

THE HILLTOP REVIEW

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A JOURNAL OF WESTERN MICHIGAN
UNIVERSITY GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

The Hilltop Review: A Journal of Western Michigan University Graduate Student Research

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Cover Art by Brandon Bruce Dellario, School of Social Work, College of Health and Human Services

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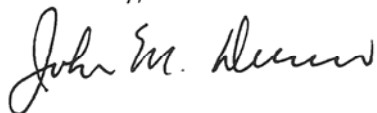
Welcome from President Dunn—

Another great job! Accolades go to all who contributed to this, the second issue of the revitalized *Hilltop Review*—to the chairs and directors who endorse and facilitate the process of self-expression, to the professors and advisors who guide and critique the learning process, and certainly to the outstanding graduate students of Western Michigan University who are responsible for all facets of this impressive publication.

The poetry, artwork, and scholarly papers that fill the pages of this issue are representative of the diversity and creativity that have long been the hallmark of the WMU Graduate College. It is a fine publication. While *The Hilltop Review* Spotlights the talents of a few, the publication itself exemplifies what the collaboration of many can accomplish. Many students support this endeavor as peer reviewers, editors, layout designers and those who prepare it for publication both on paper and online. Every aspect of the Hilltop Review bears the artistic and scholastic touch of our Graduate College.

Congratulations, Broncos, for a job very well done.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John M. Dunn". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "D".

John M. Dunn
President

Welcome from the Graduate Student Advisory Committee (GSAC)

It is a great pleasure and honor for me, as the new Chair of the GSAC to congratulate everyone who was involved in the publication of the Spring 2010 issue of the Hilltop Review. Special accolades are given to the authors who were selected for the current issue. It is a proof of scholarship commitment and fruitful collaboration between the Editorial Board, led by Lotfi Ben Othmane, students, faculty members and staff, reviewers, and the previous leadership of GSAC. It is a great accomplishment that marks the superior quality of graduate education at WMU.

My philosophy of higher education is that it is a tool to equip an individual to meet the reality of life challenges as well as an instrument to build a better world. Towards that purpose, advocating graduate studies excellence is the top priority of GSAC during my leadership. We will give special attention to programs and activities that will contribute to the academic and intellectual growth of graduate students at WMU. This goal will be achieved by the close collaboration between students, faculty and staff, and the administration.

In closing, I would like to express my gratitude for Lotfi Ben Othmane, who was key in reviving the Hilltop review. We thank him and his team for their untiring service for the graduate students at WMU and wish him success as he officially steps down from the Editor position. The journey of the Hilltop Review will continue to provide academic, artistic, and scholastic opportunity for WMU graduate students. As a side note, I also would like to welcome Michelle McWilliams as the new Vice Chair of the GSAC and wish her the best as we work together as a team.

Being a Bronco is not only a pride but also an opportunity to serve for a higher and solemn cause! The GSAC is your voice at WMU; please consider supporting and joining us.

Sincerely,

Joel L. Raveloharimisy, M.B.A
Chair, Graduate Student Advisory Committee

Dear Readers:

I am pleased to introduce the new issue of the *Hilltop Review*, Spring 2010. This product is the result of the work of many contributors from Western Michigan University.

My warm thanks go to President Dr. John M. Dunn, Provost Dr. Tim Greene and Dean of the Graduate College Dr. Lewis Pyenson for their continued support for the *Hilltop Review*. I also thank the chairs of the departments for their support and for securing faculty and graduate student reviewers.

I am also grateful to Dr. Leszek Lilien, my faculty advisor for the journal. Dr. Lilien coached me in developing, with the editorial board, the review process for the journal. He also mentored me in designing with the editorial board the format and the look of the journal. I also thank him for the several advices that he gave me on improving the visibility of the journal.

I thank Brandi Pritchett and Joel Luc Raveloharimisy former chair and new chair of the GSAC, respectively, who facilitated the production of the journal and also participated in all the editorial board meetings.

I thank all graduate students who submitted their work for the *Hilltop Review*. I thank faculty and graduate student reviewers for reviewing the articles, giving the committee their recommendations and comments and giving the authors comments and advice that help them to improve their work. I also thank the editorial board members for their hard work, commitments and sacrifices. I thank especially Ilse Anne Schweitzer, Michelle A McWilliams, Abdullah Shehabat, and Raed Salih for the extra work in copyediting the journal and helping to finalize preparing the issue.

In this issue, the editorial board selected 4 articles and 3 pieces of artwork that we hope you will enjoy. The first article, "White Thugs & Black Bodies: A Comparison of The Portrayal of African-American Women in Hip-hop Videos," discusses the performance of young African-American women in rap and/or hip-hop videos. The study seeks the appearance and the attention to the male gaze and the ways in which African-American women negotiate their sexuality. It analyzes and compares the most popular music videos of Caucasian and African-American hip-hop artists from 2003-2005. It focuses on three prominent characteristics: (1) level of sexism; (2) presence of intimate touch and alluring attire; and (3) which race portrayed women in a more sexist manner.

The second selected article, "The Myth of Racial Superiority in Sports," seeks to enlighten our collective understanding of sports and race in America by highlighting the inconsistencies in our commonly held assumptions about races and athletes. The author presents a number of arguments, some genetically based, others logic-driven, that critically expose the egregious nature of the many postulations and suppositions that Americans have regarding athletes, their race, and their athletic prowess. Through these varied lines of reasoning, the author proves that natural biological variation amongst peoples cannot be used to presuppose or validate any notion that certain groups of people have innate superiority in sports or sporting events.

The third selected article, "Idealism in Yogācāra Buddhism," discusses a new trend to classify Yogācāra Buddhism as phenomenology rather than idealism. The paper

seeks to put to rest the debate over the classification of Yogācāra Buddhism. The author shows that arguments suggesting the classification of Yogācāra as phenomenology are flawed and that Yogācāra Buddhism is idealism.

The final selected article was “Singing the Story: Narrative Voice and the Old English *Scop*.” Among the more compelling puzzles in the study of literature in Old English is the societal structure of early Anglo-Saxon culture; one potential key to this conundrum is the ubiquitous figure of the court harper, bard, or *scop*. This essay investigates three literary texts in which the *scop* figure plays a principal role. Through this careful examination of the *scop* in *Beowulf*, *Deor*, and *Widsið*, the author not only casts light on one societal figure, but also provides insight into the larger culture of which he was a part.

We are also pleased to include in this issue several pieces of art. They are the contribution of Brandon Bruce Dellario from School of Social Work, College of Health and Human Services.

We finally call for our graduate students to participate actively in the *Hilltop Review*. We think that the experience in producing an issue of the journal is worth investing their time. We are in need for a new editor, associate editors, reviewers and authors.



Editor
Lotfi Ben Othmane

WHITE THUGS & BLACK BODIES: A COMPARISON OF THE PORTRAYAL OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN IN HIP-HOP VIDEOS

By *Ladel Lewis*

Abstract. The continued appearance of African-American women as performers in rap and/or hip-hop videos has called attention to the male gaze¹ and the ways in which young African-American women negotiate their sexuality. The most popular music videos of Caucasian and African-American hip-hop artists from 2003-2005 were analyzed and compared to determine the levels of sexism between the two cultures. With these videos, this study replicated a qualitative content analysis from another study that identified three prominent characteristics: (1) the level of sexism; (2) the presence of intimate touch and/the presence of alluring attire; and (3) which race portrayed women in a more sexist manner. From those distinctions, it was discerned that the majority of videos featuring both races possessed low levels of sexism, if any at all. Regarding sexual iconography, barely half of the Caucasian sample depicted women wearing alluring attire, and approximately a quarter of them revealed women engaged in intimate touching scenes with men and women. It was concluded that African-American rappers portray African-American women in a more sexist manner than their white counterparts in the name of hip-hop.

Now I chill real ill when I start to chill
 When I fill my pockets with a knot of dollar bills
 Sipping pints of ale out the window sill
 When I get my fill I'm chilly chill
 Now I just got home because I'm out on bail
 What's the time? it's time to buy ale
 Peter eater parking meter all of the time
 If I run out of ale it's Thunderbird wine
 Miller drinking chicken eating dress so fly
 I got friends in high places that are keeping me high
 Down with Mike D. and it ain't no hassle
 Got the ladies of the eighties from here to White Castle

-Beastie Boys, *Hold it Now, Hit it*.

1. Background

Previous explorations about the way African-American men portray black women in rap videos have exposed an extreme amount of sexism. For example, rap videos present scantily clad women primarily posing seductively and/or being groped and fondled. Black artists have been the objects of media criticism in the black middle

¹ The male "gaze" refers to how males sexually view the females. This gaze adds to the commodification of women's bodies which in turn perpetuates sexism.

class cultural magazines *Essence* and *Ebony*, on mainstream news programs such as *Paula Zahn Now* on CNN and the cable program *America vs. Hip-Hop*. The ways in which white artists portray black women, in contrast, is hardly, if ever, discussed. This article addresses inquiries in that area.

Hip-hop's inception in the early 1970s and subsequent exponential increase in popularity has mystified the masses, drawn attention to how hip-hop culture influences the lives of so many inner-city minorities, and gained the attention of many suburbanites. As the mid-1980s approached, Music Television (MTV) began to see a decline in the viewership of its successful video programming, which consisted primarily of rock and heavy metal videos. A new product was needed to keep this thriving powerhouse afloat (Yousman, 2003). Executives decided to take a chance and explore this new genre affiliated with what the South Bronx and many other inner-city residents called "rap." This was the introduction of hip-hop to mainstream society and the beginning of a lifestyle openly embraced by white kids from the suburbs.

The Beastie Boys were one of the first prominent white rap groups. They were able to successfully cross over onto predominantly black musical turf and solidify a firm place in the history of hip-hop. They met with little resistance because this three-man crew was not imitating black authenticity or reciting lines about racial oppression and growing up in the ghetto. Rather, they rapped about universal, juvenile topics such as getting drunk and having fun. While the topics and themes of their lyrics did not mimic those of their African-American counterparts, their clothing and behavior did. They visually mirrored their African-American counterparts in the videos, thereby reinforcing the sexual images of African-American women (Hess, 2005). The Beastie Boys continued to mimic the black rapper and hip-hop community's clothing and behavior, which allowed them to fit in and be accepted. Furthermore, popular acceptance of the Beastie Boys made it acceptable for white viewers to mimic these traits, including the sexual exploitation of African-American women.

During inception of hip-hop on MTV, white patronage was believed to be the driving force behind the sales success of so many hip-hop artists. Although music data studies at that time did not clearly show the races of individuals purchasing rap albums (Kitwana, 2005), *The Source*, a hip-hop magazine that caters to a predominantly male audience and views itself as the authority on hip-hop (Bailey, 2006), reported that more than 70% of rap music buyers were white (Yousman, 2003). The typical rap fan's love of or mere fascination with the genre developed into more than something to do or a way to be rebellious. Identifying with hip-hop culture set a standard to which to adhere, to the degree that it became a mode of initiation to fit in with minority groups, and even their own inner circles. What Cornell West (1994) described as the Afro-Americanization of white youth was demonstrated by whites who adopted a hip-hop swagger and wore hip-hop brand-named clothing; that is, clothing developed by rappers such as Rocawear by Jay-Z, Sean John by Diddy, Fetish by Eve, Phat Farm by Russell Simmons-Brother of Leader of Run DMC, and Wu Wear by Wu-Tang Clan and the "sagging" jeans style of rap artists signature to this genre. These ideas and values were reinforced by the white rappers in their videos, and were also displayed in the emergence of mainstream white hip-hop artists.

After the Beastie Boys' era began to pass, artists like Robert Van Winkle, known as Vanilla Ice, emerged. Unlike the Beastie Boys, Van Winkle appeared to capitalize on black culture by imitating African-American hip-hop artists in his lyrics as well as his behavior and dress, rather than actually living the black experience. While the Beastie Boys sang about what they knew and dressed like the rappers they are, Vanilla Ice was inauthentic in his music and style. This contributed to the difficulties other white artists had trying to be embraced by the hip-hop community. According to Light (1999):

When African-Americans complained about white rappers' cultural imperialism, Vanilla Ice made [their observations] painfully obvious from his stiff rhyme flow and awkward use of rap slang (at one point he boasted how he strapped on his jimmy, thinking jimmy meant "condom" instead of "penis") (p. 124).

3rd Base, another white rap group that rose to temporary fame in the early 1990s with their song, *Gas Face*, attempted to gain cultural credibility by criticizing Ice's "wannabe" image (Kitwana, 2005). In their music video, *Pop Goes The Weasel*, a Vanilla Ice look-alike was shown being beaten up and removed from the stage. This proved that white artists could have their authenticity challenged and lose their sustainability when they pretended to live the black experience and borrow from urban terminology.

Another prominent white rap artist is Marshall Mathers, also known as Eminem and as "Slim Shady," who attempted to change the stigma of whites in rap. Eminem's autobiographical (and sometimes absurd) lyrics generated street credibility in the hip-hop community, as well as the black community, in general by not insinuating a life unfamiliar to him (Hess, 2005). He used his white identity as a selling point for the record label Aftermath Entertainment. He maintained the position of "white forerunner," which earned him the distinction of being the "Elvis of Hip-Hop" (Light, 1999). Other white artists, such as Paul Wall and Bubba Sparxx, also rose to the challenge to solidify their position of credibility as white hip-hop artists in this African-American dominated genre. In doing so, it was considered commonplace for them to take on customary themes associated with hip-hop, such as flashy lifestyles and sexist behaviors, such as referring to women as "bitches" and "hoes" (Kitwana, 2005). In most cases, this meant exploiting and commodifying African-American women (Karenga, 1993). In just one example of this trend, Eminem is quoted in Bakari Kitwana's (2005) book *Why White Kids Love Hip Hop*:

Girls I like have big butts
No they don't, cause I don't like that nigga shit
Blacks and whites, they shouldn't mix
But black girls only want your money
Cause they be chicks (p. 136).

Also of relevance to this discussion is the question of profitability. Are music producers and labels getting wealthy as they perpetuate sexism in the world of hip-hop? Jim Levin, CEO of Time Warner, is a prime example of this practice. Although his label assisted 2 Live Crew's founder, Luther "Luke Skywalker" Campbell (net worth \$11 million), in selling millions of records on which artists sang about women performing oral sex on men and men engag-

ing in sexually explicit acts with women, Levin's net worth alone was approximately \$775 million (Hooks, 2002). An obvious problem arises when individuals, including rap artists and CEOs, who receive the monetary benefits from this exploitation of women, refuse to take responsibility for these negative portrayals. As a result, pornography in music and other media adds to callous attitudes toward women in general (Surette, 1998). These cultural and economic factors, while interesting, would constitute an entire study in and of themselves. Thus, this study focuses solely on the portrayal of black women in the rap videos of white artists, though the question of "who profits" should never be far from our minds.

2. Cultivation Theory

Gerbner and Gross (1976) believed that "heavy exposure to cultural imagery will shape a viewer's concept of reality...The television set has become a key member of the family, the one who tells most of the stories most of the time" (p. 176-184). The two scholars developed cultivation theory, sometimes referred to as the "cultivation hypothesis" or "cultivation analysis." This theory suggests that media teaches about American values as well as myths (Vincent, 1989). Furthermore, the theory also argues that television has long-term effects that are gradual and indirect, but cumulative and significant.

