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The act of writing is the act of making soul, alchemy.
- Gloria Anzaldúa

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Welcome to *Alchemy*, Swarthmore College's journal of academic writing. Each year a group of Writing Associates publishes several academic papers written by members of the Swarthmore student body. In this year's issue, Isabel Rivera explores the social influence of Christian religious institutions on the Puerto Rican community of Philadelphia. Sarah Bedolfe and Niki Machac outline the environmental effect of pH on the health of ocean mussels, while Justin diFelicianantonio investigates race and gender in Ben Jonson's *The Masque of Blackness*. In addition, Miriam Rich uses a case study of an American factory worker to draw larger conclusions about nineteenth-century American life. Finally, Andrew Loh discusses the role of new media in contemporary Malaysian politics.

Each of these of papers represents an individual perspective on a specific topic of interest to the author. They represent a variety of approaches to an equally diverse group of subjects. Every author collaborated with the editorial board to produce the final version of the paper that you see in this journal.

We believe these papers represent a cross-section of the student-motivated research that happens both inside and outside of the classroom. The hard work and commitment to academic inquiry that these authors demonstrate is just one small glimpse of the Swarthmore experience. We hope that you will enjoy reading what Swarthmore students have been writing over the past year.

*Judy Browngoehl and Sean Nesselrode
and the Editorial Staff of Alchemy
2009*



*¿En el nombre del Padre, del Hijo y de la
prosperidad puertorriqueña?*

The Role of the Catholic and Protestant Churches in
the Puerto Rican Community of Philadelphia

Isabel Rivera '10

In the 1950s, a time known as the Great Puerto Rican Migration, the Puerto Rican population of Philadelphia grew at an exponential rate. During this time, the Catholic Church played a crucial role in integrating the new migrant community into city life. Some scholars have argued that the Catholic Church adopted the role of an “Americanizer of immigrants” in response to criticisms regarding its lack of Americanism during the mid-nineteenth century. Others maintain that the Catholic Church assumed the role of a not-for-profit organization because it provided care services to the needy.¹ However, both camps recognize that at present many Puerto Ricans in the United States do not view the Catholic Church as a breeding ground of deep faith. Evidence for this lies in statistics that attest to the high percentage of conversions within the Puerto Rican community, particularly to various Protestant faiths. An examination of the history of the Catholic Church within the Puerto Rican community and the illuminating story of Marcus Delgado, a Puerto Rican migrant in 1950s Philadelphia, reveals that the contemporary image of the Catholic Church as an apolitical institution that provided formal and informal care services to the Latino community alienated Puerto Rican youth in

the mid-twentieth century. As a result, many Puerto Ricans looked to Protestant faiths for the politicization that the Catholic Church did not provide, shifting the religious make up of the community.

In the 1920s, the passage of a series of immigration acts, including the Emergency Quota Act of 1921 and the National Origins Act of 1924, limited the percentage of foreign immigrants permitted to enter and reside in the United States. However, Puerto Ricans, having been granted U.S. citizenship in 1917, were viewed as a source of cheap labor. Consequently, in the 1950s and 1960s, the disappearance of the tobacco and sugar industries on the island and the emergence of farm labor programs caused a flood of migrants from the towns of Salinas and San Lorenzo to seek seasonal labor contracts in the U.S.² Many of these Puerto Ricans came to the U.S. through family connections, assistance from the Puerto Rican government’s Migration Division Office, or through a seasonal labor contract. Between 1945 and 1965, Philadelphia was the second most common destination for Puerto Ricans. By 1954, Puerto Ricans had become the largest Latino group in the city.

At the onset of the Great Migration,

the Catholic Church in Philadelphia played a critical role in settling migrants in the U.S. However, scholars offer various interpretations for the Catholic Church's motivation in integrating Puerto Ricans into the larger U.S. society. For instance, in "The Puerto Rican Religious Experience," Jaime Vidal argues that the Catholic Church's involvement in the Puerto Rican community was a result of institutional power dynamics within the U.S. In response to nineteenth century criticisms that claimed the Catholic Church to be "incompatible with basic American values,"³ the Church attempted to legitimize itself as an American institution by becoming the "Americanizer of the immigrants."⁴ However, according to Vidal, Puerto Ricans on the island viewed Catholicism as the religion of high society. Similarly, Ana María Díaz-Stevens claims that the practice of Catholicism varied by the location and socioeconomic status of the congregation. She argues that the Catholicism practiced by the Puerto Rican elite was an institutionalized form that contrasted with the "folk Catholicism that survived in the [Puerto Rican] countryside."⁵ The latter type sometimes included elements of Santería, an Afro-Caribbean religion whose strong influence could be identified in "supplications to the household saints and personal spirit-guides [that] are... necessary to many Catholic Puerto Ricans."⁶ Thus, in "taming" the religious beliefs of Puerto Ricans, the more institutionalized Catholic Church saw its job as a missionary one "in which a people who had been superficially evangel-

ized would now be brought to the full understanding and practice of true Catholicism."⁷ Simultaneously, missionaries intended to Americanize Puerto Rican Catholics by teaching and conducting mass in English and by reinforcing the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church. This missionary relationship continued on the U.S. mainland as the Catholic Church strove to establish itself as an American institution for the new wave of Puerto Rican migrants.

Thus, despite regional and class differences present on the island, the U.S. Catholic Church reached out to the new migrants. The Church believed that in order to Americanize and maintain the loyalty of this predominantly Catholic migrant group, it had to tailor itself to the needs of the Puerto Rican community. In cities like Philadelphia and New York, the number of Puerto Ricans was too significant for the Catholic Church to lose from its constituency. Consequently, during the Great Migration, parishes like *La Milagrosa* and *Santa Agonía* opened in major Northeast cities to address the needs of the growing Puerto Rican community.

As new migrants, the majority of these young Puerto Ricans experienced difficulty in adjusting to Philadelphia.⁸ According to historian Carmen Teresa Whalen, "Puerto Rican migrants who settled in Philadelphia confronted their new urban environments as young adults from the countryside, with little formal education, who had worked

mostly in agriculture, agricultural processing, and the garment industry.”⁹ Moreover, the cold climate, language barrier, and urban racial segregation were major impediments in their adjustment to the city.

Seeking a familiar and accessible institution through which they could find connections to other Philadelphia resources, many Puerto Ricans turned to the actively welcoming Catholic Church. Catholic missions like *La Milagrosa* in Spring Garden—the only Spanish-speaking mission in the area—and charities like *Casa del Carmen*, cultivated a sense of community among the Puerto Ricans settling in North Philadelphia. For example, in the 1960s, church personnel “met each plane at the Philadelphia airport and asked every Catholic to register his name so that he [could] be referred to the proper parish rolls.”¹⁰ In an attempt to Americanize the new migrants, the Catholic Church actively reached out to the growing Puerto Rican community.

According to anthropologist Joan Dee Koss, migrant Puerto Ricans became involved in the Philadelphia Catholic Church primarily to familiarize themselves with the city’s civic and welfare institutions. There were many benefits to being members of the Catholic Church congregation. Through their participation in the Catholic Church, many Puerto Ricans were able to meet their welfare needs while minimizing the social stigma they would face as newcomers to a country that valued self-reliance. In *The Other*

Philadelphia Story: How Local Congregations Support Quality of Life in Urban America, Ram Cnaan writes, “religious congregations and other faith communities shoulder a considerable portion of the burden of care for the needy people in America.”¹¹ The Catholic Church of Philadelphia served as a place where Puerto Rican migrants could seek some informal care services like “counseling, senior care, children and youth services, health programs for homeless and poor people, education, art, security, community organizing, community economic and social development, social issues, and housing.”¹² In fulfilling the basic needs of the Puerto Rican migrant community, the Catholic Church took on the role of a contemporary non-profit social organization, providing both the informal and formal care services that governmental welfare programs neglected to provide the community.

The Catholic Church in Philadelphia also helped migrants establish social connections similar to those that people were accustomed to on the island. Social activities like baptisms, weddings, and other weekend events sponsored by the Catholic Church provided a place for Puerto Ricans to gather and unwind while recreating the social atmosphere of the island. These social events also provided the new migrants with job networking opportunities and a community space to relate the challenges they faced in the city.

In attempting to fulfill God’s word through social service, however, the

Catholic Church's religious message of faith and salvation was lost on the younger generations of Puerto Ricans in Philadelphia. The Catholic Church became particularly irrelevant to those who had been born in the city or had migrated to the city at a very young age. Directly confronted with the social and racial turmoil that brewed in the streets of Philadelphia, the day-to-day reality of these youths differed greatly from their parents'. The baptisms and weddings became mundane and routine for the younger generations that were not being provided with care specific to their needs as youths of the inner city (i.e., youth programs that would allow them to escape the pressure of gang life and crime as a means of survival). These youths wanted guidance in understanding their place in and potential contribution to the Puerto Rican community. Thus, in its efforts to recreate the environment of life in Puerto Rico, the Catholic Church could not attract Puerto Rican youth. The failure to reach out to the youth led to the religious displacement of many Puerto Rican teenagers in Philadelphia.

The case of Marcus Delgado, the current Vice President of Human Services at *Asociación Puertorriqueños en Marcha, Inc.* (a non-profit organization that serves the Greater Philadelphia area) represents the migration experience of many young Puerto Ricans to Philadelphia in the 1950s. In 1956, a four-year-old Delgado and his family migrated from San Lorenzo to Philadelphia through the invitation of one of the

family's relatives. The Delgado family settled in Spring Garden, one of the main Puerto Rican enclaves in Philadelphia (that included Northern Liberties and Southwark).¹³

Because the family lived in North Philadelphia, *La Milagrosa* played an integral role in the life of the Delgados. The Church's activities enabled the family to recreate the social environment that had existed on the island but had been difficult to recreate on the mainland due to the constraints of urban planning. The creation of this environment was possible due to the fact that there were many migrants from San Lorenzo residing in the area. As Delgado recalls, the Catholic Church's social activities were "a place of refuge and...a place of support where all the families came together."¹⁴ Because he attended a parochial school in the Fairmount section of the city, the Catholic Church also played a role in Delgado's primary school education. However, his experience with the Catholic Church was merely institutional. Upon reflection, Delgado maintains that:

It was an institutional system that was not attached to personal involvement . . . whenever we had to confess our sins it was in this box and you'd go there and say what you did and [the priest] would say, "Well, just do three Hail Marys, two [Our] fathers and your sins will be forgiven. Oh gee, this is easy. I'll come back again next week and give him some harder ones

(laughs). So it, you know, you grow up in that and you know it but it was never close to touching you where you really needed the touch...[that is] what happened when I got involved with the Pentecostal church.¹⁵

Delgado's disconnect with the Catholic Church, vividly illustrated by his perception of the church confessional as "this box," was one shared by many Puerto Rican youths living in Philadelphia at the time. The religious and political experience they sought was not provided by the Catholic Church, and many disenfranchised youth, like Delgado, sought this experience elsewhere.

Like other Puerto Rican youths at the time, Marcus Delgado's religious conversion from Catholicism to Protestantism was brought about through his experiences as a teenager fending for himself on the streets of Philadelphia. After living a life of drugs, crime, and gangs during the 1970s, a young Delgado found religion through his involvement with a Methodist minister. The minister met Delgado's gang in the 1970s through a business development plan facilitated by the local government to service the community. The minister used his connection to this group of teenagers who were living in a "reality of loneliness and not knowing what [their] future was like"¹⁶ to preach about hope. Delgado asserts that the subsequent encounter with God enabled him to seek higher education and set his life in the right direction.

Additionally, his encounter with the Protestant faith encouraged him to remain active within the Puerto Rican community of Philadelphia. Through his past work in various Latino organizations in Philadelphia and his current position as Vice President of APM, Delgado has been able to give the Puerto Rican community an opportunity to break out of the cycle of crime through the hope of achieving salvation.

In seeking a closer relationship with God, Puerto Ricans sought a church that would connect them to God in the political, social and spiritual aspects of their lives. A study conducted by the Pew Hispanic Center found that one in three Puerto Ricans in the United States is a convert, with twenty-one percent of those converts former Catholics. This makes Puerto Ricans the largest group of converts among Latinos in the United States.¹⁷ According to the study, most subjects claimed that their primary reason for conversion was to develop a more direct, personal experience of God. This statistic supports the idea that in the past, the Catholic Church had been recognized not for its religious role, but for its secular role as a charitable organization.

