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[North Avenue Review](#)

A Georgia Tech Publication.

# Letter in Response

## to Shira Kapplin's Article on Women and Obstetrics

by [Gregory Lybanon](#)

*(The original article appears in our [Winter 1995](#) issue)*

In response to "Women and Obstetrics..."

First of all, I think you should look at the problem within the proper context. The time period, the 19th century, is the biggest problem. If you have not, you should read a book by Helen Longino called "Science as a social knowledge." In this book, she shows that science is not a purely objective field, but it is subject to contemporary trends, philosophies, etc. During that particular time in history, there was a lot of research on measuring intelligence. Many of the doctors who were doing the research had already decided that all other races were inferior to caucasians and that "women are just as stupid as blacks or children." They organized data so that they could prove their hypotheses and dismissed others who contradicted them by saying that the other had already made up his mind about the situation and was just fitting the data for his own purpose. If you want to know more about this, read Stephen Jay Gould's "The mismeasure of man."

Point one: cultural bias affects scientific reasoning.

Secondly, these doctors who believed in the inferiority of women had no idea that women's bodies were much different than men's. I see that you are a STC major and have probably already read about some of the incredibly stupid things that male doctors said about women (periods were a disease, a woman's menstrual cycle assures that she cannot reason and is no better at controlling her emotions than an animal, etc.). Anyway, this period began the first quasi-scientific (I say quasi because through history, medicine has been the least scientific of all fields of human knowledge. You would think that since health is so important people would have done a better job of finding safe, effective treatments and cures.) study of women's bodies. Of course they made mistakes. It's inevitable in a new field. They had to learn not just in what ways a woman's body is different from a man, but how a woman's body works. It takes experimentation and a lot of data. The only reason we know what radiation does to the human body or how much it can take is because we dropped two bombs on Japan. That and a few minor accidents supplied necessary, but unfortunately gained, data.

Finally, I'd like to show you the fruits of their labor. Of course more is known now about women because there are women doing the research. There is one point I'd like to make about these evil, unfeeling bastard who "raped" women's bodies in the name of science. If you look at how the average life expectancy of women and men have changed over the years, you will see something interesting.

Men used to live considerably longer than women, but in the late 19th century women began to catch up, and in the early 20th century, women surpassed men in life expectancy (although the numbers are getting closer now because more women smoke). The major reason for this change is that women now are (well I should say it happens rarely) not dying during child birth. Why? Because child birth now takes place under supervision of a doctor who can step in and attempt to save both mother and child, using all of the tools of modern technology. That is something that you cannot get from a midwife. It is a shame though that doctors insist on using the tables which they do. There are better positions for a woman to be when she is in labor than on her back with her feet in the air. Maybe procedure will change someday.

There is one thing which I would like to ask you. In your paper you kept saying that men wanted "control." That is a word I've heard many women, both hard line feminists and others, use about men. Where did this come from. Can you point me to any literature, studies, or anything that will show me how much of a control freak I am. So far, I haven't been able to see it myself. I'm wondering if it's just an excuse, a way for women to point the finger at men one more time, to blame them for all of women's problems.

## **[Gregory's second letter]**

I left out a few points which you might want to consider in your analysis.

Somewhere in the middle of the 19th century Darwin proposed his theory of evolution and natural selection. Now, racism became easier to justify. Since we didn't all come from Adam and Eve, caucasians could have evolved from a better set of monkeys. Women didn't come from a spare rib, but social darwinism did as much as it could to keep women down.

Perhaps if we go to the root of the problem, see where it all started, we could understand who is to blame. Women became suppressed with the beginnings of the "sky cults." It is clearly a Judeo-Christian idea that women are inferior. For thousands of years people have been trying to escape the manacles of those doctrines. The belief in God almighty has really slowed human intellectual and social progress. Perhaps in a future time when the church doesn't have so much control over the minds, the ethics and values of people, when a former president will not get away with saying, "America is a christian nation," everyone will receive their proper respect. (are you Jewish? Your name sounds Jewish.)

Humankind's original sin is the lopsided dominance of reason over intuition.