Cultivation theorists are best known for their study of television and its impact on viewers, and, in particular, for their focus on violence. Other research grounded in cultivation theory focused on the mass media as a socializing agent, and investigated whether television viewers experience a mainstreaming effect, which is when they come to believe television's depiction of reality the more they watch it (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999). This was a central conclusion of cultivation theorists. In addition, other studies have considered this theory relevant when dealing with topics such as prejudice based on gender, ethnicity, and age. For example, many posit that television music networks are major socializing agents among adolescents—at least indirectly—which is consistent with previous research (Stephens & Phillips, 2003; Wilson, 1992). At the time, studies also showed that entertainment programming was the most important source of information and socialization for African-American adolescents (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). Brown, Campbell, and Fisher (2008) assert, "African-American teenagers are more likely than white teenagers to report watching music videos because they want to emulate the people in the videos and learn the latest fashions and dance moves" (as cited in Bryant, 2008, p. 357). Yousman (2003) summarized the trend by stating, "when they write the history of popular culture in the 20th century, they can sum it up in one sentence which is, white kids want to be as cool as black kids" (p. 367).

In contrast, hip-hop's initial focus was to autobiographically verbalize the realities of everyday life in the ghetto, which allowed the artist's life to shape the music. Cultivation theory accurately predicted that the actions of current hip-hop followers of all races were being influenced by the mainstream messages of the music. A recent study showed the more time participants spent viewing rap music videos, the greater likelihood they would accept the negative images in those videos (Bryant, 2008).

In many rap videos, women are viewed as passive, sexually aggressive, and willing to be utilized at will. Television and other informative outlets exhibit women who appear to enjoy being stared at, groped and squeezed by random individuals (Jhally, 1995). A woman is considered abnormal if she does not comply with the actions of a man or fit the mold of her assigned gender. In this manner, young women learn the qualities of being feminine and young men learn how to perceive women. Moreover, these images falsely exhibit how white males should interact with African-American females.

Although cultivation theory emphasizes the importance of mediation on the symbolic function of television in its cultural context, it has been criticized for oversimplification, in that the theory is considered to be subjective because it is based solely on the act of television viewing. Cultivation theory tends to underplay the point that there are heavy and light viewers, and that viewers vary in other ways, such as age, sex, and education. The theory also ignores the social dynamics of television use. When the viewer has some direct or indirect lived experience of the subject matter, the cultivation effect may be reduced. McQuail (1987) argued that "it is almost impossible to deal convincingly with the complexity of posited relationships between symbolic structures, audience behavior and audience views, given the many intervening and powerful social background factors" (pp. 99-100). In short, people's attitudes are likely to be influenced not only by television, but also by experience and interaction with other people. However, although cultivation theory may oversimplify the impact of television's influences, this theoretical framework is more than sufficient for this specific study because this paper focuses primarily on rap artists and how they portray African-American women in their videos, not on the viewers who watch.

Sexism has continued to be a universal force against which women of all races have battled. This issue has become increasingly detrimental to African-American women because they are expected to mirror the narrow stereotypical images set forth by mainstream media. African-American women's oppression is being further systematized and structured ideologically because of how they are depicted within hip-hop videos. They are frequently depicted as objects of male pleasure because their role is primarily sexual (Emerson, 2003). Tragically, these restricted and controlled images and beliefs that are embedded in youth of all races at a young age serve to justify the mistreatment of all black women (Tong, 1998; Jhally, 1995).

In this dominant ideology, the line between fantasy and reality is blurred. Vincent (1989), and Vincent, Davis and Boruskowski's (1987) video study on content described in this article was designed to empirically test that hypothesis.

This research serves as an introductory examination of how white rap artists portray African-American women in hip-hop videos. Based on cultivation theory, four research questions were asked: (1) Did white rap artists portray African-American women in hip-hop videos in a sexist manner? (2) Did white rappers' videos possess more intimate touch than those of African-American artists? (3) Did white artists' videos possess more alluring attire than those of their African-American counterparts? (4) Compared to African-American men, did white rappers portray African-American women in a more sexist manner in the name of hip-hop?

3. Methods

3.1. Sampling

Qualitative data collection techniques for this video content analysis proved to be beneficial when examining the relationship dynamics that shaped race and sexuality (Stephens & Few, 2007). I obtained a sample of 11 rap videos from the Internet sites Yahoo Music! and AOL Music. Due to the lack of nationally known white rap artists, a sufficient sample could not be acquired using the basic cable networks (MTV and BET). Also, rap videos by white artists were not regularly represented on weekly video shows, so extracting measurable samples which used that technique was not possible. Finally, relevant videos may have been omitted from the sample because the artists' videos were not available on the particular web sites. Research could be improved as outlined in the "Future Recommendations" section of this article.

The timeline I used to sample videos ranged from January 2003 to December 2005. I eliminated all videos recorded earlier than 2003 (such as Eminem's *Stan* and Bubba Sparxx's *Ugly*), and later than 2005 (such as Sparxx's *Ms. New Booty*) for two primary reasons. First, if I did not exclusively use videos from this timeframe, they would not have been analogous to the original videos used for my previous non-published study concentrating on African-American males. The methodological issue could have corrupted the comparative analysis. Secondly, since mainstream rap songs remained popular for only a short period of time before they were replaced and often forgotten, I expanded the initial research to include either older or more recent videos from 2003 to 2005 to represent the mainstream artists who received airplay. This may not have accurately represented the portrayal of African-American women during this specific time period, as political situations or shifts in culture may lead to a difference in popular culture. Also, it must be noted that the levels of sexism in general may have increased or decreased before or after this time. In essence, using either outdated or current videos could have tainted the findings severely, as in the case of Vincent's revisited study (1989).

3.2 Barriers to Research

There were several other factors that affected the selection of videos used in this study. For example, social trends may have caused an increase or decrease of sexism in hip-hop videos. When Vincent reexamined the portrayal of women in rock videos in 1989, he noticed that an increase in public awareness changed the study he had completed eighteen months earlier. The ad hoc group, Parents Music Resource Center, led by several prominent congressmen, made charges at a U.S. Senate Hearing that there was too much sex and violence in rock music and videos (Vincent, 1989). These hearings brought major attention to the rock and video industry. When Vincent performed his study after this crucial period in history, he observed a 22% decrease in videos rated level one (displaying the highest amount of sexism), and a 173% increase in videos rated level four (displaying the least amount of sexism). Thus, any research conducted during a period of political or cultural change may not generate a true representation of "typical" white artists' hip-hop videos.

Another factor that affected the selection and use of videos in this study was the difficulty in accurately and equally comparing videos according to Vincent, Davis, and Boruszkowski's (1987) sexism scale, which has been used to examine sexism in rock videos. Although a video may have been placed in the same category as another, the scale did not measure the frequency of sexist elements.

I coded and categorized all videos into six categories: artist, title of song, sexism classification, intimate touch, alluring attire and mixed-artist video.

3.3. Operationalizing of Variables

My independent variable was the race of the main performing artist. The race of the artist was based on obvious physical characteristics and by any reference to his race in his lyrics. Although some artists, like Pit-bull, appeared to be white, the lyrics were closely inspected and autobiographic research was conducted to determine their minority status, which disqualified them from the sample. It was important to document the race of the artists because this revealed if there was an obvious difference in the way African-American women were portrayed by African-American males in hip-hop videos compared to the way white men depicted them.

Unlike the studies of Vincent (1989), and Vincent, Davis, and Boruszkowski (1987), I created a category titled "Mixed-Race Artists." This category was measured by a (Y), which signified that the song included artists of mixed races or an (N) when the song was exclusively by a white artist. This category was created to reveal whether having a co-artist of another race in the video affected the levels of sexism by either reducing or increasing the levels. This provided specific findings, such as whether white videos were more or less sexist with or without their minority counterparts. Leaving the groups combined would not expose this important data.

Hurley (1994) defined sexual iconography as the exposure of breasts, buttocks, lingerie, bikinis, mini-skirts, and sexually suggestive expressions and the caressing of body parts (Hurley, 1994). Since sexual iconography played a major role in the analysis of gender subjectivity, intimacy and the dress of the women in hip-hop videos were taken into account. Vincent measured sexual iconography in two primary categories: intimate touch and alluring attire. Intimate touch included individuals who were touching themselves or each other in an intimate manner. These categories were measured by either being absent or present.

My dependent variable was the level of sexism in hip-hop music videos. One of the original scales used was a heuristic model of classification by Pingree, Hawkins, Butler, and Paisley, called the scale of sexism. This was originally designed to test for sexism in print advertisements. Later, Vincent *et al* modified the same scale to measure sexism in music videos. This scale could be converted easily because just like advertisements, videos used high amounts of sexual imagery (Jhally, 1995). Since this scale was proven valid and reliable in both studies and in previous hip-hop research (Lewis, 2005), it was thought to be a reliable source for this investigation as well.

I reviewed each video and coded the level of sexism according to the presence of its characteristics on the sexism scale, with Level I displaying the highest amount of sexism and Level IV displaying no sexism. Each video was placed into one of the four sexism categories, but notably that the categories were not necessarily mutually exclusive or exhaustive (Wilson, 1992). If a video was coded for more than one level,

the highest level was used to determine its classification. For example, if a video displayed Level I and II characteristics, it was classified as Level I.

The following describes the four-item ordinal scale that measures how women were portrayed:

Level I: “*Condescending.*” The woman is portrayed as being less than a person, a two-dimensional image. This characterization may include the “dumb blond,” the sex object and the whimpering victim. It can also include an aggressive sexual role. Here women are used as sexual objects, in exclusively decorative roles, or presented in roles where others do her thinking for her.

Level II: “*Keeping Her Place.*” Some strengths, skills, and capacities of women are acknowledged, but tradition also dictates “womanly” roles. She may be presented outside domestic or decorative situations (i.e., where she participates to some degree in a recreational or intellectual environment), but she is always submissive to men. The emphasis is on subservience in romantic or secondary relations. A high emphasis on sexual attributes is still found here.

Level III: “*Contradictory.*” Emphasizes a dual role where a woman plays a traditional, subservient role while also displaying a certain degree of independence. This character’s independence is gained at the expense of her subservience. Anything she does outside of domesticity and nurturance is viewed as “something extra” (women may have secondary interests but that domesticity/nurturance dimension is of foremost importance). Examples: A woman skilled at operating a computer is placed in a situation where she must teach a man how to use the Internet but then lets him believe she thinks he knows how and that he is just humoring her. A woman fantasizes that she can assertively tell a man to stop talking down to her, but in actuality finds that he only laughs at her and degrades her more, and that she must be good natured about it.

Level IV: “*Fully Equal.*” The woman is treated as a person (possibly a professional) with no mention of her private life. The video does not remind us that domesticity and nurturance are non-negotiable and are considered the woman’s work as well. Women are viewed non-stereotypically (Vincent, 1989; Vincent, Davis, Boruszkowski, 1987).

4. Discussion

4.1. Levels of Sexism

A sample of eleven videos is used for this hip-hop study, compared to the 52 videos extracted from my previous research regarding African-American males on BET (Lewis, 2005). Two significant themes emerged from the data when the scale of sexism was applied. According to the findings, differences in sexism portrayals between African-American musicians and white musicians were observed. My results supported the notion that although sexism towards African-American women was pre-

sent, the prevalence of sexism was lower in white artists' music videos (Table 1).

Table I. Mixed-Race Artist and Sexism

	White Artists	Mixed-Race Artists	Total
Level 1: Condescending	1	3	4
Level 2: Keep her place	0	0	0
Level 3: Contradictory	0	0	0
Level 4: Fully equal	6	1	7
Total	7	4	11

Of the videos sampled, 36% portrayed black women in a Level I sexist manner, while 56% of African-American videos from the previous study were classified as such (Lewis, 2005). In Paul Wall's video, *Sittin Sideways*, black women were portrayed as wallpaper. Their sole purpose was to be sexy and desirable. In Eminem's video, *Ass Like That*, under-the-skirt shots (camera angles from the ground) of women from a variety of nationalities were shown, signifying African-American women were not being subjugated exclusively. This reinforced the negative stereotypes that as one rapper showed these themes, the rest followed suit.

Compared to African-American men, white male rappers did not portray African-American women as sexist in the name of hip-hop. The majority of the videos (64%) were designated "not sexist" or classified as Level IV according to the sexism scale. That was the opposite of the African-American male study that found sexism in 67.3% of all videos (Lewis, 2005). Since the videos were classified as only Level I or Level IV on the sexism scale, Level II and Level III classifications were not applicable. This finding was not surprising because the 2005 study pertaining to African-American male rappers did not have a strong representation of these categories either.

It is noteworthy to focus on the fact that the videos that possessed artists from mixed races were more sexist than those of lone white artists, with 76% of the videos falling in to the mixed category (Table 1). Paul Wall's video, *They Don't Know*, featuring two African-American artists, was an example of this. It showed scantily clad African-American women washing cars in a sexually suggestive manner. On the other hand, Eminem's "solo" video, *Toy Soldiers*, explored his grief over the murder of a fellow band mate and how he was denouncing what was labeled "hip-hop beef" (physical and verbal confrontations between hip-hop artists). The data showed there was a relationship between high levels of sexism and the presence of mixed race artists ($X^2 = 4.055$, d.f. = 1, $p = .044$).

Men and women being treated equally emphasized the absence of sexism. These videos often depicted people in naturally realistic environments or did not include African-American women. For example, in Eminem's animated video, *Mosh*, the artist raps:

Let the president answer a higher anarchy

Strap him with an Ak-47; let him go, fight his own war
 Let him impress daddy that way
 No more blood for oil, we got our own battles to fight on our own soil
 No more psychological warfare, to trick us to thinking that we ain't loyal.

The lyrical content and the cartoon-like characters express disappointment with the current political situation. The video called for all races to unify for social justice. In Paul Wall's video, *Girl*, the artist was shown having marital problems with his African-American wife. Wall was trying to express his love for her, but apparently she decided to heed the advice of her African-American female peers and divorced Wall. The video setting then switched to a courtroom where the woman was unsuccessfully suing him for alimony and his material possessions. Although this video was not characterized as sexist based on the 4-item sexism scale definitions, it reinforced a stereotype that African-American women are connivers for money or "gold-diggers" (Stephens & Phillips, 2003).

4.2. Intimate Touch

Although the relationship between intimate touch and sexism categorization was insignificant, the intimate touch findings brought attention to the way men and women exchanged bodily contact. About 25% of the white artists' videos sampled had some level of intimate touch compared to over 50% of the African-American videos. Although intimate touching was present at all levels, it was more sexual in some cases. In Level IV videos, intimate touching, such as hugging, was not as extreme as it was in Level I videos, which consisted of pelvic gyration, fondling, and groping. That alone calls attention to the way men and women displayed intimacy towards one another in hip-hop videos, and how the young adult viewing audience translates that relationship.

