to govern the new United States. The ideas of community were constantly being challenged during the war, as New Englanders had to support a war that was taking place beyond their own borders and outside their individual interest as the war became too much to support.

War was incredibly damaging both economically and emotionally for the members of New England. The Revolution had a profound emotional impact on those involved and was, in many ways, traumatic. Throughout the years from 1775-1783, many people lost their homes, friends and family members to the war, and even those that did not lived in fear that they would. At the start of the war, many believed that the Revolution would be quick and decisive and that, after the war, everyone could return to their various ways of life. The New Englanders believed that the Revolution would not impact their communities, except to reinforce the authority

they already held at the local level. This was not to be the case. Instead, they were engaged in a war that lost popular support quickly and left people desirous of returning to their closed communities. However, as the war continued, New Englanders would find this task difficult to accomplish as they were becoming more dependent on this newly established network of communities and were continuing to integrate themselves further and further into "global" issues.

Economically, the war became more than the communities could handle. The American Revolution was disastrous and crippled the United States financially. It is estimated that the colonies did not return to their pre-Revolutionary economic prosperity until a quarter of a century after the War ended.

After the war ended, the economic problems were far from being solved. In some ways, in fact, they became worse still as debates over printing money and the inability to pay off loans left people with no money at all. Tensions began to rise within and between the States yet again as the small scale communities were unable to pay the state and the state was unable to pay the federal government for the costs of war. The need for one currency medium across the states and acceptance within the global economy were a necessity for America to pick themselves up financially. The standardization and unity across states became a necessity in order to pay off debts and keep conflict to a minimum. Now that these communities had begun working with one another, they had to realize that, in order for a community to work at

a larger scale, "the people must cede to it some of their natural rights in order to vest it with requisite powers." With this standardization, the communities had to leave a part of their culture and autonomy behind to adopt a new political, economic and social order.

This cessation of power was only being realized towards the end of the 18th century as the people were being forced to acknowledge that their nation needed a government with authority capable of regulating the states and towns in order to provide practical solutions to the economic problems the new nation was facing. If the states were not regulated, there would be greater chaos and confusion. State conventions were called to solve the economic issues that could simply no longer be solved at the town level. The attrition of this local power was furthered by the creation and gradual acceptance of the Constitution. The Constitution established a strong central government with bureaucracy that served to separate the people from their government and the power they once held and was, in many ways, a betrayal of the local community's original goal of maintaining local autonomy. This growing dependence on a larger network reinforced the idea that these were no longer small independent communities; rather they had become a part of a large scale group of interdependent, cooperating communities.

The latter half of the r8th century was a difficult time for New Englanders and became a period of challenging ideas and restructuring of community. Because of this period of conflict and trauma, some men chose never to come home. They began new lives in other, more urban, New England towns, integrating themselves

"One change always leaves the way open for the establishment of others."

-Niccolo Machiavelli

into a new community to better fit a new set of needs brought on by war and shifting ideas. The generations following the war continued to challenge the norms of their communities, searching new fields for employment as they arranged themselves in their new, broader world. In order to accomplish this, the members of the New England communities lost a part of their identity, a part of their culture.

New Englanders entered global politics to protect their local autonomy and their traditional communities, only to experience a small-scale globalization of the same communities they were attempting to protect from outside influence. Thomas Jefferson stated "these wards, called townships in New England, are the vital principle of their governments, and have proved themselves the wisest invention ever devised by the wit of man for the perfect exercise of self-government, and for its preservation." The local autonomy held by New England communities before the American Revolution and the Constitution was recognized by Jefferson as a brilliant institution, one that ultimately he would be disappointed to see disappear as the communities failed to maintain this local power.

As the relevant community grew larger, New Englanders were unable to determine a "public good" and provide for it because there were simply too many parties, too many voices involved in this larger world. With the beginning of the 19th century, New Englanders continued to open to this larger world, strengthening the communal network that began before the Revolution, and, as they did so, continued to change their own cultures and lose their traditional practices to meet the needs of the larger national community.

Globalization, small or large scale, is a continual concern for many scholars and activists alike. This concern grows as we move further into the digital age; with social media and the ability to share information instantaneously we have been opened to a broader world that is continually getting smaller and smaller. The effects of this instant communication and integration with the world around us beg the question: While we become members of a large scale community, what bits of our identity, community and culture are we giving up? And perhaps, most importantly: can we ever get those bits back or are they forever changed or lost? Perhaps, for these answers, we need only look at our own past.



