

ISSN 1676-8965
RBSE 6 (18): 684-706
Dezembro de 2007
ARTIGO

"I'm sick of shaving every morning": or, The Cultural Implications of "Male" Facial Presentation *

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RESUMO: Este artigo analisa o significado cultural do cuidado facial masculino, as artes de raspar, grampear e aparar, e os significados do crescimento da barba cerrada. Parte de uma interpretação semiótica, e reconfigura o ritual negligenciado e personalizado da preparação e da apresentação facial diária. A análise vê o cabelo facial como um mais significado de masculinidade, mas aquele que não permanece fixado dentro do reino masculino. A politização radical do cabelo facial foi efetuada através dos movimentos gays e feministas, de modo que as figuras do "*bearded fairy*", "*goateed club bunny*", e o do "*drag king*" não são restritos a suas atribuídas subculturas, mas sangram através dos meios de comunicação de massa na cultura dominante.

PALAVRAS-CHAVES: Implicações Culturais; Apresentação Facial; Masculino.

* - Publicado com a autorização do autor, editado pela primeira vez no *Journal of Mundane Behavior*, 1 (1): Fevereiro de 2000.

ABSTRACT: This paper analyses the cultural significance of male facial grooming, the arts of shaving, clipping and trimming, and the meanings of full beard growth. It draws upon a semiotic interpretation, and reconfigures the overlooked and personalized ritual of daily facial preparation and presentation. The analysis sees facial hair as a signifier of masculinity, but one which does not remain fixedly within the masculine realm. The radical politicization of facial hair has been effected through both the gay and the feminist movements, so that the figures of the "bearded fairy", the "goateed club bunny", and the "drag king" are not restricted to their assigned subcultures, but bleed via the mass media into dominant culture.

KEYWORDS: Cultural Implications; Facial Presentation; Male.

When my grandmother died the first thing my grandfather did was grow a beard. He had not had a beard throughout my lifetime, but now he sported the full white and silvery beard of Santa Claus, and chuckled in character if anyone touched it. Of course we all did touch it, affording him the sort of petted affection that he also had not experienced within my memory. Now when he laughed he was jolly, and when he was stern he was God-like, the Christian God with claps of thunder and bolts of lightning, terrifying to behold. Had my intellectual references been up to it I would also have seen in him Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx and countless legions of patriarchs whose beliefs have come to be the orthodoxies of Western culture. His was the beard aligned with high Victorianism, of empire building and colonial exploitation, the rightness of his purpose caught in every single hair.

His wife had been wrong to make him shave every day, and now he was proving that fact.

My grandfather had felt emasculated within his marriage, subjected to the voice of the feminine, caught by an historical and cultural positioning which made it impossible for him to escape. He had to be a husband and a father, and he had to be the husband and the father that his wife wanted him to be. She wanted him clean-shaven, spruced up, with not a hair on his head out of place. The beard was a symbol of his rebellion. He was his own man, at last, and so much more of a man as a consequence. I cannot pretend to remember him kindly, but the beard spoke volumes - softly.

The whispering wisps of men's beards contribute to a symbolic system which acts in contingency with cultural implications about masculinity as a concept and male subjectivity as a construct. Conceptually, a cultural encounter with masculinity defines the parameters of male experience, and is powerful enough to regulate the lives of male subjects. Within a hegemonic dynamic these subjects then construct themselves and each other in accordance with ideological dictates - not least in terms of appearance, sporting goatees and "muzzies" (moustaches) as signifiers of sexed differentiation, through which access to power is regulated. I see the beard (even when it has been shaven away) and I know I am in the presence of a man. The beard is expected and regulated by the processes of facial grooming, so that even the clean shaven carries its presence. It is a biological

imperative, undeniable within the gender system under which we all operate. It also affords to the male subject himself the opportunity to speak his state of being, to self-signify, and to proclaim the potency and virility accorded to him within the patriarchy; " ... his voice no longer exists as an abstraction, but ... in fact inhabits a body: its own sexual/textual body" (Boone, 12).