In considering the aspects of Protestantism that attracted Puerto Ricans, it is important to understand the social function of Protestantism in the community "as a force to generate personal transformation and revolutionary social change, or as a force to maintain the existing social order and provide therapy or reinte-

grate persons into this order or to rationalize their exclusion.”¹⁸ Koss explains the conversion of Puerto Ricans to Protestant churches in the 1950s as a sign of their commitment to a change in lifestyle. By converting and foregoing certain aspects of their cultural traditions, Puerto Ricans could assimilate and achieve their individual goals on the U.S. mainland (something that could not have happened with the Catholic Church). Koss’ explanation, however, overlooks the history of the Protestant Church within the Puerto Rican community in Philadelphia. Protestant churches provided a place for Puerto Ricans to organize that the Catholic Church did not. As Delgado’s story shows, small storefront churches in the community were a breeding ground of deep faith and commitment to finding solutions to the problems existing in the community.

To reiterate, the shift of Puerto Rican religious practice from Catholicism to Protestantism was due to the inability of the Catholic Church to address both the social and political needs of the community. By assuming a pro status quo position on political issues, the Catholic Church quelled any signs of political organizing in their congregations. Unlike the Baptist Church, which encouraged political organizing within the black community, the Catholic Church in the Puerto Rican community was not supportive of any political activity. This position on political organizing had also existed on the island: the Catholic Church saw politics as a matter for “their civic conscience...

[adding that] Catholicism has no preference for any political status.”¹⁹ Moreover, the Catholic community of Philadelphia sought to provide services to “‘good’ Catholics,” which it defined as those who were better educated and economically stable—immediately prioritizing the relocated Puerto Rican elite among the migrants.²⁰ While the Catholic Church created a social atmosphere similar to that on the island, it provided economic services with caution, encouraging migrants to use the resources in a manner that would avoid dependency and help them integrate into mainstream U.S. culture.

In contrast, the Protestant churches of the U.S. provided a safe space for subsequent generations of Puerto Ricans, like Marcus Delgado, to come together and discuss issues directly affecting them. This granted them a forum that the Catholic Church, in trying to assimilate the community, did not provide. Along with their opportunities for political organizing, Protestant churches appealed to the Puerto Rican community in other ways. Joan Dee Koss claims that Protestantism was attractive because of the familiarity of the religion, the opportunity for the following of a strict moral code, and the “bizarre” behavior of revivals of the Pentecostal faith. She views the Pentecostal Church in particular as a place where Puerto Ricans could express emotional intensity freely. It was also a place where “almost all are on equal social footing,” (something that could not be achieved in the hierarchical structure

of the Catholic church).²¹ According to Koss, the Pentecostal faith served as a place where Puerto Ricans could be truer to their identity as a people and where they could practice their faith in a manner that was celebratory of their culture—not assimilatory. The ease and comfort of the environment enabled members of the congregation to speak freely, without the fear of being rejected. Thus, people felt comfortable voicing their concerns regarding community issues and politics. The setting provided an exemplary place for discourse on politics, and eventually, action.

Marcus Delgado's own life trajectory fits into this religious-political context. As one of the founders of the Hispanic Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, the possibility of faith has always influenced Delgado's belief in social and spiritual change in the Puerto Rican community of Philadelphia. Delgado's conversion to Protestantism fueled his desire to give back to the community. Considering his life experiences, he found it necessary to take on the responsibility of engaging in social work and mobilizing other Puerto Ricans. Some scholars have argued that the Protestant faith has historically attracted many Latinos like Delgado because it encouraged its members to become leaders within their congregations, an opportunity denied by the Catholic Church (this was especially true in the 1960s when those leading the Spanish masses were usually white American priests who spoke Spanish adequately at best). By contrast, the pastor in

Protestant congregations was usually a devout member of the congregation, who maintained his position through the rigorous practice of faith and work in the congregation. He was usually a well-known member of the congregation and someone who had earned a significant level of respect. In his founding of the Presbyterian Church, Marcus Delgado himself is a clear example of the opportunity for Latino leadership within the clergy. In this way, it can be said that the large-scale adoption of Protestant faiths within the Puerto Rican community also enabled their political and social efficacy, defying Koss' notion that conversion to the Protestant faiths was an act of assimilation that encouraged Puerto Ricans to disregard issues involving their communities.²²

Despite the mass conversions to Protestantism, the contemporary Catholic Church has continued to function as an informal care provider in the Puerto Rican community. However, there has been an emergence of more explicitly social service-oriented and secular organizations. These include organizations such as *Concilio* (Council of Spanish-Speaking Organizations), *Congreso de Latinos Unidos*, *Casa del Carmen*, Norris Square Civic Association, and *Nueva Esperanza*. Moreover, organizations like APM, acknowledging the historical ability of churches to provide services, have begun to look for ways to reconnect to religious institutions.

The intricate relationship between

Protestant churches and second generation Puerto Ricans living in Philadelphia demonstrated that the Catholic Church's assimilationist and apolitical role failed to deliver the stability and politicization that the Puerto Rican community warranted. The Catholic Church's focus on providing services for the integration of Puerto Rican migrants and its work to improve its self-image in the eyes of white America overshadowed community organizing and spiritual care. Thus, many Puerto Ricans like

Marcus Delgado found grounds for community organizing and spiritual care through their encounter with the Protestant faith. However, despite the motivations of the Catholic Church, the social services provided have continued to be a source of assistance for the Puerto Rican community in Philadelphia. Thus, the potential integration of organizations like APM with Philadelphian churches promises an interesting development in the Puerto Rican community's relationship with social services and faith.

References

¹ Jaime R. Vidal, "The Puerto Rican Religious Experience" in *Introduction to the U.S. Latina and Latino Religious Experience*, Hector Avalos, ed. (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, Inc., 2004), 52.

² In San Lorenzo agricultural employment was at 20 percent; in Salinas 24 percent found employment in agriculture and 28 percent worked in manufacturing. (Carmen Teresa Whalen, *From Puerto Rico to Philadelphia: Puerto Rican Workers and Postwar Economies* [Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001], 122.)

³ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁴ Vidal, "The Puerto Rican Religious Experience," 52.

⁵ Díaz-Stevens, Ana María. *Oxcart Catholicism on Fifth Avenue: The Impact of the Puerto Rican Migration upon the Archdiocese of New York* (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 53.

⁶ Koss, "Puerto Ricans in Philadelphia," 403.

⁷ Dolan, Jay P., and Jaime R. Vidal, eds. *Puerto Rican and Cuban Catholics in the U.S., 1900-1965*: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994.

⁸ In 1954, the median age of Puerto

Rican migrants was 21.3 years. (Arnold Siegel, Harold Orlans, and Loyal Greer, *The Puerto Rican Experience: Puerto Ricans in Philadelphia* [New York: Arno Press, 1975], 31.)

⁹ Whalen, *From Puerto Rico to Philadelphia*, 135.

¹⁰ Joan Dee Koss, "Puerto Ricans in Philadelphia: Migration and Accommodation" PhD diss., (Univ. of Pennsylvania, 1965), 424.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, xvi.

¹² Ram A. Cnaan, *The Other Philadelphia Story: How Local Congregations Support Quality of Life in Urban America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 71.

¹³ Victor Vázquez-Hernández claims that many Puerto Ricans settled in the Spring Garden area of North Philadelphia in large part because of the existence of *La Milagrosa*, a Catholic mission at the heart of the Spring Garden community and one of the few Spanish-language chapels in the city. (Victor Vázquez-Hernández, "From Pan-Latino Enclaves to a Community: Puerto Ricans in Philadelphia, 1910-2000" in *The Puerto Rican Diaspora: Historical Perspectives*, Carmen Teresa Whalen [Philadelphia: Temple University Press,

2005], 92).

¹⁴ Interview with Marcus Delgado by author, February 29, 2008 (Philadelphia, PA).

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life and Pew Hispanic Center. *Changing Faiths: Latinos and the Transformation of American Religion*, 2007. (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center: 2007).

¹⁸ Luther P. Gerlach, "Pentecostalism: Revolution or Counter-Revolution?" in *Religious Movements in Contemporary America*, ed. Irving I. Zaretsky and Mark P. Leone (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), 698.

¹⁹ De Nieves, Elisa Julián. *The Catholic Church in Colonial Puerto Rico (1898-1964)* (Rio Piedras: Editorial Edil, Inc., 1982), 127.

²⁰ Koss, "Puerto Ricans in Philadelphia," 422.

²¹ Ibid., 440.

²² Ismael García, "Hispanic Experience and the Protestant Ethic" in *Protestantes/Protestants: Hispanic Christianity Within Mainline Traditions*, ed. David Maldonado, Jr. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 199): 141. Jaime R. Vidal, "The Puerto Rican Religious Experience" in Introduction to the U.S. Latina and Latino Religious Experience, Hector Avalos, ed. (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, Inc., 2004), 52.

Isabel Rivera is a junior honors History major, Political Science minor and course major. This was her final paper for Sonia Lee's "Race and Poverty in the United States." The goal of the paper was to incorporate oral history into a particular aspect of the history of the area. The writing of this paper was extremely rewarding, though laborious; it was a semester-long process of interviewing, transcribing, researching, writing, drafting and editing. Isabel hopes to continue researching and writing about Puerto Rican history in the United States.

How is the Health of *Mytilus Edulis* Affected by pH?

Sarah Bedolfe '11 and Niki Machac '11

Abstract

Though the pH of the ocean has varied over time, it is rapidly becoming more acidic due to anthropogenic carbon dioxide entering the atmosphere. Since pre-industrial times, the pH of the ocean has dropped by 0.1 units to the current level of approximately 8.1. It is expected to decrease further over the course of the next century. In our study, we sought to observe the effect of a variety of pHs on mussels based on these predictions. Mussels are calcifying organisms and are expected to be particularly sensitive to changes in pH. Healthy mussels demonstrate clumping behavior and they open their shells to allow for respiration and filter feeding. We expected fewer healthy behaviors, an open shell and clumping, in mussels residing in a more acidic environment. We found a significant difference in clumping behavior; however, we could not find a clear trend that suggests that pH was a factor. Our data on the opening of shells did yield significant results as well as a trend that indicates a negative effect of high acidity on mussel health with more mussels open in the 8.18 tank than in the 7.95 and the 7.85 tanks and more open in the 8.10 tank than in the 7.85 tank. While this short-term study indicates negative effects of acidic conditions on mussels, extending the study would yield information about the

long-term impact of these conditions on mussel health.

Introduction

Within the past three hundred years, the average pH of the world's oceans has decreased dramatically. The oceans absorb CO₂ from the atmosphere and the increasing amount of CO₂ due to the burning of fossil fuels is likely the cause of the decline in pH. Models based on atmospheric levels of CO₂ suggest that over the past 300 million years, the average pH has never been more than .6 units lower than current levels, while models further predict that the pH of the oceans could drop as low as 0.7 pH units below the current readings (Caldeira and Wickett 2003). The average pH of the ocean in pre-industrial times was approximately 8.18. Since then, the average has decreased to its current level of approximately 8.10. Predictions based on models suggest that by the year 2100 the average pH will have dropped 0.3 to 0.4 units below current levels (Haugan and Drange 1996).

The impact of lowered pH on ocean life has increasingly become an area of study in recent years. Fine and Tchernov (2007) studied the impact of the decreased pH on calcifying coral species by subjecting specimens of *Oculina patagonica* and

Madracis pharencis to pH values from 7.3 to 7.6 and from 8.0 to 8.3 for twelve months. They saw differences within a month of the beginning of the experiment: those in the lower pH environment demonstrated polyp elongation. By the end of the experiment the coral skeleton had dissolved and the colonies had dissociated resulting in more solitary polyps in this condition than in the control condition (Fine and Tchernov 2007). Fine and Tchernov concluded that while the corals may survive the change in pH, their ability to build and maintain a calcified skeleton can be negatively affected. These findings suggest that not only will corals be affected by increasing acidity, but other calcifying species, such as *Mytilus edulis*, may be as well. It has been found that over the past 8 years, 10 to 20 percent of the mussels around Tatoosh Island have been replaced by more acid-resistant algae. Tatoosh Island may be indicative of future change since its waters have changed pH more rapidly than other areas (Wootton et al. 2008).