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# Letter to the Editor

## Response to Gavin's Article on GenX

by [Sam Leininger](#)

*(the original article can be found in our [fall 1994](#) issue)*

Dear NAR guys,

I just read the new issue and I have a BIG-ASS bone to pick. Gavin Guhxe's article, "The Whole Hoopfla (sic) of Generation X and who it really affects," is totally misleading and apocryphal. Let me start off by saying that I'm not quite sure of the validity of "Generation X" myself, but since it has been labeled, I take pride in perverting that label whenever possible.

That being said, it is painfully obvious that Gavin's concept of Generation X is *\*not\** the right concept, as perceived by (as he puts it) "the common mainstream." I suggest that he pick up Douglas Coupland's book "Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture," which is where the "the common mainstream assumption" comes from. Gavin's impression (which he takes to be "the common mainstream assumption") is that Gen X is "a bunch of crybaby slackers who love pop star icons ... will buy anything and whose parents are predominantly divorced." Well, according to Coupland's book (which is the actual "common mainstream assumption"), members of Generation X are *\*not\** "spoiled ... predominantly middle-class or higher ...[or] have plenty of time and money." Instead, the typical Gen-Xer is a smart, over-educated, under-paid "poverty jet-setter" (the last meaning they move around a lot despite the lack of money) who has become fed up with the yuppie ideals forced upon them by the successful Baby Boomers (another generation). These individuals spend a lot of time searching for what is right in their life, and a subculture of Gen-Xers have indeed become "slackers" (BTW -- other subcultures of Gen-X include "black holers" and "squires"). Gavin also argues that only when "the money becomes tighter" do kids jump out of their "Gen-X" lifestyles. Well, for Coupland's (and "common mainstream assumption") Gen-Xers, money is always tight, due to the "McJobs" they have, and the money is not a part of their philosophy -- it is exactly the dreams of money for money's sake that they are trying to fight. Gavin, at one point, uses freshmen as an example of Gen-Xers (I assume), saying that some try "to have one big party and deny reality." And the ones that do this are desperately holding on to their Gen-X roots. He then goes on to say that other Gen-X freshman "get their act together," which means leaving their Gen-X roots behind them. He also states that these kids abandoning Gavin's vision of their Gen-X ideas "conform to what society wants." Well, in a very circular paragraph, Gavin has made my argument for me.

Gavin is not the voice of the "common mainstream assumption" that he thinks he is, which makes me wonder if his arguments have any validity at all. In any case, he goes on to say that he believes that "The Generation X generation (slight sic) is the one that could come," and that most of his idea of Gen-Xers

are "predominantly teenagers." I would argue that fact, citing the above paragraph and Gavin's misconception of Generation X (where all the problems really lie), saying that only a select few teenagers have the ideals and moral structure of "the common mainstream assumption" of Generation X. He also hypothesises that "Generation X characteristics might only be manifested in the punk/alternative/grunge social circles." I totally disagree, and will expound on this later. Let me get back to what I was saying... the bold assumption that "as of right now, there is no Generation X" only goes to show the lack of history. Billy Idol was the frontman for a band called Generation X in 1977. As a matter of fact, the commonly agreed upon starting date for Generation X is anyone born after 1961. Well, if you do the math, that means there are Gen-Xers now in their thirties.

Which leads me away from the article and more towards my own problems with Generation X. What the Baby Boomers have tried to do is label a certain type of lifestyle "Generation X." Problem being, "generation" refers to a time period, not a way of thinking. Which means to say that Tupac Shakur and Douglas Coupland are both members of Generation X, and thus have similar lifestyles and beliefs. See where the problem lies? But since we, as an age group, have been labeled, there will be no getting rid of it (especially because those god-awful fuckers, the Baby Boomers, who are really in control of this country, are the ones that stuck it on us). The problem with labels is that they are a way to categorize someone's thoughts and actions so that it is easier to control them. Gavin tried to touch on this in his article. Near the beginning of this, I said that I take great pride in perverting the Generation X label whenever possible. I feel that labels are so controlling that the only way to deal with them is to embrace them. Take for example (and don't scream racist) the word "nigger." When the slavemasters first used it, and when certain folks with red necks use it today, we all know what it means, but the black culture \*has\* embraced the word, and it can be meant as a term of endearment. Check out "Sucka Nigga" by A Tribe Called Quest for this exact argument. Anyway, this is exactly what needs to be done with the Generation X label, and is in many ways. Especially at a place like Tech, there are plenty of Gen-Xers that still have those Boomer dreams of a Saab, a big house, and imported beer. This duality, of Gen-X and the Boomers, is what we need to dilute the Generation X control that those stuffy guys in suits have over us. But more on that in the next paragraph...