This paper aims to analyse the significance of male facial grooming practices as they are made manifest within the West. It is my intention to offer a reading which emphasises the potential of facial hair both to uphold and more interestingly to subvert patriarchy. As a signifier, the beard, or any adaptation thereof, and all the practices of shaving and pampering the face, fall in line with definitional stances that male subjects adopt in order to make themselves known within our shared culture. What is interesting about these stances is that they do not all correspond easily with the required, culturally promoted attributes of masculinity. The very acts of preparation, washing, shaving, balming, beautifying, and mirror gazing, take the masculine subject into the feminine realm, and this on a daily basis, as a starting point for an encounter with the world at large. It is my hope to uncover those crossover points between acts of masculine consciousness and those of a feminised positionality, in order to assess the sexual political implications of facial grooming. This I shall carry through into an analysis of subcultural "masculinities", who use the signifier of facial hair in different and sometimes unexpected ways to challenge the status quo.

Many are the men who grow beards to compensate for a receding hairline, or a balding pate, resexualising the image they present to the world, just in case the world thinks they are starting to flag. The thickness and the heaviness of beard growth in some particular way adds not only to the authority of the locutor, but puts his sexedness upon display. "I am a man", says the beard, even before the man himself has opened his mouth, a gaping hole in a hairy surround, grunting his joy and his sorrow.

The beard has never been without political significance. In simple terms man presents his face to the world and it is known by the hair that can grow upon it (and similarly women present their faces to the world and they are known by their hairlessness). Biology has little to do with the ways in which such attributes are displayed; in fact it is conformity to a structured imago which is actually put on show. Men speak their sexual potency by proclaiming their passage through puberty, synchronically aligning face with pubis, hair with the production of sperm. They are validated in gendered and genetic terms, and begin the process of assuming the rights which their culture affords them. This is the signifier of their meaning as living entities; that they are progenitors, procreators, possessors of the Lacanian transcendental signifier, the phallus itself - bearded to match the beard they cannot show to the world. They enter the realm of subjectivity as the product of cultural forces, learning and "speaking" the language of self-presentation. Facial hair is the indicator that hair is on their bodies, that their voices have deepened, and that their genitals

have assumed a greater proportion. They do not need to display this to the world, for the beard says it all; the asexual smoothness of childhood is over, and earthiness and ruggedness has replaced it. And when they laugh, how their teeth flash, and how wet their lips get! The beard frames the gash of the speaking subject.

The semiotic process asserts itself, so that meaning is encoded at the point of production and decoded at the point of reception. The male subject may know what he intends within his ritual of facial grooming, but he has no control over how that meaning will be received, except that it is received within the broad understandings of a culture dominated by patriarchy. Thus his body comes to embody the figure of the patriarch, and he aligns himself with that figuration by selecting his particular mode of representation. He may choose to shave the beard away, and cling to hairless boyishness, but a biological imperative is set in motion, and the man is set to emerge.

2.

The sign of facial hair assumes its significance beyond the proscriptions of language, in that it does not have to be read or inscribed linguistically for meaning to be carried. As an attribute of nature in one sense it offers coherence to male subjectivity which is unassailable - "men", in generalised terms, are hairier than women. But it is how that fixed point of recognition is reinterpreted within the cultural realm that comes to be of importance. We all know that there

are words to describe the various manifestations that facial hair assumes - the moustache, the goatee, the sideburn, the beard itself - and that all of these words carry meanings that are specific to themselves, but let us not forget that it is not only the hair itself which speaks to us, but engenders a discourse where all the accoutrements of shaving and grooming come to take their place. So that the bathroom has to be in part a male terrain, where the potions and the liquids and the foams are on display, where the ritual can be performed, where close attention to detail takes precedence, and where narcissism is allowed full rein. These are moments when men are like beauty queens - maybe only fractions of a second where some point of admiration is found - for the self and for the others. This is a language beyond language, one which men understand but rarely utter, allowing a preened visage to say it all for them.

The masculine enters the terrain of signification as soon as facial hair is perceived, and it is linked with popular conceptions about testosterone. This is true even when the subject is a woman or a child, both of whom sport varying degrees of facial hair. The response is always to look for further proofs of masculinity - that she is also broad shouldered and slim-hipped, that her breasts are barely noticeable, that her vocal range is deep. Women with hair on their faces are encouraged to pluck it away, bleach it, wax or shave it out of existence, unless they want to run the risk of being seen as ugly. In the binary polarity of ugliness and beauty there is a gendered imposition, strictly splitting the remit of their meaning. Women

with hair on their faces are ugly because they bear an attribute of masculinity, whereas men with no hair on their faces, and no evidence of shaving, are asexualised, seen as not fully formed, and are aligned with beauty only if they can be further feminised, with fine features and flawless complexions. In looking at others and in contemplating ourselves we look for associative signs which engender the sureties of our own sexed subjectivities. There has to be a certainty, otherwise the edifice of patriarchy itself begins to crumble, and the roles we all adopt become meaningless.