Mussels, which are found in a variety of environments from the intertidal to the abyssal zone, are important in all their respective ecosystems. Mussels create beds and form a layer of organic material, which provides a habitat for species such as deposit-feeding worms. Mussel beds also create hard surfaces for species such as barnacles to live on. Jordan and Valiela (1982) found that the mussel population of the Great Sippewissett Marsh, Massachusetts, could filter 1.8 times the volume of the entire

marsh during a single summer tidal cycle; this huge amount of filtering also contributes to the processing of a large amount of phytoplankton which increases the speed of organic matter breakdown (Dankers & Zuidema 1995).

Healthy mussels are often found together, attached to one another and the substrate via byssal threads which keep them anchored although mussels are also capable of moving using their foot (Okamura 1986). Mussels position themselves in moving water using their byssal threads so that filter feeding is more energetically efficient (Holland-Bartels 1990). Mussels form dense groups to counter the disadvantages of isolation; while a lone mussel can grow and reproduce at a faster rate than those at the center of a large group, slower-growing mussels in densely populated areas are more protected against predators (Okamura 1986). Mussels are also capable of opening and closing their shells since they are filter-feeders that strain water in order to feed (Dankers and Zuidema 1995). A closed shell suggests that a mussel is expending energy and a lack of feeding and respiration activity. We observed these factors, clumping and an open shell for filter-feeding, as parameters of health in our study.

Our experiment sought to determine the short-term effects of environments of differing acidity on mussel health and behavior. Since long-term effects are dependent upon a series of short-term circumstances, it also

offers insight into the larger implications of global declining pH. We hypothesized that over the course of the experiment, lower pH environments would cause the mussels to be less healthy. Conversely, the null hypothesis predicted that the mussels would not be affected by the difference in acidity. Healthy mussels were expected to anchor themselves, clump, and filter feed more in less acidic conditions, which we investigated by counting the number open mussels and the size of clumps.

Materials and Methods

The *Mytilus edulis* used in the experiment were collected by hand at Shark River Inlet, New Jersey. Prior to placement into study groups, all mussels were stored in a controlled seawater table together. In these conditions, mussels displayed clumping behavior and appeared to be healthy. We separated the mussels by cutting byssal threads and cleaned them by removing threads that were attached to the outside of shells. Once the mussels were separated and dried, they were randomly separated into groups of 20 and numbered using White-Out® in order to be able to identify them individually. Due to a delay with preparing the tanks, the mussels did not go into the tanks that day but instead were placed in Tupperware® in order to keep them separate and placed back in the seawater table.

Four two-gallon glass tanks were filled with artificial seawater made from Instant Ocean® and well water.

The tanks were set up with a running filter. The filters ran for a full day before the mussels were placed in the tanks in order to oxygenate the water and equilibrate them to the proper pH. Four target pHs, 8.18, 8.10, 7.95 and 7.85, were determined based on prior research of past, current and predicted future pH values (Haugan and Drange 1996). pH was measured daily on a pH meter and regulated using hydrochloric acid (HCl) to lower the pH and oxygenated water to raise the pH. Every day, the water from each tank was analyzed for salinity and pH and these were calibrated so that the salinity remained at about 35 ppt and the pH was within 0.05 units of the target pH. During a period in which the experimenters were out of town and no data could be collected, a clear plastic wrap was placed over the top of the tanks so that air could enter but water would not evaporate as quickly. The oxygenated water was obtained from a separate tank with a running filter that contained no animals. The previously sorted and labeled mussels were taken from the Tupperware® containers and separated; twenty were placed in each tank in a dispersed fashion in three widely spaced rows on the bottom surface of the tank while the filter was turned off. The filter was then turned on. The experiment was conducted in a temperature-controlled room in which the lights were automated to a twelve-hour cycle.

The mussels were examined each day at approximately the same time. The number open versus the number

closed in each tank was recorded. The placement of the mussels was also recorded using previously set up rulers as a grid system. When mussels resided in clumps, the coordinates of the whole clump rather than those of each individual mussel were recorded. Though they varied in size and density, clumps were defined as a group of mussels connected to one another by byssal threads.

To calculate our results, we pooled the daily data over the course of the whole experiment for each tank. For clumping, in each tank we found a median number of mussels per clump; data for open versus closed mussel shells were converted into percentages per day and we found the median percent of open mussels for each tank. These numbers were used to calculate significance between all tanks using a Mann-Whitney statistical test to account for non-normal data distribution. The statistics were calculated through the JMP and Kaleidagraph programs.

Results

Due to extensive clumping, counting the byssal threads of individual mussels was not feasible despite an abundance of byssal threads. Due to the tendency of the identification numbers to fall off the mussels, tracking the movement of individual mussels was also not possible. Clumping behavior and a count of the number of open versus closed mussels were preserved as measures of health.

Clumping behavior was measured based on the number of mussels in each clump. For each tank, we pooled the data and acquired a median clump size (Table 1). The number of open versus closed mussels was converted into percentage open, in order to account for the death of two individuals, both in the 8.18 tank. After determining the percent each day, we found the median percent open for each tank over the course of the experiment (Table 2). The data indicate a clear trend of a direct correlation between percentage open with decreasing pH.

Discussion & Conclusion

The goal of the study was to investigate the effect of increased acidity on *Mytilus edulis*. Despite some inconsistencies, we find that the data support our hypothesis that declining pH adversely affects mussel health. We judged our mussels to be healthy prior to beginning our experiment due to their active clumping behavior in the controlled seawater basin after they were placed in the Tupperware. This decreases the possibility of mussel illness affecting our results and suggests that our significant results were in fact based on the differing pH environments.

The median number of mussels per clump (a group of mussels attached by byssal threads) was calculated for each tank over the course of the experiment. While most tanks displayed a significant difference in the median number of mussels per clump, there was no clear trend that

indicated that these differences were due to the pH levels; the pH of the tank with the most mussels per clump was 7.95 while the tank with the least was 7.85. Due to these scattered results, we could not draw strong conclusions based on these data. These data could be the result of mussel behavior or the results of initial mussel placement in the tanks and their subsequent movement because of water force when the filter was turned on. In order to come to a more definite conclusion, we would need a better circulation system or a larger tank that is not so affected by the force of the filter.

Ultimately, since the clumping behavior displayed no clear trend, our conclusions are based on whether the shells of the mussels were open or closed. In these data there is both significance and a clear trend (Figure 1). The data suggest that the mussels were influenced by the pH levels and were more likely to be closed in more acidic conditions. The data support the hypothesis that the mussels in the more basic tanks were healthier and more able to carry out life-supporting processes than those in the acidic tanks. The mussel must use energy to remain closed; thus, a closed shell suggests a lack of

feeding and respiration in addition to an expenditure of energy. It is likely that the acidity of the water is harmful to the mussels and thus they are closing to avoid overexposure. Conversely, mussels in conditions similar to those of pre-industrial eras are expending less energy and are able to feed and respire.

It is noteworthy that within just a few days, the ability of mussels to carry out basic life processes, such as respiration and feeding, was debilitated. A long-term study involving the effect of acidity on mussels that would be able to precisely moderate pH levels would supplement predicted implications of decreased acidity. Further, we used average measurements of pH and the ocean is highly variable, meaning that some areas will see more drastic consequences. In addition, the subjects of our experiment were juvenile mussels, so it may be beneficial to examine the effects on mussels in different life stages. Since changes in ocean acidity are likely to have an adverse affect on mussels, larger ecological impacts should be studied as well. The deteriorating health of mussel populations will affect their ecosystems directly, in addition to being indicative of the effects on other shellfish.

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A l c h e m y 2 0 0 9

Data

Table 1. The median number of mussels per clump overall and the statistical significance between different pH tanks.

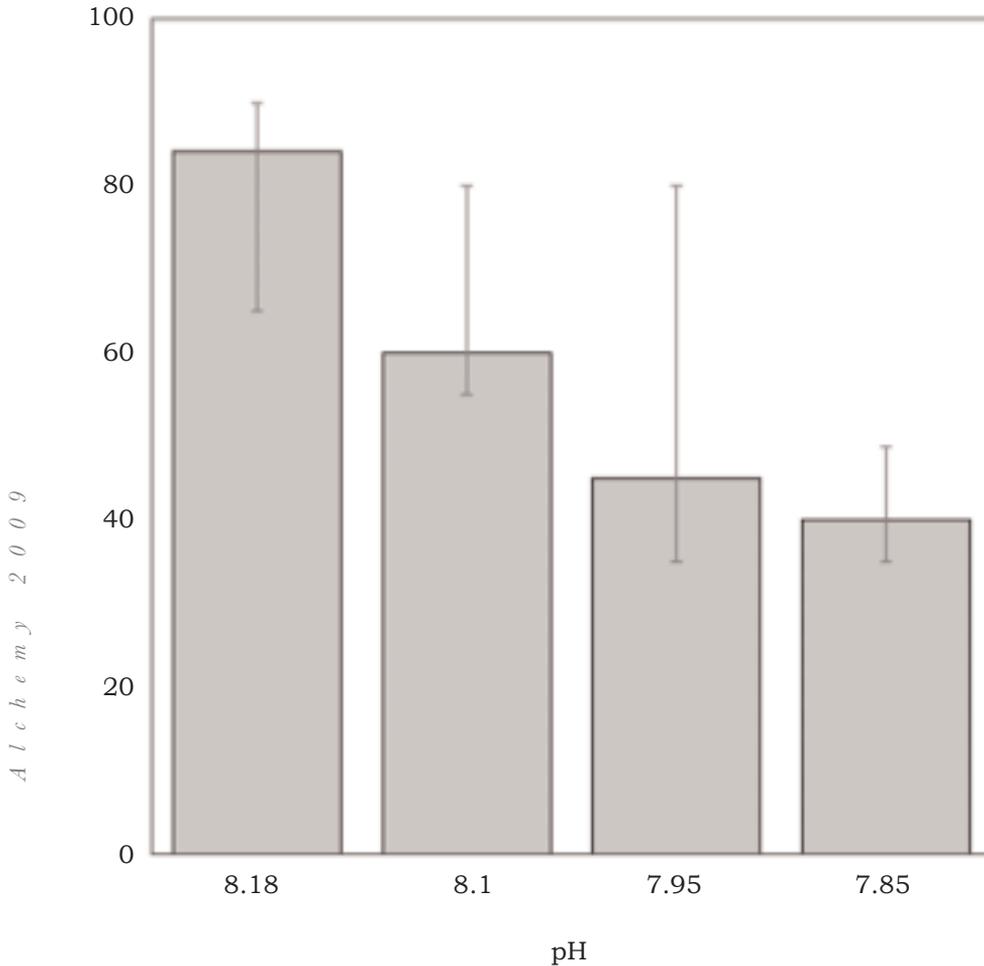
pH	median	8.10	7.95	7.85
8.18	2	Z=2.70205, P=.0069*	Z=1.76649, P=.0773	Z=10.11691, P=.0000*
8.10	2		Z=1.78025, P=.0750	Z=3.3422, P=.0008*
7.95	4			Z=7.60277, P=.0001*
7.85	1			

Table 2. The median percentage of mussels open each day and the statistical significance between different pH tanks.

pH	median	8.10	7.95	7.85
8.18	84.21	Z=1.35496, p=.1754	Z=2.30088, p=.0214*	Z=3.68871, p=.0002*
8.10	60		Z=1.38840, P=.1650	Z=3.24240, P=.0012*
7.95	45			Z=1.06240, P=.2881
7.85	40			

How is the Health of of Mytilus Edulis Affected by pH?

Figure 1. The overall median percent of open mussels in each tank.



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Nicole Machac and Sarah Bedolfe are sophomore Biology majors. They wrote this paper for Rachel Merz's "Marine Biology" course on the short-term effects of increased acidity on mussels. While the assignment was open-ended, they took inspiration from the various papers they read for the course, particularly those about the increasing acidity on coral reefs.

Nicole and Sarah were very excited for this opportunity to apply their knowledge of marine biology to an important environmentalist issue.

