

# Opinion

## Film colorization vandalizes film's artistic heritage

Don't you think Leonardo daVinci's "Mona Lisa" would look better with blue eyes?

Don't you think Michelangelo's statue of David would look better in jockey shorts?

Don't you think that Grant Wood's "American Gothic" would look better if the old man had long hair and was smoking a joint?

Unless you are an artistic idiot you realize that defacing such works of art would be criminal. But there is a form of artistic bastardization that is infesting America — colorization of film.

Colorization is a computerized process by which old black-and-white films are turned into color films. The process costs about \$300,000 for a full-length feature film. Two companies, Colorization Inc. and Color Systems Technology, are dedicated to adding color to old movies. The colorization process has been used in the re-release of Frank Capra's "It's a Wonderful Life," George Romero's "Night of the Living Dead" and Michael Curtiz's "Yankee Doodle Dandy." It's funny to think that it probably cost more to colorize "Night of the Living Dead" than Romero originally spent when he made the film. Hundreds of films, including Curtiz's "Casablanca," John Huston's "The Maltese Falcon" and others, are scheduled to be colorized.

"It's a Wonderful Life" has been one of my fa-



Karl Pallmeyer

vorite movies for years. I rented the colorized version on video the other day and was disgusted. The film I had loved — the film that I remembered — had changed. Now there were colors that didn't ring true. All the colors were flat and the film seemed to be a distorted vision of what had touched me years ago. I hope I don't have to see my other favorite films raped in the same way.

In "Casablanca," when Humphrey Bogart is talking to Ingrid Bergman about their fling and says: "I remember it well, you wore blue and the Germans wore grey," I don't want to see Ingrid in anything but black and white. Just like millions of visitors at the Louvre don't want to see the "Mona Lisa" in anything but the colors daVinci originally painted.

The other film is Orson Welles' masterpiece "Citizen Kane," probably the best film ever made. Director Welles and cinematographer Gregg Toland filmed a movie in 1941 unlike any movie before or since. The starkness of the blacks, whites and greys of the film are representative of the blacks, whites and greys of Charles Foster Kane's life. Color simply would destroy the film.

One of the arguments for colorization is that most early filmmakers didn't use color because it wasn't available or was too expensive. That may be true in some cases, but not in all. During the '30s, when color first was introduced in film, many filmmakers opposed the use of color — just like they opposed the use of sound during the '20s — because they felt it would take away from the aesthetic values of film. Colorizing films just to see what they would look like if the director used color makes as much sense as defacing the "Mona Lisa"

to see what it would look like if daVinci had used an air brush.

Several famous directors have come out opposing colorization. Woody Allen, who filmed "Manhattan," "Stardust Memories," "Zelig" and "Broadway Danny Rose," four of his last seven films, in black and white, condemns colorization as being mutilation of works of art. Martin Scorsese, who filmed "Raging Bull" in black and white, says he is afraid films will be changed and destroyed by colorization.

The American Film Institute, the Writers Guild of America and the Directors Guild of America have issued statements opposing colorization. Since the owners of the films' copyrights have the final say in colorization, these organizations have no legal right to stop colorization. The AFI says it is working to rally public opinion against the colorizing of old films.

The main reason companies are colorizing movies is money. Television stations prefer color over black-and-white films and are not willing to show too many old films. Many television stations believe that most young people will not watch old black-and-white movies and are trying to pull in larger audiences by colorizing the old movies.

According to Rob Word, senior vice president in charge of product development at Hal Roach Studios, the company that released the colorized version of "It's a Wonderful Life" and "Night of the Living Dead," sales of films to television stations have jumped 90 percent now that the films have been colorized. So far it's hard to say if the increase reflects a new interest in the old films or is because of colorization's novelty.

