What is *Spectrum*?

*Spectrum* is an annual competition in essay writing sponsored by the Writing Across the Curriculum Committee at Saint Mary’s College. Submissions are read by a panel of judges and cash awards are given at the end of each spring semester. Winning essays are published in *Spectrum* the following fall.

*Spectrum* seeks to publish essays from a wide range of disciplines, and all undergraduates at Saint Mary’s College are encouraged to submit essays written as a part of their coursework for consideration.

Submissions for the 2005 contest may be sent via campus mail to *Spectrum*, c/o Gail Drexler, English Department, or may be placed in the zebra-striped *Spectrum* box on the third floor of Dante Hall, near the elevator. All submissions should include the name of the faculty member and course for which the paper was written. Please mark all submissions with “Attention: *Spectrum*,” and make sure they contain the author’s full name, local phone number, and email address.
Acknowledgments

Thank you to all those students who submitted their work, and to the professors who encouraged them. Please keep those essays coming from courses across the curriculum—we can’t publish this annual anthology without you.

After much pondering, our judges have chosen four essays with enlightening insights and unexpected perspectives. To stimulate further thought, we encourage faculty and students to read and discuss these essays in class, as appropriate to the educational goals of each course.

We are especially grateful to those who volunteered to serve as judges: Marilyn Abildskov, Molly Metherd, Elise Miller, Naomi Schwartz, Glen Silva, Chris Stroffolino, and Ed Tywoniak.

Thanks also to Carrie Brewster, Director of the Hearst Art Gallery, for scanning the cover etching; to Gail Drexler, English Department Administrative Assistant, for all her help in coordinating the contest; and to all those who have supported Spectrum over the years.

The cover etching, “Mother and Child,” is by Erin Murray, from the student art exhibit.

Chris Miller
Faculty Moderator
SPECTRUM 2004

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Madame Mao’s Revolution:
Madame Mao Jiang Qing And the Performing
Arts of China During the Cultural Revolution

By Tiffany Anders-Record

“Don’t think that I am just here promoting theatrical performances. I am here engaged in a battle against feudalism, capitalism and revisionism.”
- Jiang Qing

“Sex is interesting in the first rounds, but what sustains interest in the long run is power.”
- Jiang Qing

Chinese who were adolescents during the late 1960’s are known as “the lost generation,” for they came of age in a chaotic cultural caldron known as the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), which dissolved the traditional Chinese social framework (China Rising). The Cultural Revolution was Mao Zedong’s attempt to reassert his authority as Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and to prove to the Chinese people he was still in control. He started by tapping into the great idealism and energy of China’s youth and encouraging youth movements, such as the Red Guard, to return to the pure ideals of revolution. They were urged to scour their society of its “Four Olds”—old ideas, old culture, old customs and old habits—and then rebuild society anew (Short 547). This cultural cleansing sought to eradicate traditional forms of Chinese art and literature, declaring the old forms and the people who made them bourgeois, decadent and glorifying China’s feudal past. At the helm of the youth movements and artistic cleansing was the patron saint of the Red Guard, Mao’s wife, ex-actress Jiang Qing, known simply as “Madame Mao.” Under the direction of Jiang Qing, traditional Chinese art forms, most notably Peking Opera, were transformed and manipulated to spread the socialist doctrine of the CCP and bolster Mao’s power. Jiang Qing officially sanctioned and directed the production of the “Eight Model Works,” carefully-crafted modern revolutionary operas, ballets and symphonies whose characters and themes offered perfect role models of ideal communist revolutionary thought and spirit. These model works reached their zenith during the Cultural Revolution, illustrating the dramatic transformation of the role of art and the artist in Chinese culture.
However, contrary to her claims, it becomes apparent that in creating revolutionary performing art works, Jiang Qing was not merely carrying out Mao’s wishes. Jiang Qing’s achievement of producing a canon of revolutionary stage and film pieces had a profoundly personal goal: to obtain her own individual power, both as the sole leader of the Chinese people and in the film and theater industry that had rejected her during her acting career.

In order to understand Jiang Qing’s cultural reform and the complex era in which it took place, it is essential to provide a foundation through an overview of Chinese history, including the life of Jiang Qing and the tradition of Chinese performing arts. Events as momentous as the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution do not occur in a vacuum, but rather are clearly spawned from the environment preceding them. Such events change history. It is through the investigation of the climate surrounding the Cultural Revolution that we may understand the political tensions and how they influenced Jiang Qing’s manipulation of Chinese arts and literature.

**Part I, History**

In any discussion of Chinese society one must remember China is an ancient, exceptionally sophisticated culture with a five-thousand-year history of refined philosophy, science, medicine, religion, art (including literature and music), and efficient bureaucracy. Throughout China’s history its leaders have governed a self-sufficient, vast, geographically isolated area populated with hundreds of millions of people and comprised of diverse ethnicities and cultures, including the predominant Han and over fifty-five minorities (China Rising). This enormous population was united by the control of an emperor ruling under a Mandate of Heaven, and although individual emperors and ruling families have come and gone, the imperial throne itself was respected and remained for thousands of years (Roberts 195). In this way, China’s culture remained conservative, resisting change in its social and philosophical structure.

Amid this seemingly stable social structure there have been two overarching themes that have defined much of China’s history and shaped its ethnocentric outlook: feudalism and the threat of foreign invasion. Both themes continued into the twentieth century and became the integral components in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in the 1960’s (China Rising). The first, the feudal institution, has existed since China’s prehistory. As far back as
back as the Shang Dynasty (1523-?1027 BCE), wealthy landowning warlords with aristocratic lineages controlled large populations of peasants who were made to work the land, defend it and build fortifications and cities to increase the warrior landlords' power (Roberts 69). Although there has been a tradition of peasant revolts throughout China's history, especially during times of famine, this fundamental division between the landowning nobility and the common people remained indestructible and shaped China's future society. Eventually the individual warring states were brought together as a unified China in 221 BCE under the Ch’in (or Qin) Dynasty, which gave the country its name and its first emperor of the united China, Qin Shi Huangdi (Rawson 314).

The other predominant theme is barbarian attacks from outside China. China’s past is punctuated by these struggles with outside invaders. It was barbarians who drove the ancient Chinese Chou people from their ancestral homeland around 700 BCE, and later the first Ch’in emperor built the Great Wall as a barrier against the northern Manchurian barbarians in the second century BCE. Nevertheless, by the end of the thirteenth century CE China had been overrun by the Mongols, led by Kublai Khan and later, his grandson Genghis and his descendants (Roberts 203). In 1644 the Manchu invaded and seized Peking, beginning the Ch’ing Dynasty. However, by the seventeenth century it was European colonialism threatening China, igniting tension leading to the Opium War between Britain and China in 1839-42, resulting in the ceding of Hong Kong to Britain (Roberts 383). Colonialism exacerbated anti-foreigner sentiment, which peaked in 1900 with the failed Boxer Rebellion. A secret society known as the “Society of Harmonious Fists” or “Boxers,” a group who opposed all foreign influence, attacked Christian converts, missionaries and the entire foreign population. Supporting this group, the dowager empress declared war on all foreign powers but the rebellion was quickly squelched by an international expedition of troops (Roberts 388).