*Biography of a Factory Girl:
Life and Death in the Early Republic*

Miriam Rich '11

At first glance, the most remarkable—perhaps the only remarkable—aspect of Sarah Maria Cornell's life appears to be her death. Classified first as a suicide and later as a homicide, it was a harrowing case: on December 21, 1832, her lifeless body, over four months pregnant, was found hanging from a stake beside a neighboring Rhode Island farmer's haystacks. In the absence of this grisly demise, it is difficult to imagine that Cornell's name would be a topic of modern-day discussion at all. An early mill operative, she was just one of a huge wave of young women who left home and traveled to cities to work in the textile mills that characterized the opening stages of America's industrialization.¹ Indeed, there is little in this humdrum story of factory life and migration to distinguish Cornell from thousands of other factory girls, save for a salacious epilogue in which her battered body sags from a fence post.

Yet peering beyond the sensationalism of her violent end affords a glimpse into the daily operations of an existence profoundly shaped by the distinctive era of American history that extended from the late eighteenth century into the opening decades of the nineteenth. Indeed, the struggles, ambitions, and work patterns of Sarah's truncated life tend to parallel, in poignant miniature, those of the early republic. Her

story exposes a society grappling to confront a novel and rapid economic trajectory that threatened to derail traditional modes of social order. Specifically, it informs—and is informed by—the personal turbulence faced by the era's young women as gender constructions began to shift and reconfigure to address changing economic and social realities.

Sarah Maria Cornell was born on May 3, 1802 to James and Lucretia Cornell. Her parents' short, unstable marriage was wracked by financial uncertainty. In the changing economy of the early 1800s, James was unable to provide for his young family and, soon after Sarah's birth, he abandoned them to be raised by Lucretia and her relatives in Norwich, Connecticut, where Sarah spent most of her childhood.²

In 1818, at the age of sixteen, Sarah began a two-year apprenticeship in Norwich, explaining to her sister in an 1819 letter that she was "learning the Tailors trade."³ This home-based apprenticeship was probably characterized by what Nancy Cott describes as "the irregularity, the responsiveness to immediate and natural demands, and the intermixture with social occasion common to preindustrial occupations."⁴ By 1821, Sarah was working in the Connecticut town of Bozrville. As a tailoress, her work

would have still largely conformed to preindustrial work patterns. In one way, however, her station in Bozraville did mark a significant change: for the first time Sarah was no longer living with relatives in Norwich. The letters Sarah sent to her sister prior to this time diligently recorded anecdotes relating to family members, whether it was the marriage and missionary work of “aunt Lathrop’s eldest daughter,” the religious conversion of “aunt Lathrop’s youngest son,” or simply the mention that “Mother Grandma Aunts and cousin send their love to you.”⁵ In the letter from Bozraville, the subjects of Sarah’s stories were now unrelated members of her new community. Though Sarah did not speak explicitly of her feelings about living away from her relatives, she mentioned her separation from her mother twice, first noting that she was “four miles from mother” and later that “I am so far from mother that it will not be convenient for her to write any more.”⁶

Sarah’s next work transition represented an even more drastic change. By May 1822, she had moved to the town of Killingly to work at a factory, for the first time placing her, as she lamented in a letter to her sister, “far from any friend or connexion.” Despite her stoical assertion that she was “not too proud to get a living in any situation in which it pleases God to place me,” a sense of loneliness and isolation pervades the letter. Still, Sarah defended her work choice, complaining that her sister had “murmured at my coming to the

factory to work, but I do not consider myself bound to go into all sorts of company because I live near them.”⁷

Indeed, though it was becoming increasingly common in this generation for daughters to leave home to seek work in the emerging factory towns, there was widespread apprehension over the sort of “bad company” these young female workers might find themselves in so far from home. “Factory girls,” as the mill operatives were termed, occupied a precarious social role. They were a vital work source for the rapidly industrializing economy, but, like Sarah’s sister, many felt uneasy about a situation in which young, unmarried women worked for wages in factory towns far removed from traditional social and communal controls. Orestes Brownson famously proclaimed that, “‘She has worked in a Factory,’ is almost enough to damn to infamy the most worthy and virtuous girl,”⁸ an opinion shared by many of his contemporaries.

In fact, Sarah first found herself in trouble not while working in the factory in Killingly, but later that year while visiting her sister in Providence, Rhode Island. Despite her resolutions to do away with the “glittering toys” of the world, Sarah was not immune to the rising spirit of consumerism. Gurdon Williams, in his brief account of Sarah’s life, laments how “she became extremely fond of dress,”⁹ while Catherine Williams records “childish vanity, and love of dress, and show, and ornament.”¹⁰ In November of 1822,

the twenty-year-old Sarah succumbed to material temptations, stealing five or six dollars worth of fabric, lace, and clothing items from local merchants.¹¹ Although Sarah returned and paid for the items she had taken, the incident wracked her with guilt. The months following were a dark time in Sarah's life. In addition to the aftermath of her theft, there is some indication that Sarah suffered from a failed romance and disappointed marriage expectations at this time. In a later letter, Sarah would describe this period as having "almost been my ruin."¹²

In 1823, Sarah, who was now twenty-one, came to work in the mill town of Slatersville, Rhode Island. Slater factory communities were designed, according to Barbara Tucker, with the aim of "safeguarding traditional prerogatives," such as perpetuating paternal authority.¹³ The attention to old familial values and customs helped ease the transition from household production to large-scale industrial manufacture. In the trajectory of Sarah's increasingly more industrialized (and increasingly distant) employments, the Slatersville Mill was the logical next step.

Slatersville was also home to a thriving Methodist community. Sarah had always been strongly disposed towards religion, but Methodism, with its emphasis on personal agency and emotional individual salvation narratives,¹⁴ plunged her into a new degree of religious fervency. She became a devout Methodist, espousing her personal narrative of salva-

tion in passionate, visceral imagery, castigating herself for, among other vivid transgressions, bringing "reproach upon the cause of God," and having "caused Jesus to open his wounds afresh."¹⁵ The self-presented enormity of her past sins was used to underscore the miracle and glory of her redemption.

In certain ways, the appeal of Methodism to someone in Sarah's situation is intuitive. She was alone in each new factory town, without friends or family. As a young mill operative, her working life—and entire living situation—was transitory and uncertain: few factory girls stayed in one place for very long. The Methodists offered a stable community that would persist amid the personal transience and isolation of wandering from factory town to factory town. As Sarah proclaimed in a letter to her sister and brother-in-law, "God has raised up many Christian friends of different orders—all united heart and hand, bound to one home."¹⁶ Besides its spiritual and moral functions, Methodism provided Sarah with a community that could counteract the loneliness and isolation that had, in separation from her family, plagued her at the factory in Killingly.

To truly appreciate the extent of Methodism's pull on Sarah, however, it is necessary to step back and examine the significance of religion in a larger context of social forces. The opening decades of the nineteenth century were an uncertain time for America. The societal changes being

wrought by the transformation from a preindustrial household economy to an industrial market economy, with all its opportunities for geographical and financial mobility, had the potential to undermine the traditional family unit and erode social controls. The ambitious, pecuniary, unreliable world of market relations signaled to many a loss of morality and stability. David Rothman describes how medical superintendents of the time worried that “the community’s inherited traditions and procedures were dissolving, leaving incredible stresses and strains.”¹⁷ To assuage pervasive societal anxiety, a gender construction emerged in which the female represented static constancy and rootedness to counter the business world’s frenzied kinesis. Women’s identities were conflated with home—stable, fixed, chaste, transcending material concerns, and wholly separate from the outside economic and political sphere. Nancy Cott explains that this ideal “enlisted women in their domestic roles to absorb, palliate, and even to redeem the strain of social and economic transformation.”¹⁸

Yet implicit in Sarah’s lifestyle were antagonisms of the domestic construction. She led a life of transience and wanderings, going from mill to mill, from state to state, in pursuit of factory work; instead of existing in a sphere apart from the new economic order, she actively participated in it as both producer and consumer. Sarah’s reality violated her society’s construction of true womanhood. It is in this context that religion may

have had its deepest appeal.

Religion, like the new ideal of womanhood, served as a respite from the worldly, pecuniary sphere of the burgeoning market economy. It was conceptually aligned with domesticity through its categorical separation from the material affairs of the world. Thus, by immersing herself in religion, Sarah not only atoned for specific indiscretions of her youth, but also, in a larger sense, for the “sin” of being a working woman who enjoyed material goods, did not stay rooted in a single place, and remained unmarried. She repented for her transgressions against domesticity through her devotion to religion. In a letter to her mother, she asserted her belief “with the Apostle that we should be as strangers and pilgrims having here no continuing city or abiding place, but seek one to come,”¹⁹ explicitly using religion to defend the transience of the factory girls’ lifestyle. When Sarah wrote to her sister noting that the latter had “become a wife and a mother”—quintessential female roles that Sarah, conspicuously, would never serve in—she followed it up by expressing to her the hope “that the cares of a married life [had] not separated your heart from God.” This gentle admonishment contained an implicit justification of Sarah’s own failure to become a wife—her heart was devoted to God rather than a mortal man.

In spite of Sarah’s professions of heavenly aspiration, however, earthly temptations intruded. Though she had recorded hopes of finding a per-

manency in her stay at Slatersville, revealing on one letter that she “expect[ed] the Lord willing to spend my days in Slaterville,”²⁰ Sarah was forced to leave the town in 1826. Though Catherine Williams attributes Sarah’s exodus from Slatersville exclusively to the burning down of a factory,²¹ it is likely that Sarah left after being expelled from the Church in Slatersville for, as one witness stated, “intimacy with men.” William Holmes, a Methodist Class leader in Slatersville, related that Sarah had been accused of and confessed to sexual relations with men, and testified that Sarah “was admonished, and while we were preparing to bring her to trial she left.”²²

In late 1828, after nearly two years spent traveling from town to town across Rhode Island and Massachusetts, Sarah alighted in Lowell, Massachusetts. In her progression from task-oriented work based in the home to fully industrialized factory employment, the Lowell Mills were the final destination. Thomas Bender argues that whereas “the social system in Slater’s factory villages clearly represented an extension of the existing mill-handicraft-farm complex,” the Lowell factories, which incorporated all aspects of textile production and did not attempt to replicate traditional rural structures, truly signified the “the creation of an urban-industrial social order.”²³

As in Slatersville, Sarah found her place in Lowell with the Methodist community. She was apparently well-respected among her Methodist peers

at first, writing to her sister that “the religious privileges I enjoy are much greater than they have ever been before.”²⁴ Yet by 1830, rumors impugning her character had begun to circulate in the Methodist community. Character and reputation were vitally important in both Sarah’s Methodist circle and her larger factory one; with strangers continually entering and leaving the town, word of mouth was a key means of ascertaining trustworthiness and respectability. Karen Hansen asserts that “gossip acted as a mechanism for social control” because “participation within a community necessitated a good reputation.”²⁵ Once Sarah’s character “became bad by reports,”²⁶ as one witness put it, her position in the Church was in grave danger. Indeed, it was not long before reports of Sarah’s deviant behavior reached Methodist leadership. Though fellow Methodists were in large part responsible for informing against Sarah, the atmosphere of moral policing was such that even non-Methodists felt compelled to report Sarah’s violations of chastity to her Church leadership: William Graves, a Lowell doctor, testified that after treating Sarah for a venereal disease, he “mentioned it to a student I had, who was a Methodist, and authorised him to inform Mr. Avery.”²⁷ The Mr. Avery in question was the Reverend Ephraim K. Avery, a Methodist minister who would later stand trial for the murder of Sarah Cornell. Avery testified that in 1830, as the reports of Sarah’s improper sexual conduct accumulated, he “told her there must be a trial in the usual way, and

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advised her to go immediately to her friends."²⁸ Consequently, Sarah left Lowell, staying for a time in Dover and Summersworth, New Hampshire; in her absence, she was found guilty of the charges and officially expelled from the Methodist Church.