This semiotic system in which we invest in order to produce meaning is linked strongly with the theories propounded by Roland Barthes. Here we encounter the sign composed of signifier - the facial hair itself, in whatever manifestation it makes itself apparent - and the signified, that cultural mythology which surrounds its possession. Barthes is particularly interested in highlighting the mythical associations of any sign, and what he uncovers is a clear indication that the formulations of meaning are built upon fabrication, and that it is this fabrication which is spoken, transmitted and understood. He is insistent upon casting all signs, including facial hair and its associations with the masculine, into the realm of myth, or "metalanguage" (Barthes, 115). This is a language beneath or above language as it is spoken, which runs as its parallel, carrying powerful comparative meanings which are unspoken and unacknowledged. The beard itself is understood as the mark of the masculine, but it also speaks of authority

and power in its acculturated form, as well as harking back to naturality.

It is men with beards who have "ruled the world" both real and mythical, from Abraham Lincoln to Neptune, and they have been known in clear symbolic terms as having facial hair. This affords the possessor of facial hair an alliance with such figures on a symbolic level, one which can be played upon in unspoken terms, and understood across the culture as a whole. What is significant about the Barthesian theory is that the system exists as fabrication, and if it exists in this way then it can be undermined and retold. There is no fixed meaning, only a set of understandings which carry an historical positioning based on myth. This can be challenged.

In an age which distances individual subjectivities further and further from the world which they inhabit, the reassertion of the natural finds an expression which is not only closest to the skin, but a product of the body; and yet this too resides in the realm of myth. There is an undeniability about facial hair which makes the world seem real again, puts each subjectivity in its proper relationship, into a world of trees and rivers as much and seemingly more so than of highways and skyscrapers. This facet of the mythological process is one of denial, of male subjects with hair on their faces (and male subjects with shaven faces) not wanting to face up to the realities of the world which they have created. If I look in the mirror and see my beard showing, or growing, then the natural order reassumes its position and everything else which happens around me becomes mythically a

part of that same order. I am not responsible, and I am not culpable. I do not have to acknowledge the part that I may be playing in the systems which govern the world, and which act to exploit and oppress us all, me included. As subjects to capitalism we only retain mythic associations with the natural, and the beard which grows uncontrollably is one of those associations. It allows a position of exclusion - as if none of it has anything to do with me(n). Luce Irigaray perceptively states that: "In the system of production that we know, including sexual production, men have distanced themselves from their bodies. They have used their sex, their language, their technique, in order to go further and further in the construction of a world which is more and more distant from their relation to the corporeal" (Irigaray, 83-84).

Men sit stroking their jaws in board meetings, and distractedly twirl the ends of their moustachios while perpetrating evil deeds (a popular representation in silent movies and pantomimes). The beard can be a cloak for a grimace which would reveal truths of anguish and despair; shame and guilt can be hidden behind facial hair, as can blushes of inadequacy, fear, and sexual excitation. The beard remains a constant signifier on the jowls of men, unaffected by any emotional state, which male subjects have been encouraged to disavow. Those who are beardless have exactly the same potential - in shaving it away every morning, every evening, that potential is constantly recognised; it is another way of hiding, and the face is prepared, so that the square jaw and the composed

features do exactly the same job. We collectively encounter a link with the animal, which is not to be ordered and controlled by the social structures which we have invented. The beard grows and grows, and the fierce slashings of razor blades across countless millions of faces does not change that fact; it only creates an illusion of civility. This is the great myth of male subjectivity - that the world is in his control; patriarchy as an edificial imposition asserts his rights over other human beings, but the world carries on regardless, as does his very own beard. "Everything signifies," says Barthes, "by this proposition, I entrap myself, I bind myself in calculations" (Barthes, 63), which is the reason for trying to cut back and preen and hold in check facial hair growth, to justify that entrapment, and give meaning to the dull monotony of most subjected lives. What the world I have created, and in which I believe, is doing to me I shall also do to myself, and my face as I present it will say it all. I may be yearning for the myth of childhood, where my smooth face is caressed by women who love me, mothers who will nurture me, feed me; or I may wish to embrace the myth of masculinity, where power is accorded me, where driving and drinking is my right, my loudmouth proclaiming a disappearing potency; either way I will never ignore the hair that grows on my face, but I will enter into a relationship with it which will allow it to speak for me - I acknowledge its presence and all that it means: "The mythical signification ... is never arbitrary; it is always in part motivated, and unavoidably contains some analogy" (Barthes, 126). Male facial grooming carries the

meaning of masculinity both as it is known and as it is reluctantly recognised; men are the perpetrators of both good and evil, increasingly so as corporate and institutionalised creatures, and their faces only partially mask that admission, no matter how much they insist upon their "naturalised" rights as "men".