The internal chaos ensuing from China’s struggle with Europeans led the Chinese people to believe the imperial rule had become ineffective. Great revolts broke out aimed at imperial authority. In 1911, the Republicans deposed the Ch’ing Emperor (known as “the Last Emperor”), ending the long succession of emperors, one of the most traditional institutions in Chinese history. In 1912, the Republic of China was formed, led by president Sun Yat-sen (China Rising). This era was marked by bloody civil war between the
reforming and modernizing Nationalist Party, known as the Kuomintang, and the burgeoning Chinese Communist Party, which won over masses of peasants with promises of reform (Roberts 383). The two groups only ceased fighting once, when they came together to attack the Japanese occupation of China in the 1930’s, preceding World War II. Finally, after great bloodshed, the Kuomintang withdrew to Taiwan in 1948, where its successor remains today (China Rising). The triumphant Communists inaugurated the Communist People’s Republic of China on October 1, 1949 in Peking, led by a man who was a great general of the Red Army and chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, Mao Zedong. The charismatic Mao filled the moral void created by the fall of the imperial ancien régime and won many supporters by focusing his revolutionary rule on the peasant class, workers and soldiers (Roberts 483).

However, after approximately fifteen years of Communist rule, a growing number of opposition groups began to arise and question Mao’s leadership. This opposition was largely due to the failure of Mao’s “Great Leap Forward,” an economic offensive aimed at modernizing and strengthening China’s industry, which resulted in unrest and widespread famine (Short 442). Out of fear of his slipping power and loss of revolutionary zeal, Mao, assisted by his wife Jiang Qing, instituted the “Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution” in 1966, a sweeping cultural reform designed to eliminate conservative opposition and reassert his power in the Party. As the name implies, the Cultural Revolution especially targeted China’s cultural institutions, namely its education system, media and artistic traditions. In an attempt to limit emerging power or opposition, schools and universities were closed, physical labor was demanded of citizens in order to change traditional attitudes of cultural superiority of intellectuals and scholars, and the family structure was undermined by deliberate attacks on family authority, an institution which was based on the most conservative of all Chinese traditions, Confucianism (Short 530). Mao tapped into the enthusiasm of the young people of China, promoting youth movements such as the Red Guards, where children as young as twelve carried out the majority of the public torture, executions, ridicule, “struggle sessions,” and property damage which the Cultural Revolution became known for (Short 544). Ultimately, the upheaval of such ingrained aspects of Chinese culture would result in chaos and unmanageable violence. The Cultural Revolution came to an end when Mao Zedong died, in 1976.
Part II, Jiang Qing

In addition to the shifting of family values, the role of women in China drastically changed and advanced under the newfound freedom of Communism. Arranged, early marriages and antiquated practices such as foot binding were banned and women were allowed to be active members of the People’s Liberation Army. One woman who took advantage of the new freedom granted to women was a dynamic, adventuresome aspiring actress named Lan Ping, later Jiang Qing, who moved to Yen’an, the early capital of the CCP, where she met her future husband, Mao Zedong.

Jiang Qing was born Li Yunhe in the Shandong province in 1914 to the youngest concubine of a rich businessman. As was common at the turn of the century, Li Yunhe’s feet were bound at age four as a social signal designed to indicate she was not made for work, but for marriage. Li Yunhe hated the idea and was in such excruciating pain, pain that she recalled as the “brutal evidence of feudalism” (Min 5), that she defiantly removed the bandages (Terrill 23). Soon after, due to excessive abuse at the hands of her husband and other family members, Li Yunhe’s mother ran away with her daughter. When Li Yunhe’s mother found she could not support her daughter on her own, she moved back to her parents’ home when Li Yunhe was about eight years old (Min 11). These two events in Li Yunhe’s early life left an indelible impression on Jiang Qing and she would later state the pain surrounding them and her resulting outrage was the motivation behind her feminist, empowering artistic endeavors.

Although adored by her maternal grandparents, Li Yunhe repeatedly ran away from home to join Peking Opera schools and troupes, where she worked as an apprentice and eventually received a role based on her devotion and ambition (Terrill 30). However, due to the depressed economic climate brought on by the Japanese occupation, theaters were closed and Li Yunhe lost her job (Min 22). Perhaps due to financial obligation, she soon married a man named Fei, but the marriage only lasted a few months and was never mentioned by Jiang Qing in the future (Terrill 38). She divorced and ran away to a nearby bigger city, Qingdao, where she worked at the Qingdao University library and audited classes (Terrill 40). It was in Qingdao where she met and fell in love with Yu Qiwei, a student leader of the Communist underground. In 1931 the two began living together in a modern, “anti-feudal” marriage without certificate or ceremony (Terrill 42). Li Yunhe became involved in anti-
Japanese theater productions and due to Yu Qiwei's connections she soon became a left-wing activist and eventually a member of the Chinese Communist Party (Min 32).

However, this marriage was short lived as well. Li Yunhe left Yu Qiwei after he was imprisoned by the Nationalist government as part of their crackdown against influential Communists (Terrill 44). As at the end of her first marriage, Li Yunhe again sought to change her environment and make a fresh start. In 1933, at the age of nineteen, she moved to Shanghai, and as an aspiring actress changed her name to Lan Ping (Terrill 49). While struggling to make it as an actress, she became active in the Communist Youth League and was arrested in early 1934 and imprisoned for several months due to her association with the CCP. She was released after signing a denunciation of her Party affiliation, a fact she hid later in life, but one that would eventually be used as a weapon against her.

In 1935, she received the female lead role of Nora in Ibsen's *A Doll House* (Terrill 63). The play was hailed a success and considered a political statement that spoke of the people's dissatisfaction under the Nationalist leader Chiang Kai Shek (Min 58). Lan Ping became the talk of Shanghai and attracted many admirers, one of whom was a famous theater critic named Tang Na, whom she married in 1936 (Terrill 93). The cosmopolitan, well-traveled Tang Na helped expand Lan Ping's intellectual and artistic horizons by introducing her to an international group of artists and writers in Shanghai, where she cultivated a knowledge and taste for the vibrant Western art, film and music that was flourishing in Europe, especially Weimar Germany and Paris, and America in the 1930's (Terrill 96). She continued to win lead roles in theater while trying eagerly to use her fame to enter the film industry. However, her attempts failed due to a full-scale Japanese attack on Shanghai, which crippled the Chinese film industry (Terrill 109). After Tang Na attempted suicide, the famous couple's tumultuous marriage and subsequent affairs became notorious in Shanghai and it was not long before the couple divorced. Soon Lan Ping's stormy personal life and career disappointment led her to make yet another move, this time to the capital of the CCP, Yen'an.

The adventurous Lan Ping arrived in Yen'an in 1937 amid an ocean of pilgrims who were flocking towards an exciting new life of Communism, some for the promise of education, others to escape their family or arranged marriages, still others just out of curiosity (Terrill 130). The facilities in the small, dusty market village of Yen'an were primitive, for it
was a makeshift coordination center for the Communists' guerilla war against the Japanese and Nationalists. People lived in caves hollowed out of the yellow mountainside and worked alongside the area's peasants. Lan Ping lived the life of a rural girl, working the fields, living in filth and eating what little could be coaxed from the mountainous hillside soil (Terrill 142).