Far from accepting this expulsion, Sarah became desperately determined to win admittance back into the Methodist Circle. While in New Hampshire, she wrote several letters to Avery detailing her sins and begging for forgiveness. When he did not reply, she returned to Lowell the next year to solicit forgiveness in person. Many of her fellow workers in Lowell testified that she also approached them at this time, asking for their signatures on a document certifying that she was forgiven and held in good faith by the Methodist Church.²⁹

Ultimately finding it too painful to remain in Lowell after her expulsion, Sarah moved to Taunton, Massachusetts, where she once again found work in a textile factory. Then, from June until October of 1832, she stayed with her sister and brother-in-law, the Rawsons, in Woodstock, Connecticut. Apparently unable to relinquish the company of those who she had once described to her sister as "my people—with them by the grace of God I was spiritually born,"³⁰ Sarah attended a Methodist Camp Meeting in nearby Thompson, Connecticut that August. Some months later, she revealed to her sister and brother-in-law that she had been impregnated by Avery while at

Thompson. At her brother-in-law's advice, she left Woodstock and relocated to Fall River, a factory town near Rhode Island, the state where Avery then resided.³¹

Whatever happened in Thompson, it was enough to finally end her nearly decade-long love affair with the Methodist Church. Even through her expulsion and shunning, Sarah had continued to seek out the company of Methodists and beg for forgiveness and readmittance into their society. Yet after the Camp Meeting at Thompson, Sarah expressed no further desire for contact with the Church. In an unmailed letter found in Sarah's trunk after her death addressed to a Methodist minister in Fall River, she wrote that "for reasons known to God and my own soul I wish no longer to be connected with the Methodist society," though she felt compelled to add that "I hope I shall feel different some time or other."³² She never got the chance; several months after arriving in Fall River, her life came to a violent close.

Interpreting Sarah's life with the knowledge of her ultimate death makes it tempting to paint her as a quintessential victim, whether of a specific violent act or of oppressive social forces in general. Yet, as the extraordinary proportion of Avery's trial testimony dedicated to indicting Sarah's character shows, she was regarded by some in her society not as a victim but as a transgressor. What exactly were Sarah's crimes? Some were literal—the theft that occurred on at least one, and by

some accounts two, occasions in her life. Many were sexual. But, in a larger sense, Sarah's was a crime of existence, implicitly challenging social constructions of the woman's sphere with the reality of her working and wandering. In her short life were reflected the turbulence and anxiety of an entire era of social transformation.

In this way, an understanding of Sarah's life is predicated upon an understanding of larger patterns of American life in the early republic.

Her work patterns, consumerism, sexual behavior, and participation in religious communities were all historically situated within a specific period of American life, a period in which conceptions of such basic social structures as family, work, and gender were being reconfigured in the rapidity of economic change. The historical contingencies that shaped Sarah's existence were the same ones that defined this distinctive era, rendering Sarah both product and reflection of her times.

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Miriam Rich is a sophomore History major and Biology minor. This paper was written for Professor Bruce Dorsey's course "Murder in a Mill Town: A Window on Social Change in the Early Republic." The process of writing an individual's biography allowed her to contextualize her understanding of broad sociohistorical forces in more concrete terms.

Jacobean Deference and Feminine Subversion in Ben Jonson's *The Masque of Blackness*

Justin diFeliciano '10

Throughout the English Renaissance, court masques celebrated the monarchy, showing deference through praise of the rulers' wealth, power, and political ideology. Commissioned by the crown, artists—architects, poets, and tailors—created panegyric works of visual splendor and poetic elegance. One can certainly make the argument that Ben Jonson's *The Masque of Blackness* fulfills these charges. *Blackness* narrates the story of twelve Ethiopian princesses, who travel by seashell in search of the mystical land "Britannia." Once there, they wish to bathe their bodies in the sun's temperate warmth, which they have been told can bleach their black skin and make their bodies beautifully white.

During the 1604-05 Christmas season at Whitehall, Jonson presented *Blackness* for the pleasure of James I and his English court. Newly anointed King of England, James Stuart had come to the throne in 1603 after Queen Elizabeth's death. Still King of Scotland, James brought to England a retinue of Scottish courtiers. As a result, he ambitiously attempted to unite the two countries as "Great Britain." The English reaction to this idea was not enthusiastic. Nevertheless, elements in *Blackness* seem to laud the superior virtue of the Stuart court and praise the king's efforts at unity. Yet, the inclusion of the Queen, Anne of Denmark, as a

nymph throws into question much of *Blackness*'s supposed legitimization of the monarchy. Though Anne played the part of a masquer—which, on the surface, resembled obedience and gratitude to the onlooking king—she was visibly pregnant, dressed in provocative clothing, and covered in black make-up. Many scholars have suggested that her appearance expressed an impoverished condition, a response to James's neglect of family life. But in expressing her "black" poverty, Anne may be read as subverting the power of the English crown and, consequently, James's political ideology. Insofar as this tension between legitimization and subversion exists, I do not conclude in favor of absolute royal deference or subversion. Rather, I want to argue that *Blackness* speaks a Jacobean cultural energy, namely one which reflects the tenuous socio-political reality of James's court.

Many scholars believe that the 1605 performance of *Blackness* praised the wealth and power of the Stuart monarchy. Indeed, the complex extravagance of its spectacle and its allegorical representation of the king gives weight to their argument. The court architect for *Blackness*, Inigo Jones, designed sets extremely advanced for his day. His stage design included new technology, such as the *machine versatilis*, which turned on its axis to quickly reveal a

new stage environment, and the *scena ductilis*, a complex system of grooves and flats that could be made to rapidly change its appearance (Butler 156). Jones also developed costumes for Jonson's masques, fashioning expensive and innovative types of garments; each masquer, Jonson writes, wore "the most choice...pearl" (l. 50). Built to accommodate the King's perspective, James would have been able to see all of Jones's work, constructed to entertain his pleasure and reflect upon his greatness. We may posit, then, that for the numerous powerful aristocrats and foreign diplomats at the show, the sumptuous nature of the masque's stage design, as well as its orientation toward the king, proclaimed the legitimacy of the Stuart monarchy.

The luxury of *Blackness*' occasion, however, was not only a result of Jones's stage design. Present at the masque were powerful foreign diplomats and the most privileged of English society. These elites crammed themselves into the tight masquing space at Whitehall in their most elegant attire, wishing to show their own deference to James and, perhaps, win his favor (Parry 113). Additionally, the masquers themselves were powerful aristocrats. The twelve nymph "blackamoors" in the 1605 masque were played by the esteemed aristocrats Lady Richard, who played Ocyte, and Lady Wroth, who played Baryte. Even the Queen, Anne of Denmark, played a nymph with considerable effect (Jonson ll. 244-245). Like the English elite, the

masquers' show of deference and respect toward James could also win them political favor, oftentimes through the act of dancing (Butler 154). It is conceivable, then, that the English aristocrats appeared dependent on the king even in their roles as masquers.

Corollary to this notion of deference is *Blackness*'s poetic allegory, which may be read as associating the King with the virtues of divine power and temperance. Following the white moon Aethiopia's advice to search for the land that ends with "tania," the African nymphs arrive on the outskirts of Great Britain. Once there, they hope to gain access to the magical beams of England's sun, whose mild nature has the capacity to bleach their skin and make them beautiful once again:

Whose beams shine day and night,
and are of force,

To blanch an Ethiop, and
revive a corse.
His light sciential is, and, past
mere nature,
Can salve the rude defects of
every creature. (ll. 224-7)

Because Aethiopia refers to the land as Britannia, which is "ruled" by a sun at a great "height," Jonson may be tying the sun to James (Jonson l. 223). As Shakespeare critic Martin Butler argues, this allegorical connection allows Jonson to directly praise the "miracle of his [James's] sovereignty"; the whitening of an African is the "proverbial phrase for doing the impossible" (Butler 158).

This blanching of the Ethiop, however, is not the only way we can interpret monarchical deference in Jonson's work. The sun produces light. If the sun is representative of James, it can be said that the king has ubiquitous authority, the ability to affect faraway places "day and night" from a stationary source (l. 224). To the gathered aristocracy and foreign diplomats, then, *Blackness* may be saying that the English monarchy has the power to exercise its rule throughout Britain and perhaps beyond, even though the King remains on the throne in London. Additionally, unlike the physical properties of our own sun's rays, James's light is learned, or "sciential" (l. 225). Perhaps alluding to Plato's Theory of the Forms, this light can comprehend the rational and the abstract, beyond those that must always be tied to material "nature" (l. 226). To the English viewers, the Ethiopian princesses—in their dark color and foreign dress—are not so learned as exotic and primitive. Furthermore, wherefore the sun is omnipresent and enlightened, it can refine the "defects" of every "creature" in the world (l. 227). The "sun is temperate" in Britannia; it does not scorch the skin like African sun but heals through its mild temperature (Butler 161). Hence, *Blackness* creates a binary between Britain and other climate zones around the world. While lands that lie under African skies are subject to the "rude" effects of its blistering heat, the temperate and monarchical sun of England is virtuous, enlightened, and pure, able to gently warm its subjects and order its lands toward the good

(l. 227).

As a work of deference to monarchical iconography, *Blackness* also constructs the sovereignty of the Jacobean court by lauding its political ideology. Recall that when James became King of England in 1603, he still retained the crown of Scotland. With this in hand, James saw the opportunity to extend a new "British" identity onto his subjects. In the summer of 1604, he proposed to Parliament that England and Scotland should adopt the common name "Britain" and construct a constitutional union between the two countries. (Butler 160). The 1604 Parliament, however, feared the change. After three days of debate, the body decided not to approve James's proposition; they believed it could lead to the reversal of important English statutes and provisions within the state's constitution. But in October of that year, despite Parliament's disapproval, James anointed himself "King of Great Britain." (160). *Blackness* took place only eleven weeks after this proclamation. Tensions between the English aristocracy and the King were likely still high during the 1604-05 Christmas season.

Yet, in spite of this controversy, we still may read *Blackness* as a construction of James's sovereignty; allegorically, the masque seems to project universal support for the new British nation. After Aethiopia reveals that it was she who told Niger and the nymphs to make their way westward, she explicates the greatness of that

land which ends with “-tania:”

Britannia, which the triple
 world admires.
 This isle hath now recovered
 for her name
 [...]

 With that great name
 Britannia, this blessed isle
 Hath won her ancient dignity
 and style
 [...]

 For were the world with all his
 wealth a ring,
 Britannia, whose new name
 makes all tongues sing.
 (ll. 211-2, 216-7, 221-2)

Butler notes that the word “style” was at one time the “technical legal term for a royal title” (160). If “style” alludes to James, Butler argues, *Blackness* must support the monarchy’s proclamation. Moreover, the level of praise in the masque is beyond the worldly plane; “Britain” is glorified by the “triple world” (l. 211). If we read this phrase in the context of classical Greek mythology, we can interpret that news of Britain is so wonderful that it transcends time and space, making its way to the Underworld—the land of the dead—and Mount Olympus, home to the Gods. Accordingly, Britain’s new name has achieved the “ancient dignity” and the historical respect antiquity warrants.

Furthermore, if we read the word “her” as a possessive pronoun, the “blessed isle” may be seen as being restored to the greatness it once held in the past. Aethiopia, then, commu-

nicates a paradoxical notion of progress: one moves forward by regaining what has been lost. Finally, the last couplet reinforces the theme of universal acclaim. In deference to James’s political ideology, Britain is likened to the jewel of a “ring,” the precious isle within the larger, mediocre context of the world. But “Britannia” is collectively praised not just because it represents a place destined toward eternal greatness; the word itself possesses a certain aesthetic that makes all people want to “sing” its name. If read as four syllables, “Britannia” is composed of two iambs, a metrical foot which, then and now, retains a noble lyrical quality. Through Aethiopia’s discourse on the beauty of the name “Britannia,” as well as the noble land it represents, *Blackness* seems to argue in support of James’s political ideology.

The presence of Queen Anne, however, as an Ethiopian nymph in *Blackness* throws into question much of the work’s monarchical deference. In recent years, large amounts of evidence have surfaced suggesting that Anne of Denmark was alienated from the English Court. Amongst the Calvinist-dominated societies of Scotland and England, her official status as a committed Lutheran worried many. But she was also suspected to be a converted Catholic, a much more grievous charge than her official protestant background (Murray 428). Though James officially tolerated dissenting religious beliefs, his Calvinist sentiments may have strained the couple’s relationship. This tension, in particular, seems to have been pres-

ent in the education of their children. When it came time to select Prince Henry's royal custodian, Anne struggled against James's choice of the Earl of Mar, regarded by many to be extremely anti-Catholic (Aasand 278).