Table II: Level of Sexism by Intimate Touch: White Rap Artists (2009)

	Absent	Present	Total
Level 1: Condescending	2	2	4
Level 2: Keep her place	0	0	0
Level 3: Contradictory	0	0	0
Level 4: Fully equal	6	1	7
Total	8	3	11

$$X^2 = 1.637 \text{ d.f.} = 1 \text{ p} < .201$$

When intimate touch was compared to the amount of sexism in videos, the data

supported that the more sexist the video, the more likely intimate touch was present. Although videos rated “sexist” were assumed to possess scenes of intimate touching, it was found that some Level I videos did not possess this characteristic, such as Paul Wall’s *They Don’t Know*. Here, women in bikinis were being gazed at without any physical touching, proving that sexism existed outside of physical interaction with another person.

Table III: Level of Sexism by Intimate Touch African-American Rap Artists (2005)

	Absent	Present	Total
Level 1: Condescending	7	22	29
Level 2: Keep her place	1	3	4
Level 3: Contradictory	2	0	2
Level 4: Fully equal	15	2	17
Total	25	27	52

$$X^2 = 20.653, \text{d.f.} = 3, p < .05$$

Table IV. White Artist Data (2009): Level of Sexism by Alluring Apparel

	Absent	Present	Total
Level 1: Condescending	0	4	4
Level 2: Keep her place	0	0	0
Level 3: Contradictory	0	0	0
Level 4: Fully equal	6	1	7
Total	6	5	11

$$X^2 = 7.543, \text{d.f.} = 1, p < .01$$

4.3. Alluring Attire

Data showed that 45% of all white videos possessed the presence of alluring attire, compared to almost three-fourths of African-American videos. Of the Level IV videos, only one video (Eminem’s *Lose it*) contained women’s outfits that were considered alluring. This video briefly showed black females mimicking background hip-hop dancers of the late 1980s/early 1990s by wearing dated bra-like tops with span-

dex shorts (a style of dress worn by pop icon MC Hammer and his entourage). Eminem impersonated MC Hammer by wearing big-framed glasses, extremely baggy pants, and also emulating his outdated dance moves. As shown in Table IV, there was a significant relationship between alluring attire and sexism.

Table V. African-American Artist Data (2005): Level of Sexism by Alluring Apparel

	Absent	Present	Total
Level 1: Condescending	0	29	29
Level 2: Keep her place	0	4	4
Level 3: Contradictory	2	0	2
Level 4: Fully equal	14	3	17
Total	16	36	52

$$X^2 = 40.402, \text{ d.f.} = 3, p < .05$$

It was also important to note that African-American women were not the primary target of all white rap artists. A few videos, such as Eminem's *Lose it*, were not labeled sexist, and Bubba Sparxx's *Back in the Mud* did not show the presence of alluring attire because they did not exclusively exploit African-American women. In Sparxx's rock-rap hybrid video, a white cheerleader was shown in a revealing modified cheerleading outfit. This did not qualify as a valid alluring attire classification because the cheerleader did not meet the criterion for race. Although women were not acting subserviently or serving as "wallpaper" for men, the wearing of water-saturated, bra-like shirts revealed excessive exposure of stomachs and breast cleavage.

Vincent et al asserted that, since the provocative dress of women was not so different from that found in magazine advertisements, the fairly seductive clothing was accepted as not being sexist, but feminine (1987). In turn, the more skin one showed and the more tightly one's clothes fit, the more feminine they were considered. If women of all races were examined in this study, the findings may be different. It is important to note that all women were subject to sexism, and one race's experience was not more imperative than the next, but this specific research focused exclusively on African-American women.

5. Conclusion

Did white male rap artists degrade African-American women in hip-hop videos? Clearly, the answer is yes. Did they do it as often as their African-American counterparts? Based on this preliminary study, the appropriate answer is no. Regardless of the apparent effect of ethnicity, it is imperative that this type of debasement continues to be examined. The intent of this paper is not to serve as a call for censorship, but to

invoke thoughts about dismantling unfair patriarchal practices against minority women that have become commonplace in mainstream television.

According to Kitwana (2002), “due to hip-hop’s role in shaping a whole generation’s worldview, including our ideas about sex, love, friendship, dating and marriage, rap music is critical to any understanding of the hip-hop generation’s gender crisis” (p. 82). Furthermore, Hooks (1992) stated, “to change the representation of black women from sexual objects, we must be willing to transgress traditional boundaries” (p. 45). That poses a degree of difficulty within the arena of hip-hop because black male artists assert power and authority that is usually suppressed in a very oppressive, Euro-centric society (Kitwana, 2002). Furthermore, white artists replicated these behaviors, which were endorsed by black rappers, while making a substantial amount of money in the process. Record executives and rappers were not naïve; they were making strategic choices to push music that would be embraced by mainstream society.

In the past, inner-city minorities looked to this music to tell their stories and give them hope while having fun in the process. Today, this thriving generation continues to look up to hip-hop for the same reasons but they are coming up short with the less-than-positive messages being relayed. Since videos are a part of a social process by which young people understand the world (Jhally, 1995), their influence as transmitters of ideas should be more carefully considered. Society as a whole must go through a transformation process by critiquing those choices and their impact on inner-city and suburban residents (Hooks, 2002; Kitwana 2002).

Although women have to find strength from other women because that is what gets them through various life challenges and obstacles (Guy, 2004), white women need to become more sensitive to the combination of racism and sexism or “multiple jeopardy” experienced by women of color (Tong, 1998). Moreover, this is in white women’s own interest. White women quickly became a commodity for sexual exploitation on the hip-hop circuit as well. In recent videos they were witnessed partaking in degrading behavior such as engaging in sexual types of activity for the entertainment of men and serving as wallpaper. Many African-Americans of the hip-hop generation, especially women, took issue with the portrayals of women in rap music videos, but did not aggressively oppose these portrayals (Bryant, 2008). That was why it is considered an obligation for not only black feminists, but all feminists, to free African-American women from these overt stereotypes that many feel are women’s sole responsibility to correct (Squires, Kohn-Wood, Chavous & Carter, 2006).

Additionally, it is important to not only conduct longitudinal studies in this area and spread this type of knowledge in scholarly journals (Bryant, 2008), but to take this message to the masses and plant seeds of knowledge about sexism, whether at a community forum or during a conversation with an acquaintance.

Dyson (1993) asserts:

Because women by and large do not run record companies, or even head independent labels that have their records distributed by larger corporations, it is naïve to assume that protest by women alone will arrest the spread of sexism in rap. Reproach must flow from women and men who are sensitive to the ongoing

sexist attitudes and behavior that dominate black male and female relations. (p. 98).

Chuck D proclaims, “there has to be some balance” (D & Jah, 1997). Political activist and CEO of Stepson Media, Bill Stepheney, put it succinctly in his comments to the *New York Post* (May 8, 2001) (Kitwana, 2002): “What is the line that we [artists and industry executives] are unwilling to cross for profits? Is there a line? Or is it completely laissez-faire?” (p. 214).

What mainstream hip-hop has done, thanks in part to the advent of music videos, is accelerate and exacerbate woman-hating, bringing it to the world stage (Powell, 2003). The blame cannot be attributed to one individual, but to the overwhelming capitalistic desire to make money at all costs. If that meant the artists must begin to think of themselves and their peers as “niggas and bitches,” worship “bling-bling” (expensive gaudy jewelry), glorify expensive late-model automobiles, and boast about consuming and getting drunk from high-priced liquor, they will do it. They may believe those actions will be their formula for success. Tragically, however, those same ingredients may also be the recipe for the death of an entire generation.

6. Future Research Recommendations

This research could be improved by conducting a longitudinal study. Expanding the time frame used to examine videos by white artists could be beneficial. Additionally, expanding the sampling frame to include other video sites would be helpful. Finally, analysis of the portrayals of all women, rather than exclusively African-American women, would improve this research and findings.

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A former Mott Community College and Baker College of Flint faculty member, Lewis owns a women's semi-professional basketball franchise called the Flint Lady Flames located in her hometown of Flint, Michigan. With the motto "Taking Our Game and Our Community to the Next Level," the Lady Flames partner with local businesses and non-profit organizations to restore community pride, resurrect women's professional basketball, and give post-collegiate women across an opportunity to compete for professional basketball contracts.

The American Evaluation Association (AEA), National Black Graduate Students Associations (NBGSA) and the American Sociological Association (ASA) are some of the organizations where Lewis has cast her membership. She presents contemporary research at conferences nationwide.

Appendix

Coding of Entire Sample by Artists

	Artist	Title of Song	Sexism Coding	Intimate Touch	Alluring Appeal	Mixed-Race Artists
1	Eminem featuring Nate Dogg	Shake That	I	P	P	Y
2	Eminem	Toy Soldiers	IV	A	A	N
3	Eminem	Mosh	IV	A	A	N
4	Eminem featuring D-12	How Come/ Git Up	IV	P	A	Y
5	Eminem	Mockingbird	IV	A	A	N
6	Bubba Sparxx	Back in the Mud	IV	A	A	N
7	Paul Wall featuring Unknown Artist	Sittin Side-ways	I	P	P	Y
8	Paul Wall	Girl	IV	A	A	N
9	Paul Wall featuring Mike Jones and Bun B	They Don't Know	I	A	P	Y
10	Eminem	Ass Like That	I	A	P	N
11	Eminem	Just Lose It	IV	A	P	N

THE MYTH OF RACIAL SUPERIORITY IN SPORTS

By Ian B. Kerr

Abstract Sports hold a special place in the hearts of many Americans. Indeed, athletic competition has come to define and shape our understanding in many ways of what it means to be American. There is, however, a dark side to sports and that is the racial tension that often consumes our understanding of athletic competition and the equality of athletic prowess and personal ability. Seemingly innocuous, sports bring to the forefront racial sentiments about innate superiority, that certain types of people are better athletes simply by the nature of their being born. In his book *Taboo: Why Black Athletes Dominate Sports and Why We Are Afraid to Talk about It*, John Entine posits that innate genetic differences amongst peoples leads to certain racial groups excelling at particular sporting events. It is the intent of this paper, through a close examination of Entine's theoretical arguments, to demonstrate that science and genetic experimentation have proven that natural biological variation amongst and between peoples cannot be used to validate claims of innate racial superiority in athletic competition.

1. Introduction

Sports and athletic competition in the 21st century are subject to many of the same racial prejudices and beliefs that have come to consume daily American life. Undeniably our penchant for sports and athletic competition has lead to the fact that there are few places where the idea of race as biology is as highly contested as on the playing fields of America. Notions of race and racial superiority abound when one even superficially begins to examine the plethora of recent materials written on sports and athletic competition. One of the more controversial and substantial pieces of work to have come out of America's obsession not only with sports but also with race is a book written by sports journalist Jon Entine. The book, entitled *Taboo: Why Black Athletes Dominate Sports and Why We Are Afraid to Talk about It*, sets forth the highly contentious belief that advantages in certain sports can be traced to different body types and physiological structures which are in turn derived from innate genetic differences among racial groups (Entine, 2000). Stemming from this central thesis, Entine furthers his discussion on race and sports by examining certain athletic events like long-distance running and basketball and the historical origins of racism within those sports.

This paper, however, is not merely a summation of Entine's book. Beyond closely examining the theoretical propositions that Entine's theory supposes, I will investigate and appraise the validity of Entine's thesis in light of the plethora of recent genetic experiments and discussions dealing explicitly with notions of race and racism.

2. Overview

As previously stated, in his book, *Taboo: Why Black Athletes Dominate Sports and Why We Are Afraid to Talk about It* (hereafter referred to as *Taboo*) Entine contends that there is a genetic basis for the predominance of Black athletes in many sports.

Entine further contends that this predominance of Black athletes is also tied to the fact that Black athletes are so successful at those sports. Despite acknowledging that environmental influences have a role in athletic aptitude and performance, Entine asserts throughout the book that the environment remains strongly subservient to the role of innate genetic athletic ability in certain racial groups. This article will critically assess both the central thesis of *Taboo* and the logic behind Entine's use of empirical data, biomedical studies and statistical reasoning in creating such a strong argument for genetic determinism in athletic performance.

To accomplish this end, a brief outline of *Taboo* will be helpful. In the first two sections of the book, Entine discusses running events, noting the prevalence of Black sprinters with West African descent and the multitude of long distance Kenyan runners in global athletic competition. The next two sections deal with the history of racially motivated science, like the eugenics movement and early "scientifically" driven stereotypes regarding African Americans' intelligence levels and mental abilities. *Taboo* also discusses a multitude of flawed studies which concluded that genetic factors were responsible for Black athletic success. Entine ends with a final chapter reiterating his belief that genetics lies at the heart of athletic success.

I will use three conceptual frameworks: genetic, racial, and environmental determinism to illustrate the ways in which Entine creates several causational fallacies, erroneous statements, and incorrect inferences regarding the supposed genetic basis for the predominance of Black athletes in sports. To provide stronger reasoning against Entine's stance on racial superiority I will supplement my argument with several other articles and recent scholarship dealing explicitly with issues of race and athletic ability, and with various book reviews and critiques of *Taboo*. I start by examining Entine's central thesis of genetic difference among populations in light of the recent science conducted by geneticists and anthropologists.

3. Racial Biology: Race And Genetics

According to Entine, "the scientific evidence for Black athletic superiority is overwhelming," and "cultural explanations do not, cannot, account for this phenomenon" (2000: 341). What then does the scientific community say to those statements which are tantamount to stating that "Blacks" are inherently, genetically, not only different from "Whites" and thus set apart biologically, but somehow different enough from the rest of the human population to be able to dominate athletics globally?

First, it is important to note that Entine is not working in a vacuum; his assertions about race and sports are part of a larger ongoing argument about folk notions of race. Folk notions of race founded on the idea that deep, mutually exclusive biological categories dividing groups of people have scientific and cultural merit. This type of thinking is rooted in the notion that there are underlying, essential differences among people and that those observable physical differences among people are rooted in biology, in genetics (Ossorio, Duster, 2005: 2).

4. Genetic Determinism

Underlying Entine's assumption that genetic differences account and provide for solid differences in athletic abilities is the notion that we can best account for these

differences by looking through the catch-all lens of genetic determinism. Genetic determinism can best be defined as the idea that genes are a determining factor in the formation of certain complex traits in humans and their behavior (Harpalani, 2004). Claims of genetic superiority in certain groups or “races” of people, to be scientific and valid, must be proved in order to conclude genetic determinism. Using that idea as a framework, authors like Entine who deduce that there is a genetic basis for Black athletic predominance have three main objectives to prove. Vinay Harpalani is one of the most outspoken critics of using genetic determinism to validate notions of inferiority or the superiority of certain groups (in this case Black athletes). He argues that in order for any of Entine’s claims to be valid he must prove that: 1) there is a systematic way to define Black and White populations; 2) consistent and plausible genetic differences between the populations can be demonstrated; 3) a link between those genetic differences and athletic performance can be clearly shown (2004).

An examination of those three criteria, using prominent biological and anthropological theories, can shed light onto racial genetic determinism in regards to Entine’s thesis. It has been accepted generally by anthropologists that race is neither a genetically nor biologically sound paradigm but instead a social construct based largely on Western society’s obsession with superficial physical features such as skin color (Harpalani, 2004). Even those who make arguments for a biological definition of race acknowledge that that definition would not correspond to simplistic notions of people being labeled as “Black” and “White” (Andreasen, 1998). Prominent anthropologists such as Jonathon Marks have also recently weighed in on this issue, debunking notions of genetically-based racial differences. Marks writes that Entine is saying one of three things: that the very best Black athletes have an inherent genetic advantage over the very best White athletes; that the average Black athlete has a genetic advantage over the average White athlete; that all Blacks have the genetic potential to be better athletes than all Whites. Clearly these three propositions are both unknowable and scientifically untenable. Marks writes that “the first statement is trivial, the secondly statistically intractable, and the third ridiculous for its racial essentialism” (Marks, 2000: 1077).