With her attractiveness, charisma and verve she stood out from the other girls in Ye'nan like a peacock amidst hens. Lan Ping first caught Mao Zedong's attention at one of his lectures; Lan Ping found Mao's power very attractive and Mao found her vivacious, beautiful and engaging (Zhong and Miller 45). Mao was living alone at the time, as his wife had been sent away to Russia for medical treatment following a nervous breakdown resulting from the breakup of their marriage (Zhong and Miller 44). The two soon began to see one another regularly; she was twenty-four and Mao was forty-five (Terrill 138). In 1938 an already pregnant Lan Ping moved into Mao's cave, changed her name to Jiang Qing and married him soon after; it was technically her fourth marriage and his fifth. The Politburo did not approve of their union due to her shaky political background and made Mao promise she would not interfere in Party issues (Min 105). She withdrew for decades and became a devoted housewife, taking care of Mao and their daughter Na.

She reemerged in the early 1960's to help Mao reform the arts and literature of China and repair his image after his failed "Great Leap Forward" in 1958 (Zhong and Miller 83). He promoted her to head of the Literature and Art Reform Committee, and she relished this opportunity to enter the political sphere and gain an official title and place in the CCP. Mao also appointed her the chief advisor to the three million soldiers of the People's Liberation Army on all matters concerning art and literature (Terrill 256). Jiang Qing's reform of traditional Chinese performing arts was wildly popular and she soon found herself at the center of China's cultural whirlwind. As part of her new role she wrote an article, denouncing a subversive play called *Hairui Dismissed from Office*, the publication of which is considered the official launch of the Cultural Revolution (Min 226).

Jiang Qing's fame, power and position in the CCP grew rapidly from 1966 to 1969. Mao asked her to lead the burgeoning group of revolutionary youth called the Red Guard, who followed Mao's every wish and command, carrying out the Party's dirty work, including public ridicule sessions and even executions of party members. Mao asserted the Party itself
was too corrupt to carry out its own cleansing of revisionists, whom Mao viewed as his chief threat (Wen xiii). Jiang Qing led ten rallies, each with eleven million Red Guard attendants, to anoint them for their task of “rebelling against the bureaucracy” (Terrill 256). She had complete freedom and immense power, which she used to mold China’s performing arts into her image, and attempted to pave the way for her to step into the role of Chairman of the CCP after Mao died.

Ironically, it was the same qualities that propelled Jiang Qing to power that caused her eventual demise. Her headstrong determination and fiery temperament made her many enemies. When Mao was close to death she expected and thought it natural that she would take over as head of the CCP (Terrill 17). Instead, she was used as a scapegoat by the leading members of the CCP and was blamed for the chaos and violence that occurred during the Cultural Revolution. For the very same events Mao was deified, Jiang Qing was vilified. Three weeks after Mao’s death in September of 1976, Jiang Qing and three of her cronies, together known as the “Gang of Four,” were arrested and imprisoned as Deng Xiaoping took power over China (China Rising). All four were later sentenced to death as traitors at a highly publicized, televised trial in 1980-81, although the sentences were stayed for several years (Terrill 387). During the trial, Jiang Qing never admitted any guilt or confessed to any crime; she maintained an air of superiority and repeated countless times she was only following Mao’s orders. Waving a finger and lecturing, she cursed at the judges and suggested they were the true criminals (Terrill 388). Jiang Qing spent the remainder of her life in jail sewing clothes on dolls for export until her death in 1991.

Part III, Performing Arts

When she began her cultural reform in the early 1960’s, Jiang Qing believed the first genre of performing arts to be revolutionized must be Peking Opera, for it was the biggest challenge to reform. Peking Opera was an influential, classical and pure Chinese art form, and one that was steeped in hundreds of years of tradition. It was highly didactic in nature and was the way the Chinese masses learned about their history and cultivated moral values (Mackerras 21). The plots were either civil or military in theme and revolved around China’s feudal history, telling romantic, heroic tales of famous emperors and their concubines, great warlords and mythical characters (Mackerras 6). Peking Opera was a rich artistic tapestry
that wove together a variety of disciplines, integrating acrobatics, singing, mime, acting, dancing, costuming and elaborate makeup into the operas. The music was classical Chinese and showcased traditional, well-loved string and flute musical scores. The educated elite and aristocracy, and most especially the imperial family, favored the dramatic style, elegant music, language and sumptuous costumes of the operas.

Prior to the early twentieth century, Peking Opera actors were all male, with boys and young men impersonating the female characters. Many of China’s greatest Peking Opera stars were those who had specialized in female impersonation, called dans (Zhong and Miller 100). The boys would wear stilted shoes, or caiqiao, which made them walk as if they were women with bound feet, a practice the Communists suppressed as feudal and “unhealthy” (Mackerras 4). The boy actors’ personal lives were also unsavory to the Communists, for they were often lovers to the imperial courtiers and intellectuals who followed the operas. This practice was clearly in conflict with the progressive gender equality ideals of the Communist Party. Jiang Qing was quoted in the CCP newspaper People’s Daily denouncing the practice, stating, “Female impersonation is a product of feudal society. It would be a strange phenomenon for female impersonation to appear on a Socialist stage. Such impersonation would undermine operas on revolutionary contemporary themes” (Zhong and Miller 100).

Yet Jiang Qing could look beyond what she perceived as the weaknesses of Peking Opera to see the Communist potential of the art form. She knew of the inspiration and power of Peking Opera first hand, for she had been both a great fan and devoted actress. She realized the tradition of Peking Opera was completely ingrained in the Chinese culture, and therefore, it could either be a formidable threat towards or an instrument of the CCP. Jiang Qing did not delegate the changes, but instead was an active part of every facet of the productions and revisions. She first adapted existing storylines or had new patriotic revolutionary plots written, aiming for an end result of expressing her messages of contemporary Socialist life and providing role models for the youth, workers, peasants and soldiers who were the opera’s audience. She intended to preserve the tradition of the opera, but also to reform it by making the masses the heroes instead of the feudal ruling classes. For example, dramas about rebellions against corrupt emperors were praised while those about “feudal morality” were criticized and rejected (Mackerras 17). Jiang Qing in her
speech entitled “Summary of the Forum on the Work in Literature and Art in the Armed Forces with Which Comrade Lin Pao Entrusted Comrade Jiang Qing” stated her goals:

    We, too, should create what is new and original, new in the sense that it is socialist and original in the sense that it is proletarian. The basic task of socialist literature and art is to work hard to create heroic models of workers, peasants and soldiers. Only when we have such models and successful experience in creating them will we be able to convince people, to consolidate the positions we hold, and to knock the reactionaries’ stick out of their hands (Jiang Qing 42).