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On Generation X and pop culture...

My above rant on labeling, however, does not seem to be doing any good because the Generation X stereotype is becoming popular in today's society. It's making money for those in control, and it's delegating a state of hip-ness (and thus controlling the Gen-Xers that it is forming). Take a look at films -- "Reality Bites," "Singles," "Natural Born Killers," and "S.F.W." come quickly to my mind. While not saying a thing about the quality of these films, they were all marketed towards a younger audience, one fresh for molding. The emergence of coffee shops and pseudo-intellectuality as signs of status and coolness only further shape (or narrow, if you will) the Generation X culture, and lots of kids who don't even like coffee now frequent these hang-outs, and are falling into the deadly trap.

On pop culture II.....

At the same time, pop culture is something that is so broad and \*could\* be wonderful for Gen-Xers to

use against the people trying to define them. Gavin mentions punk rock, pop icons, and Kurt Cobain, as defining elements of Generation X. He is doing more to catalyze the above problems by slipping such a narrow scope of pop culture into an article that is supposed to be anti-Gen X (see how it works -- people read the article, say "yeah, I'm not a Gen-Xer," and then listen to Nirvana and do other Gen-X type things without even knowing it). You see, the Energizer Bunny is as valid as Kurt Cobain as a pop icon. Responsible Gen-Xers that don't want to be classified need to realize that a lot of what was "marginal" (like punk rock, for example) has become the signifiers of the Boomers' perception of Generation X. To really fuck them up, start listening to Elmore James at the local "alternative" club (that would be something \*alternative\* for you, but don't get me started on that whole notion of "alternative"). Or better yet, take everything new and decidedly "Gen-X" (time period-wise, not stereotype-wise) and glorify it. Mention Jodeci, Harry Connick, Jr., and the Queers in the same sentence. Don't limit yourself and fall into routine like they want you to.

Along the same lines as embracing pop culture, embrace people of all different styles and tastes into your parties, into your lives, into your "generation." If we can do this, and only if we can do this, will Generation X be representative.

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Back to Gavin's article, where I accept the notion of the "common mainstream assumption" of Generation X, which I was trying to dispell in the above paragraphs, separated with stars. His article, based on his misconceptions, is misleading and only fosters the lifestyle that the Boomers want Generation X members to live. I mentioned this briefly before. The last sentence, "As of right now, there is no Generation X in my opinion, just a bunch of teens who are spoiled," does so much damage because it tends to subdue the obvious control that others are trying to put on people as they enter their twenties and make life decisions supposedly on their own. I feel bad for Gavin, because I don't think he meant to help out the classification and trivialization of his own beliefs, but that is what his article has done. It has tried to convey an attitude that Gen X is not alive, but you cannot negate the fact that the Gen X label exists. Therefore (with the assumption that Gen X does not exist), when people get dictated to them what is cool and hip, it is actually these stereotypical Gen X characteristics that they fall in love with. Not to say that the ideals and beliefs of a stereotypical Gen-Xer are invalid, I actually agree with a lot of it (I'm talking of Coupland's and the "mainstream common assumption," not Gavin's assumptions), but the stereotype is too limiting, and Gavin's article tries (I think) to get people mad at his view of Generation X, and in the process they become more like the stereotype than before.

Please do not take this as a personal assault on Gavin, and PLEASE think about the things I have said.

Forgive me if this was hard to follow in places :)

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# The Romantic Slacker

by [Kiefer](#)

Generation X: Those young people unfortunate enough to come of age at such an awful time in history such as today. Slacker: A member of the above Generation who has decided to eschew all that the system stands for. We can most likely all agree that these are close to the common definitions for these terms created by the media. And yet, these definitions imply a defiant purpose behind the now-famous arrogant, detached attitude. Is this implication justifiable? Why is the notion of Gen X so persistent? Possibly because this concept of Generation X is, for many a pathetic youth, a saving grace. The romantic mystique of the slacker is the crutch on which many a wasted life relies on.