The second criterion -- demonstrating across the board genetic variations between populations -- has in recent years been roundly debunked. Recently, out of the scientific community we have seen a huge influx of genetic work, testing, and experimentation in determining the linkage, if any, between notions of race and biology. Recent work on alleles, a part of a gene that produces variation in inherited characteristics, has shown that allele frequency comparisons among different human populations rarely show any discontinuities between them (Marks, 2002; Molnar, 1998). Like the allele analysis, studies that focus on comparing different and varied human populations help to support the perception that human physical traits vary gradually across the entire global landscape. Differences in height, skin color, and hair texture are simply the result of climate-related variation. The reason for the different appearances of an individual from China and a native Kenyan is that across the environmental landscape small changes have produced different ways of dealing with those environments. To say that a Kenyan is naturally more attuned to becoming a champion runner is simply false; he or she is simply more attuned to living in his or her environment in the best way dictated or determined by human evolution.

The wide range of physical differences among people across the global environmental landscape makes it exceedingly difficult to entertain the notion that there are four or five non-overlapping, distinct races. The more scientists measure human traits, the fewer discrete differences they find. As Marks writes, "Nature has not created four or five distinct, non-overlapping genetic groups of people, but rather the human species possesses remarkably little genetic variation when compared with other organisms" (2002: 34). However, in his preface, Entine initially sets up his argument by stating, "Biological factors specific to populations can exaggerate the impact of anatomical differences" (2000: xi). This is in stark contrast to scientific studies which, time and time again, have failed to locate concrete biological differences specific only to certain populations. Noted social critic Pilar Ossario observes, "We can't find any genetic markers that are in everybody of a particular race and in nobody of some other race" (2003).

Beyond the realm of scientific endeavors, race in America is not even generally defined or discussed in terms of genetics. An individual is not assigned a racial category based on what percentage of genes he or she shares with any other person, nor do any outward appearances give any indication of what that percentage would even be. Regardless, racial determinists, Entine among them, equate the racial category of "African" with common notions of being "Black" (Harpalani, 2004). This is a highly erroneous assumption because it neglects entirely the sexual mixing of different groups of people. What of the countless African American slaves forced into sexual relationships with "White" masters? A large portion of any gene pool is derived from many different ancestries; African Americans are no exception. Many individuals who appear ostensibly "Black" or "African" may have large portions of European ancestry in addition to other ancestries. By equating dark skin with notions of solely African heritage, Entine muddles his intentions of linking African ancestry with innate athletic superiority.

5. Biological Variability And The Environment

When Entine does cite supposed "genetic" data on the differences between Blacks and Whites, he is in fact citing biological data. These include studies on African fast twitch muscle fibers and development of motor skills. Entine includes these studies to demonstrate irrevocable proof of embedded genetic differences between populations but refuses to accept the fact that any differences may be due to environmental factors or training. Entine then is unfairly giving an undue strong preference to genetic factors while disregarding social and environmental factors (Harpalani, 2004).

Moreover, external differences like height or weight, which play an instrumental role in helping define an individual's athletic prowess, have not been proven to be exclusively rooted in biology or genetics. Genetic differences among people cannot solely account for why certain people are more athletic than others, as scientists cannot find any specific genetic markers that define the characteristics of athleticism (speed, height, strength) in one group or "race" more than any other. Kenyan athletes may have won the majority of long distance racing events this decade but their victories cannot be inherently tied to their "Blackness" because a classification of these athletes as "African" cannot explain any deep set biological differences that one might purport they have in order to explain their prevalence for winning. The answer

to their high success rate as runners must be innately tied to the social and cultural environment in which they find themselves. Perhaps by looking at the ways in which Kenyans have adapted to their environment we might be able to come to a better understanding of their running dominance.

Indeed, many anthropologists have suggested that evolutionary factors, like the natural selection of larger lung capacities for populations living in high altitudes or lean body structures in tropical climates, play a larger role in determining an individual's predisposition for running (Moore, 1992). Discussions of environmental factors, however, do not begin to explain or validate any notion of long-standing genetic divergence but instead highlight different selective processes at work across the global landscape. Entine downplays, in his own words, the "environmentalist case against innate Black superiority in sports" to an alarming degree. In fact, Entine dedicates an entire chapter in *Taboo* to relegating the environment to a secondary role behind the "primary of innate (genetic) advantage" (Entine, 2001: 280). Seemingly the social environment where one lives, grows up, and trains means nothing to Entine, who presumes that instead, genetic good fortune has everything to do with athletic success. Entine states that "all the hard work in the world will go for naught if the roulette wheel of genetics doesn't land on your number" (Entine: 2001, 271). How does one explain, then, the athlete who trains countless hours a day fine-tuning a jump shot, like LeBron James or shaving seconds off sub-four minute miles like Robert Kipkoech Cheruiyot, a four time Boston Marathon winner? Both of these individuals were not born in affluent conditions, nor into families with particularly athletic parents yet they reached the pinnacle of their respective sports. How, would Entine explain how an individual born in squalid economic and social conditions rise to the top of his teams? Entine seems to purport that being born to Black parents who are athletic themselves trumps environmental and social factors.

Furthermore, Entine's stance stands in stark contrast to the accepted belief of anthropologists, sociologists, and behavioral scientists that there exists a strong interplay between the socio-cultural environment and the biology of human growth and development (Bogin, 2001). In fact it is socially and scientifically understood that environmental forces, including social and economic ones, regulate the expression of DNA as much as DNA regulates the growth patterns of individuals (Bogin, 1999: 397).

6. African Dominance: The Crisis Of "Whiteness"

Beyond its treatment of human genetics, *Taboo* dedicates several chapters to long distance running in an attempt to elucidate valid reasons for the supposed African, specifically Kenyan, dominance in this sport. A look at the contemporary scholarship on this complex relationship between notions of "Whiteness," "Blackness" and men's long distance running is highly useful in exploring and critiquing Entine's notions of genetically superior athletic inheritability. A 2006 study conducted by sociologists Theresa Walton and Ted Butryn examined over 700 printed sources dealing explicitly with distance running in the U.S from the 1970s through to the present. They came to the conclusion that distance running was and is still largely framed as being an issue of "White space," that it's explicated as a conflict between the imagined understanding of the historical domination of long distance running by American males and cur-

rent increasing Black African dominance. The U.S media has largely structured the so-called “crisis” of long distance running as a two-pronged threat: externally, by a perceived dominance of African athletes; internally, and concurrently, by a lack of American White male success.

This crisis of whiteness within distance running can clearly be seen in the 1960 Olympic Games, when Ethiopian runner Abebe Bikila won the Olympic gold in the marathon, the standard for long distance running. Before 1960, the overwhelming majority of medals awarded in long distance running had gone to White athletes (Walton and Butryn, 2006:7). By the late 1980s, the American media had subverted the African dominance in running in a way that spoke to White anxieties over their “space” in the realm of distance running. In other words American media failed, quite purposely, to provide any real coverage or attention to African American running victories in order to maintain the illusion of White dominance in athletics. These “White anxieties” over the dominance of non-White runners translated into genetic differences almost immediately, with the popularly held assumption that racial physiology must account for the recent African dominance in running. The genetic differences people argued over were conflated with differences solely of skin color. Popular theories abounded on the link between darker skin and athletic aptitude (Dyer, 1997). This was the historical and cultural context that gave rise to Entine’s *Taboo*.

Since Entine so readily subscribes to using statistics and athletic results to confirm his belief that advantages in certain sports can be traced to genetic differences among people (Entine, 2000), let’s briefly examine recent results from several of the elite marathons races. The 2008 Boston Marathon saw a winner in Kenyan Robert K. Cheruiyot. However, the next four top places went to non-Kenyan runners. The 2008 running of the New York City marathon saw only three Kenyans in the top 15, with four American runners in the top 10 (marathonguide.com). On the women’s side, arguably the world’s best marathoner over the past five years is Paula Radcliffe, a Briton. Although Kenyan women and men still win a large percentage of marathons and earn high rankings, they are certainly not alone on the winner’s podium, as Entine would have us believe.

If Entine’s conjectured correlation among skin color, genetics, and Black athletes’ successes seems illogical and egregious, there may be a reason for it. Entine’s thesis creates what historian Amy Bass calls the “fantasy of authority” wherein the logic of a statement, in this case the statement that race determines success, seems to be supported by the results (that Kenyan runners seem to dominate distance running). The assumed correlation is reified as something natural and factual, based wrongly only on the chance reoccurrence of the results, and thus appears to legitimize the results of the statement. In other words, because we see Black runners succeed and White runners not as frequently, we attribute Black success to the marker of the group’s difference, skin color. Clearly the causation drawn from the correlation stated above is fraught with problems.

Yet why has the genetic theory of Black athletic dominance been so difficult to debunk? Part of the problem are the roles of professional athletes and the media in reinforcing negative stereotypes regarding race and athletic ability. Officials reporting on the 1995 World Distance-Running Championship stated that Wilson Kipketer, a Kenyan athlete, despite winning the 800 meter championships, “loped around like a

sightseer” (Barbash, 1995: 1). The media’s incredulousness over Kenyan dominance in sports has caused many reporters and journalists to posit that Africans need not try hard or train with any difficulty to ensure their success. Further, many of the United States’ top runners have also stated at different times their own beliefs in the concept of genetic predisposition. Steve Holman, one of the top U.S mile runners up until the late 1990s, publically stated that he felt that his African competitors had a genetic preponderance for speed. Holman, himself an African American, also went as far as to say that although he himself has African ancestry, he was “different from the Kenyans, whose bodies were designed for distance running” (Noden, 1996: 148). In using the term “Kenyan” to stand in for male elite distance runners, Holman commits one of the greatest fallacies in the entire African genetic-edge debate; by treating a particular subsection of a group of people interchangeably with the group as a whole, Holman is bringing essentialism into play. There are plenty of native Kenyans who have no better running ability on average than anyone else on the planet. Placing all Kenyans into the small group of elite runners is thus highly suspect.

The term “Black African” seems to have emerged as the dominant blanket term for all Africans, save Moroccans and Algerians who are largely identified as “White.” Seeing as how several high-profile Algerian and Moroccan runners have had great success in long distance running, this conflation of the terms “Black African” and “African” should be seen as a red-flag in the inadequacies of the supposed theories of Black dominance of running. Inherent in this debate over athletic aptitude is a revival of a new kind of racial labeling. Black African success in running has forced a new cultural context to emerge in which Whites are viewed as the victimized group (Hoberman, 1997). The idea held by much of the media is that, putting aside the socioeconomic benefits and privileges of belonging to the Caucasian majority group in American society, White athletes struggling against the “naturally superior” African athlete are locked into this stark cultural dichotomy of Whiteness versus Blackness (Kurtz, 2003). Popular culture at large seemingly casts everything in the terms of this “Black” and “White” divide. Regardless of the multitude of other groups of athletes participating in distance racing, many of which are difficult to openly categorize, the debate has sadly and unfairly come down to “White” versus “Black.”

7. Conclusion

Race is not a legitimate biological category and, as a social construct, does not influence sports or sports performance in the myriad of biological ways Entine purports. In *Taboo*, Entine falsely conflates race with culture, and biology with social and environmental factors. Entine also wrongly equates notions of inherent natural ability with environmental occurrences and predicaments. The example of male Kenyan dominance in long-distance running to which Entine devotes several chapters is not a matter of genetic isolation at all. Statistically, Kenyans are no more genetically different from any other African or European population on average. If the Kenyan body was inherently genetically more adapted to running than any other group of people in the world, then Kenyans would handedly win every long distance race. That, of course, is not the reality of the situation. It is important to note here that the identifier Kenyan although often used as describing a biologically—or-genetically defined population instead denotes a nationality, a well-defined political and cultural group.

Instead of validating Entine's objectives, the "Kenyan example" demonstrates the power of human adaptation to a particular environment. The fact that runners coming from Kenya do so well in running events attests to the fact the combination of intense high altitude training, consumption of a low-fat, high protein diet, and a social and cultural expectation to succeed have created in recent decades an environment which is highly conducive to producing excellent long-distance runners. It is important to remember that until the early 1980s, Australian, American and British runners dominated long distance running events. Simply put, athletic performance simply cannot be labeled a race-related phenomenon if race is not a valid genetic or biological determinant.

Entine and other quasi-genetic determinists fall into a mode of thinking wherein physical differences between individuals are read as proof that separate races of people exist. By focusing on physical differences and insignificant genetic variations rather than providing insight into the biodiversity among humans, Entine muddies the waters of racism and racial superiority.

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Michigan Ruby-throated Hummingbird

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IDEALISM IN YOGĀCĀRA BUDDHISM

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Abstract. In the last fifty years or so, since Yogācāra texts have been available to western academics, there has been a debate as to how Yogācāra Buddhism should be interpreted. This article seeks to establish that Yogācāra Buddhism is most properly interpreted as an idealist school of Buddhist thought. Specifically, it challenges the arguments that have been put forth in recent years that suggest a phenomenological interpretation of Yogācāra Buddhism. The primary target of my argumentation is Dan Lusthaus but arguments of other scholars are also taken into account. In the process of defending my thesis I will explain the fundamentals of Yogācāra Buddhism, provide the reasons why Yogācāra Buddhism should be interpreted as an idealist school, provide reasons why some have interpreted Yogācāra Buddhism as phenomenology, refute non-idealist interpretations of Yogācāra Buddhism, and investigate the relation between Yogācāra Buddhism and other forms of idealism. In order to achieve each of these goals I will utilize the original texts of Yogācāra Buddhism, known as the *Trimsika*, authored by Vasubandhu and the *Cheng Wei-Shih Lun*, authored by Hsüan-Tsang. I will also reference and expound upon the philosophies of George Berkeley, Immanuel Kant, and Georg Hegel along with recent scholars who have partaken in this debate.

“All this is consciousness-only, because of the appearance of non-existent objects, just as someone with an optical disorder may see non-existent nets of hair.”¹

1. Introduction

Yogācāra Buddhism is often interpreted as an idealist school, a school of Buddhist thought that holds reality to be immaterial, or only mental² This interpretation is sometimes disputed. Here I will demonstrate that Yogācāra philosophy is most properly interpreted as idealism. I will then address some non-idealist interpretations of Yogācāra, primarily, but not limited to, Dan Lusthaus’ claim that Yogācāra is phenomenology, and demonstrate their failure. Lastly I will briefly explore the similarities and differences between Yogācāra and various forms of idealist philosophies.

2. Yogācāra Buddhism

Yogācāra Buddhism is an Indian Buddhist school “founded in the late fourth century CE by Asanga and his brother Vasubandhu, as the second of the two major Mahayana philosophical traditions.”³ “Yogācāra” is a composite term of “*yoga*,” or

¹ Saam Trivedi, “Idealism and Yogacara Buddhism,” *Asian Philosophy* 15 (3): 235. Trivedi is using Stefan Anacker’s translation of Vasubandhu’s *Vimsatika*, Verse 1.