Next, Jiang Qing designed the actual production, picking actors and actresses, helping choose the costumes, sets and even hair and makeup styles. She kept some of the most classic elements in the productions, such as the greatly stylized gestures, the singing style (or it would no longer have been opera), and the acrobatics. However, she removed “bourgeois” elements that did not fit the revolutionary ideals. The opulent costumes and sumptuous embroidered silk backdrops were discarded in favor of the simple cotton uniforms of the soldiers and peasants. The heavy role-identifying makeup was exchanged for a more natural style, befitting the proletarian roles. The non-linear episodic plot style was changed to a two to three hour narrative arch (Mackerras 17), which allowed time to tell stories of model revolutionaries, albeit blatant propaganda. She then added signature elements to the productions, the most notable being the inclusion of the female heroine as the main character of almost every performance (Mackerras 19). These heroines added a strong feminist aura to the productions and provided young women with new models to emulate. In several scenes in one of Jiang Qing’s ballets, The Red Detachment of Women, the female characters jump through the air holding rifles and grenades. Compared to western ballets where waif-like women are lifted up by strong men, the women in the Chinese productions were undoubtedly self-assured and empowered. Another of her changes was to order everyone associated with the production, men and women, to wear army uniforms both on and off stage during rehearsals.

    There is however, a touch of irony in Jiang Qing’s modifications. Although these changes were made in the name of revolutionary reform, which was one of the main tenets of Mao’s anti-Western, anti-capitalist brand of Communism, many of Jiang Qing’s changes show a strong Western influence. This paradox betrays Jiang Qing’s keen interest in Western art forms, which she acquired during her time with her third husband Tang Na,
especially film and musicals, which she was rumored to have enjoyed regularly throughout her life (Thurston 17). The simplified backdrops, costumes and make-up style emulated modern western opera and the orchestras were expanded to include non-Chinese instruments, such as brass and the violin (Mackerras 44). The plot lines came to resemble the long, unfolding narratives of European opera, which rose to a climax instead of describing short individual episodes in succession, as did the classical Chinese opera (Mackerras 29). The Western influence was highlighted when Jiang Qing expanded her reform to other performing arts, including Western-style ballets, films (mostly of the staged operas) and symphonies. These other genres reflected elements from the West, no matter how heavily Jiang Qing tried to mask them.

The majority of Jiang Qing's reforms took place in the early 1960's, and the fruits of her labor were showcased in the 1964 Festival of Peking Opera on Contemporary Themes. By the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, Jiang Qing had devised a theory of "model" dramas and soon had a repertoire of reformed work known as the "Eight Model Works," which were comprised of five revolutionary operas (The Red Lantern, On the Docks, Raid on the White Tiger Regiment, Spark Among the Reeds and Taking The Bandits' Stronghold by Force), two ballets (The Red Detachment of Women and the White-Haired Girl) and a symphony (Shachiapang) (Zhong and Miller 169). The works all focused on lauding the CCP and its heroes, and the main principles of these model works were that they must reflect class struggle, promote the interests of the proletariat (particularly members of the CCP), and denounce bourgeois villains who took the form of Kuomintang officials, their representatives, or Japanese occupiers. Western brass instruments were added to the orchestra to make the music more heroic and revolutionary (Mackerras 30).

By the time the feverish pitch of the Cultural Revolution reached its peak, between 1967-69, when Jiang Qing's power was at its zenith, her attacks on Chinese tradition became more virulent. All performances of traditional Peking Opera were banned and all records of music and books about traditional operas were hunted down and destroyed (Mackerras 19). Jiang Qing ordered the persecution of artists and directors whom she considered bourgeois or feudal; such actors were humiliated, physically harmed or otherwise victimized by Red Guards fired up with revolutionary fervor. If you wanted to be in the arts during Jiang Qing's time you had to follow her instructions, for if you did not, you were disagreeing with
the government and therefore labeled a counterrevolutionary and could be sentenced to death (China Rising). Many of those persecuted were people from Jiang Qing’s past who were rivals or obstacles to her acting career during her life in Shanghai (Min 267).

Jiang Qing’s productions defined the culture of the time, for they were the only state-sanctioned form of entertainment during the Cultural Revolution. They were the only things to see in theaters and cinemas, and all that could be heard being broadcast on the radios and hummed on the citizens’ lips; posters of the productions even decorated the walls of people’s houses and communal areas (Evans and Donald 1). Historian Anne Thurston states in her book Enemies of the People, “It was a time when the viewing pleasure of hundreds of millions of people had been limited to eight revolutionary works in which heroes were ever both glorious and victorious and villains were unabashedly and unremittingly evil” (Thurston 17).

Due to the fact that official state-sanctioned art and literature were the only readily available sources of entertainment and information during the Cultural Revolution and preceding years, there is little doubt Jiang Qing’s theatrical works did indeed present strong role models of ideal communist revolutionary thought and spirit, as they were the only models available for the youth to emulate. However, if we dig deeper into the phenomena of revolutionary opera and art during the Cultural Revolutionary period, we see Jiang Qing’s motivation for producing the art was more than just stoking revolutionary zeal for her husband’s use. Contrary to her claims, it becomes apparent Jiang Qing was not merely carrying out Mao’s wishes. She was not Mao’s pawn in his reassertion of power campaign, for she went beyond advancing Mao’s agenda and at times accomplished her artistic goals in ways contrary to Mao’s doctrines. Jiang Qing’s achievement of producing a canon of revolutionary stage and film pieces was a profoundly personal goal to obtain her own individual power, both as the sole leader of the Chinese people and in the film and theater industry which had rejected her during her acting career. Jiang Qing’s dynamic and innovative revolutionary art was an outlet for a frustrated actress’s unfulfilled dreams, and a physical manifestation of her hope of emerging from the shadow of Mao and the rest of the powerful men in China’s CCP, who had eclipsed her from the very beginning of their union. It was a dream to stand proudly in the spotlight as Mao had, to be worshipped and applauded by her nation, deafened by peals of “Long live Jiang Qing!” In The White Bone Demon: A
Biography of Madame Mao Zedong, Ross Terrill suggests that the only impediment between her and leadership was her gender, stating “No other woman rose as high in the Chinese Communist Party (nor in the Communist Party of any other country). She became one of the handful of most powerful women in China’s five-thousand-year history. Yet she had not avoided being discriminated against as a woman” (Terrill 3).

Works Cited


Elizabeth’s Dark Eyes
By Tony Vala-Haynes

Beautiful eyes possess an enchanting quality that can blind the admirer and paralyze his wits. In *Pride and Prejudice*, when Mr. Darcy first sees Elizabeth’s alluring eyes he loses his ability to reason with himself. Already overwhelmed by the beauty that he can see, he is soon consumed by the mystery that rests behind the dark eyes. Drawn to something he finds equally pure and beautiful, Darcy falls in love with a pair of eyes that fail to see the truth. Jane Austen eventually reveals the mystery that rests behind Elizabeth’s alluring eyes—an overwhelming prejudice that originates in a poor first impression and continues to grow with a series of lies. While Darcy grows enchanted by Elizabeth’s eyes, Elizabeth develops a contempt for him that does not allow her to see the truth. The sense of pride Darcy exudes encourages Elizabeth to dislike him. With one impression, Elizabeth builds the foundation for her dislike of Darcy—a foundation Wickham preys on. She allows herself to be deceived by Wickham because she wants to believe Darcy is the rude, prideful man she perceives him to be. Elizabeth sees what she wants to see. Through Elizabeth’s dark eyes, Austen exposes the prejudice that rests in a beautiful woman who believes she can see the truth. In doing so, Austen reveals the blind nature of Darcy’s love as he falls for the attribute in Elizabeth that gives birth to her prejudice—her eyes.