Think for a minute: What is your image of the typical slacker? Most people see an intelligent, wise beyond his years sage, who has come to disdain all that the system stands for, and therefore lives outside of it. And a good percentage of you are likely flickering between the images presented in *Reality Bites* or whatever your favorite Christian Slater movie happens to be. But when you get past the Hollywood screen, who are the real majority of the people who call themselves Gen X? Am I the only one who sees masses of the great unwashed, those who graduate High School, even college, while unable to read a simple bus schedule, much less a decent job application; the only one who sees a group of losers unable to fit into the society around them? I'm sure these misfits love to be able to perceive themselves as examples of the romantic slacker, martyrs better than the system, but I am unable to allow them to indulge in that deception.

Sorry, but placing most of these people into a mold of defiant rebel is bullshit. What they are are pathetic wastes of humanity. It isn't that they can't find any use for the system, it's that the system has no use for them. Sure, we would all like to think that we are better than everyone else, that everyone around us has sold out while we stayed true to our beliefs, but many of these losers didn't opt not to sell out, they were never offered a chance. There's a big difference between not working 9 to 5 because you have a higher purpose, and not working because no company wants you. I know that there are some people who actually do believe that the system must be changed and then go on to either escape the system or attempt to change it. Unfortunately, these people are the exception. Most of those who wish to put themselves in the role of wise man just drift around in the jetsam of society, allowing it to exploit them. And then they delude themselves into thinking that they are better than the system that they just let use them.

No matter how much history gets rewritten, you will never be able to find a responsible text book claim that any great revolution was started by slack. Apathy never provokes change. It entices domination. The powerful will attack the weak. By deciding not to use the system, you are guaranteeing that the system uses you. We don't feel sorry for the mess you have turned your life into. We don't care if you've declared yourself a conscientious objector to the exploitation of the common man. We don't care what



grandiose plans lie in your mind. Either get off of the sofa and do something about it, or shut up. Don't try to make us believe that you're living in your MTV world for a higher purpose. And while you're at it, don't forget for a second that MTV is only pretending to find justification for your "life"style because there's profit in it for them. Kurt Loder is laughing his ass off at you all the way to the bank. Hell, even Puck is getting a good giggle.

Don't let me make any decisions for you. If you want to admire some lazy dumbass who's unable to use his college degree to find a good job, if you aspire to join her in her parents' basement reminiscing about your favorite episode of "Diff'rent Strokes", if you yearn for the excitement of flitting through life going from burger flipper to mall cashier, so be it. But don't expect me to find beauty, truth or moral superiority in your lifestyle. And don't expect me to feel any sympathy for you because you think that corrupt society screwed you over. You're just a pretentious little fuck who couldn't cut it in the real world.

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# Ghost Dance of the White Guys

*by Bill Boomer*

Some Pacific Island cultures reacted interestingly to a sudden and extraordinary influx of wealth during WWII, when the Great Industrial Nations arrived, bringing with them the appurtenances of their Great Industrial War. Not completely content with the trickling down of that wealth (although even GI trash was something strange and wonderful), and especially disappointed when the soldiers left and the trickle stopped, some of the people sought to explain why the gods had failed to send more of that wealth directly to them. They also suggested a way to correct the problem. Thus the Cargo Cults were born.

For some of the Cults, the airstrip was a key concept. After all, the GI's built airstrips and then huge airplanes full of goods came. Clearly, the soldiers' airstrips had decoyed the airplanes that carried the gods' gifts. The folk had only to build their own to rectify the situation. Yes, if you build it, they will come. I may never forget this image, seen in a PBS documentary years ago: a model-like airstrip, maybe forty feet long and ten feet wide, built of wood, and set up so that it juts over a cliff-edge high on a mountain. There is a man there holding a spear. He gazes at the sky.

What is fascinating about the Cargo Cults is not that they demonstrate the strangeness, charm, or savage ignorance of the islanders, but that they foreshadow our own reaction to the withdrawal of the wealth generated by the Great Industrial Wars now that they have finally ended -- now that the ravaged industrial nations (Japan, Germany for ex.) no longer need to buy a swollen stream of capital goods from the U.S. What has been our reaction? A general sense of anxiety, an unspoken fear that those days will not return -- that only a lucky few (and fewer every year) will be able to feed off the top of our new servant economy. Thus the Cult impulse rises up in us. We tell ourselves that the great (I'm not being ironic) bourgeois values of hardwork, saving, delayed gratification (i.e.: the Contract) will bring those days back again. Or we tell ourselves that subsidized health-care and mass vocational training (yes, laptops for everybody!) will do the trick (New Covenant).