² *Ibid.*, 231.

“discipline,” and “*cara*,” or “practice.” Yogācāra Buddhism, then, is essentially Buddhist practice of discipline.⁴ Like all Buddhist schools Yogācāra aims at the cessation of *dukkha*, loosely translated as suffering, which is realized at the attainment of enlightenment. Because attachment is the cause of *dukkha*, and attachment is an activity of the mind, Yogācārans involve themselves in an exploration of the mind. The primary conclusions to which the Yogācārans arrive to explain the role of the mind are (1) everything is mind only; (2) that there is an *ālayavijñāna*, or store-house consciousness, which allows for continuity of a “self” despite universal momentariness; (3) *vasanas*, or subliminal inclinations, act as karmic seeds that are stored in the *ālayavijñāna*; (4) the manas, or ego consciousness, influenced by the *vasanas*, color or “perfume” our perception of the world; (5) the perceived world is *vijnana-parinama*, or a manifestation of the transforming of the consciousness; and (6) there are three forms of being, or *svabhavas*, the imagined, the dependent and the absolute.⁵ These primary tenets of Yogācāra philosophy guide nearly all debate as to how Yogācāra is most properly interpreted, ie. whether or not Yogācāra Buddhism is idealism. All Yogācārans will generally agree with these six conclusions. There does exist disagreement internal to the Yogācāra school; for example, practitioners disagree as to how one comes to escape from *samsāra*, or the cycle of re-birth and re-death, how one gets rid of the *vasanas* in order to cease the production of karmic fruit, and whether or not the *ālayavijñāna* is overturned upon enlightenment. But the disagreements that are internal to the Yogācāra school are not relevant to the task of this paper.

3. Why Yogācāra Is Idealism⁶

It is not uncommon to interpret Yogācāra as idealism. Fernando Tola and Carmen Dragonetti, in their essay “Philosophy of Mind in the Yogācāra Buddhist Idealistic School,” take the Yogācāran understanding of *svabhavas* to profess idealism:

two of these natures (the dependent and the imagined) constitute the empirical reality, and the third one, the Absolute. To study these three natures is to study the empirical reality and the Absolute; to define the essence of these three natures is to define the essence of the empirical reality and of the Absolute; and to establish the relation which links both of them, and to show the mechanism by means of which the imagined nature comes forth from the dependent nature, is to show the process of how the empirical world is created from the mind...⁷

Their analysis of the three forms of being seems to yield not only a mind-dependant world but also a mind-created world. This conclusion is supported by Vasubandhu in

³ John M. Koller, *Asian Philosophies* (Upper Saddle River: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007), 96.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ For verification of these claims, see: Dan Lusthaus, *Buddhist Phenomenology* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), throughout.

⁶ In this section I demonstrate the reasons why Yogācāra has been interpreted as Idealism and why such interpretations are reasonable. Such interpretations, however, have been challenged in recent years. It is the overall aim of this paper, though not this particular section, to establish that new developments in interpreting Yogācāra fail to overcome idealistic interpretations.

⁷ Fernando Tola & Carmen Dragonetti, “Philosophy of Mind in the Yogacāra Buddhist Idealistic School,” *History of Psychiatry*, 16 (4): 454.

verse 17 of his *Trimsika*:

The transformation of consciousness is imagination. What is imagined B y it does not exist. Therefore everything is representation-only.⁸

This is also illustrated in verse 18:

For consciousness is the seed of everything. Transformation in such and such ways

Proceeds through mutual influence, so that such and such imagination is born.⁹

Further, verse 17 is reminiscent of Kant's transcendental idealism, which claims that empirical perceptions are only appearances.¹⁰ Verse 18 more closely resembles Berkeley's idealistic claim that the world is mind dependant.¹¹ In either case it is hard to imagine that these claims are not idealistic. Verse 17 explicitly categorizes all things as representations that are dependant on the imagination (a function of the mind) rather than the sensing of a real world. Verse 18 clearly establishes consciousness, or the mind, as the foundation for all things (including physical objects). The clear reaction to Vasubandhu's writings is, I think, the one that Paul Griffiths summarizes well when he states,

The cosmos, then, is straightforwardly said to be nothing more than mental events, and, as Vasubandhu points out, mental representations do not necessarily (perhaps necessarily do not, though this interpretation is questionable) possess, or have as their intentional objects, physical objects external to the mind.¹²

In Yogācāra Buddhism, priority is definitely given to the mind's involvement in the world and, under some understandings of idealism, priority given to the mind is sufficient. The *Dictionary of Philosophy* defines idealism as:

[...] any system or doctrine whose fundamental interpretative principle is ideal. Broadly, any theoretical or practical view emphasizing mind (soul, spirit, life) or what is characteristically of pre-eminent value or significance to it. Negatively, the alternative to Materialism.¹³

Other understandings of idealism differ. For example, S. Trivedi distinguishes between three types of idealism (i) metaphysical idealism (the idealism put forward by George Berkeley), (ii) epistemic idealism (the idealism put forward by Emmanuel Kant), and (iii) absolute idealism (the idealism put forward by Georg Hegel).¹⁴ Trivedi understands idealism in its Western sense by the philosophers who are called idealists, namely Berkeley, Kant, and Hegel.¹⁵ Because Trivedi's understanding of

⁸ Dan Lusthaus, *Buddhist Phenomenology* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), 291. Dan Lusthaus uses Richard Robinson's translation.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 292.

¹⁰ Emmanuel Kant *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 155.

¹¹ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "George Berkeley," WMU Library, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/berkeley/>

¹² Paul Griffiths, "The Attainment of Cessation in the Yogacara Tradition," in *On Being Mindless: Buddhist Meditation and the Mind-Body Problem*, (La Salle: Open Court, 1986), 80.

¹³ Dagobert D. Runes, *The Dictionary of Philosophy* (New York: Citadel Press, 2001), 142.

¹⁴ A discussion on the similarities and differences between the philosophies of Berkeley, Kant, and Hegel, would be far too technical and lengthy a process to undertake here. Readers who are interested in

idealism is rooted in the systems of these Western philosophers, he concludes that Vasubandhu's conclusions are not idealist conclusions. However, there is no good reason to consider idealism only in its Western context. Advaita philosophy, for example, is idealism; and while this sort of idealism resembles more closely absolute idealism, it is not identical to Hegel's philosophy and would therefore, according to Trivedi's criteria, not be idealism.

A criterion that idealism be rooted only in the philosophies of particular thinkers is an absurd criterion, for if it is the case that idealism is defined by similarity to idealist thinkers in history, then thinkers such as Kant, who is almost universally considered to be an idealist but whose philosophy was new and unique, would be excluded from the category simply because idealism existed before Kant did, thus excluding Kant's new idealism. In other words the category of idealism, according to Trivedi, is temporally and culturally restricted, allowing for no new idealists in the future or outside of the Western tradition. It is fair to question whether or not Yogācāra should be associated with the philosophies of idealists in the West, but not to question whether or not Yogācāra is idealism, for it resembles too closely those philosophies that are unquestionably idealist and fits the criterion of giving priority to the mind.

4. Arguments For A Non-Idealist Interpretation Of Yogācāra

We have already partly explored one objection to Yogācāra as idealism. It is appropriate now to reinterpret Trivedi's objection in its full context, as well as other objections to Yogācāra as idealism, such as that raised by Lusthaus.

I have already established that Trivedi's criterion for idealism is absurd, but his criterion is not at the heart of his argument. Trivedi's primary objection is that Vasubandhu's position has been taken out of context and made to seem more like idealism than it actually is.¹⁶ Trivedi suggests that Vasubandhu's Yogācāra has been influenced by Tibetans. When Buddhists were forced out of India by Islamic invaders, Buddhism essentially left India and lost its historical and cultural context. Trivedi argues that this would be like studying Kant as though he were a Frenchman. We could not, he claims, do justice to Kant's philosophy from this perspective. Philosophies, rather, must be understood contextually.¹⁷

To reinforce his objection, Trivedi targets Garfield's conclusions that Yogācāra is metaphysical idealism, instead suggesting that Yogācāra is phenomenology. His position is based on the fact that Vasubandhu did not make any ontological claims. Trivedi's argument resembles one of Dan Lusthaus's arguments against the idealistic interpretation of Yogācāra. Lusthaus quite plainly argues in favor of a phenomenalist interpretation of Yogācāra. Whereas Trivedi's focus is solely on Vasubandhu, Lusthaus's arguments are inclusive of later Yogācārins. He also makes the argument that idealism requires ontological commitments that Vasubandhu and other Yogācārins have demonstrably avoided. Lusthaus takes Hsüan-Tsang's *Ch'eng wei-shih lun* to make the epistemology of Yogācāra explicit: "remote alambana [objects] are 'external hyle [raw sense material].'"¹⁸ Lusthaus interprets this passage as a rejection of the knowable outside of raw sense material; he takes this to be evidence for Trivedi

¹⁵ Saam Trivedi, "Idealism and Yogacara Buddhism," *Asian Philosophy* 15 (3): 231.

¹⁶ Saam Trivedi, "Idealism and Yogacara Buddhism," *Asian Philosophy* 15 (3): 244.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

and Lusthaus's claim that the epistemic conclusions put forth by Yogācārāns have been misinterpreted as ontological when they actually avoid ontological commitments.¹⁹ Essentially the argument in favor of phenomenology is that the epistemic claims made by Yogācārāns do not commit them to any ontological claims.

Furthermore, Lusthaus sees another rejection of idealism in the *Ch'eng wei-shih lun* having to do with an externality to consciousness. The *Ch'eng wei-shih lun* affirms the existence of other minds. Lusthaus takes this to be fatal to the idealist interpretation. He states, "once and for all a very common misconception concerning Yogācāra as an idealism can be put to rest. Yogācāra does not posit any single overarching 'mind' or 'consciousness' as the source or solitary existent of or in the world."²⁰ Lusthaus takes metaphysical idealism to be necessarily solipsistic and, if he is correct, then the *Ch'eng wei-shih lun* has indeed delivered the fatal blow to interpretations of Yogācāra as an idealism. The power of Lusthaus's argument is best expressed in his own words:

Nothing whatsoever, especially if it can be appropriated by conversation or cognition, can properly be said to be radically separate from consciousness. This does not entail the absurd consequence that my consciousness and my consciousness alone has thoroughly and utterly constructed the entire Lived-world in which I locate myself as a self. While there are things that operate in ways that are significantly independent of my consciousness, their independence does not imply externality. I perceive other minds as moved by wills and intents other than my own. But I perceive them. Does this non-external "external" mind establish a perceptual pattern that might equally be applied to other things? [...] If so, then all shreds of metaphysical idealism will have been precluded from the Yogācāra position.²¹

The third and final argument Lusthaus offers against Yogācāra Buddhism being interpreted as idealism is that idealism commits itself to the mind, whereas Yogācāra seeks the mind's destruction. Recall that the aim of all Buddhist schools is the cessation of *dukkha*. To accomplish this goal Yogācārāns have explored the consciousness because of its direct involvement in causing *dukkha*. Lusthaus offers two arguments:

Yogācāra (yoga practice) doctrine received that name because it provided a "yoga," a comprehensive, therapeutic framework for engaging in the practices that lead to the goal of the bodhisattva path, namely enlightened cognition. Meditation served as the laboratory in which one could study how the mind operated.²²

And moreover,

Consciousness (*vijnana*) is not the ultimate reality or solution, but rather the root problem. This problem emerges in ordinary mental operations, and it can only be solved by bringing those operations to an end.²³

For *dukkha* to be overcome, the whole system of Yogācāra needs to be halted. Yogācāra explains how the mind operates in *samsara*, but this is precisely what is to

¹⁸ Dan Lusthaus, *Buddhist Phenomenology* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), 504.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 487.

²¹ Dan Lusthaus, *Buddhist Phenomenology* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), 491.

²² Ibid., 533.

be avoided. Yogācāra simply cannot be an idealism if its ultimate goal is to overcome itself.

The last objection which I will offer is that of John M. Koller. Koller argues from the same position put forth by Lusthaus. Yogācāra is not idealism, claims Koller, but rather a middle path between idealism and realism.²⁴ Because Yogācārāns acknowledge that “there is a basis for the constructions of object and subject and that this basis can be known directly, they avoid the idealist error of claiming that persons and things exist only as ideas in the mind.”²⁵ This is to say that Yogācārāns understand that their efforts to understand the functioning of the mind are meant only to explain how *dukkha* arises from “selves” that exist outside of their idealistic structure. In other words, there is a foundation in the world from which the Yogācāran system arises that is not contained within consciousness. We can infer from this claim that upon reaching enlightenment, or the cessation of *dukkha* and therefore the cessation of the Yogācāran system, one will have attained an existence that is not described by Yogācāra, one that is not involved in the conditioning of the world by the consciousness.

5. Refuting Non-Idealist Interpretations Of Yogācāra

Here I will argue that, though the above objections to interpreting Yogācāra as idealism may sound convincing, they are flawed. I will address each of the objections outlined above. Additionally, although some of the above arguments are interrelated, I will do my best to address them each individually.

Trivedi has argued that an idealist interpretation of Yogācāra fails to recognize the context in which Yogācāra was first put forth by Vasubandhu. He claimed that Yogācāra has been inappropriately colored by a context of which it is not a part. He claimed that Western and Tibetan interpretations are flawed in the same way that understanding Kant in the context of the French existentialists would be.²⁶ While it is true that context is valuable in understanding historical philosophy, Trivedi seems to give it too much weight. Studying Kant in a French context would surely change the way we view his philosophy, but not to the extent that we would no longer call him a transcendental idealist. Kant would still have a categorical imperative. We would surely be able to recognize his arguments for the world of appearances and the *a priori* cause to believe in a world beyond our appearances. I concede that certain aspects of how Kant is understood might change; for example, we might not recognize him as being the inspiration for Fichte, but those claims that are internal to Kant would remain untouched so long as the translations represented them accurately. Furthermore, Yogācāra has been viewed in its historical and cultural context and is still understood as idealistic. Karl H. Potter, in his book *Presuppositions of India's Philosophies*, investigated the various schools of thought in India and their relations to each other. Yogācāra, Potter reports, is an idealist Buddhist school influenced by Advaita and Madhyamika, among others. Trivedi argues that we have misunderstood Yogācāra. It seems obvious that, if he is correct, it is not simply because of the context in which

²³ Ibid., 533.

²⁴ John M. Koller, *Asian Philosophies* (Upper Saddle River: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007), 102.

²⁵ John M. Koller, *Asian Philosophies* (Upper Saddle River: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007), 102.

²⁶ Saam Trivedi, “Idealism and Yogacara Buddhism,” *Asian Philosophy* 15 (3): 244.

we study it.