In reading facial hair within the semiotic system as put forward by Roland Barthes we find that it is a cover for the various myths of masculinity, and the myths of a civilisation based upon patriarchal values. Of course the two are intertwined and interlinked, which permits to male subjects the assumptions of their status as men, and this as exemplified by their shaven and not so shaven faces. This is a position which male subjects know themselves is under assault, as we culturally shift into a postpatriarchal realm where it is not necessarily those with hair on their faces who are privileged. Vast proportions of these subjects are experiencing economic, social, and cultural disempowerment. The mouth speaking from the hairy centre is no longer heeded in the same way as it was, and all the signifiers of masculinity are paling into insignificance. Musclebound men are seen as "dragging up" masculinity, wearing a costume which parodies masculine attributes; shouting men drum up support in some, but get the volume turned down by many; powerful old men are mocked behind their backs and then allowed to slip into senility; even the penis itself is a cheap plastic dildo available through mail order for a seriously reasonable price - and more reliable than the real thing. Many male subjects are trying to

adopt the stances of masculinity which they feel are theirs by virtue of their maleness - by virtue of the hair on their faces - but those stances do not fit comfortably within a changing cultural scenario. This is what is popularly termed and increasingly spoken about as "the crisis in masculinity".

3.

Where the crisis actually lies is in the struggle for meaning. It has been for those other than classically defined male subjects to recognise that facial hair can carry different meanings, that the book can be rewritten, and the sign reassigned. This places the politics of resistance in the hands (or in this case, the faces) of subcultural movements. The women's movement has allowed certain female subjectivities to spurn the cultural requirements to body (and sometimes face) shave, and to outface the consequences of hairiness. The photographer Trisha Morrissey has exhibited work in Arles, France, and London, England, under the title "Moustache", where female models are positioned face on to the camera and their facial hair is not disguised in any way. She observes that: "... people at first assume a woman with facial hair is a transvestite, a man dressed as a woman. They don't see the feminine neck and shoulders at first, just the moustache" (Morrissey, 5). Although she assigns to her models all of the acculturated attributes of femininity, having their hair set for each photograph, and their faces made up, it is the facial hair as signifier which takes precedence and comes to be unavoidable in its intent. This is a

destabilising of the masculine norm, which crosses the divide between femininity and masculinity, and makes of the female subjects other than our expectations. Each print challenges shared cultural meanings which apportion facial signifiers within a gendered economy and carry resonances into the sexual political sphere. Our insistent and unwavering version of femininely and masculinely charged aesthetics is also challenged, so that a subtle destabilising of the status quo is achieved, and this is recognised by the mainstream. The models are not beautiful and neither are they ugly, but they are intensely human, real and unquestionably known. The display begins to unpick the mythologies surrounding an acculturated gendered state.

Yet these images, and the women who in reality refuse to remove facial hair, speak a different version of semiosis than that put forward by Roland Barthes. This is a version which demythifies the sign, and can be attributed to the theorist Julia Kristeva. "The semiotic is described by Kristeva as destroying or eroding the Symbolic; it is said to be "before" meaning, as when a child begins to vocalize, or "after" meaning, as when a psychotic no longer uses words to signify" (Butler, 82), and as such it is before and after linguistic formulations which set the parameters of cultural understanding. Here the practise of semiosis, the reading and interpreting of signs and sign systems, exists outside of a language which operates only in symbolic terms; it is Kristeva's contention that the symbolic as structured within language is not meaningful enough in understanding all of the meanings which her version of semiosis affords. It

does not argue for meaninglessness, but taps into a meaning which is unadulterated by the impositions of the social law inscribed within patriarchy; it allows to us as subjects the opportunity to read the signs of our culture and of our being in different ways from those which we have learnt, and therefore offers a subversive potential to all. In effect it is the unlearning of set signification. This is a semiotic system which fractures binary opposition and breaks down hierarchies, and so is liberatory in its effect. What is most significant is that this is a semiotics " ... established as a science which seeks to represent that which per definition cannot be represented: the unconscious." (Moi, 75).