But the Contract and the Covenant both seem cultic. They appear to be forms of magical thinking -- a belief that if we simply reproduce the attitude that was appropriate to early and industrial capitalism (Contract) or to our post-WWarII heyday (Covenant), then, presto!, that state of mind will cause that economic reality to return. That's Cargo Cultish. It is like the Native American Ghost Dance which aimed magically to bring back the buffalo. Only now it is the Ghost Dance of the White Guys.

In this context the Slacker takes his/her place. The Slacker is someone who apparently doesn't believe in the magic. An infidel, a heretic. The person at the seance whose dubious vibes help explain the medium's failure to connect with the spirit world: who does not hear in her/his heart the last echoes of the big 'planes and vast herds and exclaim "Ah, yes! I feel it now. Soon they will come again. I need only have faith, and perform the ritual!" And that Slack refusal to have faith -- that ironic gaze directed

at the desperate believers -- baffles and enrages the believers. For they know (after all, when they were young they tried it too) that irony alone is no solution.

What is the solution? I suspect it would have to be something difficult -something radical and strange. Perhaps we need to keep on dancing, but learn to dance only for the sake of the dance itself, knowing that the dance will not magically make the world conform to our impossible desires -- to be forever wealthy, say, or never to die. Could we do that?

Maybe at some all-night rave Generation X will see Shiva beating his drum and lighting the way along the eightfold path.

Maybe it will only be the second coming of Maynard G. Krebs.

Either way, the buffalo ain't coming back.

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# Words Without Feelings

by [Kiefer](#)

Love, lust, like, *love*. When do our feelings pass from one of these levels to another? Where do we all stand now? Are we able to commit? Simply put, in the words of The KLF, words that we have all asked ourselves, "What the fuck is going on?"

It seems as if we all find it hard to clearly express our feelings for one another. Just as the Eskimos have hundreds of different words for snow, we have just as many for our meaningful relationships. We play around with "like"s, "love"s and "care for"s in vain attempts to claim control over our emotions. But in reality, we're just grasping at thin air. We go around pretending that we have a handle on what we feel, giving it a name, but the fact that these terms don't clearly convey anything to others betrays the fact that we are all just bluffing.

I mean, has anyone (stand-up comedians excluded) ever figured out what the difference between being in like with someone, and being in love with someone, is. Or how to differentiate between a date, and a date date? How many times have you been able to stay friends afterwards? Obviously, these phrases are sometimes used to spare feelings, but all too often, they are used to hide them.

We hide behind these empty phrases in attempts to protect ourselves from rejection by others. Let's face it, none of us wants to be the first to say "I love you" only to get back "And I like you" (even "Ditto" would be better than that). The problem is if neither one of us is willing to make the first step, we'll never get anywhere. We realize this, and thus enter the mind games.

Before I get too far up on my soapbox, let me make a confession. I too have been guilty of the mind game. For anyone who is unclear of what the game is, a quick explanation. The game is usually played between two people who are currently "friends", or at least friendly, one of which has grander designs for the relationship. This is the time where the aforementioned playing with semantics enters the picture. Then, the person who wishes for more starts trying to telepathically let the other know his or her true feelings, hoping to get a favorable response, before words are dared spoken. Unfortunately, most people aren't all that proficient with telepathic powers (including Uri Geller). Thus we let what could be a potentially great future slip away, because we are afraid we will get hurt, afraid that we will ruin the good present.