But Anne's possible estrangement from her husband was not only a result of Prince Henry; it could also have been due to James's own gender bias. In seventeenth-century England, James served as a symbol of fatherhood and virile masculinity (Butler 155). He had many male favorites, whom he appointed to high positions in the government. Preferring the company of male aristocrats, it is possible that James's interest in physical relations with his wife suffered. For the Bishop Godfrey Goodman, who worked as a councilor to the couple in an attempt to save their marriage, "[i]t is true that some years after they did not much keep company together. The King of himself was a very chaste man" (qtd. in Aasand 278). Losing contact even with his wife, we can argue that the Stuart court embraced patriarchal paradigms. This, added to Anne's religious estrangement, further marginalized the Queen's presence at James's court.

During the 1605 performance of *Blackness*, Anne may have expressed the reality of her marginalization through her appearance. In her desire to appear in blackamoor, Queen Anne served a key role in Jonson's creation of the plot. Jonson writes in *Blackness's* stage notes that "because it was her majesty's will to

have them blackamores at first, the invention was derived by me, and presented thus" (ll.18-19). In short, the Queen commissioned Jonson to write a story that would allow her to wear black make-up. Once written, she even worked with Inigo Jones to design the subsequent costumes for the Ethiops. But besides her presentation as an African, involving clothing which revealed her ankles, she visually performed on stage six-months pregnant (Aasand 277). Dudley Carleton, an aristocrat who attended the performance, considered Anne's appearance scandalous. He remarked that "you cannot imagine a more ugly Sight then [*sic*] a troop of lean-cheek'd Moors," adding that the Queen looked like a "country woman" (Murray 427). It is likely that Carleton's distaste for the *Masque* stemmed partly from an aversion to Anne's portrayal of sexual and racial difference.

Blackness, however, may be read as more than a presentation of some "lean-cheek'd Moors;" the motif of African fertility may symbolize Anne's own estranged religious and domestic condition to her husband and the court. In contrast to the Anglo-protestant English norm, Anne appeared as an exotic and culturally dissimilar African. Moreover, she was pregnant. Within the public context of the masque, Anne's actions can be interpreted as a symbol of feminine power, separating her from the patriarchal domination of her marriage and the court. Therefore, in Anne's visual appearance during *Blackness*, she does not display the conventional

chaste, obedient, and quiet values that governed women's behavior during the Renaissance. Rather, she shows her own religious, social, and marital poverty and, by doing so, begins to subvert James's image as the powerful, virtuous, and temperate monarch of "Britain."

If we maintain this interpretation, regarding her symbolic show of estrangement to the monarchy, we may call into question all of *Blackness's* earlier allegorical deference to James. As an expression of power and temperance, the sun may indeed "blanch an Ethiop" and refine "All things on which his radiance shines," bringing the non-white exotic into virtuous English beauty (Jonson l. 225, l. 235). However, Queen Anne is herself the black exotic. Recall that the iconography of the Queen, especially in Elizabeth I's court, was equated with chastity and reserve. Appearing as an emblem of African fertility would certainly complicate this convention. It may be interpreted that Anne's appearance in the masque represented a desire to become "bleached" in the color of the good Queen, who submitted to the will of her husband.

But as we have seen, it is likely that Anne historically maintained her identity apart from the King; she did not convert to Calvinism, nor did she cease in attempting to control to the fate of her children. As Queen, Anne had the ability to establish her own conventions and influence her social status's respective iconography. Additionally, black on the Queen

could not be purely seen as defect, or in simple opposition to noble "blanched" skin. Insofar as historical circumstance and literary conventions converge, it is possible that her black physical appearance did not symbolize an attempt to be "white" in agreement with the king. It was, instead, a message intended to subvert James's power and authority. If this is the case, the aristocrats in attendance undoubtedly realized early in the masque that they were to witness a series of inverted and confused English values.

Utilizing this interpretative lens, we start to notice in *Blackness* further monarchical subversion. Toward the beginning of the play, Aethiopia states that Niger shall part from his daughters, leaving the nymphs to reside in the waters outside of Britannia. She makes clear that if the nymphs wish to go through with the "blanching" process, they must first bath their bodies in the sea for the course of a year:

You shall, when all things else
do sleep,
Save your chaste thoughts,
with reverence steep
Your bodies in that purer brine
[...]
So that, this night, the year
gone round,
You do again salute this
ground
And in the beams of yond'
bright sun
Your faces dry, and all is done.
(ll. 312-4, ll. 322-5)

As critic Molly Murray makes clear,

the monarchal beams of the “bright sun,” then, can not automatically whiten and beautify the skin of an Ethiop; the final alteration of color will result from “collaborative” efforts (441). In short, there must be transitional period between the nymph’s first exposure to the sun and the effects that exposure produces. Interestingly, this makes the sun’s power dependent on the self-initiated, and persistent, bathing by the women in the “purer brine” outside the shores of England. As Murray emphasizes, the nymph’s bathing can be interpreted as a private “womanly rite” (441).

Yet, it is also possible that the waters become pure about the Isle as a result of their constant exposure to the temperate, refining beams of the sun. If so, the process of the Ethiop’s bathing can be seen as a literal watered-down extension of the sun’s powers, necessary for that period when “all things else do sleep” and the sun’s light disappears. However, as we saw earlier, Britannia’s temperate sunbeams shine “day and night” (l. 224). This extra requirement, then, that the women “steep” their bodies with “chaste thoughts” in the water suggests either that: the sun does indeed set, despite what is said by Aethiopia, and the women must procure its powers at night through the water, or, the refining powers of the sun are dependent on the effects of a year’s exposure to the briny English waters. Either way, the sun still loses its might to the “womanly rite” of the nymphs (Murray 441). When read in light of feminine agency, and possible

subversion, *Blackness* rescinds much of its monarchal deference to James.

This motif of subversive bathing is continued in the nymphs of Oceaniae, the women masquers who represent in *Blackness* the water itself. In one of the masque’s songs—a court convention in which women masquers chose male partners in the audience to perform a dance—these ladies of Oceaniae are referred to as “daughters of the subtle flood” (l. 279). Critic Hardin Aasand writes that the literary echoes following the call for the daughters to leave—“Let earth longer entertain you”—represent the mens’ efforts to persuade the women to stay rooted to the English land and its men (Jonson l. 281; Aasand 282). Yet, these echoes go unheeded, as the women slowly retreat from the authority of their male partners in the guise of ever-shifting fluidity. If the Ethiopian princesses themselves reside with these ladies of Oceaniae at night—by nature of their temperate bath—they too may adopt the water’s fluidity and independent agency. Thus, the Ethiopians’ act of bathing in the waters surrounding England is not simply a step toward “blanching” deference to the king. Rather, the waters may be interpreted as antagonistic forces to patriarchal authority. Insofar as we may doubt the finality of “all is done,” James’s monarchal power and authority are called into question (l. 325).

As seeds of doubt thrown into *Blackness*’ allegorical praise, the

symbolism of Anne's empowering actions and Jonson's poetics problematize political deference shown toward the Stuart court. If the sun cannot effect change throughout all of Britannia—due to the limitations of its sunbeams and its dependence on the salty English waters—the King will not be able to effectively govern a union between England and Scotland. Covered in black color and playing out the duplicities of Jonson's poetics, Queen Anne breaks down James's formerly affirmed sovereignty. In revoking deference, Anne simultaneously fractures *Blackness'* universal support for James's political ambitions, casting a shadow over its solidarity.

In our analysis of Ben Jonson's *Masque of Blackness*, we have seen the patriarchal tapestry of monarchical deference—weaved in favor of James's wealth, power, and political ideology—unravel due to Anne's expressions of femininity. Regarding the authority of the Stuart monarchy, we are left in a state of uncertainty. Even the last lines of the masque are inconclusive. In *Blackness's* last scene, the nymphs return to their shell and go back to sea, where they

will—or will not, as Murray points out—complete the process of blanching of their skin. The subsequent *Masque of Beauty*, presented by Jonson to the court in 1608 as a sequel to *Blackness*, may indeed resolve this issue by successfully whitening the Ethiops. Yet, in *Blackness*, competing gender and political ideologies render monarchical praise ineffectual. Jonson allegorically praises James's court, yet also destabilizes it, pitting Anne and her coterie against the King. Therefore, as a Jacobean cultural product, I contend that *Blackness* echoes the tenuous nature of James's monarchy. Like Jonson's and Anne's own unsteady deference, James I wavered in his power and authority over both his English subjects and the Queen. James once spoke metaphorically to Parliament: "I am the Husband, all the whole Isle is my lawfull Wife" (qtd. in Aasand 280). As "Wife," Anne does not submit wholeheartedly to James's "sciential" and refining light (Jonson l. 226). Instead, Anne and England yield unwillingly, leaving doubts as to whether their white skin is more than superficial.

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The Impact of the Internet and New Media on Malaysian Politics and the 2008 General Election

Andrew Loh '10

The March 8, 2008 Malaysian General Election results were both groundbreaking and surprising. The long-ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition lost its customary two-thirds majority in Parliament, received only 51% of the popular vote, and lost five (out of thirteen) state governments and the capital Kuala Lumpur to the opposition Pakatan Rakyat (PR) coalition. In my paper I propose that new media (internet sources i.e. online newspapers and blogs, as opposed to mainstream media i.e. print media and television channels) had a significant influence on the results of the 2008 election. The evidence suggests that the 2008 election results are indicative of a more politically conscious electorate. Firstly, new media has gained legitimacy, popularity, and clout among the urban, educated middle-class and the youth. Secondly, the Malaysian mainstream media has become more critical of the BN in an effort to regain credibility from the more trusted new media. Thirdly, while it was BN policy to belittle and denigrate new media, in the aftermath of the 2008 election, significant BN leaders have belatedly started their own websites. Some BN politicians have even reviewed their political policies to better reflect this change in society. Fourthly, the Malaysian blogosphere has been inundated with personal stories and articles articulating the “change” and

“hope” wrought by the election. In these four subsections of Malaysian society I examine the roles new media and the internet played in inducing, catalyzing, disseminating, and perpetuating these changes. Based on the changes in mainstream media, BN politicians, and the Malaysian blogosphere, I argue that the Malaysian electorate has indeed become more informed, critical, and political-sophisticated.¹

History

The BN has ruled Malaysia since independence from Britain in 1957. Malaysia is a highly multiethnic (50.4% Malays, 23.7% Chinese, 11% Indigenous, 7.1% Indians, 7.8% others) and multi-religious country (60.4% Muslim, 19.2% Buddhist, 9.1% Christian, 6.3% Hindu, 4.9% others) consisting of West (or Peninsular) Malaysia and East Malaysia on Borneo Island.² In this possibly unwieldy situation, the BN claims to be the only effective coalition that can represent all major races, religions, and regions through its corporatist structure. The United Malays National Organization (UMNO) is the Malay voice within the BN and is its largest, dominant member. Other parties include the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), the United Traditional Bumiputera Party (PBB),

Gerakan, and other minor parties, all of which are tasked with advancing the interests of their specific communities in the BN. In the few years before 2008, however, the semi-hegemonic UMNO had bulldozed many policies through Parliament and the Cabinet without prior consultation or input from other component parties. Criticism of the “arrogance” and “racial stances” of UMNO culminated with a former Gerakan president exclaiming that non-UMNO BN parties are effectively “beggars” within the coalition.³

The only other election fiasco faced by the BN was in 1969, when the Alliance (BN’s predecessor) lost the popular vote. The result of this was communal strife. Ethnic riots broke out in what is now known as the “May 13 incident” with 196 killed and 149 wounded (police figures), but other estimates put the number dead at ten times these numbers.⁴ The Alliance-led government then imposed a state of emergency with diminished civil rights (which still exists today); Parliament only reconvened in 1971. This violent episode has framed Malaysian discourse and consciousness since. Come election time, BN politicians (regardless of ethnicity) explicitly threaten Malaysians not to vote for the Opposition, lest May 13 happen again.⁵

Furthermore, BN political parties or by businessmen with connections to the BN own almost all mainstream media, ensuring strict, often pro-BN regulation of published and broadcasted content.⁶ Also, often arbitrary

and draconian licensing severely handicaps mainstream media through the Printing Presses and Publications Act, the Internal Security Act, and the Sedition Act.⁷ In 2000, the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression issued a report stating that freedom of opinion is curtailed systematically in Malaysia: that the aforementioned acts “were used to suppress or repress expression and curb peaceful assembly... [the laws] appear to be having a very chilling effect.”⁸

The Opposition, on the other hand, has almost always been fractured compared to the BN. Opposition alliances in the past have been short-lived, ideologically contradictory, and politically ineffective. The Democratic Action Party (DAP), a secular, social-democratic, mainly Chinese opposition party, is often at loggerheads with the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), an Islamist, Malay-based opposition party with aspirations to turn Malaysia into an Islamic state. The BN’s electoral message is simple: there is no alternative.