Facial hair then takes its position within a system of representation which defies the dictates of the paternal, and carries with it a disavowal of established power structures. It also has resonances beyond the realms of ordered signification, and of definition itself, becoming not conscious and therefore not traceable in its effect. There is a recognition of the performative nature of gender roles, of the assumption of cultural attributes which have invested power in the few, those few in particular being men, and mainly straight white men of a certain middle age. The great white fathers are not unassailable, and there is no reason to allow them to rule. Their system of signification does not carry all meaning, and their translation of that system into law does not have to be obeyed; as Kristeva herself puts it: "...considering the complexity of the signifying process, no belief in an all powerful theory is tenable" (Kristeva, ix).

In certain environs there is a cultural encounter with the beard in altered manifestation. Men wear beards and makeup and frilly dresses on gay pride marches, collapsing the symbolic system of gender into their very being; and the Radical Fairy movement, which is a promotion of difference both within and without the gay movement, accepts the "bearded fairies" amongst its number. In Europe the Hairy Bear movement promotes a similar acceptance and exultance in the possession of facial hair, and again crosses the gay/straight dichotomy. Men with hair on their faces are seen as men with hair on their faces and not as bearers of a signifier which carries social privilege and cultural importance; more pointedly, their sexuality is not fixed, but fluctuates not only from person to person, but within the psychology of each individual. In broader terms such subjects literally take to the streets and actively make visible both their beards and their views, becoming a living example to all male subjects whose gaze is captured from the sidewalks - and if it does not happen in your town or your city you can see it happening all over the world on the television screen.

The significance of subcultural movements which shift from darkened clubs into broad daylight, and whose cultural manifestations and manifestos bleed into the mainstream, is that the mainstream itself comes to be affected. Of course some subjects become increasingly defensive and/or aggressive towards the impact of the subculture, but consciousnesses are, for want of a better word, raised. Whoever the speaking subject may be, and from wherever that speech is

derived - even within the dominant - that subject knows that its speech is polyphonic, and can be interpreted in ways that are not intended; so the straight man who grows a moustache ends up whispering to his closest female friend: "Does it make me look gay?" Subcultural movements in response recognise that it is the employment of such strategies which secures an access to power; gay politics, for instance, has taken on board the observation of Judith Butler that: "The normative focus for gay and lesbian practice ought to be on the subversive and parodic redeployment of power rather than on the impossible fantasy of its full scale transcendence" (Butler, 124).

Gay male subjects sporting the latest fashion for goatees hold a particularly interesting position in respect to patriarchy. Their beards are incomplete, as if there is a resistance or unwillingness to assume the full rights and responsibilities of the masculine norm. This is a norm differentiated from any connotations of normality, as it could be argued that the more the systems of our understanding break down, the more evident it becomes that "normality" itself is a construct invented to keep in place a hierarchical pattern of exploitation. In male-to-male relationships the position of the homosexual male subject has always been one of subjection, and this subjection has been fought against by the assimilation of such subjects into the norm, not least within self-presentation. The homosexual thus became known through nomination (language), and through character attributes (gestures). With the adoption of an iconic sign such as the goatee, referenced within the club

world and amongst younger, "queerer" subjectivities, the homosexual becomes instantly recognised everywhere within the dominant culture. The goatee as such does not always connote homosexuality, but in its present fashionable form it does speak of otherness, both individual and nonconformist. This particular sign also crosses the gendered divide, framing the mouth with hair in a fashion not dissimilar to the framing of the vagina, thus clearly signifying one version of homosexual sexual practise. This version is not that of sodomy, by which the homosexual was known within the established male to male economy, but does incorporate a sexual arena which is subversive to the heterosexual norm. If it is asked of these signifiers: "Are male bodies impenetrable? Are they without their holes?" (Rambuss, 85), then the answer must be "No". As such the goatee becomes markedly politicised. The "goated disco bunny" of the gay world thus clearly undermines the dominant order, and not only within the confines of his own subcultural positioning; in every way he demands recognition, and in every environment. The beard becomes the marker of a contingency which requires the toleration and acceptance of a whole life style and life choice; no denial remains, either to him as a subject, nor to those who subject him.