The second objection Trivedi puts forth is the same as that of Lusthaus; Yogācāra, they argue, is not idealism but phenomenology. First of all, there is nothing inherent in phenomenology that precludes idealism. Usually phenomenology is distinguished from idealism in that it deals only with what is presented to the mind and makes no ontological commitments, however, the lack of ontological commitments does not preclude idealism. Trivedi and Lusthaus are right to acknowledge the phenomenological aspects of Yogācāra, but are incorrect in believing that Yogācāra is only phenomenology. The doctrine of *cittmata*, or “all is mind only,” is read in two ways. First, it can be read as the ontological claim that all existing objects are mind-dependant, the one that Griffiths takes to be blatantly idealistic. It holds that the entire cosmos to be composed of mind “stuff” and nothing else. The second way to interpret *cittmata*, the interpretation that Lusthaus and Trivedi favor, is that consciousness cannot transcend itself, that all events that are brought before the mind involve the mind’s participation. This second interpretation makes no claim outside of what is brought before the mind and is therefore phenomenological. I argue that these two claims are not mutually exclusive. If we are to assume there is something other than mind then the second interpretation precludes the first, however, if there is only mind, then there is nothing beyond phenomenology to make claims about, and phenomenology becomes idealism. For this reason it would be premature to take *cittmata* as either an idealistic or a phenomenological claim in and of itself. Whether or not *cittmata* is a doctrine of idealism or phenomenology hinges on whether or not there is anything other than mind.

The task of discovering whether or not there is anything other than mind is a difficult one because Yogācārāns do not talk about anything outside of the mind. In fact, anything outside of the mind must be considered to be “unreal,” because in order for anything to be outside of the mind there must be unconditioned *dharmas*; however, *dharmas* are by definition conditioned, thus unconditioned *dharmas* are unreal.²⁷ If anything outside of the mind is “unreal” then what is real is mind-only. This conclusion agrees with both the idealist and the phenomenalist interpretation of *cittmata*.

To make the point clear let us look at how a Western idealist approaches the issue. George Berkeley has an argument that commits the phenomenological conclusion to idealism. Berkeley first establishes a mind-only principle and concludes from this principle the impossibility of objects outside of a mind:

That neither our thoughts, nor passions, nor ideas formed by the imagination, exist without the mind, is what everybody will allow. And it seems no less evident that the various sensations or ideas imprinted on the sense, however blended or combined together (that is, whatever objects they compose) cannot exist otherwise than in a mind perceiving them. I think an intuitive knowledge may be obtained of this, by anyone that shall attend to what is meant by the term *exist* when applied to sensible things. The table I write on, I say, exists, that is, I see and feel it; and if I were out of my study I should say it existed, meaning thereby that if I was in my study I might perceive it, or that some other spirit actually does perceive it. [...] For as to what is said of the

²⁷ Dan Lusthaus, *Buddhist Phenomenology* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), 528-9.

absolute existence of unthinking things without any relation to their being perceived, that seems perfectly unintelligible. Their *esse* is *percipi*, nor is it possible they should have any existence, out of the minds or thinking things which perceive them.²⁸

The power of Berkeley's argument lies in the necessity of one's cognitive involvement in the world; this Lusthaus admits to. When considered linguistically, or what we mean when we say X, the phenomenological interpretation of *cittmata* commits one to the idealist claim. What is meant by ontology is that which is, was, or will be presented to the mind. Thus phenomenal claims *are* ontological claims; this logically follows from the recognition that the mind cannot escape itself. So we see that though Yogācārāns have not explicitly made this argument, the positions to which they adhere commit them to the ontological interpretation of *cittmata*. With the ontological claim established, we see that Trivedi, Lusthaus and any others who interpret Yogācāra as phenomenology may do so, so long as they do not mistakenly take this to mean that Yogācāra is not also idealism.

Having established the failure of the argument for a phenomenology that precludes idealism, I would like to take this opportunity to comment on how it is that Lusthaus in particular came to reject idealism. Lusthaus seeks to reject idealism is because he finds it repugnant; Lusthaus believes that idealism necessitates solipsism. Recall that Lusthaus claims that the recognition of other minds in the *Ch'eng wei-shih lun* "does not entail the absurd consequence that my consciousness and my consciousness alone has thoroughly and utterly constructed the entire Lived-world in which I locate myself as a self."²⁹ It is common for idealism to be misinterpreted as solipsism, especially the metaphysical idealism of Berkeley which we have likened to Yogācāra. Berkeley has often been interpreted as a solipsist because of his tenet "*esse* is *percipi*." Certainly the claim that "to be is to be perceived," from the perspective of the individual, yields a sort of phenomenological solipsism, however, Berkeley's full claim is not expressed in this tenet. The full claim is "*esse* is *percipi* aut *percipere*," or "to be is to be perceived or to be a perceiver." Because Berkeley is a metaphysical idealist, and not a solipsist, we can conclude that metaphysical idealism does not require solipsism. Lusthaus is simply wrong to think that the existence of other minds entails the rejection of idealism. Furthermore, the absolute idealism of Hegel requires other minds, so even if Berkeley were a solipsist, the existence of other minds would not preclude every type of idealism.

A second misunderstanding of idealism that is common amongst those (Lusthaus included) who find it repugnant is that idealism entails a rejection of the reality of the world. It is easy to see how one would come to this conclusion. When the waking world is equated with the dreaming world, as is done explicitly in Yogācāra and is suggested by other idealisms, one could easily take this to entail that the unreality of the dreaming world is now the unreality of the waking world. This is no more correct than a materialist concluding that the material reality of the waking world entails the material reality of the dreaming world. Idealism does not claim that the world does not exist; idealism claims that materialists misinterpret existence to require material-

²⁸ George Berkeley, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, ed. Kenneth Winkler (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1982), 24.

²⁹ Dan Lusthaus, *Buddhist Phenomenology* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), 491.

ity. The world still exists for the idealist, just not materially. I take Lusthaus to be a victim to this misunderstanding when he says, “If they [Yogācārāns] are not idealists, what are they? What do they posit as real, if anything?”³⁰ If this misunderstanding is corrected I think that scholars like Lusthaus and Trivedi would not be so eager to reject an idealist interpretation of Yogācāra.

That being said, Koller’s objection is now much easier to address. If the phenomenological interpretation of Yogācāra is really an idealistic interpretation, then what is left to address about Koller’s objection is the idealistic mistake “that persons and things exist only as ideas in the mind.”³¹ Koller maintains that the foundation for cognition precludes the possibility of persons and things existing only as ideas. This objection carries weight against the absolute idealism of Hegel but fails to properly understand the idealism of Kant or Berkeley. Kant’s transcendental idealism does not preclude a foundational existence; in fact it embraces the foundation and calls it *noumena*. Berkeley also recognizes the foundation of thought as being something other than ideas. Berkeley claims that there are not just ideas, but also minds or spirits that perceive the ideas (which are not ideas themselves). It seems that Koller is simply mistaken to think that idealists, or at least idealists other than Hegel, treat perceivers as ideas in the mind.

I have now shown that the compelling arguments offered by Lusthaus, Trivedi, and Koller ultimately fail and the interpretation of Yogācāra as anything but idealism either fails to understand idealism or mistakes phenomenology as necessarily excluding idealism. I will now move to a discussion on the similarities and differences between Yogācāra and various kinds of idealism.

6. What Sort Of Idealism Is Yogācāra?

Having established that Yogācāra is in fact idealism, it is now appropriate to investigate the question: what sort of idealism is Yogācāra? It is not necessary for Yogācāra to fit Western models of idealism, but it will be useful to see in what ways Yogācāra parallels each of these. Of course a sufficiently thorough investigation is too large a task to undertake here, but establishing some similarities and differences will prove useful.

We can eliminate an interpretation of Yogācāra as absolute idealism up front. Absolute idealism, the idealism of Hegel, is unique to a particular method. Hegel uses a dialectical method or logic that is nowhere to be found in the Yogācāra tradition. Furthermore, in the absence of this method, Koller’s objection outlined above suggests that a view of idea-only is not compatible with the Yogācāran requirement for a foundation from which the consciousness can operate. There is, however, one important similarity between Yogācāra and absolute idealism: the concept of the self. Being a Buddhist school requires that Yogācārāns maintain a denial of a distinct self. In Hegel’s philosophy there is a self that is created through the recognition of the other. The process for the creation of the “self” in Hegel’s philosophy closely resembles the interdependence of the “self” in Buddhism. In Buddhism it is not so much a denial of the self but rather a denial of an individually existing and independent self. Hegel’s

³⁰ Dan Lusthaus, *Buddhist Phenomenology* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), 6.

³¹ John M. Koller, *Asian Philosophies* (Upper Saddle River: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007), 102.

self is similarly not distinct but dependant upon its involvement in the world.

The next two idealisms to which I will compare Yogācāra are the epistemic idealism of Kant and the metaphysical idealism of Berkeley. Yogācāra shares a great deal of similarity with both of these forms of idealism. The *vasanas* or “perfumings” in Yogācāra are reminiscent of Kant’s categories. For Kant there is a structure in each of us, a way in which we must perceive the world. This structure determines how we perceive the world. For example, Kant challenges the reality of absolute space and time and reduces them to a sort of rational set of goggles that each of us wears which forces the world of appearances into a structure of time and space. This is similar to Yogācāra in that, within that philosophy, our karmic seeds or *vasanas* determine how the world is presented to us. Also, according to Kant’s idealism, the perceived world is really just the mind in much the same way that Yogācārāns use a mirror analogy to express the seeming externality of the world which, for them, is really internal. Another analogy that can be drawn is that freedom from *samsara* in Yogācāra, seen through Kant’s eyes, would be an attempt at recognizing the world in itself, what Kant would call the *noumenal* world. Kant prescribes *a priori* reason as the vehicle to the *noumenal* world, whereas Yogācārāns believe that through a thorough investigation into the world of appearances, one can learn how to differentiate or stop one’s attachment to appearances and come to know ultimate reality. In both philosophies the ultimate reality is beyond the mind’s grasp but is nevertheless accepted as real. Yogācāra parts paths with epistemic idealism when it comes to their respective views of the self. Whereas Yogācārāns’ view of the self more closely resembles absolute idealism, epistemic idealism presumes a distinct self. There are other places in which these philosophies fail to meet, but it is sufficient to establish that Yogācāra cannot be epistemic idealism due to the different notions of the self.

Metaphysical idealism and Yogācāra will also part paths in their understanding of the self. For this reason, Yogācāra cannot be equated with metaphysical idealism, though we should also acknowledge where these two philosophies concur. Metaphysical idealism and Yogācāra agree that the “self” experiences the world as mind-only. The objects of consciousness according to both philosophies are mental events. Berkeley maintains that these mental events are ideas, whereas Yogācārāns maintain a less strict and slightly more complex explanation for the objects of perception. Berkeley will also diverge from Yogācāra in the understanding of particulars. The Yogācārāns adhere to the Buddhist doctrine of interdependent arising, which requires a more interconnected explanation with regard to any particular. Berkeley, on the other hand, maintains particulars in the form of *minima sensibilia*, or the minimal object of sense, which act as the building blocks for the whole phenomenal world. Yogācāra has some vital commonalities with metaphysical idealism, but alas, they do not completely coincide.

7. Conclusion

The congruences and departures between Yogācāra and idealism are vast in number. Though I have not been able to explore the issue thoroughly here, what is important to note is that Yogācāra, though similar in many regards with idealisms in the West, must be viewed as its own form of idealism. That it is idealism can no longer be denied, yet it obviously does not fit into our traditional Western models. This

should not, as Trivedi has suggested, exclude Yogācāra from the category of idealism, but instead be an impetus for change in the Western understanding of the term.

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SINGING THE STORY: NARRATIVE VOICE AND THE OLD ENGLISH *SCOP*¹

By *Lisa M. Horton*

Abstract The picture of Anglo-Saxon society that we receive through its literature is a direct result of the life of the Old English *scop*. His personality and experiences filter into the stories that he tells and provide nuanced interpretations of both histories and legends, while his position within Anglo-Saxon society allows him direct access to the great events and persons of his time. As an active participant in his society, at the feet or even at the right hand of a king, he wields profound influence; as an observer and commentator on his society, he records and interprets both reality and fiction. Comprehension of narrative voice in Old English poetry depends on understanding the function, development, and complex social position of the *scop* who authors and disseminates this literature. This focused examination of three poems, *Widsið*, *Deor*, and *Beowulf*, provides a functional description of the professional life of the Old English *scop*.

*Þæt ic bi me sylfum // secgan wille,
 þæt ic hwile wæs // Heodenigna scop,
 dryhtne dyre. // Me wæs Deor noma.
 Ahte ic fela wintra // folgað tilne,
 holdne hlaford, // oppæt Heorrenda nu,
 leoðcræftig monn // londryht gebah,
 þæt me eorla hleo // ær gesealde.
 Þæs ofereode, // þisses swa mæg.*
Deor 35-42

[This I will say of myself, that I used to be *scop* to the Heodenings and dear to my lord. I was called Deor. For many winters I was in good service, loyal to my master. Now another, Heorrenda, a man skilled in poetry, received the landright that the protector of warriors formerly gave to me. That passed away, so may this.²]

1. Introduction

Within the canon of extant poetry in Old English³, there are three poems that not only demonstrate the art of the poet, but also provide useful insight into the lives of

¹ The whole profession encompassing musician, poet, jester, and lore-master is vast, making a study of the whole impracticable for my purpose. These varied professions, though relying on similar disciplines, are quite distinct in Anglo-Saxon society and are described using very different Old English words: *þyle*, *scop*, *gleoman*, *wopþora*, and *leoþwyrhta*. The subset of the profession that I am interested in is only the group of people categorized by the word *scop*. For a very complete discussion of the larger issue, see Opland (230-56).

² My translation—as some of the translations herein are mine and some are not, I carefully note which is which throughout.

³ I make a conscious decision not to approach the vexed question of date assignment for any of these poems, although there are several well-reasoned debates on the subject. For *Widsið*, see Joyce Hill's

the professional verse-makers who created them. It is surprising that these poems have not received more scholarly attention in this respect. These works survive for our examination due to the *scops* who first sang them and to their fellows who learned them as part of their repertoire. These professional singers repeated the poems until they became such an integral part of the culture that, when later Anglo-Saxon society in England began to document its oral traditional literature, such poems were preserved in the resulting manuscripts. Two of the poems, *Widsið* and *Deor*, are found in the Exeter Book.⁴ The third, of course, is *Beowulf*, part of the manuscript described as Cotton Vitellius A.xv.⁵ *Widsið* is a poem about a *scop*, albeit a fictionalized one. *Deor* is a philosophical poem whose narrator is a displaced *scop*. *Beowulf* contains so many lines either about a *scop* or spoken by a *scop* that an argument could be made that it is more about that profession than about the hero whose exploits it narrates. Other poems do mention either the professional *scop* or the amateur court singer or harper, such as Cynewulf in *Elene* and even *Riddle 89*, but the references are too fleeting to contribute substantially to an examination of the profession itself.⁶ Comprehension of narrative voice in Old English poetry depends on understanding the function, development, and complex societal position of the *scop* who authors and disseminates this literature.⁷ A focused examination of these three poems, *Widsið*, *Deor*, and *Beowulf*, provides a surprisingly clear picture of the professional life of the Old English *scop*.