With Mr. Darcy’s initial response to Elizabeth, Austen deliberately leads the reader astray in order to justify Elizabeth’s immediate dislike of him. Austen writes about Darcy, “and turning around, he looked for a moment at Elizabeth, till catching her eye, he withdrew his own” (8-9). Darcy looks at Mr. Bingley and says coldly, “She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt me” (9). With such a display of Darcy’s pride and arrogance, Elizabeth understandably dislikes him. However, even in their first meeting Darcy is caught off guard by her eyes. If his arrogance is such that he is “the proudest, most disagreeable man in the world,” as Austen describes him, he certainly would have no qualms about holding his gaze on what he perceives to be an inferior woman (8). But he does not hold his gaze when she catches his eye; he turns away like a child caught staring at a beautiful woman. In her initial illustration of Darcy’s behavior, Austen challenges the reader to look past the pride he exudes to see the reaction of an average man. Darcy is vulnerable to beauty.
His response to Bingley only serves to protect himself—a common practice by humans who feel vulnerable. With his rude comment about Elizabeth, Darcy intentionally excuses himself from conversing with a woman who has caught him looking at her. Unfortunately for Darcy, his childish response reinforces Elizabeth’s perception of him as a prideful, arrogant man.

With her first impression of Darcy, Elizabeth fails to see a shy, immature man. Rather, she perceives Darcy’s pride to be the primary ingredient of his character. Ironically, following Elizabeth’s first meeting with Darcy, Austen foreshadows Elizabeth’s blindness. In a conversation with her sister, Elizabeth says to Jane, “With your good sense, to be so honestly blind to the follies and nonsense of others!” (10-11). Austen’s inclusion of such a speech just moments after Elizabeth disapproves of Darcy alludes to Elizabeth’s own blindness to the nonsense of others. When Darcy turns away as he catches Elizabeth’s eye and then makes a rude comment to justify ignoring her, he demonstrates the same level of nonsense Elizabeth criticizes her sister for failing to recognize. Elizabeth expects others to have the same skills of intuition as she does. However, her own intuition is poorly represented in its assessment of Darcy. The beautiful eyes that send a man’s gaze to the floor see only the prideful qualities in Darcy.

Although Elizabeth professes to have an intuition untainted by her surroundings, when she first dismisses Darcy she merely conforms to the popular assessment of him as a prideful man. Austen writes, “Mr. Darcy danced only once with Mrs. Hurst and once with Miss Bingley, declined being introduced to any other lady, and spent the rest of the evening in walking about the room, speaking occasionally to one of his own party.” After observing Darcy’s behavior Austen writes, “His character was decided” (8). Austen’s tone leaves no room for doubt. In addition, Austen assumes the personalities of the onlookers in the ballroom, including Elizabeth, when she says Darcy’s character has been decided. In doing so, she reveals Elizabeth already maintains a bias toward Darcy before he says she is not handsome enough to tempt him. Elizabeth harbors Austen’s initial assessment of Darcy. Consequently, Elizabeth fails to heed the advice she gives her sister, and proceeds to blind herself to the truth by conforming to the perception of others—or what she refers to as “the nonsense of others” (10-11).

While Elizabeth’s contempt for Darcy grows, Darcy continues to look at the woman he offended with growing affection: “no sooner had he made it clear to himself and his friends
that she had hardly a good feature in her face, than he began to find it was rendered uncommonly intelligent by the beautiful expression of her dark eyes" (16). The eyes that once turned Darcy's gaze away now hold a mysterious, dark quality that draws him in. Just like a child caught staring at something, Darcy's intrigue continues to grow after his first glance at Elizabeth. Austen continues, "To this discovery succeeded some others equally mortifying" (16). Along with Darcy's preoccupation with Elizabeth's eyes, he begins to find the rest of her form beautiful. However, his poor impression holds such a strong imprint on Elizabeth she no longer looks up to meet his eyes as she once did. "To her he was only the man who made himself agreeable no where, and who had not thought her handsome enough to dance with" (16). Darcy begins to fall in love with the dark eyes that are developing a growing contempt for him.

Elizabeth's contempt for Darcy reaches its climax when she listens to and readily believes what Wickham tells her. When Wickham relates his story about his relationship to the late Mr. Darcy, a man he claims was to provide for him following his death, Elizabeth willingly accepts his lies as the truth. With the conclusion of his story, Wickham remarks, "A man of honour could not have doubted the intention, but Mr. Darcy chose to doubt it" (54). Elizabeth's acceptance of Wickham's story is the result of the dark eyes that Darcy finds so enchanting. Because she already harbors disagreeable feelings toward Darcy, it takes little effort on Wickham's behalf to convince her of Darcy's lack of compassion. In addition, Austen allows Elizabeth's beautiful eyes to lead her astray when she first meets Wickham. Austen describes Wickham: "His appearance was greatly in his favor; he had all the best part of beauty, a fine countenance, a good figure, and very pleasing address" (49). Following Wickham's misleading account of Darcy, Elizabeth honors Wickham for "such feelings, and thought him handsomer than ever as he expressed them" (55). She becomes so immersed in Wickham's handsome features and his equal contempt for a man who offended her that she turns blind.

To emphasize how easily Elizabeth is led astray, Austen exposes Wickham before he shares his feelings about Darcy. He says, "I have no right to give my opinion as to his being agreeable or otherwise" (53). However, following such a disclaimer, Wickham jumps into his personal history with Darcy, ignoring his previous statement. The contradiction in his speech appears so obvious the reader may even fall victim to Wickham's trap. Because
Elizabeth accepts Wickham’s truth she becomes oblivious to Darcy’s advances. Overwhelmed with disgust for Darcy, Elizabeth is unable to see his affection for her. As a consequence, his marriage proposal arrives as a great surprise.

Darcy allows himself to fall so in love with Elizabeth through her enchanting eyes that he convinces himself, regardless of her feelings, that she will accept his proposal. The blind nature of his love keeps him from realizing Elizabeth’s deep-rooted contempt. The sudden expression of his feelings shows the desperation in his voice: “In vain have I struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you” (125). When he reveals his feelings he is too much infatuated with Elizabeth to remain concerned with her response. He carries out his proposal with the blind affection of a man in love. Following his proposal, Austen writes, “Elizabeth’s astonishment was beyond expression. She stared, coloured, doubted, and was silent” (125). Her surprise comes as a consequence of her own poor judgment. Had she been able to see past the lies fed to her by Wickham and the deception of her own eyes, Elizabeth’s prejudice toward Darcy would never have developed. However, just as Darcy is blinded by his love, Elizabeth’s dark eyes are blinded by the lies and prejudices of those who surround her.

Mr. Darcy falls in love with the source of Elizabeth’s prejudice, her enchanting eyes. Austen stresses the irony in Darcy falling in love with something that fails to see him in a truthful light. However, she eventually removes the veil covering Elizabeth’s eyes. In doing so, Austen introduces Elizabeth to a man who never falls out of love with her, even after she refuses his hand in marriage. Darcy never moves past Elizabeth’s beautiful eyes. However, his love for her allows him to forgive the mistake of her dark eyes. With his second proposal accepted, Darcy is given the rest of his life to find out what rests behind Elizabeth’s beautiful eyes.