The figure of the "drag-king" also appropriates facial hair as a signifier of masculinity, and this in order to send up all that masculinity means, both culturally and personally. The drag-king is significant because she not only assumes the look and the gestures of male subjects, and along with that an

access to the realms of masculine power which is culturally inscribed, but she repoliticises the arena of "drag" itself, using it against its classic positionality, which was one of degradation and mimicry of femininity. She thus turns not only gender upon its head, but the very systems by which gender has been categorised and used within a dominant order which has privileged male subjects at the expense of the female. She shows up not only the patriarch as a sham, but patriarchy itself: "In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself - as well as its contingency" (Butler, 137). We are all invited to laugh at the structures which prescribe our gendered state, and to reassess our levels of conformity - as those levels themselves begin to shift. In a sense it is the structure itself which is being redeployed, and not individual lives; we act in response to the cultural order, and when that order begins to shift then it is at that point that we start to see our own subjectivities differently. If the effect of the drag-king is to encourage a reassessment on the part of the patriarch then this is potentially an extremely significant shift; and this despite the fact that drag is laughed away and seen as cheap entertainment. The photographer *Della Grace* positions herself as a drag-king and documents the people around her - and so her pictures enter the mainstream. Chat shows boost their ratings by inviting drag-kings into the TV studios, and the clubs of party capitals like New York, London and Amsterdam positively welcome the drag-king through their doors; the rude and angry mockery is displaced once these

mouths surrounded by hair find a platform from which to speak - because somebody takes notice.

4.

It has been my contention throughout this essay that facial hair acts as a cultural sign, but that our understanding of that sign has shifted because of the intervention of various seemingly disempowered subjectivities. The power that is accessed is "spoken", but not necessarily in linguistic terms; in a culture increasingly dominated by visual signifiers it is the power of show and look and recognition that becomes the currency of a re-establishing established order - in other words, the process of semiosis. We come to see the sign, in the words of Kristeva, as "the fundamental ideologeme of modern thought" (Kristeva, 72), and as such that sign operates in specific ways both to uphold and, more importantly, to undermine the status quo. There are associated ideas and images which collect around the sign, and these are both transgressive and politicised in their effect- the sign no longer refers to a single unique reality, and can thus be seen as arbitrary. Meaning itself comes into being, or arrives at its being, and is part of a complex system of interpretation, which relies upon other signs in order to achieve an interaction; when we see the beard on the face of a woman, or redeployed on the faces of men in subcultural arenas, then that system is garbled, and new meanings struggle for recognition.

The sign itself "harbours a principle of transformation: within its field, new structures are forever generated and transformed" (Kristeva, 72), and

it is these new structures which are coming to impact upon the realities of living subjectivities. This effectively means that we as individuals do not even have to be aware that we are bearers of signifiers that operate within the semiotic system, and in the case of shaving and facial grooming, of beard growth and beard clipping, it may well be the case that few intentions underlie the daily decision to shave or not to shave. Nevertheless we are read as texts by those around us and by the culture at large, so that it becomes apparent that it is not as individuals but rather in collectivities that we speak; the sign transcends any momentary personal decision. The fact that we have little control over how such signs are read is a part of their liberatory potential, for we are all borne along by the cultural shifts that happen around us, and within a hegemonic dynamic we become the key players in how civilisation advances. This puts power firmly in our own hands, and not in the hands of those we think dictate to us. For this reason it is perfectly proper to analyse the significance of beard growth, for "any practice can be scientifically studied as a secondary model in relation to natural language, modelled on this language and in turn becoming a model or pattern for it. It is in this precise area that semiotics today is articulated or rather is searching for its identity" (Kristeva, 75).

In the last fifty years there has been a rich tradition of semiotic interpretation which is not afraid to encounter the seemingly banal, and to relate it to the greater formulations of cultural power and identity; this piece adds to that tradition. As Homi Bhabha has

noted, "value must be sought in petits récits, imperceptible events, in signs apparently without meaning and value - empty and eccentric - in events that are outside the great events of history" (Bhabha, 243); here lies the true value of individual contribution to the advancement of history - such contributions happen within a collective framework - I speak for many and many speak for me. My grandfather, for instance, did not lead a meaningless life - but the meanings he generated may not have been the ones that he had intended. And when I look into the mirror every morning and think to myself that I am heartily sick of shaving every day, I could take a moment to think about what it is I am trying to say.

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