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# CONCRETE

Concrete shroud is an exhibition originating from a dialogue betwen the two artists, culminating in a series of lectures written by Mariah Tate Klemens and Jake Reller.

### POTENTIALITIES OF EXISTENCE

JAKE RELLER

ariah Tate Klemens, fundamentally minimalist in her program embraces simplicity, the mundane, as her prima materia. But this is a different alchemy: the masculine heroicism of Carl Andre's austere bricks and Richard Serra's grandiose sheet metal dissipate into materials less obsessed with Western industrialism, more interested in the humanity raw matter may prophesize. Steel is reimagined as pneuma as bricks crumble like Jericho to water. Lead melts, coalesces unto the floor as fat. But don't let her emphasis on humanity fool you into thinking she is passive, her work haunts the viewer with reverberations of death. Dissection, dismemberment; the violent surgery the cubists did to the picture plane, Klemens conceptualizes unto our biological processes themselves. All the while, Cronenberg with his diabolical corn syrup, lurks nearby.



Cover Appx 3'x4' bedsheet & wax

### REFLECTIVITY OF THE VOID WITHIN THE LACK

MARIAH TATE KLEMENS

The Void is neither the presence of something nor the absence of nothing, a constructed non-space ideal for viewer's self-implication. Considering Yves Klein's notion of the "Void," I will explore Jake Reller's necessity to produce a viewer's obligation to self-reflect within his Voids by analyzing the large lithographic print, Consuming the Lack. Evoking a secular/spiritual duality similar to that of Klein, Reller's compositional construction exists between an illustrative narration of the flaws in humanity and a formal art display reflective of viewers' potential shortcomings.

Set near the bottom of a large, clean, thick white paper, an indecipherable breed of dog stands with an absent leg and open mouth displaying the moment before the dog begins to consume a deer appendage. With no reference to any other portion of the stag, Consuming the Lack, constructs



Consuming the Lack 22" x 30", Lithograph, 2012



Body of Water, Body of Fat Dimensions variable Plastic bags, 98.14 lbs of water, 15.9 lbs of Crisco

In Cover, which takes the form of an implied figure recumbent on the gallery floor, the artist has coated a commonplace bed sheet in paraffin wax, fixing the pliable material in time, an insect in resin. The rigidity of the work is only perceived, as time and heat will invariably melt the delicate forms. As though exhaling, the pieces seem to sigh under the weariness of external inputs, and thus becomes metaphoric for both the literal sleep in a bed, and the metaphoric expiration under a shroud. Cover becomes a memento mori of sorts, and there is

a poignant loss of the figure in time; it is as though the sleeper's spirit had already departed, but now even the memory, the trace of the sleeper, also fades.

If Cover allows the human form to be seen in its entirety, it is the exception and not the rule. As if The brilliant but foolhardy mad scientist played by Jeff Goldblum in the 1986 adaptation of The Fly, Klemens atomizes the body in her piece(s) Body of Water, Body of Fat, reassembling select elements in the white cube fascimile-transporter of the gallery. She renders us on the floor: in

heaping mounds, the average amount of water in our body (held in zip lock bags, like a transparent epidermis) and the average amount of fat in our bodies (here represented by ordinary Crisco). The fat she kisses to the ground, by transferring mouthfuls of the stuff from the store bought cardboard cylinder to the floor. These multiform references to the body, of consumption, regurgitation, kissing, etc, enable the piece to skirt a linear didactic reading and thereby elevate the action to the realm of the poetic. The Bodies are in effect multiple

#### THE FLY



In David Cronenberg's 1986 adaptation of The Fly, an intrepid young scientist, Seth Brundle (played by Jeff Goldblum) slowly transforms into a monstrous fly after a freak teleportation accident.

a connection between the animals by
highlighting the presence or the absence
of a limb. The dog stands, propped only
on three limbs, emaciated, on sparse
ground. Bones protrude; ribs, shoulders,
ankles, and vertebrae jut out of the

act that is expected to transpire. A soft sadness found within the eyes of the dog almost acknowledges the inability to become satisfied fully within the dogs consumption.

dog, heightening the sharp, violent

Structured within a space/non-space, viewers, similarly to Reller, interact with the dog as a mirror. The central figure becomes a kind of faltering hero. Unable to feel satisfied with one's current condition, Reller displays the human need to become 'whole.' An attempted action, as in the image of the dog nearly consuming the leg, explores the moment before the failure of transformation on the part of our protagonist. Set on a heroic scale, Reller tragically plays with hero/non-hero as an emblem for his faltering experiences and desires. As with many of Reller's other works, the necessity to explore the inadequacies of the human condition is referenced within the interaction between figures or objects: a simulacra of the viewer. The dog consumes the leg in order to fulfill the deficiency of the animal. Although it is known a dog eating a leg will not grow a new appendage, the desire to be whole overshadows logic, forcing an absurd action. All existing with a large white field, viewers become enveloped in boundlessness, forcing identification with the presumed failure of the hero.