One factor of the Opposition’s surge in 2008 is the genius of Anwar Ibrahim, its charismatic leader and a former Deputy Prime Minister who was sacked and imprisoned on charges of corruption and sodomy.⁹ Against all odds, Anwar elicited cooperation between the DAP, PAS, and the multiethnic, centrist, populist People’s Justice Party (PKR) to form a coherent political alliance against the BN. The PR’s election manifesto

emphasized universal values like social justice, equality, and anti-corruption and the vast disconnect between the BN and political realities on the ground – and this paid off when significant, unprecedented numbers of Malaysians of all colors and creeds voted for the Opposition.¹⁰

New Media

The internet has broken the BN's monopoly on information dissemination. Previously, the BN could easily ignore dissenting voices because of mainstream media censorship; now, they do so at high risk. Nationwide internet penetration has exploded in the last decade: 15% of Malaysians used the internet in 2000; 47.8% in 2007; 59% in 2008.¹¹ Parallel to this is a mushrooming of blogs, alternative media, and anti-BN websites that provided "scathing criticism of government policy" in Malaysian cyberspace.¹² This is reflective of a groundswell of emotion against the high-handed and confining BN-regulation of information. The internet has presented an alternative, extensive platform through which opposition ideologies can spread. The proliferation of online dissent is only possible because non-censorship is guaranteed in the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998. Violating this could discourage foreign investment in the burgeoning Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector (the government has invested heavily in infrastructure to position Malaysia as a regional ICT hub).

The BN and the Opposition responded to this trend in very different ways. The Center for Independent Journalism said the BN was "very complacent" in cyber campaigning because its "biggest constituency is the rural Malay heartland, where there is low Internet penetration and a non-IT savvy populace, and the pro-government mainstream media exerts greater influence."¹³ In contrast, the DAP publicized its election manifesto and candidate information and fundraised heavily via the internet. This was "borne out of sheer necessity," since new media is "the only way the Opposition could circumvent the [BN-imposed blackout] on opposition messages."¹⁴ Even before the March 2008 election, analysts predicted that the "proliferation of anti-government sites and blogs... [had] created a chink in the armor of the [BN] political behemoth."¹⁵ The voters of high-penetration areas like Penang, Perak, Selangor, and Kuala Lumpur (which altogether contribute over 60% of Malaysia's GDP) voted out the BN.¹⁶ Cyber political campaigning proved to be effective, especially in urban constituencies, as both opposition politicians-cum-bloggers (Lim Kit Siang, Teresa Kok) and bloggers-turned-politicians (Jeff Ooi, Tony Pua, Nik Nazmi, Elizabeth Wong) were voted into Parliament with significant majorities.

Furthermore, more than 50% of the Malaysian population is below 25 years old.¹⁷ This more educated, tech-savvy younger generation is significantly likelier to prefer new media

as they gain the freedom to choose their sources of information. Some have “lost faith in the local media’s coverage of political issues,” while others allege that “mainstream newspapers don’t provide fair coverage to the opposition.”¹⁸ Voting patterns in the aftermath of the Kuala Terengganu by-election in January 2009 support this general pattern: the youth are leaning towards the opposition.¹⁹ According to political analyst Ong Kian Ming, this trend is especially worrying for the BN, since 25 to 30 percent of the electorate is expected to be below 35 by the next general election in 2013.²⁰ Moreover, young people can also play a role in shaping the voting patterns of their parents. PAS’ hold on rural states like Kelantan and Kedah has strengthened as the youth expose their parents to Opposition messages when they return from working or studying in urban centers like Kuala Lumpur.²¹ The failure of the BN to engage with the online dialogue, juxtaposed with the Opposition’s versatility and creativity in exploiting this phenomenon, resulted in huge opposition electoral gains.²²

There are two possible hypotheses from this observation: firstly, that Malaysians trust cyber information because of the inherent attractive nature of the internet as a medium of information; or secondly, that the internet is important because it disseminates critical messages (that would otherwise be censored in mainstream media) to a politically informed electorate. I argue that the latter case is true. Firstly, the prolif-

eration of anti-BN blogs and websites was caused by already existing undercurrents of discontent against the BN, and not vice versa. The internet merely provided a neutral (but viral and effective) medium of expression. Secondly, anti-BN blogs and websites would not be as popular if Malaysian mainstream media were not censored. The political clout of new media derives from it being the only medium that provides critical information that already resonates with an informed electorate. Thirdly, if the internet were inherently attractive as a medium of information, it would be just as popular even if it were censored. I argue that this is false: if the internet were censored, a politically conscious Malaysian populace would search for alternative mediums of information and treat new media just as they already treat mainstream media with distrust and cynicism.

Mainstream Media

Parallel to the development of new media is a growing general distrust of mainstream media as a veritable source of news and information. An analysis of major newspapers show that for two weeks before the 2008 election (February 25 – March 8), the vast majority of articles were pro-BN (Utusan Malaysia, 82%; Malaysia Nanban, 70%; Makkal Osai, 66%; The Star, 63%; The New Straits Times, 60%; The Sun, 43%).²³ Mainstream media did not cover large opposition rallies or demonstrations; for instance, DAP’s election rally in Penang (attendance: 60,000), de facto

Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim's rally in Lembah Pantai (attendance: 10,000), or the BERSIH rally in Kuala Lumpur (attendance: 30,000).²⁴ In contrast, every newspaper highlighted Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi's rally in Penang (attendance: 3,500) and Deputy Prime Minister Najib Razak's rally in Lembah Pantai (attendance: less than 1000).²⁵ The selectivity and partisanship in election coverage is reflective of a greater BN-bias in ordinary reporting. Mainstream news coverage for the opposition is minimal and mostly negative; on the other hand, BN articles are almost always positive and take up the majority of news space.²⁶

The dumbing down of news creates an information vacuum to the informed Malaysian. As internet penetration grows exponentially, the average Malaysian is exposed to alternative, more critical sources of information, becoming more skeptical of the pro-BN narratives the mainstream media churn out. Indicative of public opinion, one Malaysian wrote: "come election time, all [the mainstream media] do is spin tales – how dare they take me for an idiot!?"²⁷ A report by three media watchdogs stated that "[the 2008 election] really showed how irrelevant the [pro-BN] coverage in these newspapers [was]" because Malaysian voters had not been "taken in by the powerful pro-BN media machinery."²⁸ To blogger Din Merican, the election result is a salient call for mainstream media to "stop being lapdogs of the [BN] government, learn

the basics of good journalism... and behave like a true Fourth Estate," or "risk losing the last remaining shreds of credibility and relevance that they enjoy."²⁹

On the other hand, new media has gained ground as a legitimate, trustworthy source of information. For a week before the 2008 election, Malaysiakini (an award-winning, independent online news provider) provided free subscriptions – and a whopping 500,000 visitors visited it on election night.³⁰ In July 2008, Malaysiakini was the most visited news site of the country (as a subscription website it received more traffic than free news sites).³¹ It now reaches over a million unique visitors per month.³² Even the BN government has found it hard to continue ignoring popular dissenting voices – in July 2008 the Information Ministry finally issued official press tags to Malaysiakini, after a wait of nine years.³³ Also, blogs of recently elected Members of Parliament receive large numbers of monthly unique visitors: Jeff Ooi (835,388)³⁴ and Tony Pua (338,607).³⁵ The cumulative power of the internet perhaps is more accurately portrayed when the other few dozen influential sites and the thousands of minor blogs are included. In contrast to the growing popularity of new media, circulation for mainstream newspapers has fallen from 4,608,211 (2004) to 4,435,558 (2006).³⁶

After the 2008 election, Malaysians expressed a great outpouring of gratitude to new media for "election cov-

erage unmatched in Malaysian history for its breadth and balance – despite being outmatched in almost every resource by the mainstream media... the historic March 8 [election] outcome could not have happened without the alternative media or the citizen journalists in the blogosphere.”³⁷ Others attributed the BN’s dismal electoral performance to their ignorance and arrogance towards a more demanding citizenry, to their failure of recognizing this major change in society. Welsh writes: “Gone are the days when resources and promises alone can woo support... Malaysians want more responsiveness and voices... They no longer can be talked down to, but need to be listened and heard.”³⁸

All this suggests a shift in the political intelligence of Malaysians: that the popularity of new media stems from its ability to disseminate alternative information, and not because the internet is inherently attractive as a medium of information. The latter argument is further weakened because even mainstream newspapers have free online sites – but these sites are still viewed with suspicion and skepticism. New media merely filled the informational supply gaps of mainstream media as demanded by Malaysian consumers of information – which made new media popular and trustworthy.

It is telling that even some mainstream media have become more critical of the BN-government after the 2008 election. The Malaysian Insider writes:

Realizing that the political environment had undergone a tectonic shift, many [newspapers] gave more ink to opposition policies and politicians, and started to become more questioning of government policies. This new approach was driven mainly by business considerations and the concern that the mainstream media ran the risk of losing ground to the alternative media if it continued to ignore the [Opposition]. And the newspapers have been vindicated. Latest circulation figures indicate that all the English dailies and Chinese-language newspapers have kept their readers since Election 2008, with some even growing their base.³⁹

Some BN Cabinet ministers, used to a docile press, were unhappy with the new, more critical “tone and coverage in mainstream newspapers.”⁴⁰ An important caveat: the mainstream press as a whole is still skewed towards the BN; also, only a subsection of it (the English and Chinese press) is relatively more critical when compared with pre-election coverage. Anti-Opposition and pro-BN articles are also now less explicit to at least preserve a veneer of legitimacy. Still, a significant number of scathing articles have been published since March 8 – something incomprehensible prior to the election.⁴¹

BN Politicians

Before the election, the BN tone

towards new media was one of condescension, disdain, and outright blackmail. Bloggers were called “monkeys,”⁴² “liars,” “unemployed women,”⁴³ and “snipers.”⁴⁴ There was also a proposal to “register all bloggers” in the interests of national security and to separate them into “professional” and “non-professional” bloggers (Zainuddin Maidin, Information Minister).⁴⁵ These approaches are demonstrative of the BN’s failure to grapple with the new medium. Also, to intimidate the Malaysian blogosphere, prominent bloggers Ahirudin Attan and Jeff Ooi (now Member of Parliament) were sued for defamation, libel, and sedition.⁴⁶

The 2008 election taught the BN a few lessons. Prime Minister Badawi said his “biggest mistake” was to ignore cyber-campaigning.⁴⁷ Smarting from the electoral debacle, BN politicians are scrambling to claim territory in cyberspace. Khir Toyo, ex-Selangor Chief Minister, started his blog 20 days after the election. Joining Toyo are Senator Muhammad Taib and Deputy Prime Minister Najib, who launched their personal websites in April and September 2008 respectively.⁴⁸ Suddenly, “everyone wanted to be a blogger.”⁴⁹ Other BN politicians have even turned to Facebook to reach political supporters and fend off damaging allegations.⁵⁰ The enormity of this about-face reflects a belated understanding among BN politicians: those who previously expressed nothing but vitriol and derision for the blogosphere now felt the power of the inter-

net. Ex-Terengganu Chief Minister Idris Jusoh concluded that “openness [is] key to changing public perception of BN... The advent of new technologies forces everyone to embrace openness... the alternative media will be the mainstream media soon.”⁵¹

Parallel to the acceptance of new media, many BN politicians have also been more outspoken in espousing more progressive and liberal policies – even articulating Opposition positions on certain issues.⁵² These politicians see the writing on the wall and are reacting to it: they understand that the power of new media stems from its ability to disseminate information that Malaysians want to know, and are becoming more responsive to the populace. The Opposition had decimated the electoral bases of these BN component parties, and the only route to political survival is for the parties to become more attentive and receptive to voters’ concerns. It is significant that many (previously subservient) BN component parties have spoken out in support of progressive policies versus the more conservative UMNO – such a scenario was unthinkable before new media and the 2008 election. There is more dissension in the ranks: the Sabah Progressive Party has pulled out of the BN,⁵³ the United Pasokmomogun Kadazandusun Murut Organization has threatened to quit the BN if specific issues were not resolve,⁵⁴ and Gerakan has reported similar large-scale undercurrents in their grassroots.⁵⁵ Even a significant portion in UMNO

acknowledges the need to reinvent itself and its policies if UMNO is to continue assuming political leadership of the BN and the nation.⁵⁶

On the other hand, some conservative elements of the BN are unwilling to change long-held policies. They think that just by flooding cyberspace with pro-BN messages, just like they did with newspapers and television airspace, the coalition will emerge victorious once again. Both the progressive and conservative segments of the BN agree on the importance of new media; they disagree on whether the election results portray a shift in the political intelligence of the Malaysian people. Either way, both subsets of the BN are not letting the Opposition dominate cyber discourse.