2. Limitations of this Examination

Certain aspects of the profession of court singer in Old English culture are completely undiscoverable due simply to a total absence of data. For example, the first question that any modern musician would ask is what the court singer sings—not the words but the music. Unfortunately, apart from some fascinating speculation by several scholars (particularly John Nist) on the rhythmic patterns and scansion in Old English poetry, it is impossible to reproduce or even definitively to describe the music.⁸ There are neither known notation systems nor extant scores for this period (Wrenn 122).⁹

The other virtually fruitless question any musician would ask about these performances involves instrumentation. There are many references to the harp in the Old English canon. In *Beowulf*, the Lay of the Last Survivor contains a poignant reminiscence of the “*hearpan wyn*” [harp-delights] which are no more in the barrow of the

⁴ Excerpts from *Deor* and *Widsið* are also taken from Klinck. *Beowulf* excerpts are taken from Heaney’s facing-page translation.

⁵ I am indebted to Professor Tolkien for providing an explanation of manuscript description notation: “The manuscript in which *Beowulf* is found is London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius A. xv (the manuscript name means that it was part of Sir Robert Bruce Cotton’s collection of manuscripts in the seventeenth century, and that it was stored on a shelf under the bust of the Roman emperor Vitellius; it was the fifteenth manuscript on the shelf)” (164).

⁶ Brooke believes *Riddle 89* to be both by and about Cynewulf (8).

⁷ Opland connects the profession of *scop* with the verb *scieppan*, meaning to create or to form (Opland 232; Bright 463).

⁸ Nist does a very thorough, if bafflingly complex, study of halfline metrical cadences in *Beowulf* and concludes that the use of the harp could have been something like the background jazz band in a ‘50s poetry reading (28-29).

⁹ Some isolated pieces of information about the *scop*’s performance practice are available from passing references in other works. Anderson asserts, “He usually occupied a seat of honour near the king and remained seated while reciting his poems, accompanying himself with the harp” (38). Wrenn repeats this assertion, citing lines 80-81 from *The Fortunes of Men*: “*Sum sceal mid hearpan // aet his hlafordes / fotum sittan, // feoh thicgan*” [A certain one shall, sitting at his lord’s feet with the harp, receive riches] (qtd in Wrenn 125).

lost people (line 2262). In *Widsið*, the poet recollects a particular performance:

*Donne wit Scilling // sciran reorde
for uncrum sigedryhtne // song ahofan,
hlude bi hearpan // hleoþor swinsade,
þonne monige men // modum wlonce,
wordum sprecan, // þa þe wel cuþan,
þæt hi næfre song // sellan ne hyrdon.* (103-108)

[When Scilling and I, with ringing voices, performed a song before our victorious lord, the singing in clear harmony with the harp, many a proud-spirited man of great discernment in the art admitted he had never heard a better song (Dronke 127).]

If Wrenn's theory is correct, *Widsið* has actually named his harp Scilling (120). Although Dronke interprets his translation as a reference to two performers singing in unison, Wrenn's alternative is just as plausible. If he is wrong, this passage still proves that the harp was used as accompaniment to vocal performances. Even outside these three poems, the harp comes up again and again, notably in *Genesis A*, *Caedmon*, and even *Riddle 70* (Boenig 295; Bright 127; Wrenn 126-127). Unfortunately, here again an exact description is problematic. It is possible to assert that the harp most common in this period was a small lap harp or lyre on the order of the Sutton Hoo replica based on this passage in the story of Caedmon, recounted by Bede: "*Onð hē for þon oft in gebēorscipe, þonne þær wæs blisse intinga gedemed þæt hē ealle scalde þurh endebyrdness be hearpan singan, þonne hē geseah þā hearpan him nēalēcan, þonne ārās hē for scome from þæm symble onð hām ēode tō his hūse*" [Because often in fellowship, when for the sake of merriment it was decided that they all should sing with the harp in turn, when he saw the harp approaching him, then he arose for shame from the feast and went home to his house] (Caedmon 15-18, qtd in Bright 127).¹⁰ Clearly the harp is approaching Caedmon (note the dative pronoun "him"), not the other way around; therefore, the harp, being passed from one reveler to the next, must be small enough to make this practical.¹¹

3. The Professional Functions of a Scop

Many other aspects of the *scop*'s professional existence, however, can be extrapolated from the three available and most relevant texts. They provide many descriptions of the various functions of the *scop*. The first and most prevalent of these functions is that of entertainer. In *Beowulf*, the *scop* is first introduced as the principle entertainer in Heorot and thus, incidentally, the primary incitement for Grendel's wrath:

*Ða se ellen-gáest // earfoðlice
þrāge gepolode, // sē þe in þystrum bād,*

¹⁰ My translation. The Sutton Hoo replica, based on the remnants of an instrument found in the excavation of the ship burial, has the dimensions of 8 ¼" wide by ¾" deep by 29 1/8" long.

¹¹ My argument for the practicality or otherwise of passing the harp is not merely hypothetical. I have taken part in musical sessions where harps are used. A lap harp of the Sutton Hoo kind can be passed from hand to hand without difficulty. The British Museum replica of the Sutton Hoo instrument has the approximate dimensions of seven inches wide by two inches deep by thirty-six inches long and is made of maple, a relatively light-weight hardwood. A triangular floor harp, even of the comparatively small 29-string variety, is too unwieldy. Jess Bessinger discusses in detail and at length the Sutton Hoo replica and its implications for musicology for the period.

*þæt hē dōgora gehwām // drēam gehyrde
hlūdne in healle // þær wæs hearpan swēg,
swutol sang scopes. (lines 86-90)*

[Then a powerful demon, a prowler through the dark, / nursed a hard grievance. It harrowed him / to hear the din of the loud banquet / every day in the hall, the harp being struck / and the clear song of a skilled poet (Heaney 8-9).¹²]

As the *scop* here joyously sings the story of creation, he entertains the loud gathering of warriors at their ease, just before Grendel's first recorded attack. Later in the poem, after Beowulf defeats Grendel, Hrothgar and his people celebrate the victory in their reclaimed feasthall. After Hrothgar presents the victorious warriors with gifts, his court poet entertains the company with another recitation. Although the song's content is the tragic story of Hildeburh and her sorrows, the occasion dictates that the song's purpose is still primarily entertainment:

*Þær wæs sang ond swēg // samod ætgædere
fore Healfdenes // hilde-wīsan,
gomen-wudu grēted, // gid oft wrecen,
ðonne heal-gamen // Hrōþgāres scop
æfter medo-bence // mǣnan scolde:— (lines 1062-1066)*

[They sang then and played to please the hero, / words and music for their warrior prince, / harptunes and tales of adventure: / there were high times on the hall benches / and the king's poet performed his part (Heaney 70-71).]

Here the poet is specifically referred to as "*Hrōþgares scop*." The celebration demands entertainment and the *scop* dutifully provides pithy, dramatic poetry.¹³

A second function of the poet, also exemplified by the *scop* in *Beowulf*, is that of observer and recorder of important events. After Beowulf delivers Hrothgar and his people from Grendel, the *scop* demonstrates this function by crafting a new song both to record the historical event of the death of the legendary monster and to preserve Beowulf's name alongside the famous heroes of legend:

*Hwīlum cyniges þegn,
guma gilp-hlæden, // gidda gemyndig,
sē ðe eal-fela // eald-gesegna
worn gemunde, // word oþer fand
sōðe gebunden. // Secg eft ongan
sīð Bēowulfes // snyttrum styrian
ond on spēd wrecan // spel gerāde,
wordum wrixlan. (lines 867b-874a)*

[Meanwhile, a thane / of the king's household, a carrier of tales, / a traditional singer

¹² The picture Heaney draws of Grendel's aversion to the "din" of harp and poet is particularly vivid.

¹³ The inclusion of this song at this point in *Beowulf* has drawn a great deal of critical attention. The *scop*'s choice of song provides thematic links in the poem and clearly foreshadows both an imminent and brutal attack from Grendel's outraged mother and the more distant doom of the Danish kingdom resulting from just the sort of poorly-executed alliance described in the *scop*'s song. Despite the meta-thematic significance of its inclusion for the literary text, however, the *scop*'s performance clearly provides entertainment for the gathering.

deeply schooled / in the lore of the past, linked a new theme / to a strict meter. The man started / to recite with skill, rehearsing Beowulf's / triumphs and feats in well-fashioned lines, / entwining his words (Heaney 58-59).]

In the lines that follow, the narrator makes it clear that the poet makes a direct connection between Beowulf and "Sigemunde," the legendary dragon-slayer in the song he composes for this occasion.¹⁴ Then the poet sings an abridgement of Sigemunde's entire history, bringing in Beowulf at the end to cap the story and emphasize the fame the warrior has won. Stephen Evans states, "actually witnessing the events recounted in his poems would have made a poet's praise, recited in the hall in front of the other warriors, all the more satisfying to the participants than had he relied on second-hand accounts" (12). This dual role of observer and recorder is key to the *scop*'s profession, although it does potentially problematize his position. The *scop* duly records and praises suitably praiseworthy deeds, thus encouraging his lord's followers to display such courage and prowess in battle as would justify the song of the *scop*. However, the *scop* also serves a lord, and is duty-bound to record only such events as bring no dishonor to his employer. In *Beowulf*, one of the most notable features of the *scop*'s and even the poet's own narrative is the very faint praise for Hrothgar himself. Though introduced to the poem as "*helm Schyldinga*," [protector of the Scyldings] it is Hrothgar's inability to protect his people that necessitates Beowulf's involvement in the first place (line 456). The king's twelve-year exile from his own meadhall, though successfully brought to an end through the intervention of Beowulf, constitutes an unspoken source of shame to both Hrothgar and his warriors. Unable to drive the invader from their midst, they are forced to rely on the prowess of an outsider. Thus, the *scop* sings his song of Beowulf's victory whilst walking a difficult edge between the propriety of praising the savior of the community and the impropriety of seeming to censure their erstwhile unsuccessful protector. Of course, the events that a *scop* can record do not always take place within his lord's own court.

In *Widsið*, the titular poet's most striking function is that of a traveling performer. Indeed, his very name means far-traveler (Brooke 1). It is the range of his alleged travels that provides one of the first clues for a modern audience that the poet is fictional. He claims to have been everywhere from the far north "*mid Geatum*" to the Middle East "*mid Persum*" (lines 58 and 84). Of course, the mere experiences are insufficient to the profession of the *scop*; he must also be able to encapsulate those experiences in poetry and communicate them to his audience. In the same poem he gives fleeting examples of his skill as he reviews the catalogue of his many and generous patrons.

For a *scop* posted to a lord's or king's court, of course, his principal function is publicizing the deeds of his patron. L.F. Anderson verifies the importance of this function to the professional *scop*, saying, "that which more than anything else won for the singer the favour of the great was the power he possessed of extending through his songs the fame of those whom he praised" (35-36). *Widsið* knows his function and its importance to any potential new patron: "Even great kings are but little, [Widsið] thinks, without their singer. In his hands their history lies, and their

¹⁴ The presence of the story of "Sigemunde" (alias Siegfried, alias Sigurd in Germanic legend) in *Beowulf* also points out both the widespread disbursement pattern and the surprising longevity of scop-carried legends.

honor” (Brooke 5). French summarizes this poet’s offered services: “[Widsið] promises the patron that he, like Eormenric, will be extolled, not for qualities that he never possessed or acts he never performed, but for a generosity entirely within the *scop*’s cognizance” (630). Widsið’s catalogues of satisfied patrons who have richly rewarded him ably demonstrate his awareness of his duty as *scop* to bring glory to the name of his lord and clearly signals his willingness to perform that duty for his next prospective patron.

Another vital function of the *scop*’s profession is fictionalizing the events of real life and storycrafting. Anne Klinck points out that Deor’s very name is probably a fiction: “Deor does not appear in the Hild story—or elsewhere in heroic literature...Whereas the other proper names in the poem belong to heroic legend, Deor seems to be an imaginary figure” (167). The poet simply states, “*Me wæs Deor noma.*”¹⁵ Klinck further discusses the various critical theories surrounding the name of the poet, but concludes, “whether an epithet or a regular proper name, ‘Deor’ reflects the speaker’s respected status at the court of the Heodenings—a status which he no longer enjoys” (168). *Widsið* also fictionalizes and exaggerates the life of a *scop*. As Graham Caie notes, “it is clear that no single man could have lived long enough to have been with all the rulers that the *Widsið*-poet claims to have served, and that we are dealing with a fictional character” (83). Michael Swanton summarizes:

To suppose that [*Widsið*] represents anything other than an imaginative interpretation of the historical circumstances would be mistaken. The purportedly autobiographical details of Widsið’s [sic] journey to the court of the Gothic king Eormenric are given a legendary rather than factual framework, reflecting a situation which had passed away even in the fourth century. (36)

The poets’ skills in fictionalizing their experiences demonstrate their abilities as storytellers and composers of new tales.

The role of the *scop* is vital to his society. More than merely an entertainer, more than a promoter of warriors’ or kings’ reputations, more even than a recorder of history, the *scop* is a teacher and a guardian of community. As Stephen Evans observes: “The poetry paid special attention to the duties and obligations owed by both chieftain and warriors to one another in the lord-retainer relationship, which was the fundamental basis, the permanent foundation, upon which the comitatus structure and its heroic value-system were built” (16). Hrothgar’s *scop* in *Beowulf* demonstrates his skill in this role by the care with which he recites the story of Hildeburh with its example of the chaos and tragedy that follows upon the breaking of oaths (lines 1070-1159a). The *Widsið* and *Deor* poets, though they do not tell of particular communities, still demonstrate by their references that they too know instructional tales of the idealized, correctly functioning society and can produce them when such lessons are required.

4. The Professional Development of a Scop

The early phase of a *scop*’s career involves traveling, listening, and gathering a

¹⁵ Line 37. Various interpretations of the name “Deor” range from Michael Swanton’s plaintive “‘Dear’ was my name,” and Anne Klinck’s preferred “bold,” to W. Bolton’s disparaging “animal” (Swanton 45; Klinck 167; qtd in Klinck 167). However the name is translated, the poignancy of the line is that the verb is past-tense; no one calls him “Deor” anymore.

repertoire. Speaking to the poet's necessarily sizeable repertoire, French states, "the author of [Beowulf] alluded or referred knowingly to some sixty probably historical persons and some twenty-five events" (626). He goes on to speak of *Widsið*'s catalogue of famous persons: "The ancient name-lists incorporated into the poem must have been quoted exactly as modern scholars have conjectured. They were part of a well-taught minstrel's stock in trade. They were the table of contents of his repertory—or at least, so he would have his hearers believe" (629). Caie speculates that the *Widsið* catalogue serves as "a mnemonic poem that might help a poet remember the major figures of heroic legend" (82). French also makes a good case for poets' accurate preservation of their material: "[Widsið] was just the sort of work that, once introduced among *scops*, was likely to undergo little change so long as people would listen to stories about the ancient Germanic heroes" (629). French further notes an incident which demonstrates the profound truth of this phenomenon: "One of the Icelandic visitors to Harald's court completely satisfied the king as to the accuracy of his narrative about the king's own deeds in the Eastern Empire, and this although he had picked up his story from another poet at an assembly" (626). Therefore, the *scop* is responsible not only for hearing, learning, and remembering a respectable repertoire, but also for insuring that it is not modified in error. Especially if the subject of a heroic lay is still living, it is obviously important to the *scop* not to make factual mistakes in his performance. With legendary material, presumably, the *scop* has more margin for adjustment.¹⁶

The primary phase of the *scop*'s career consists of residence with and service to a single principle patron. The principle *scop* in *Beowulf* is attached to Hrothgar's service and presumably retains his position for as long as Hrothgar is king.¹⁷ At the same time the most immediate goal of both the *Widsið* and the *Deor* poet is to acquire and keep a generous patron. French describes the poet's search for an employer as exemplified by *Widsið*:

His ultimate aim in composing the poem or in reciting it subsequently was to interest a patron in supporting him...to attract a patron, the poet must achieve two successes: he must persuade possible employers that he was thoroughly competent; and he had to assure them that they might count upon a fitting return for their liberality. (623)

Swanton speculates on this ultimate goal in regard to rhetorical strategies of *Widsið* and *Deor*, "it is not insignificant that these are mere pseudonyms. Their verse is necessarily anonymous since its function is to serve their patrons' reputation [sic] rather than their own. The client's urgent priority was for fame in his own lifetime" (9). Caie defines the relationship between patron and *scop* as a simple exchange of glory for treasure: "Poets were more than mere entertainers, they could make or break one's reputation and give or withhold immortality" (84). Evans elaborates on the specifics by saying:

Lords rewarded poets handsomely because their chief duties – the recitation

¹⁶ Such latitude towards the tales of ancient times might partly explain regional variants in the details of such legends as those of Eormenric and Sigemund.