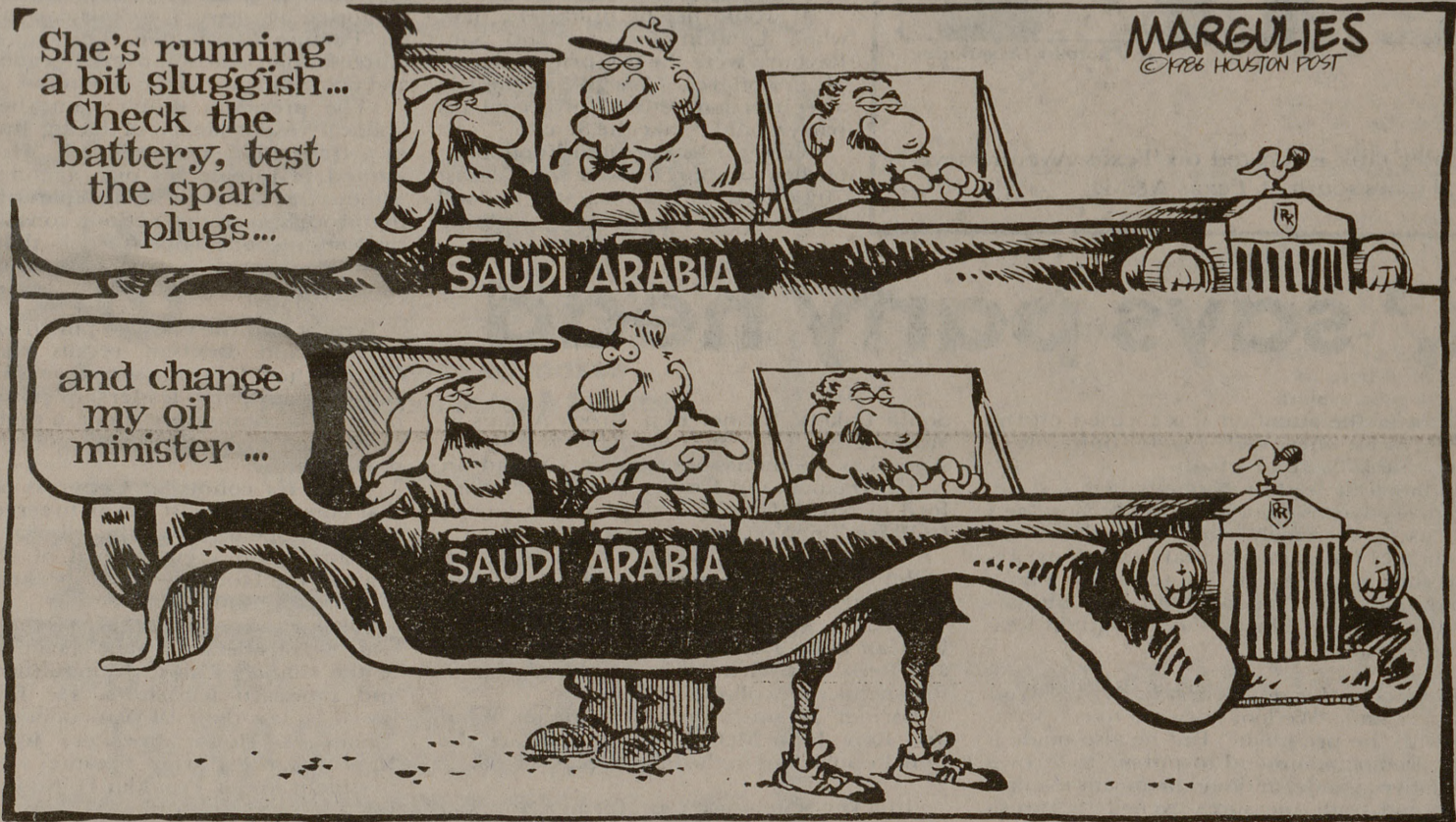
The only good thing that is coming out of the colorization boom is that many old films are being restored. "It's a Wonderful Life" was originally more than two hours long but usually television stations cut it down so that it — and about 20 minutes of commercials — will fit into a two-hour time slot. Years of use and abuse have damaged many of the film to the point where it is almost impossible to find a good copy. The colorization companies found the best copy of the film and restored it to its original length before coloring it.