Circular Ruins 28" x 40", Charcoal Drawing, 2013

perhaps infinite potentialities simultaneously coexisting, like Schrodinger's cat, the famous thought experiment concerning quantum superposition, which is both dead and alive until observed. Once we observe Klemens' work we must grapple with all of these actions at once, be confused and forced to reconcile our confusion.

In 14,400 Breaths or a Day of Rest the artist inflated over 900 white balloons and hung them at mouths height from the ceiling. The number in the title roughly correlates to the amount of breaths one would take on a day of rest, i.e. a 24 hour resting heart rate. In addition to the previous motifs of water and fat, Klemens adds another element into her visual lexicon: air. Like Cover, Klemens' work evokes the philosophical Greek concept of pneuma, (the root of course we are familiar with, for it forms the base of the word "pneumatic") or wind, which in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, and the Greek New Testament is oft translated as soul or spirit. Like the departed spirit of Cover the artist's pneuma, her wind, quite literally, leaves her body in the making. Perhaps in one potentiality, one breath of respite is transported symbolically beneath the sheets of Cover, completing a conceptual loop. Herein lies the profound power of Klemens' program-the viewer is given metaphorical breathing room to reconcile disparate conceptual dilemmas into a meaningful diagram of human mortality. The artist gives the viewer the basic components, for now, water, fat and air, which may exist simultaneously as particle or wave, or in infinite combinations.



14,400 Breaths or A Day of Rest
Dimensions variable
Latex, breath

the world is thus on the far side of an unsilvered mirror, there is an imaginary beyond, a beyond pure and insubstational, and that is the dwelling place of Bachelard's beautiful phrase: 'First there is nothing, then there is a depth of nothingness, then a profundity of blue [the boundless Void]'



An image of Yves Klein's blue void

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# SURVIVING ON \$9.25 AN HOUR AS A SINGLE MOTHER IN WHATCOM COUNTY

### **OLIVIA CHARLES**

IN MMERICAN SOCIETY, labor services were once considered to be honorable and respectable positions (Shulman, 2003). In the last few decades, these jobs have undergone a transformation. Low-wage jobs such as home health care aids, security guards, bank tellers, cashiers, and workers in industries such as manufacturing, agriculture, and food processing make up 30 million Americans (Shulman, 2003). In Beth Shulman's "The Betrayal of Work," they have been betrayed by American society. The main concept she illustrates in her book is how low-wage jobs are unable to provide workers in these positions with enough support for them to pay their bills and take care of their families. She also states that society keeps them at a disadvantage compared to high-wage earners, using examples from people who are working in low-wage jobs such as call centers, poultry plants, janitors and grocery store clerks. These 30 million Americans receive limited benefits, if any. The wages they receive, as well as the discrimination they face by working low-wage jobs, illustrates the difficulties these individuals face. In this paper, I will be discussing the impact these jobs have not just on Whatcom County, but the entire country, using the main concepts demonstrated in Shulman's book.



SCENARIO: A single mother of one child (who has a chronic health condition) has worked for five years at a local company in Whatcom County and earns \$9.25/hour.

This scenario exemplifies Shulman's matrix of challenges low-wage employees face. This hypothetical woman worked at a local company for five years earning \$9.25 an hour. She's been recently laid off. The odds that this company would offer or even have benefits for her are low due to the fact many employers do not offer benefits in low-wage employment. She may have Medicaid or a basic health care plan if she was employed full-time, but that plan will be discontinued soon after termination. As Shulman states: "Women with children face added barriers to getting better jobs."

She mentions that women in the labor force who have children "sacrifice pay and benefits and must work more non-standard hours" (p. 75). Thus, with the decrease in pay and benefits, this single mother may have to take jobs that do not allow her the time to care for her child, leaving her even more disadvantaged than how she was previously.

