

THE OBERLIN REVIEW

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“Shift” in Power Shift Remains to Be Seen

The regional Power Shift summit held at Oberlin High School this past weekend was envisioned as a jumping-off point for activism throughout Ohio — but it remains to be seen what concrete actions students will take as a result.

During Power Shift panels on Saturday, speakers stressed that mountaintop removal is impoverishing communities and poisoning the public water supply; biofuel, geo-engineering, landfill gas, nuclear energy and carbon sequestration will never solve our problems; and there is more cancer than you can shake a stick at” in Meigs County as a result of the absurd number of coal plants in the area. So what can we do to solve these problems?

Time was set aside in the program for issue-based and region-based workshops to convene and discuss future steps that we, as students, can take to address the issues we learned about during the day. However, when the workshop leaders summarized their future steps, it seemed that the most they had decided on was to create Facebook groups for networking purposes. What’s going to come out of these groups? A few invitations to protests that most group members will be unable to attend, since they are dispersed throughout Ohio?

Granted, Power Shift organizers are making a valiant effort to sustain (no pun intended) the possibility of action. Plans for five campaign groups with “specific long-term and short-term goals,” according to one organizer, are in the works. Again, however, the possibility remains for real action to fall through the cracks of the green movement’s high-flown rhetoric, and organizers ought to keep this danger in mind as they move forward.

Power Shift also staged a rally on Sunday. Yet, we must question the actual impact of such rallies — particularly when the rally occurs on Oberlin’s campus. Oberlin students are either well-informed or apathetic, and the student body can hardly enact its own environmentally-friendly legislation. We already know the merits of moving away from coal. Rallies may garner excitement among those involved, but rally participants must not let demonstrations be the culmination of their enthusiastic efforts.

Additionally, the Power Shift summit has inspired plans for a number of anti-coal sleep-outs. The first will consist of Oberlin students in Wilder Bowl; the second will be a regional sleep-out in the Adam Joseph Lewis Center for Environmental Studies and the third will be in Columbus, OH, in front of the Statehouse, prior to the Copenhagen summit. Though sleep-outs make a visual statement, how much of an impact will students in sleeping bags truly have on the decisions of diplomats in Europe?

Some positive change did come out of Power Shift — largely, progress was made as a result of interaction with Ohio’s political leaders. After hearing Elisa Young speak about the terrible plight of Meigs County, Elizabeth Kneinich sent a text message to her husband, Dennis, asking him if he could get together a committee to help the coal-plagued region. Lieutenant Governor Lee Fisher spoke with an Ohio student who lives in Meigs County and made arrangements to visit her to get a better sense of the problems in her community. These projects have large potential to go somewhere, assuming that these politicians are as dedicated as they say they are.

We must remember, however, that it is all too easy for student activists to make a lot of noise without effecting much change. We shouldn’t merely congratulate ourselves after a rally and assume that our job is done. Power Shift was incredibly positive for the massive amount of information that attendees learned during the workshops, and for the connections that were made with important politicians. Hopefully, students will continue to move forward on the momentum from the rallies and sleep-outs to bring about some actual change.

Editorials are the responsibility of the Review editorial board — the Editors-in-Chief, Managing Editor and Commentary Editor — and do not necessarily reflect the views of the staff of the Review.

LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

OAR to Pass Out Pamphlets

To the Editors:

Oberlin Animal Rights would like to announce a new information campaign on animal use at Oberlin. Starting on Nov. 11, OAR members will be handing out pamphlets every weekday. At this point, we have four different pamphlets, each addressing a different facet of Oberlin’s animal use. Our goal is to inform the student body about exactly what goes on on campus and then to assess student opinion. In this way, we do not intend to vilify any department or individual or even to aggressively push an agenda but merely to question the status quo. The information in the pamphlets is by no means complete, but reflects our current level of knowledge based on our own continuous research. All questions, comments and additional information can be directed to us via e-mail at oberlinanimalrights@gmail.com, and we welcome anyone to come to our meetings, which take place every Sunday at 7:30 p.m. in Wilder 204.

—Sara Kuperstein
College junior

—Brendan Tucker
College senior

Oberlin Animal Rights

Union President Praises Members

To the Editors:

I wish to thank the Oberlin College Office and Professional Employees union members for their admirable support and votes to re-elect me as president for another term. During the last several weeks, many of you have called with encouraging words and appreciation for my accomplishments over the past two years, as well as your hope that I will continue to lead OCOPE through 2010. Your confidence in my leadership is taken seriously, and you can be assured that I will continue to protect your rights and interests in the

months ahead.