Work Cited

The ways people choose to parent their children will have an effect not only on those individual children, but on society as a whole. From the tangible aspects of food, shelter and education to the more intangible elements of love and nurturing, the way a society embraces the needs of its children defines that society.

I have the privilege of being a mother to my son, Steven, and my daughter Ashley, who are soon going to be six and four, respectively. As a parent I have learned how children develop physically, emotionally, and mentally; the requirements of parenting a special-needs child; how views on child rearing change once a person actually becomes a parent; how parenting styles have changed from my parents' generation to mine; and the importance of parents balancing their time.

Physical, Emotional, and Mental Development of Children

While I was pregnant with our first child, my husband and I took the advice of a good friend of mine and found a pediatrician. On our first visit with her I confessed to knowing nothing about babies. She was very reassuring, however, and we grew to rely on her greatly to assess the progress of our children's health in general and in reaching their developmental milestones. With each milestone reached, I cautiously took a deep sigh of relief and ticked another accomplishment off the mental "to-do" list I had for each baby. In general, being attentive to children reaching their milestones is extremely important for every parent. These markers indicate whether a child is progressing within normal ranges. If a child is not reaching them, or is markedly late in reaching them, this can be a sign of developmental delay, or a myriad of other problems, which should be addressed with the child's pediatrician.

There is so much to be aware of regarding the health and development of our children that I’ve found it quite overwhelming at times. Everything from their first smile to their first steps is important and, beyond being moments parents can revel in for their own sake, they reflect whether a child is developing normally. In fact, for most of us, the concerns regarding
the physical development of our children start before the babies are even born and it is during this time that we first become aware of what it means to be a parent. For most women seeing their obstetrician once a month and undergoing numerous tests throughout their pregnancy is quite common. Good prenatal care can serve to alert parents and their physicians to potential problems with the baby. Even with these precautions, though, things can sometimes go wrong that threaten the normal health and development of children. For example, despite all the good prenatal care I had received, our first child was born with a severe bacterial blood infection which was life-threatening. He spent his first three weeks in Children’s Hospital in Oakland, California, with my husband and I at his bedside virtually around the clock. Being first time parents, we felt like we had been thrown into the ice water of parenting, and I got a crash course in neonatal intensive care. Today he is three months shy of turning six years old and if a person didn’t know his history, they would never guess what a rough start he had in this world. Since he was so sick at the beginning, however, we had to be extra vigilant in tracking his progress in every respect. This proved to be very illuminating for me as I learned how much it meant that he could say his first words, and do his first puzzle, and take his first steps at the appropriate ages. Each milestone reached meant that he was progressing normally and there had not been residual damage from his birth.

Parenting a Special-Needs Child

While my son was born quite ill, my daughter on the other hand was born without complications. As she got a little older, however, she ended up being classified as developmentally delayed. She is going to be four years old in a few weeks and is now in a class for special-needs children where she receives occupational and speech therapy. My children were both raised in the same house, by the same parents, and treated by the same pediatrician, but have physically developed quite differently. The milestones my son reached early or on time are milestones that my daughter reached at a much later point. While my son walked before his first birthday, my daughter did not walk until she was about 14 months old. She also was quite late in talking and had difficulty making certain sounds. It was a series of incidents like these that first cued us that there might be something wrong with our daughter’s development and led us to consult experts in their fields. In general, if parents notice that their children aren’t keeping up with other kids their age, or progressing similarly
to their siblings, this could be an indication that their child may have developmental problems. These concerns can then be brought to the child’s pediatrician and discussed.

Fortunately, there are resources for children with developmental delays or other special needs. After speaking with our pediatrician, we contacted the Mt. Diablo Unified School District to have our daughter assessed. After completion of the assessment by the District’s language therapist, she was deemed to be qualified to enter the preschool age early intervention program. Now that she is in the program, we are in constant communication with her instructor and therapists. They each apprise us of where she is at currently, the goals they have set for her, and what this means to her overall development. In general, parents who have children with special needs can benefit from resources such as those the School District has to offer. They can further benefit from close communication with their child’s teachers and therapists. For example, I have learned through my daughter’s therapists and teachers how closely linked each component of the human body is and why two components that seem to have little or nothing to do with each other actually do have very close associations. As an example, when our kids were babies, I remember their pediatrician telling us the importance of giving them time every day to play on the floor in order to strengthen their muscles. This was often referred to as “tummy time,” where the children were encouraged to lift their heads up and prop themselves up on their hands in order to strengthen their arms, neck and torso. The importance of this is clear to me now. Two of the issues our daughter contends with are that her fine motor skills are behind and her muscle tone is somewhat low. I recently attended a presentation put on by her occupational therapist, who explained that when children are learning how to do fine motor skills such as writing or drawing, they must possess the trunk and neck strength to hold themselves in an upright position in order to support their arms and hands to perform these tasks. Without that trunk strength especially, they are unable to hold themselves in a position appropriate to execute fine motor skills. I never would have connected the strength in a child’s torso to the ability to write or draw, but now it seems quite clear how they relate. Parents of special-needs children can learn a lot through speaking with the therapists who treat their children. Not only can they better understand why their children’s bodies are responding the way they do, but they can learn techniques to help their children at home, as well.
Through this process with our daughter, I have found wonderful resources that will give her the best chance to be mainstreamed into the same school her brother will be attending. I have learned that there are milestones for her that may be different from those of normal-range kids, but they are her milestones and she will reach them. I no longer shy away from kids who seem different because I know that they probably have parents who love them as much as we love our daughter. They also probably have had way too many instances of trying to explain to inquisitive strangers why their child can’t do something the other kids do. I have learned the art of patience and realize that long journeys are often completed in tiny steps. Parents of special-needs children often have more work cut out for them because of their child’s additional needs. They can often find support in resources such as their doctors and school districts, as well as through sharing their experiences with parents of children who have similar needs.

How Views on Child Rearing Change Once a Person Becomes a Parent

“I’ll never let my kids do that” was a phrase that came flying out of my mouth often before I was a parent myself. Another incredible pearl of wisdom was “why don’t you just get a sitter for tonight” when I wanted our friends to join us for a night out. As I look back on my naïve statements I wonder why those parents talked to me at all, because I didn’t have any idea what I was talking about. They would have been right and they would have been justified to tell me what I could do with my advice. In parenting, as in many aspects of life, it is always easier to know exactly what to do when it isn’t happening to us. For example, in the blissfully quiet and sleep-filled world of the non-parent, such issues as bedtime seem clear. The parent should just tell the child when bedtime is and that’s that. For people who do not have children it is difficult to understand that the theory of parents being the ones in charge really is often just a theory. For myself, now that I have two children who have no idea of what a bedtime is, I am also eating my words. It isn’t that we didn’t try, but somehow it just didn’t seem to take. My son is fairly good about sleeping in his own bed, but my daughter wants nothing to do with it unless mommy is there too. I have met many parents in the same predicament. Parents don’t always intend for their children to fall into habits such as this, but children are little individuals who don’t always agree with their parents’ timetables. In my case, this is primarily my own doing because I would often let our
daughter sleep with me just so I could sleep at all. I had to get up early in the morning and
 go to work after all, just like most other parents I knew. I was sure she'd get better about the
 bedtime arrangements as she got older, but I realize now that I should have been more firm
 when she was younger because she has become accustomed to this routine. It is going to be
 much harder at this point to get her to adopt a set bedtime in her own bed than it would have
 been when she was much younger.