Those who favor colorization, those who are trying to make money off the process, answer critics by saying that films will be available in both the colorized and the original version. Those films may be available in both forms but it will be silly to think most video stores would carry both styles. Since only a few stores carry movies in both VHS and Beta formats, I doubt they would carry movies in both color and black and white.

According to Word, colorization should satisfy both those who want to see the old movies in black and white because all they have to do is turn the color down on their television sets to de-colorize the movie. But that is not the point. Future generations may not realize that the films originally were done in black and white when they see the colorized versions. This is nothing more than a rewriting of history that distorts our rich film heritage in favor of a few dollars.

Vandalism of art is a crime that affects the soul of man.

Karl Pallmeyer is a senior journalism major and a columnist and film critic for The Battalion.



## Freshmen persevere for the good of A&M

Once upon a time a famous American wrote something about these being the times that try men's souls.

Jeff L. Brady  
Guest Columnist

The "these" he refers to are those desperate days preceding the colonists' declaration of autonomy — the brooding calm before the stormy revolution, the rumbling cloud about the silver lining, the hardship, the frustration, the anger.

And today I, a not so famous American, declare that these are the times that try freshmen souls. Particularly freshmen in the Corps of Cadets. They are hit hard on many fronts this time of year. Between Halloween and Yuletide in College Station a bonfire is assembled, the weather turns wicked, sophomores get more demanding, an academic crunch hits before that last round of exams, final projects are due and, of course, the ever-illustrious Corps brass is to be earned.

These are the bleakest of times for freshmen retention.

Corps brass is to a class of freshmen what diplomas are to a class of seniors. It symbolizes the end of a long, grueling trek toward recognition and acceptance. It represents success. It symbolizes a coming of age and an end to youthful irresponsibility. It is like the gold medals won by an Olympic team — a mark of unity and cohesion of purpose. It stands for the strength of one small group of Aggies working tightly to earn a right to remain. It represents unity from disparity and harmony from discordance.

And it's hard to earn — so hard that some freshmen never do. They never see the day of reward, never trade in their A.M.U. fish brass for the *Per Unitatem Vis* of full-fledged cadet Corps collar brass. Because they drop out. They quit. They lose the vision, stop the hunt and accept defeat.

Who outside the Corps has never bailed out before time is up, never stopped with less than an ultimate effort, never cut corners on work that could be done better, never missed a chance, hedged a dream or clipped a goal short of glorious fruition? The association isn't difficult.

In the Corps, the reasons are many. Some drop by the wayside because the academic pressures become too intense. Inadequate high school preparation, he says, has left him awash in collegiate assignments that demand too much, and he wants out.

This is the towel pitcher. Persevere, Fish Jones.

Another claims the Corps is simply not designed for his particular taste. It's either too restrictive, too hokey, too demanding or too demanding. Enough, enough. He wants his freedom.

This is the squeaking wheel. Persevere, Fish Jones.

From time to time a freshman will dive overboard for perceived financial limits. Money is tight, he says, and company dues, dry cleaning costs, Corps trips and Brasso expenses devour his wallet. He is usually too frugal to borrow and too proud to explore grants.

This is the end-of-the-roper. Persevere, Fish Jones.

And finally, there is a species of freshman that literally defeats himself before anyone has a chance to toss him a rope. He just not measuring up, he says. "My buddies catch on, manage their time, have radiant brass a spit-shined shoe, but I just can't keep up. Let me go. Let me slip out so as not to slow down the rest. Let me slide."

This is the wrist slitter. Persevere, Fish Jones.

Earning Corps brass HAS to be grueling. It HAS to be turbulent. It HAS to be a gritty, sweaty, red-hot job that insists on shedding tears, busting a gut and parting with one's diapers.

It is an odyssey that prepares one for life.

So persevere. Persevere and thereby remind all of us that certain things ARE worth busting guts. That real reward comes only through hope, effort and dogged determination. And the realization that in 1990 there still will be a Corps at Texas A&M.

So there still will be blocks of loud buzz-headed Aggies running through campus on Friday afternoons, still be associations of riflemen clad in white, still perform at Silver Taps and Muster and still be a uniformed, historical presence on this campus reminding onlookers of what we Aggies are and from where we came.