To the UAW, Security and Carpenters Union members: It is common knowledge that all union members present at Oberlin should consider themselves brothers and sisters in the workplace, uniting for the common cause of justice, fairness and equal opportunity. Please be assured that I know the importance of solidarity and the TRUE meaning of mutually working together for the benefit of all. We are, indeed, in this together.

—Suzanne Overstreet
President, Oberlin College Office and Professional Employees union

English and the American Empire

To the Editors:

I wish to respond to some of the points raised by Alex Posa’s recent article “English as a First Language” (*The Oberlin Review*, Oct. 30, 2009, p. 14), in relation to a professed love of the English language, which I share. How could I not, when English is an intimate part of who I am? Spanish and English are making love and war in me, and I find myself richer accordingly, and the travel can go many ways, as it should.

I see a bit of confusion in the argumentation in Posa’s article, that could go the wrong way politically if left unattended. I give some applause to the care for correctness and formality in the speaking and the writing of English, as long as one does not go all the way to wholeheartedly endorsing self-appointed tribunals of the “right” language. Who can doubt that any language has levels and layers of discourse, that restrictions and regulations abound, and that we are all dealing with many social situations with no handy cartographies? Linguistic phenomena such as monolingualism, sustainable bilingualism, restricted code (idiolect), unequal coexistence of languages (diglossia), the very idea of “grammar” and informal registers attest to the fact that language, like anything social, is very multi-dimensional. We can think of language as a

symbolic net within which we are all struggling to become as fully meaningful as possible. But this signification business is hardly ever about this or that language alone in no context around some apolitical cloud. I am willing to take issue publicly with the idea of a “first” or “greatest” condition of the English language. This is supremacism of a worrying kind, and we would all be better off without it.

The English language would not be what it is today without the impact of U.S. foreign policy overseas, the frame of the Cold War, or history currently going to smithereens domestically and internationally, if ever so slowly. This is the immediate history of the last 50 years or so, and one should remember that English was not studied in large numbers in the European territory in the generation that is now in its 60s and 70s: my parents, for instance. Will it be studied in large numbers in 50 years if the U.S. is no longer the dominant country in the world, as some authors predict (including Immanuel Wallerstein, one good American intellectual to have near, particularly in our difficult moments)?

I am also willing to take issue with Alex Posa’s definition of “irony,” with his invocation of Winston Churchill as a supposed icon of linguistic correctness, and finally with his attribution of restrictions to French and Spanish languages only — and not English. Articulated thus, this is pure nonsense that wishes to convey that “we” are freer than “them,” a non-ironic and weird English commonwealth against the larger background of poor foreigners tongue-tied in their most constrained foreignness. The crucial factor is always to bear in mind that conversations about language are never about language alone: landscapes, armies, histories, people, etc. will immediately show up.

The article moves in between the denunciation of the ignorance of the native population bastardizing the English language and the desired attention to grammatical rules in relation to some dangling preposition in the shade of the said English

See American, page 9

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The *Review* appreciates and welcomes letters to the editor and column submissions. All submissions must be received by Wednesday at 4:30 p.m. at commentary@oberlinreview.org or Wilder Box 90 for inclusion in the following Friday’s *Review*. Letters must include signatures and phone numbers of their authors for verification and may not exceed 600 words, except with the consent of the editorial board. Electronic submissions from non-oberlin.edu addresses must include the author’s correct name and phone number. All electronically submitted letters from multiple writers should be carbon-copied to all signers to confirm authorship.

The *Review* reserves the right to edit letters for content, space, spelling, grammar and label. The *Review* will not print advertisements on its Commentary pages. The *Review* defines the following as advertisements: 1) any announcement of products or services for sale, 2) any announcement of a meeting or gathering. All letters are printed at the discretion of the editorial board.

Opinions expressed in letters, columns, essays, cartoons or other Commentary pieces do not necessarily reflect those of the staff of the *Review*.