It would be really easy right now to tell you that I can now let you avoid these games by giving you my "definitive" list of definitions for emotions. Real easy. The problem is that I would be bull-shitting you. I don't really have any more of a clue than you do. But I do plan on figuring out the answers to what should be the easiest questions the world: who am I, who is he, who is she, who are we? (And no, the answer is most likely not "We Are DEVO")

It looks like the only way out of this mess is through that rarely used skill: communication. True communication. You might think it absurd that I am saying that communication is dead in today's world of the super-media highway, but that's my point exactly. Most of what passes for communication these days is really just a series of soliloquies. You turn on the radio, and passively absorb another's ideas; you turn on your computer and send an e-mail message, in effect holding half a conversation; even when we do talk face-to-face, how much time do you spend listening to the other person, and how much time do you spend thinking of what you're going to say next? The communication that is going to help us out is a totally honest exchange of feelings, truly listening to what the other side is saying, *and not saying*. We need to look into that enigmatic smile, that shit-eating grin, that self-deprecating smirk. We need to listen again.

Maybe we should all meet up next week at the Ferst Theater, and work this out together. We could all where name tags and have sign up sheets for the people we want to have relationships with, indicating the intensity of our emotions. Two people sign up on each other's lists, and a neutral arbiter negotiates the result. No hard feelings, no trepidation, no anger, no shed tears. Well get past all the awkward moments and get on with the rest of our lives. I'm game, are you?

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# The Desert

*by Chad Karr*

Black wings glide, shifting as the wind passes through. They slowly cease upon landing. Necks invade and search the prone eroded cadaver. Twisted and ill-conceived, green velvet flies gather and their antennae slide smoothly, tasting their soon to be devoured entree. Within a fine second the notion of symbiosis intrudes as the black-winged fiends approach. Their tearing, pulling, and tugging emphatically contrast the gentle manner of the feces enamored friends as they brutally slaughter the last remains of bone and marrow.

The desert wind tastes dry and the fierce wind rains sweat from my tired pores; I gather weathered limbs for the evening fire aside the lost soul of an undiscernable creature. Oxygen feeds the flame as subtle hues of blue coalesce the thick orange rings praising the endless mire of darkness.

"Out of all the places we could have chosen to stop, build a fire and eat our evening meal, you choose the spot right next to the road kill. We have got to get you some help, man."

"Yeah, okay. This will be fine. What time do you think the others will arrive?"

"Hey; chill out. And put that gun away! It's not time yet." "Okay, okay. I just wanted to hold it again. "

"You are a fucking psychopath."

"I know man, I know." He grins a deep and devious grin. I've been sniffing brake fluid all day to keep me from chickening out of this and to conserve my only bottle of gin. At this point we have a fire, a piece of rotting meat, and my companion is flirting with his mortality, so I guess it is about time to break open the bottle. Sting-dry-burn shuffles down my throat with heavy steps, reminding me that I am alive. I take another gulp and try to forget. This guy that I am with spins the .38 around his finger like a child's toy. He has absolutely no concept of what it will do by the end of this evening. Someone will die; dead; what a concept. All of us are immortal. Twenty-somethings with no concept of life or death. We roll ourselves into a solid ball of work or school related stress and feed on it while calling it life. It is not, however, life. It is what the rednecks like Junior Biggs in Texas, the man who pushed the nigger off the roof, call life. They live to drink at night, go to work in the day, and drink again at night. All of the other roofers said the black man fell.

"What time is it? Why haven't they arrived yet? Do you think they will be able to find this place? It doesn't seem too difficult; I specifically told them we'd be at the point directly adjacent to Old Charlie's farmhouse. Hey! What the hell is a farmhouse doing in the middle of the desert?"

Nevertheless, it seems like a perfect place. I squat next to the heat as my companion drifts curiously away to the abandoned shack, now decayed from fierce desert winds. The fire illuminates the carcass as I write...

Distorted limbs all twisted  
All tangled  
Lie silent and covered  
Mangled  
Devoured by its prey  
Extinct...

"Shut the fuck up!" How can anyone in his right mind think under such circumstances. "I simply do not understand you." The unfinished poem, once etched into the soil, with a swift kick becomes non-existent. As I start to approach the wild noise of metal gadgets bursting in the shack, two dim headlights shine precariously as they crawl closer. The brightness increases as does the definition of the mechanical growl. Brake squeal, bright light ceases as fire sharpens, and the once questioned companions arrive. They jump out of the car with fire eyes and death hands; so, so, so unaware of what they were really doing. They become the anti-prophets of the new generation; seeing nothing, telling nothing. They reel and spin with the flow of Budweiser in their veins. They smoke Camel Lights with impunity and call to the great sportsman underground begging them to windsprint for dollars. They are the demon's first round draft picks. "Where's that pistol?" "The gun, man, the gun!" "Lemme hold onto that fucker!" They squeeze the trigger in their minds and out come rubber bullets bouncing from their frail skulls like so many under-inflated footballs thrown by beer-swilling comrades. Like I said, they have no idea. They are like the good little vegan-girl, moral in consumption but less so in creation; she plays the whore for a hit of acid.