The BN is now at a threshold of sorts: to follow the change or to claim it didn't happen. Just as it did for mainstream media, the Malaysian blogosphere had harsh words for the BN politicians remaining in denial. One wrote that it was "not the cyber-campaign that led to BN's disastrous results as the Internet [was] only an avenue [of expression]." He and many others went on to quote the rampant graft, racism, unjust policies, incompetency, mismanagement, arrogance, and insensitivity of the BN government as the root causes for the BN's electoral fiasco. Others claimed that by "refusing to acknowledge that the [populace] are no longer sheep [and] that the world has changed... [the BN is] missing the point... even if the BN had campaigned in cyber-

space it would still lose many seats because the people are fed-up with [their] lies and corruption."⁵⁸ At the core, Malaysians "want – and deserve – a better government."⁵⁹ All these point to an increasingly politically sophisticated Malaysian electorate.

The Malaysian Blogosphere

The Malaysian blogosphere is a diverse group of individuals, activists, civil society organizations, intellectuals, and enthusiasts united perhaps only in the common belief that the internet should be a free, uncensored medium of information. During the 2008 election, its freedom-to-information interests were aligned with those of the Opposition and were opposed to the BN's info-Leviathan.

The vast majority of Malaysian cyberspace rejoiced at the election results. It was called "a stunning moral victory against seemingly impossible odds... the outcome was more exciting and encouraging than even the most optimistic of [the blogosphere] could have dared hope for."⁶⁰ Amongst jubilation and celebration in these online narratives, there were even greater themes of "hope" and "change." A telling indication of a political shift in the electorate is the reframing of political dialogue from May 13, 1969 to March 8, 2008. Before the election, the BN essentially blackmailed voters to vote for them, or else racial riots would break out. The May 13 incident is the *raison d'être* for many controversial BN policies – it is perhaps the most

entrenched historical benchmark in the Malaysian psyche. That racial riots did not occur even as the BN suffered its worst electoral debacle in 39 years represents a significant break from this paradigm – and the blogosphere expressed this change articulately.

The 2008 election was the first time that significant numbers of Malaysians from all ethnicities voted across racial and religious boundaries for the Opposition – another significant break from the stratified, identity-based politics of Malaysian electoral history.⁶¹ Historian Farish Noor writes that this “reminded all politicians from all parties that the Malaysian voters will no longer vote along racial or religious-communitarian lines” and interpreted it as a sign of “political maturity and responsibility.”⁶² Kee Thuan Chye writes: “By any name, March 8, 2008 will go down in history as a turning point in Malaysian politics... Malaysians woke up to the true meaning and practice of democracy. They now face the present reasonably free from fear, free from the specter of May 13.”⁶³

Scores of other accounts expressed similar attitudes. One blogger called it a “new dawn for Malaysia.”⁶⁴ Another underscored the impact of the internet by terming it an “e-volution” for “e-mancipation from crime, corruption and injustice; e-conomic openness and honesty; and e-quality of opportunity for all Malaysians.”⁶⁵ Indicative of the significance of March 8, even the mainstream media and BN politicians reference it as a defin-

ing moment in Malaysian politics – perhaps reflecting a shift in political discourse from politics of fear to politics of hope.

To many of the bloggers, intellectuals, activists, and normal Malaysians tired of the vast disconnect between the BN and the political realities on the ground, the 2008 election was a wonderful, soaring story; a powerful, shared, coming-of-age experience of Davids taking on a Goliath and winning. The shared themes of jubilation, hope, and change are just too eloquent, too poignant, too ubiquitous, and too dominant to be dismissed as isolated cases. Rather, I argue that they reflect a major progressive shift in a significant, vocal, and numerous segment of the Malaysian populace. The internet and new media provided the platform on which this *communitas* could be built. To singer-songwriter Shanon Shah, March 8 is “the victory of ordinary Malaysians who dared to make a stand... because the story of a more just, inclusive, and democratic Malaysia has only begun.”⁶⁶

In addition to these personal narratives, many scholars agree that March 8 is reflective of a more critical Malaysian electorate. Bridget Welsh writes that “the 2008 election illustrated the strengthening of Malaysian identity and growing sophistication of the electorate... The leadership in both the opposition and the BN will have to keep this in mind, as the terrain has fundamentally changed.”⁶⁷ Ong Kian Ming concurs: “[March 8] is a clear sign that our electorate... [is]

becoming more politically mature; marking Malaysia's gradual move towards a more mature and open democracy."⁶⁸ Still, Ong includes an important observation: "One thing is for certain. If the opposition doesn't get its act together, look for the same voters who voted against the BN to turn their backs on the opposition in the next election."⁶⁹

Conclusion

Both new media and the Malaysian blogosphere had a similar objective: to challenge the information hegemony of the BN. These subsections of society entrepreneurially exploited the internet, its far-reaching access, and its uncensored nature, resulting in a proliferation of alternative, dissenting, anti-BN voices online and unprecedented opposition electoral gains. Conversely, both Malaysian mainstream media and the BN had incentives diametrically opposed to new media and the blogosphere: to preserve their domination of information through their decades-old structural and financial behemoth. It is telling that after the March 8 elections, contrary to their prior discourse, significant elements from both institutions acknowledged the importance of the internet and a political shift in the populace, and consequently reacted to them. Without this shift in the electorate, there would be no reason for mainstream media and the BN to change. That both institutions have firstly, become more open to criticism and more responsive to the grassroots, and secondly, been rewarded for it,

strongly suggests that the average Malaysian is significantly more critical than before. In addition to this, analysis strongly suggests that the internet has allowed new informational and civil institutions (of new media and the Malaysian blogosphere) to interact with and permanently transform the old institutions of mainstream media and the BN – reflecting, catalyzing, and perpetuating the growing sophistication and maturity of the electorate.

A limitation to new media is that it only reaches urban, better-educated Malaysians with internet access. Firstly, the internet has had an indirect impact on rural, less-educated, non-internet users. Such voters are exposed to opposition messages by children and friends who work or study in urban centers.⁷⁰ Secondly, internet users (59% in 2008)⁷¹ and urbanites (68% in 2006)⁷² comprise significant majorities in the Malaysian populace. Thirdly, both internetization and urbanization are projected to grow in the near and medium future. Thus, the political intelligence and maturity of internet users and urban residents accurately reflect that of a large and growing percentage of the Malaysian electorate.

A possible occurrence is a total, BN-engineered internet clampdown. While this might be favorable to some conservative BN politicians, such an action would be disastrous for both the BN and Malaysia in the long run, because a clampdown does not and cannot address the fundamental

political shift in Malaysian society.⁷³ As long as a BN-helmed government-in-denial does not address the crucial, widespread, and wildly-resonating issues of crime, corruption, mismanagement, and political racism and arrogance, dissent will seethe no matter what. Farish Noor writes, eloquently:

For the UMNO-led ruling coalition to remain in denial and to deny the fact that the Malaysian political landscape has already shifted from underneath its feet would be to compound the problem faced by themselves and the country. For this reason alone, the responsibility now lies with the leaders of this enfeebled government to admit to their mistakes and pave the way for change, even if it means sacrificing their long-held position of power and dominance over the country. For the question remains: If and when change is long overdue and can no longer be resisted, would not the preservation of the status quo be the cause of tumult and chaos we have dreaded all along?⁷⁴

The only way forward, both for the BN and Malaysia, as BN politician Idris Jusoh has observed, is to “embrace openness.”⁷⁵

Despite this, I think that the BN will still attempt to regulate the internet in more subtle ways, in addition to becoming more open and receptive to

criticism, depending on exact circumstances.⁷⁶ Firstly, the BN has vastly superior financial resources to outplay new media and the Opposition. Secondly, mainstream media still reaches more Malaysians than new media. Thirdly, the BN can retard new media’s influence through licensing – the government has repeatedly rejected Malaysiakini’s application for a print permit. Fourthly, the BN can charge bloggers or online journalists with sedition, libel, or slander, or arrest them under the Internal Security or Sedition Acts. Compounding this chilling effect are frequent, intentionally vague threats from the BN to the blogosphere to uphold “public security.”⁷⁷ Altogether, the BN still has a plethora of means that it can use to preserve power and check the influence of new media (although more constrained than before the 2008 election).

Unfortunately, the internet is not idiot-proof. In addition to critical news and information, it can also spread ridiculous allegations and unfounded speculations. One challenge for new media and the blogosphere is to ensure that the information they disseminate is truthful and verifiable. The current giants of new media (Malaysiakini, The Malaysian Insider) have proven relatively responsible in this aspect. Without this self-regulation, new media would be more vulnerable to BN legal charges of libel and slander.

A harder task, however, is for new media and the blogosphere to remain above politics. In the recent past,

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lines were drawn based on themes like freedom of information and political change, with the BN on one hand, and new media, civil society organizations, activists, and the Opposition on the other. Such political cleavages ensured clear alignments in position. As the Opposition takes up governing roles, new media must be impartial both in critiquing and lauding BN and Opposition actions and policies. It cannot afford to be seen as lapdogs of the Opposition, just like mainstream

media was for the BN. If such journalistic ethos is not upheld, it is not unforeseeable that Malaysians will grow skeptical and suspicious of new media as well. Ultimately, new media must continue to have the Malaysian electorate's best interests at heart to act as an effective Fourth Estate, and persist in transforming, for the better, mainstream media, the BN, the Malaysian blogosphere, Malaysian politics, and the Malaysian populace at large.

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Andrew Loh is a junior Political Science honors major and Islamic and Arabic Studies honors minor. He wrote this paper for a class called "American Elections: Ritual, Myth, and Substance", co-taught by Professors Carol Nackenoff and Keith Reeves. Andrew really enjoyed writing this paper because it marked a watershed period in Malaysian politics, and maybe the world: Malaysia is, perhaps, an unprecedented case of how the internet and new media can decisively influence election results and transitions to democracy. He was so excited about the March 8, 2008 election results that he skipped lunch in jubilation. Andrew is also a blogger and would like to think that he played a role in this movement.

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Criteria for Publication

The papers in this volume, and all papers considered for publication, came from a general call for submissions from the Swarthmore student body. We chose papers for publication according to the following guidelines.

The first and most important consideration was the quality of the paper itself. We expected the argument and topic of the paper to maintain its focus throughout the paper and to be well-supported by evidence. We looked for prose that was clear and engaging, as well as precise, concise, and grammatically accurate. Finally, we expected the structure of the paper to elucidate the argument.

We wanted the papers to represent a range of subject areas; however, our evaluation of the merit of the paper could and often did supervene on considerations of disciplinary diversity.

Authors remained anonymous through every stage of the selection process. Only the editor was aware of the identities of the authors. No personal characteristic of the author influenced the selection process.

Finally, we required that authors be willing to work with us to revise their papers for publication. Authors were paired with members of the editorial board to prepare their papers.

The Writing Associates Program does not necessarily endorse the arguments put forth in these essays.