We all have dreams — hopes and aspirations, well-patterned goals and long-sought plateaus that we imagine one day reaching. They seem pretty tough. They seem far-off and hard to reach right now.

But we want to see you reach your goal, Fish Jones, to remind us that ours are possible too. So DO bust a gut. DO hang the longest yard. DO dig deep and hang tight, even in these trying times.

And persevere for the good of Aggeland.

Jeff L. Brady is a senior journalism major.

## Foolproof way to get kids to study

A University of Georgia professor has thought of a brilliant idea concerning how to make high school students, many of whom have the ambition of a frog, bear down on their studies.



Lewis Grizzard

Forget "no pass, no play," he says, and I agree. Given the choice of going out to football practice every day and being hit on the head and thrown on the ground or being able to neglect schoolwork like always, most high school stu-

dents will choose to give up extracurricula.

But the professor has realized how to get to high school kids where it hurts them the most. He has suggested, "No pass, no drive."

It will work this way. High school students who don't maintain a certain average can't get a driver's license at 16. They must wait until the creaking age of 18.

Now, we have hit the little devils square in the belly. No pass, no drive. No drive, and I speak for the boys here, no girlfriends. No drive, no girlfriends, no parking in the woods. No parking in the woods, no life whatsoever.

There are a number of milestone

ages in a person's life. There is 21, for instance, when an individual allegedly becomes an adult.

I had a friend who still lived at home when he turned 21. Just after midnight, when his birthday became official, he jumped out of bed and went running through his house screaming, "There's a man in the house! There's a man in the house!"

Frightened, his father got out of bed, fetched his shotgun and fired twice into the living room at what he thought was an intruder. Fortunately, his aim wasn't that good and all he hit was the velvet painting of the bullfighter on the living room wall.

Twenty-one is nothing like 16, however. Sixteen and you have wheels! You're free! Before you're 16, your mother has to drive you on dates. Little else in life is ever more humiliating than that.

Or, as dangerous. Your mother is constantly trying to watch the road and the rearview mirror at the same time, and you could be in a serious accident.

I counted the days before my 16th birthday. Finally the day I had longed for arrived.

I passed the driver's test easily. That night I took Kathy Sue Loudermilk to the drive-in. To this day, every time I see a 1958 Chevrolet my lips pucker and I lose complete control of my hands.

The professor's idea to make kids hit the books or face no driver's license when they reach 16 may be the best thing to hit our nation's educational system since the invention of the blackboard.

The libraries and study halls would be packed. Most of the students actually would know the name of our president as well as the capital of Idaho. Some might even be able to quote Shakespeare and Disraeli.

Think of it. Literate teen-agers. American youths hit the books. Even Ferris Bueller.

The mind boggles.

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## Mail Call

### Facts confused

EDITOR:

Leon Luxemburg's impassioned denunciation (Tuesday's Mail Call) of Olivier Uytendaele's article (Oct. 31) was impressive, but he had some of his facts confused. We must be careful not to confuse the Palestine Liberation Organization with the Palestine Liberation Front and other splinter groups that operate without the control or sanction of the PLO's leadership. It is these splinter groups that have been responsible for most of the "Arab terrorism" of late, along with the Shiite fundamentalist groups who have completely different motives for their actions.

Regarding Menachem Begin, the former prime minister of Israel, we shouldn't forget the bombing of the King David hotel in the 1940s, with which he was involved. Innocent lives were lost. Wasn't that an act of terrorism?

Luxemburg's final point was the most disturbing, since it was the farthest from the truth. In all fairness to the Soviets, their treatment of the Jews in their country has nothing to do with racism. The persecution of the Russian-Jewish community is caused by their choice to practice their religion in an atheist state. After all, a good percentage of the Supreme Soviet is composed of Jews. Oh, and speaking of apartheid, how about the Palestinians on the West Bank who are kept in concentration camps and are allowed few, if any, rights?

Brian Petruskie '83

Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length, but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must be signed and must include the classification, address and telephone number of the writer.

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