The seventh chinese brother comes running from the barn swallowing the desert as if it were a salty-dry martini. The cheesy lounge-tunes coming from the car speakers follows naturally; Wayne Newton is a cordial background for the activities to ensue. Swinging the pistol deftly as always, he comes arunning to our sides and slithers into the neat circle, tossing the gun to the center for the bravest to grasp first. The barrel stares at me, mocking and vitriol; it points accusingly. The silver-casted death device boldly forecasts the image of the flame flickering softly and gently around the curve of the barrel unto the cylinder, where pointed pin-shaped savages lie awaiting emancipation. It is the executioner who, straight-laced and rigid, sharpens his teeth. Silence calls from the previous sound of rapid fire, picking off rats scurrying in the barn looking for rotting victuals to suspend death for yet another day. Silence calls from the deep lavish fury of the evening, from the moulded, decrepit carcass sunken in the sand, from the decadent eyes which pierce beyond the object of dominance, from once written scripture, and lastly from the souls which once existed, from the souls which presently exist, and from the souls that will continue to endure. I hear the brimstone preacher ranting damnation. "Thou shalt not allow thine own body to be consumed by flame. Thou shalt not allow thine own soul to exist in a state of decay." I hear him speak conflict of salvation and sin, of red-death and redemption. I think about the bullet piercing the fortress I have spent these twenty years building. It is yet another addition. A core; moulded of lead with a steel coat to prevent distortion. I take it in and form the details of death about it. I form a new life with the hot-

high-melt leaden shrapnel I dive for the gun, grasp it in hand, and belly scraping the grit desert floor aim in through the bottom of my chin and the peak of my skull. It punctures and looses a wellspring of sanguine emotion. He forgot to unload all but one. The first was bound to die. The grey wool dark-cloaked man before the tombstone read the epitaph engraved: "He died as he lived, seeking answers." Others, dressed in blackened uniforms, attempt to stand humbly, but in essence are fighting an inner urge to repeat the horrific action. The body, much like that of the rotten carcass, sits stagnant awaiting inevitable decay. Faces turn as the wooden sculpted rectangle lowers beneath and I hear the voices of those I know become faint as the distance between us, no different than it ever was, is only a grain of sand...

For that which befalleth the sons of men  
Befalleth beasts;  
Even one thing befalleth them:  
As the one dieth,  
So dieth the other;  
Yea, they all have one breath;  
So that a man hath no preeminence above a beast;  
For all is vanity.  
All go unto one place;  
All are of the dust,  
And all turn to dust again.

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# Thank You, Please Drive Through

by [Kiefer](#)

"Do you want fries with that?" he asked,  
Waiting for my answer.  
Fries with what? It doesn't matter  
A cheeseburger, McNuggets,  
A nuclear bomb,  
The menu is mine to choose from.

"Do you want fries with that?" it blared,  
As I flipped past another channel.  
Sit-Com, Superbowl, MTV,  
PBS and porno.  
57 channels, and everything on;  
Except for maybe me.

"Do you want fries with that?" it read,  
From 15-point type on the page.  
Tri-colored maps, Parade Magazine,  
Ann Landers, The Vent,  
And buried on page 27, maybe even the news.

"Do you want fries with that?" she questioned,  
From the front of the lecture hall.  
Pass/fail options, grade inflation,  
Optional work, optional thought.  
A new "course" is offered;  
A real one is gone.

"Do you want fries with that?" he campaigned,  
From the conventional hall to the poles.  
A cut-and-paste campaign,  
With the only real issues  
Being haircuts and ties,  
And maybe Hawley-Smoot.

"Do you want fries with that?" I wonder,  
As I vacantly walk through my life.

Pandering to desire,  
Thinking of now,  
Waiting till later,  
Taking it sooner,  
Blaming the former,  
Suing the latter,  
Killing the present,  
Denying the past.  
Reach for the ketchup.

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