Letters to the Editor, Continued

Continued from page 8

American Linguistic Superiority?

prime minister. My anglophilia allows for one grain of salt here in the U.S. of the first decade of the 21st century. Think of Tony Blair's more supple diction of the same Bush rhetoric, politically. The Britain typically invoked in

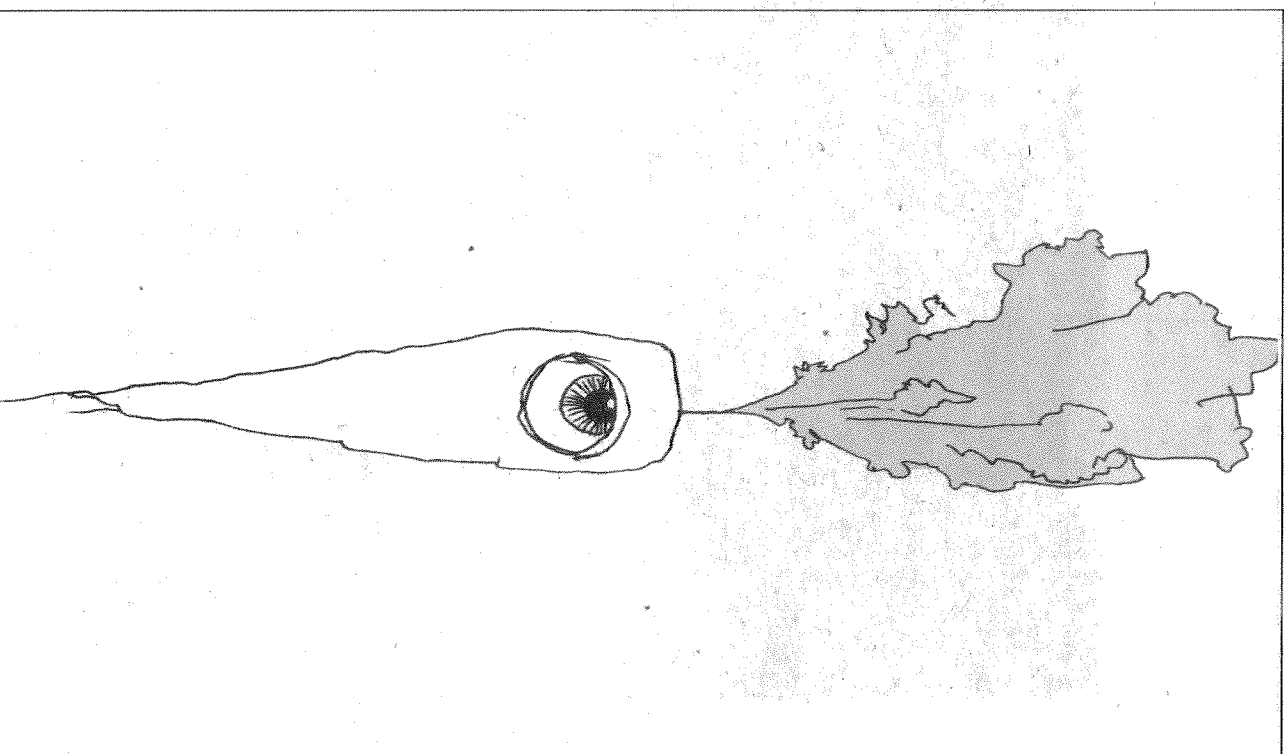
'English in the U.S. circa 2010 is situated in the shadow of its Empire.'

language so "we" have to remain vigilant. There are references to mostly European languages (Spanish being on both sides of the Atlantic as English). And this all-too-naturally assumed monolingualism that supposedly constitutes who we "are" in the U.S. is decorated with the said "first" or "most incredible language in the world" or the "greatest language there is." I would strongly like to suggest to the fearless

military, patriotism and jingoism wrapped about the "being" that America "is." English in the U.S. circa 2010 is situated in the shadow of its Empire like peanut butter goes with jelly: any doubts, anyone? This is the political unconsciousness in Posa's article that I want to expose to the critical minds in the critical space of the College. Once we get rolling with this type of ontological language (the language

of Being) "we" can all see ugly xenophobia quickly siting its fat behind with us at the dinner table summoning the ghost of Samuel Huntington (one "bad" American intellectual in the political sense of the word) to bring us the identitarian gray for the national festivities. A challenge for all of us accordingly: to think of "language" in non-identitarian ways. Substitute the "L-word" in the previous sentence with your favorite noun and do the same. Good luck.