 The bedtime lesson is but one of the many incidents of before-children thinking that
 completely go out the window once you have kids. I never realized before I had children
 how traumatic it is to leave your baby with someone so you can go to work, or even just go
 out for a date with your spouse. It all seemed so simple before kids because I didn't have
 that visceral emotional tie to children that you get once you become a parent. This is a
 universal concern for many parents. No matter who is watching our children, if it isn't us, it
 isn't as good.

 Luckily I have very good and understanding friends who good-naturedly tease me
 about my before-children views. Since the shoe is now on the other foot and I am the one
 with young children, I try to remember this too and I endeavor to be understanding of my
 childless friends and family members when they share their insights on child-rearing with
 me. I nod and smile when they compare the antics of their pets with those of my children,
 just as my friends once did with me. I try to remember what it was like to be on the outside
 looking in at the young families who seemed to have so many issues to contend with all the
 time, while I was mainly concerned with what I was going to do on Friday night. I no longer
 get impatient with parents who bring their children to restaurants because I know that the
 parents are probably thrilled that someone is waiting on them for a change and that they don't
 have to clean up the gigantic mess of Saltines that has amassed on the floor. Mainly I have
 learned tolerance and that what seems like a logical solution to a given situation means zip
 when there's a toddler involved.

 **Changes in Parenting Styles of Different Generations**

 I remember being in the grocery store one day and in line ahead of me were a mother
 and her two young children. One child was screaming bloody murder and the mother was
 doing her best to calm him down, but to no avail. All of a sudden an older woman emerged
from the crowd and, in front of God and everyone, told this woman that she ought to just spank that kid and make him shut up because that's what they would have done in her day. I recall thinking to myself that obviously that tactic worked well, because it produced such a charming and compassionate woman. But mostly I was appalled that someone would suggest smacking a child who was obviously already in distress in an attempt to make him stop crying. When I got out into the parking lot I saw the mother and told her I was sorry that she had been subjected to the other woman's abuse. As a mother of two young children myself, I could empathize with her position of unfounded embarrassment at the behavior of her child, as well as her own frustration in being unable to quiet him.

The style of parenting today is quite different from what it was when my parents were raising us. Neither that mother, nor I, nor any mother I know for that matter today, would have physically hit her child in the middle of a public place in order to make him or her be quiet, because that is not the style of parenting generally employed today. While that may have been accepted practice 20, 30, or more years ago, today's parents opt for a gentler approach. Today's parents talk to their kids, attempt to reason with them, and employ strategies such as time-outs or the revocation of privileges as opposed to corporal punishment. Today's parents don't believe that they should tell their children that hitting is wrong while simultaneously spanking them. Go figure. Most people have probably heard the expression "spare the rod, spoil the child." That was an accepted practice of parenting not too long ago. Today's parents generally feel, however, that if spanking is used as the exception rather than the rule, it will be more effective. Perhaps this is because parents today have grown up differently than our parents did. Parents of my generation have grown up with Phil Donahue, Oprah and now Dr. Phil. We have learned to talk about our feelings and our problems openly in an effort to resolve conflicts primarily through communication and understanding. In contrast, our parents grew up with the idea that what happens in a family's house stays there, a family's personal business is to remain private, and children will speak when spoken to. The influence of society, whether through media as in our case, or shared values as in our parents' case, greatly affects the way in which we parent our children.

While people in general believe today that reasoning through issues with children is preferable, I sometimes wonder if we talk to our children too much. I remember when I was young hearing from my own father the familiar mantra of "because I said so" in response to
my inquiries of why, why, why. While I was certain I would never do that to my own
children, I do on occasion find that to be a dandy little phrase. I don't always think a three or
five-year old needs an in-depth explanation of my decision, or is even capable of receiving
the complete message I am trying to give them. When I heard that phrase from my father I
knew exactly what it meant and what was expected of me. I didn't need time to try to puzzle
that one out. I also knew that Dad was the one ultimately in charge, despite what I thought in
my mind to be the family hierarchy. Comparing the styles today of reasoning with our kids
to the more dictatorial or physical styles of our parents, I think there can be a happy medium
between the two. Certainly I have found that explaining to my son why he couldn't have a
popsicle for breakfast made more sense than beating him with the popsicle. I would not
hesitate, however, to slap my child's hand if he or she was about to touch something
dangerous in order to get his or her immediate attention and make a lasting impression.
While I feel children need to be respected as individuals, I also believe in the need to
recognize that they are indeed children and not miniature grown-ups. People today expect a
lot of their children. They want them to excel and start worrying about which preschool or
kindergarten their little prodigies will get accepted into. They expect their children to be able
to cope with stresses such as heavy academic schedules and too many extracurricular
activities that they themselves never had to deal with. People forget kids need to be kids
sometimes and that parents need to be the parents. Children don't always have the capacity
to reason things out with us as today's parent might opt to do, and I have found that it is
important for children to know that their parents are the ones who are in charge. For
example, when I was a teenager I had a friend, Gloria, who actually envied the fact that my
parents were so concerned with where I was and whom I was with, even though I thought it
to be a colossal pain. "At least they care about you" is what she said to me and that has stuck
with me for 20+ years now. Without going to extremes in either today's style of parenting or
yesterday's style, I have discovered that showing a child that a parent cares is what is most
important.

Balancing Time

Dealing with mommy guilt is perhaps one of the toughest parts of parenting for me.
Living in the Bay Area is extremely expensive and it is a necessity for most families,
including ours, to have two incomes. This can leave little fun time to spend with the kids. Working outside of the home during the day means that there is usually less than an hour spent with the kids in the morning and maybe about three waking hours spent with them in the evening. During that time housework, homework, meals, baths and assorted other things all have to be squeezed in, leaving little opportunity for quality time. Ultimately though, families have to choose what is most important to them—spending time with the kids or having a perfect house. I try to choose the kids over the house as much as possible because they are only young once. Most parents will tell you that the time children are young passes very quickly, and I, personally, want to miss as little of that time as possible. This is a decision most families have to come to terms with as well. One of the ways I’ve seen parents try to spend good time with their kids is by getting involved in extracurricular activities such as sports. We have done this with our son and will be doing this with our daughter as well. Not only is this good for the kids, but it gets the whole family out of the house, away from distractions and focused on the kids. This commitment of time to them and their sport is beneficial to everyone. It allows us as parents to show our children how much we do want to be with them and how much they do mean to us when they see us on the sidelines every Saturday cheering them on. We all receive the reminder that there is more to life than going to work and taking care of a house and that we have to make time for all the important things. I’m not saying this is easy by any means. Parents are often very tired after work and the thought of going to t-ball practice isn’t always appealing. It is worth it though when you see your child growing in confidence, making new friends, and lighting up when he catches that fly ball. Making this time for our kids surely helps ease our guilt over not being able to be with them all the time, but it also reminds us how important it is to take the time while they’re young to enjoy them.