What challenges do laid-off workers face (specifically)? Which factors may most (or least) impact the woman in this scenario?

After being laid off in this scenario, there are many challenges for the single mother to overcome. Her chances of finding high-wage employment are slim since she must care for her child, thus she will be forced to seek out low-wage employment once more. While she

The odds that this company would offer or even have benefits for her are low due to the fact many employers do not offer benefits in lowwage employment.

may be able to find employment, given that the turnover rate is extremely high for such pay grades, she will most likely be searching for a job again within a couple years or be looking for a second job. The first job may not be sustainable for her family, or for herself. This is a factor she much consider in her search for employment. Shulman talks about how, "in 1995, more than twice the number of higher waged workers received benefits than low-wage workers, even though low-wage workers suffered twice the unemployment rate" (pg. 138). In 1995, the government released a report showing how low wage workers had a near-impossible chance of receiving benefits while unemployed, compared to high wage workers, and they had little to no protection when they became unemployed (Shulman, 2003).

Identify three support services you are eligible to access within Whatcom County to address your various needs. Be specific about what you would be able to access, how and where. What factors might get in the way? What are the limitations? Are any specific groups of individuals more or less advantaged in terms of what is available?

There are three support services the single mother has access to in Whatcom County. They are the SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), Salvation Army, and the United Way of Whatcom County. The United Way of Whatcom County provides resources and services for unemployed people in order to support one's self and family. It provides "resources to survive the first month of unemployment," as stated on its website. It lists resources with addresses, phone numbers, emails and websites with information on food programs, health, dental care, Thanksgiving and Christmas assistance and more. However, there are no guarantees of assistance after that one-month period, and the resources are only available to those who seek them out on their own time.

The next program is the SNAP program. The online site offers testing to see what programs one may be eligible for, and links to applications for such programs

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People who worked in low-wage jobs are unable to attain sufficient resources in order to pay bills or purchase enough food.

as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families and Working Connections Childcare (Home Site, 2013). The benefits and rewards for these programs depend on family size and income.

The final resource I've selected is the Salvation Army, which has family service programs to "help families and needy individuals with emergency food, housing, utility assistance, and other temporal needs" (Housing and Homeless Service, 2013). They also offer youth camps people can send their children to a safe place while either looking for work or while working. The website for the Salvation Army does not list details of the services it offers, so the single mother will need to go to one of the locations and find out more detailed information about the programs for eligibility or exclusion.

### Based on the information in the book, what is the likelihood that your job provided benefits? How would these benefits affect you in terms of your current situation?

Shulman divides work in society in several ways, such as its impact on the worker's health, families, the amount of work they receive, safety, their selfworth in society, and their security. She compared low-wage jobs and higher wage jobs in three separate aspects: flexibility, length of employment, and risk.

"Low wage jobs provide fewer and more unpredictable hours than higher paid positions" (Shulman, pg. 32), which describes the inflexibility of low-wage work. "Low wage jobs use more temporary workers than higher paid positions" (Shulman, p. 33), such as the retail sector where they hire people for the holiday season and release them after the season is over; retainment after the holiday season is low. "While higher wage jobs have

become safer over the past 20 years, low wage have become increasingly more dangerous" (Shulman, p. 37). The Department of Labor stated that 4,609 workers were killed while on the job in 2011, the majority of them in low-wage employment (Labor, 2012).

Here, the characteristics of low-wage jobs are of a much lower standard than higher-wage jobs. People who worked in low-wage jobs are unable to attain sufficient resources in order to pay bills or purchase enough food. There are fewer benefits offered compared to higher waged jobs. If you are injured on the job, the majority of employers do not offer health insurance to lowwage employees. These workers deal with contemptuous, and in some cases, abusive employers (Shulman, 2003). These are the points that Shulman uses to define the reality of low-wage employment.

Identify two specific legislative acts that have empowered or disempowered low wage workers during the last 75 years. How did the legislation impact these workers specifically?

One item of legislation that Shulman discusses is the Family and Medical Leave Act passed in 1993. Prior to this policy, there was no national maternity leave policy. After published findings in the late 1980s and early 1990s showed that women were increasingly joining the labor force along with their partners, the government developed this act. Its stated purpose was to

"...balance the demands of the workplace with the needs of families, to promote the stability and economic security of families, and to promote national interests in preserving family integrity and to entitle employees to take reasonable leave for medical reasons, for the birth or adoption of a child, and for the care of a child, spouse, or parent who has a serious health condition" (1993).