¹⁷ Or, indeed, for as long as Hroðgar lives. Once the king is dead, of course, the *scop*'s status, no longer linked to that of his powerful protector and employer, is freely in play. Either the *scop* fights and dies alongside his king just like any other member of the warband, or he runs away branded a coward.

of genealogies, the composition and recitation of narrative and eulogistic poetry, and the publicizing of reputations – centered on the promotion of the lord’s status in particular, and of the well-being and smooth functioning of his warband in general. (15)

Indeed the community leverage that the poet wields is substantial. Evans goes on to explain, “in a society where the active promotion of one’s reputation was all-important, the poet’s chief weapons – overt satire or subtle omission – must have ensured that the poet was treated with respect by all members of a warband” (14). While the *scop* occupies that privileged position in his master’s favor, his status is assured; however, the system is not always stable.

When a poet is displaced, his career enters a transitional, sometimes ultimate phase. This is spent in self-promotion and demonstration of prowess in the pursuit of further gainful employment as evidenced by *Widsið* and *Deor*. French argues that this stage of the *scop*’s career is neither unusual nor particularly awkward for him: “There is, indeed, every probability that the *scop* had to consider self-advertisement a normal part of his professional task, and an appeal for support [as in *Widsið*, is] the most natural act in the world” (630). Norman Eliason, in his commentary on both of these poems concludes that they both demonstrate the poets’ efforts to acquire new positions and patrons, albeit by greatly varying strategies. He explains that in the vast exaggerations of *Widsið*, “the poet is not idly indulging his fancy nor foolishly embellishing his fiction. He is simply urging claims far beyond any he could possibly make or hope to get for himself. This is the well-known begging dodge of asking for the moon in the hope of getting acheeseparang” (Eliason 188).¹⁸ After an examination of the references to Norse legends in *Deor*, Klinck discovers that the *scop* who displaced him was both a famous success and an important player in a notorious intrigue. She points out, “evidently Heorrenda was a legendary minstrel with fabulous powers. *Deor*’s own prowess is implied by associating him with such a figure” (168). The code of honor in professional competition among poets demonstrated in *Deor* seems similar to the warriors’ code. Clearly it is a grievous hardship for *Deor* to lose this patronage, but there is no dishonor in losing it to such an opponent. He does not seem unduly to resent his competitor for the outcome, calling him without apparent irony a “*leodcræftig monn*” [man skilled with his hands] (line 40). This honorable defeat may be analogous to Beowulf’s death while destroying the dragon—the loss is still a loss, but ultimately the conflict accrues still more credit to his reputation.

5. The Position of the Scop

The societal position of the *scop* allows him direct access to the great events and persons of his time and provides opportunity for the creation and dissemination of literary interpretation of these events. As Anderson points out, “of the professional singers definitely mentioned in Anglo-Saxon literature, two, *Deor* and *Hrothgar*’s *scop*, are especially spoken of as attached in that capacity to the court of a chief or king, and the *scop* of *Widsið* in all likelihood occupies a similar position” (7). This highest level access to the events of his society allows the *scop* both to observe and to

¹⁸ I agree with Eliason on this point regarding *Widsið*, despite his minimizing the societal role and status of the *scop*.

record that society, albeit within potentially problematic limitations. The singer in *Beowulf* examines the battle scene and Grendel's corpse, then composes his song in the hero's praise. This argues for a very privileged status for the *scop*, in significant contrast to Eliason's theory of the *Beowulf scop* as a mere jester.¹⁹ In addition to the *scop*'s access to events that happen at court and position of official observer, Evans argues that the poet is also a regular participant in the activities of the warband: "The fact that the poet shared with his lord and fellow warriors the hardships and dangers of the campaign trail, rather than remain at court in relative ease and comfort, would have served to strengthen his ties to those who fought, and accorded him more respect for his position" (13). His participation provides him with the dual perspective of fellow warrior among the others of his lord's retainers, and independent observer and commentator on the occurrences in which he takes part.²⁰

Not only is the *scop* able to observe, record, and participate in the society and events of his time, but also he has access to a varied audience which would receive his works. From the evidence of these texts, the audience of the Old English *scop* was familiar with a startling volume of legends and stories. The *scop* must take this into account when creating and repeating his repertoire. As Caie points out, "it would appear...that the *Deor* and *Widsið* poets *expect* us to know the many allusions to the names of ancient rulers and legends, although the poems are not about these characters" (81). Also, the poet must compose his works to optimize their performative nature. In particular, "the opening lines of a poem...are crucial...the poet designs his major rhetorical strategy to affect his audience on their first exposure to a poem...A poet must reward the imagination of those interested in the song and engage the imagination of those who are not" (Mandel 122). The retainers of a victorious chieftain were most engaged and entertained by poetry that spoke directly to their own experience: legendary heroes, their great victories and tragic deaths, and their loyal companions. The successful *scop* acknowledged the preferences of his audience and composed and performed his works with that audience in mind (Evans 16). Knowing his audience and both crafting material for and performing to its tastes make the difference between the respected and well-rewarded *scop* in a stable professional position and a *scop* who must look out for a new posting.

6. The Individuality of a *Scop*

The personality and experiences of the *scop* filter into the stories that he tells and provide nuanced interpretations of both histories and legends. Hrothgar's *scop* in *Beowulf* directly views and takes part in the events that he later sets down in verse. The contrast of the hardships of Heorot's long ordeal at the hands of Grendel and the heroic victory of Beowulf are meticulously crafted into a song that is not begun until after the warband has viewed the field of battle. Hrothgar's *scop* thus demonstrates his professionalism by this care for veracity. Evans notes, "the telling of such events would have been better served by a poet who had witnessed them, for it provided him

¹⁹ Eliason's rather strange theory is based largely on the *Beowulf* and Unferth *flyting* (or *senna*) sequence in lines 499-606 (Eliason, "Pyle" 267).

²⁰ This dual role of singer and warrior finds a possible echo in the character of Volker the Fiddler in the *Nibelungenlied*, one of the most feared companions of Gunther and Hagen. In the introduction to his translation of the text, Arthur Hatto prefers to consider Volker a "gentleman amateur," but the conflation of the two skills is nonetheless interesting (Hatto 337).

with the specific details he required to fashion a more interesting and credible account" (13). He is the court poet whose repertoire is made unique by his own immediate observation of important occurrences.

The traveling entertainer in *Widsið* possesses a phenomenal memory and an extensive repertoire. From the very beginning when he "*wordhord onleac*" [unlocks his word-hoard], his words imply great treasures long stored away (line 1).²¹ Poetry and story are conflated here with "treasure-hoards," the priceless collected treasures of dragons in Germanic legends. He offers stories of exotic foreign places and exciting foreign heroes to the shrewd patron who will reward him with gifts. His catalogue of knowledge promises a vast quantity of entertainment and enlightenment. His list of rich rewards earned suggests that the quality of his repertoire is proportionally rich. He is the itinerant storyteller, building his own unique repertoire by listening and collecting tales at every opportunity his travel provides.

The grieving, displaced poet of *Deor* departs from both the forms and the themes of his profession. He gathers together examples from across his collection of stories and legends to form a litany of misfortunes and divides it into stanzas to which he adds, in the end, an account of his own loss. Caie examines the rhetorical strategy of the poet in artistically describing his difficulties: "The effect...both highlights his problem, elevating it to epic proportions, and also puts it in perspective: if such major, world-known tragedies were resolved, so also could his" (82). He situates his predicament among some of the great if somewhat ambiguous tragedies of old.²² However, *Deor*'s autobiographical impulse is unusual among Anglo-Saxon poets.²³ Neither the composer and purveyor of second-hand tales of heroism in the manner of *Hroðgar's scop*, nor the self-publicist of his own story-making prowess in the manner of *Widsið*, *Deor* becomes the tragic hero of his own story, displaced by his lord in favor of a skillful and formidable rival. Swanton argues that *Deor* "remains stoically unresentful at the fact of his displacement, acknowledging both the competence of his rival,...and the propriety of his former patron's role" (45). His ambivalent attitude towards the situation is underlined by his repetition of the ambiguous line that ends each stanza, "*Þæs ofereode, þisses swa mæg,*" whose meaning seems constant but whose intention is warped by its shifting context. By the process of injecting his own experience and persona into the poem, *Deor* effectively inverts his own profession and demonstrates precisely how problematic the *scop*'s cultural status is. For all his abilities, for all his efforts at maintaining his social balance, *Deor* has failed to sufficiently please his employer. Though he speaks wistfully of the community and lord he has served, his lands and position have been reassigned. Whereas *Widsið* optimistically casts himself as a perpetual nomad, *Deor*'s newfound itinerant status throws him into despondency. He is the musing philosopher whose luck has run short but

²¹ It is interesting that this phrase is the same phrase that the *Beowulf* poet uses to describe how the hero addresses the Danish coast-guard (*Beowulf* 259).

²² Of the named characters in *Deor*'s litany, not all are passive victims of circumstance in the manner *Deor* would have his listeners believe that he is himself; particularly notable is *Weland the Smith* who extricates himself from captivity with vengeful fury against both his captor and his captor's household.

²³ If, indeed, *Deor* is not himself a fictionalized persona. This question forms an important critical nexus for the poem, but one for a more in-depth discussion than this article.

whose repertoire is still growing by his own creative powers.

7. Observations

The Anglo-Saxon *scop*, as demonstrated in *Widsið*, *Deor*, and *Beowulf*, epitomizes the precarious pinnacle of his society. He is the noble kinsman, trusted companion, and loyal retainer of warriors and kings. He is the wise and witty entertainer of the fellowship in the mead hall. Maintaining a delicate balance among these disparate roles, he must function as teacher, as moral rudder, and as vocal conscience of the community, sometimes against his own self-interest. At the same time, he can also be experienced battle veteran, level-headed observer, impassioned mourner of glorious defeats, and celebrant of costly victories. His is the ever-present eye and creative voice salvaging the reputations of lords and rewarding the brave deeds of heroes. Judging the world around him, he decides whose feats will achieve lasting glory. Through his words, his music, and his performances, he preserves the culture and personalities of his society and of the lost peoples of legend, and when his music is silenced, joy departs from the community. Even so, the itinerant and mendicant²⁴ character of *Widsið* and the desperate if philosophical tone of *Deor* pull the observant song-making bystander into the literary action of Anglo-Saxon culture. While Hrothgar's *scop* successfully maintains his distance from the action, lending his voice but not his arm to the proceedings, *Widsið*'s apparent disinclination to settle into a community in which he would play an active role suggests a resistance to even that level of participation. At the same time, *Deor*'s lament for the loss of established position and status within a community cautions of the dearth of security within a profession so socially problematic. Thus, three literary texts, all variously featuring examples of the Anglo-Saxon *scop*, demonstrate the intricacy of such participants in that society. Nevertheless, the mere longevity of these examples within Old English poetry attests to one clear fact—for his patron, his society, and himself, the *scop* truly holds the key to immortality.

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²⁴ As *Widsið*'s primary purpose in this poem seems to be self-marketing, the narrator's temporary mendicancy is strongly implied.

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- Text should be formatted in 12-point Times New Roman with one-inch margins. Text should also be double-spaced. All pages should be numbered in the upper right-hand corner of each page.
- Although your paper should be written using language that is accessible to those outside your field, do write in a style that is appropriate to your field, using standard conventions regarding figures and references. Be sure to explain technical terms and abbreviations where necessary.
- There is a 20-page limit to submissions.
- All submissions should be carefully edited to conform to the standards of American spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
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Fall 2010

General Guidelines: Book Reviews

The Hilltop Review: A Journal of Western Michigan University Graduate Student Research accepts submissions from any current Western Michigan University (WMU) graduate student. Book reviews are welcome from students in any of the university's graduate programs. Reviews should be submitted for **recommended reading only** and should evaluate books published within the past two years (2008-2009).

All submitted reviews should meet the following guidelines:

- Reviews should be no greater than 500 words in length.
- A cover page containing your name, department and graduate college, and contact information (phone and email address) should be included with your submission.
- The text of your review should be preceded by the author's name, the title of his/her book, the publisher, year of publication, number of pages, and purchase price of the book being reviewed.
- The text of your review should be formatted in 12-point Times New Roman with one-inch margins. Text should be double-spaced. All pages should be numbered in the upper right-hand corner of each page.

General Guidelines: Letters to the Editor

The Hilltop Review: A Journal of Western Michigan University Graduate Student Research accepts letters to the editor from any current Western Michigan University (WMU) faculty member or graduate student in any of the university's programs. Letters should be composed as thoughtful responses to articles published in the previous issue. Letters will be evaluated by the editorial board.

All submitted letters should meet the following guidelines:

- Letters should be no greater than 300 words in length.
- A cover page containing your name, department and graduate college, and contact information (phone and email address) should be included with your submission.

****The deadline for submissions is Monday, September 27, 2010.****

Submission should be made online. The submission web site is <https://www.easychair.org/login.cgi?timeout=1;conf=hilltopreviewspring2010>. An automatic confirmation email for each submission will be sent to the author.

Any questions regarding submissions for the spring issue may be directed to the Editor, Lotfi Ben Othmane (gsac_hilltop@wmich.edu).

Are you enthusiastic about graduate research and writing?

**Are you considering a career in writing, publishing,
or academia?**

**Do you have experience in editing or reviewing
scholarly articles?**

Are you interested in gaining editing experience?

If so, we are pleased to inform you that *The Hilltop Review: A Journal of Western Michigan University Graduate Student Research* is looking for additional individuals to serve as

- **Editorial Board members,**
- **Copy-editors, and**
- **Reviewers of future submissions.**

Any current Western Michigan University (WMU) graduate student may self-nominate to serve in one of these positions for the Fall 2010 semester. Please send any questions about our editing process as well as any nominations of editorial board members, copy-editors, and / or reviewers to gsac_hilltop@wmich.edu.



Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI



Graduate Student Advisory Committee (GSAC)