Conclusion

Being a parent is the toughest and most enjoyable job I will ever have in my life and it is the one thing I want to do incredibly well. If I were to give advice to someone who was about to become a parent for the first time, I would tell them to first and foremost find a good pediatrician because they are worth their weight in gold. The physical and mental health of a child will shape that child’s future and should be soundly protected. I would also tell them
that there is nothing better than the advice of a person who has been there before when it comes to raising children. Books are well and good, but a mother who has successfully raised four children of her own is a book of knowledge unto herself and her words should be treasured. Most importantly, however, I would say that loving our children and surrounding them with people who also love them is the greatest gift parents can give to their child. No child can have enough love and the more nurturing they get from many sources the better. Being a parent will teach you many things about yourself and life as you see yourself mirrored in your children. Patience, tolerance, the ability to learn to prioritize what is most important in your life, and what pure love is are all part of the package of being a parent.
The fall of 2003 left Southern California scorched by the state’s second most devastating fire in a century. Burning 722,000 acres of land, destroying 2,600 homes, and killing 20 people, flames from Los Angeles to San Bernadino and San Diego sounded the sirens for help ("Southern"). Unfortunately, the help that has come—the Government’s plan to prevent fires—may be leading to a string of even more problems. This ill-researched bill not only ignores the crux of the crisis, but may actually *increase* the possibility of more life-threatening disasters.

This fire-prevention bill has become known as the "Healthy Forest Act." Its strategy, as President Bush describes it, saves lives and homes through thinning potential fire-prone areas ("Bush eases"). Specifically, the bill would "triple logging and allow the cutting of larger trees" in several California National Forests (Thompson). Not only people would benefit, proclaims Forest Service spokesman Matt Mathes, but trees: "we’re trying to protect the giant sequoia trees from fire” (Thompson).

The Healthy Forest Act has some good points. As Bush notes, tripling logging will help the economy ("Bush eases"). The removal of dead trees in some states, such as Arizona, and the clearing of overgrown trees around aquifers makes a safer, cleaner environment for people, not to mention that the Healthy Forest Act is intended to protect property and lives (Boatman). There is no wonder why Bush calls this bill "common sense" ("Bush eases"). Even better "common sense," however, would have been to conduct some research on the subject before signing the bill and exposing the incompetence of the Forest Service and government researchers to the nation. As it appears, Bush has not taken into consideration the immediate side effects of tripling logging, such as erosion.

It is simple to understand how felling Sierra trees creates erosion. According to the American Lands website, the root systems of some Sierra conifers—sequoia, for example—can run across an entire forest, connecting each individual tree. Even the removal of a few of the larger trees can result in a small domino effect that would unearth a landslide by their roots. The more ubiquitous roots of firs and pines—counting for 99.8 per cent of the mountain forests—are what keep the mountainsides and hills in place (Storer and Usinger...
If the trees were thinned to a percent where they would not let fire catch from neighbor to neighbor, seventy-five per cent of the trees would be gone and acres of dirt and rock would come falling apart and rolling, first into Los Angeles water supplies and various Mountain water sources including Lake Tahoe, and eventually silting into the central valley and the ocean. At the same time, landslides and mudslides would be creating a hazard for homes and, indeed, lives in the foothills and central valley (American Lands).

Fortunately, the United States government will never be able to pull off such a grand project. No seventy-five percent logging will occur. Instead, Congress has only mandated "one-seventh of a percent logging" (American Lands). While this will have less drastic (but present) erosion problems, it hardly takes any steps towards the prevention of fires. To understand why, one must do a little research on the biology of coniferous forests.

Tough pine and fir needles with their waxy coverings are flammable not by an accident, but by an adaptation of the trees. These forests actually "want to burn." Forest Service spokesperson Mathes may be interested to know that his beloved giant sequoias have been marked for protection partly because they are fire-dependent. Sequoias and most Sierra conifers rely on periodic burns to kill their bark parasites, remove dead branches, and germinate their seeds (Schoenherr 119). In other words, millions of years have been invested into making sure that the trees will burn at any opportunity. Two trees can be up to thirty feet away from each other, but as long as there are dead needles lying between them, fire will spread from one to the other, if not by following the flammable waxes, by wind (Cunningham and Saigo). Meanwhile the higher percentages of UV light streaming in on a newly-thinned forest may kill patches on the remaining trees, adding to the volatility of those fire-prone giants (American Lands).

If one thing can be said for the work of the Healthy Forest Act researchers, it is this: at least they know that those forests burn. Had they gone an extra centimeter, however, they would have made another discovery: forests burn even after they are burned. Even if the trees are to be successfully removed without erosion problems, fire-inducing plants would be back to haunt the landscape. When a fire or thinning occurs, the first vegetative type to re-establish itself on the little barren patches is a brush called chaparral (Schoenherr 120; Barbour and Major 427).
Chaparral is even more potent than the coniferous forests, being one of the five most fire-inducing vegetative types in the world (Dallman 70). If the researchers were to probe just one millimeter more into their subject, they would find this chaparral to be the real culprit of the California fall fires. Not remotely connected to the fiery Sierra forests, the Southern California fires are a direct result of the flammable allelopathic toxins (a waxy substance shrubs use to kill the seedlings and new growth of competing plants) that coat chaparral shrubs. According to Barbour and Major, these flammable toxins build up as old shrubs die or get larger, and will inevitably spark the fire that will prune back old shrubs (most shrubs will actually survive the fire), clean out the dead wood, and germinate new seeds through heat. These fires typically occur once or twice a century (Barbour and Major 432).

Keeping this in mind, one should know that chaparral is the most common vegetative type in the state, abundant from Santa Barbara to San Diego and dominating the United States’ largest National Forest in the mountains surrounding Los Angeles (Dallman 63). If the government is really worried about property devastation, it should be paying closer attention to these areas with higher development and more potential risk.

Interestingly, the government did make a note of removing the chaparral in an earlier draft, but after negotiating with logging companies, the bill was amended to exclude it (Thompson). Perhaps Bush is a little daunted by the magnificent task of taming so potent and widespread a region. There is no excuse, however, why he should not have at least considered the few ways to null the effects of chaparral fire on housing communities before signing the Healthy Forest bill.

For keeping fires at bay, the number one way to “tame” chaparral is through prescribed burnings. If monitored burnings take place in early fall, fire will remove the highly volatile dead underbrush without killing the plants, while the moister climate makes the spread of fires easier to control. It is important to keep the shrubs alive since their taproots are what hold up the hills and mountainsides that would otherwise be tumbling down on Santa Barbara, San Diego, and Los Angeles (Major and Barbour 455).

If lives and homes are to be saved, the safest method stated by the Firewise Communities Council says that brush should be cleared no less than 100 yards from one’s property. In this way, it would take longer for fires to reach homes and give people a better chance of escaping (McBrian).
The government has clearly taken an interest in the well-being of its citizens, but when property and lives are on the line, rescue plans should be carried out with as much precaution as time will allow. In the case of the California fires, I hope that the Bush Administration will have the perception to rethink their rashier plans and re-create a Healthy Forest Plan that is truly healthy for the forests and people alike.

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