This gave benefits to working families based on medical factors that were never considered before, improving the health of these families. Another piece of legislation Shulman points out is the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited business and schools from discriminating in hiring and

enrollment. However, Shulman reveals that "while women and minorities made significant advances in the past generation with the creation of equal pay and equal opportunity, legislation in the sixties and seventies, discrimination persists" (p. 71). The stratification of minorities and women still exists because employers and workers allow it to continue. The act may have empowered minority and women workers when it was first implemented, but there should be additions to the act in order to break the stratification. Making higher-wage positions more accessible to these groups would be one way that could eliminate this stratification.

# What proportion of jobs within Whatcom County fall within or under \$9.25 per hour pay rate?

The majority of jobs in Whatcom County fall under the \$9.25 per hour pay rate. The state minimum wage is \$9.19. After researching online and contacting the Washington Labor Department, no information or data could be found on jobs that pay within or above that rate, leaving this hypothetical woman to have to take employment that would pay less than her previous job.

What might a sociologist who studies work and occupations conclude about the situation of low wages workers in Whatcom County, using Shulman's book as a reference point?

Based on the fact that Washington state has the highest minimum wage in the nation, Shulman would say that out of the entire country, this state honors work the most and provides more resources, rewards, and benefits to those workers. If a person loses his or her low-wage job, the accessibility and programs that assist unemployed people to sustain their families while searching for work, will prove to be very valuable.



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THIS YEAR HAS BEEN EVERY BIT AS FULFILLING and original as the journal you hold in your hands. For us to have read so many submissions represented by several departments makes me proud to be a student on this campus. If you too are a student reading this, or a professor, an alumni or a fellow member of the Western community, we've all taken part in the same experience by the end of this journal. We've read original papers that have been developed into thoughtful discussions from within the classroom of this university. This has also been an opportunity to appreciate the work of students from academic fields potentially different from our own, yet all still part of the same academic standard we hold ourselves to in our own work. We aspire for excellence and knowledge in our chosen paths of study, and this journal is testament to the diversity and success of those aspirations.

Occam's Razor WWU seeks to continue providing these experiences and opportunities as we grow into an institution on this campus. Chris Crow and Cameron Adams, the founders of this organization, established the direction very early on for this journal to be a bridge between departments, clubs, and the Western community as a whole. This year, we have published papers representing eight Western academic departments, ranging from art, to journalism, to sociology. The quality and quantity of this year's edition have only been made possible from the work of our editors, designers, marketing coordinator, business director, professors, student leaders, advisors, and the legacy established by past editions. We, the publication staff, are grateful for having had the opportunity to produce this journal for you. With the help of our readers, sponsors and supporters, Occam's Razor WWU will continue to serve as the academic journal this Western community will be proud to call its own.

To conclude this afterword, and the culmination of what has been the most fulfilling year of my academic career, I would like to end on two notes.

Firstly, to express my gratitude to the publication staff who have made this journal possible. it has been an honor working with them all this year, and in particular, Bradley O'Neal. His leadership, initiative and ambition this year have been one of the main driving forces in our discussions and actions for this year's edition. We thank him for his three years serving on Occam's publication staff, and for ensuring the legacy of this organization through his hard work since it's inception.

Secondly, to share my vision. Someday, this journal will showcase the best academic works of this university as a quarterly publication. In the future, we will outreach to more departments and colleges such as Fairhaven, and establish editing teams for foreign language papers to be reviewed with translations. Fundraising and sponsorship opportunities from both on and off campus entities will someday be more prevalent to support the expansion of this journal. I have high ambitions for this journal that could not all be accomplished in one year, but there will always be like-minded, passionate people to forward the foundation.

On that last note, here's a few things you can do if you're interested. Spread the word if you've found what you've read enjoyable and enlightening. If you would like to take up a staff position for next year as a designer, an editor, a marketing coordinator, or if you are able to offer something unique to the publication in it's continuing evolution, e-mail us at occam.wwu@gmail.com. If you would like to see one of your papers, a friend's or student's here, submit it to our e-mail and we'll be happy to give it a look. Check out our Facebook page to find out more and to keep posted on new developments.

On behalf of the publication staff behind Occam's Razor WWU 2012-2013, I thank you for reading this student-run, collegiate academic journal. We look forward to seeing you again next year.

#### GLEN TOKOLA

EDITOR IN CHIEF