-**Fernando Gómez Herrero**
Hispanic Studies Professor

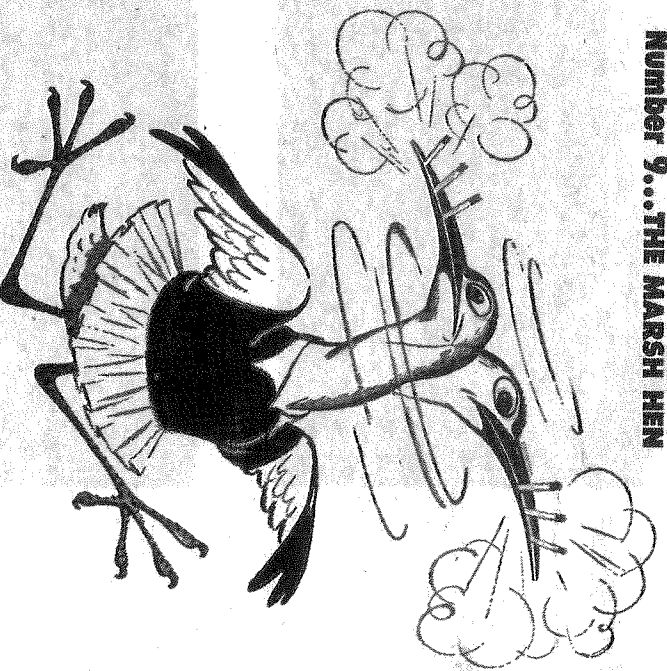


Christopher Gollmar

BLAST FROM THE PAST: Advertisements from The Oberlin Review December 19, 1950

Campus Interviews on Cigarette Tests

Number 9...THE MARSH HEN



"For a while they had me swamped!"

Some like thin continued fowl got mixed in a metaphor and was almost turned into a guinea pig. The story goes she got caught in a wicker of quick-trick cigarette tests... one puff of this brand, then a puff of that... a sniff, a whiff - a fast inhale and exhale. And then she was supposed to know all about cigarette mildness! Is that the way to treat a lady?

And is that the way to judge a cigarette?

We think not. That's why we suggest:
The sensible test - The 30-Day Camel Mildness Test, which simply asks you to try Camels as your steady smoke - on a pack after pack, day after day basis. No snip judgments needed. After you've enjoyed Camels - and only Camels - for 30 days in your "T-Zone" (T for Throat, T for Taste) we believe you'll know why...



More People Smoke Camels than any other cigarette!

Glad We Had This Talk

A Column by Julia Chauvin

So what happens when you date someone who looks like you? Or you wear the same clothes or colors as the person you are dating? Clearly this has the potential to come up a little more often in same-sex relationships, but who are we kidding - it happens to everyone at some point. And I don't think it's really that much of a gender thing. I've seen some pretty similar couples regard-

less of who is dating whom. But whatever you are, whoever you are, you run the risk of being twinsburg, girlfriend/boyfriend twins, or, my personal favorite, doppel-bangers. And if that happens, it starts to get creepy. It does. It really does. Once you start to date someone who reminds you of yourself... that's where the problems begin. It just isn't good.

To be frank, it reeks of narcissism. Of course, it's occasionally unintentional, and you don't even notice the similarities. But some people are continually attracted to people who look like them. If you are fair-haired, fair-skinned, and you are pretty consistently attracted to people of the same ilk - that's a little odd. And there is nothing worse than narcissism. Well, except for maybe incest.

Forgive me, we've been talking about incest in my English class. And narcissism. But, if you folks have been reading my column for the few years that I've been writing it, you know my opinion on incest.

I'm all for it. I think it's brilliant. What could be better than having a relationship with someone who is just like you? It sounds like such variety and excitement! I mean, you could talk about basically anything you wanted and have the same opinions. You could reminisce about times in your past that were exactly the same. Or, if you're long-lost family, one of you could act like you were always there at Christmases or birthdays with the fam. It'd be so cute and wonderful.

But regardless of the beautiful times you can share with that long-lost brother or sister (or maybe even mother or father), you still should try to avoid the whole looking alike thing, just to avoid this digression into discussion about narcissism and incest. No one wants that. And everyone will think you're narcissistic if you date someone who looks exactly like you. Everyone. You don't want that.

It's super-unsettling to others when you are both wearing, say, blue T-shirts and the

same color corduroys. Because you are more often than not together, and you're dating, you might have gotten dressed at the same time that morning and subconsciously put on the same thing. It's weird.

Now's the time when I get to admit something rather embarrassing about my personal life. Since I tend to date people who have the same impeccable fashion sense as I do, it occasionally happens that we put on very similar t-shirts and pants. And, Lord knows, it is not intentional in the slightest. I hate it when I'm twinsburg. I hate it. It's the worst. It makes me feel very uncomfortable. I don't want to look like the person I'm with. That isn't what I want. I want them to be them, and I want me to be me.

That sometimes entails looking differently. I like it when couples are different. For instance, I adore it when short people date tall people. I think it's the best. In high school, one of my 5'1" friends dated a boy who was 6'4", and I was wholly entertained the entire time that they were together. So, people, for my amusement, at the very least, date different, different people. Don't be a doppel-banger. Don't, I'm glad we had this talk.