

WENDERSCOPE

Soap opera

Advertising's focus on women leaves men with limited choices, scary commercials

There is an age of gross inequality. Like any tuition hikes, the gap between the sexes continues to spiral out of control. I dream of a day when men will be able to stand by the side of our bleary-eyed, chrome-companioned as



CHRIS MARTIN
columnist

"Wait a minute," you ask, "on what outer moon of Mercury do men have it bad?" It's a common misconception. You see, our million-year-old effort to turn men into sex objects has backfired, because now men have all the great stuff! Women know this is true. They even rub it in our faces. Their deodorant is strong enough for a man, but made for a woman? No need to kick us while we're down. Our relentless emphasis on female physical appearance has not only left our male souls empty at our bathroom counters vacant, but it's no secret that guys really care about how they look and smell, except maybe loggers, oil riggers and demolition men. Unfortunately, society still judges a man by the size of his truck, the girth of his gun, and the coarseness of his callouses. The marketing dichotomy begins at birth. Blue is reserved for males, and pink is female. Oddly enough, the situation was reversed hundreds of years ago, when female babies were adorned in soft, gentle blue and male babies were draped in glorious bloody pink. Only this reversal happens only in maxi pad commercials, where the pink hues of menstrual flow magically become clinical blue for demonstrations of absence. Now I'm no gynecologist, but turning your maxi pads blue is not a sign of good health. And at least women have gynecologists to guide them through each stage of their development. All we have is the prostate guy — not exactly the light at the end of the tunnel, so to speak.

Women get to choose from hundreds of mix-and-match shampoos, pre-conditioners, conditioners, post-conditioners, revitalizers, detanglers and anti-frizz whips made from orange peels, rose hip (whatever that is) and spring water. The only shampoo marketed to men is dandruff shampoo — as if real men only need shampoo when they have a medical problem.

The greatest advancement in bathing technology in the past ten years has been the "shower poof," but like so many bathroom accouterments, it belongs to the ladies. In a bold move one soap company actually hired a no-neck football player to extol the accolades of the poofy to men, but you know he couldn't reach for his soap-on-a-robe fast enough after cashing the check.

The only "manly" soap out there is Lava, named for the hot, oozy sludge that burns away everything it touches, which seems like more of a threat to manhood than a pink poofy. I mean, why is the image of a grown man slathering himself in fragrant, moisture-rich body cream a challenge to one's heterosexuality?

Any guy with bad skin knows it's a woman's world, filled with moisturizers, facial buffs, night creams, replenishers, clean rinses and pore strips — which they can keep, by the way.

Female face-cleanser commercials always have two freshly scrubbed friends with apple cheeks hugging puppies, recycling and suggesting new ways to clean their faces. The only acne treatment aimed at males is gross goopy zit cream, whose marketing strategy is to lure males by showing scary monsters and volcanoes erupting from their faces.

Great bluesman John Lee Hooker said the blues started way back in the garden of Eden when Adam first saw Eve. Most assume Adam's grief grew from sexual desire, but recently found Dead Sea scrolls reveal that "... while they sewed fig leaves together and made covering for themselves, Eve squeezed a nice hypoallergenic thigh cream from the fruits of the field. Adam saw that it was good, and his face was downcast." So goes the curse today.

Chris Martin is a senior journalism major.



VOICE FROM THE CROWD

Disasters act as reminder of the fragility, temporality of life

Tornadoes do not transport their victims to a wonderful world of munchkins and singing scarecrows. That great somewhere over the rainbow, the magical land of Oz, exists only in our imaginations.



CALEB MCDANIEL
columnist

The reality of a tornado's destruction is not as pretty. Ask any Floridian about the dreaded wicked witch of the East, and they will likely think of the devilish El Niño. And the wicked witch of the West has been busy in California, where the weather has caused dangerous floods and mud slides. Over the past few weeks, the devastating forces of nature have ravaged the homes, the property, and the lives of hundreds of Americans. No Toto or tin man in this story — just lots of torn lives and tearful people, trying to make sense of sudden disaster.

As these unfortunates pick up the pieces left behind by the storm, those of us who have not been touched by the tornado still have some profound reflection to do. Times of trouble should always make people pause to think about what is really important to them.

Floridians and Californians are quick to discover what is not most important — material wealth. The wreckage left by the tornadoes' paths and the floods' currents reveals the vanishing nature of temporal possessions.

The sudden loss of property teaches us that if hopes are placed on objects, cheap or costly, they will eventually be disappointed.

It is not a lesson we would like to learn. But that reality should make us think seriously about how much we invest in the instruments of material prosperity — our careers, our salaries, our cars, our homes.

Consider how much time and energy we devote to these objects — objects that will never bring us any long-lasting satisfaction, precisely because they do not last. "Happiness," wrote Blaise Pascal,

"cannot be based on external objects which an individual can possess, such as wealth or power." Life, El Niño reminds us, does not consist in the abundance of property or the affluence of people. A stray tornado can claim both of these things for its own.

And although we do not enjoy thinking about it, disasters also remind us of our own fleeting frailty. Young Aggies do not like to reflect for very long on kicking the bucket; they are more interested in dunking the ring.

But every once in a while, young Aggies should sober up (in more than one way) and think seriously about the great equalizer.

Death, like a tornado, can come without warning, and every individual must be prepared to meet it with quiet dignity and without regret. At the risk of sounding melodramatic, the time will come when the name of every one of us will echo in the Muster roll. The time may be distant, or the time may be near, but one thing is for certain — the time will come.

And while it is not always easy to contemplate, we must even consider

and confront the possibility of some fate after death.

As my dad once told me, it very well could be that "there is nothing more important in your life than what is going to happen when it's over." He was right. Even if no one can prove that there is an afterlife, the mere possibility of one deserves our serious — perhaps our most serious — attention.

Disasters remind us that life is short, and each day we are creating for ourselves the legacy that we will leave behind. But we seldom consciously contemplate that legacy, thinking that it will write itself. And it will — but if we are not careful, it will not be a very flattering memorial to the life we have led. Perhaps that is why Thomas à Kempis wrote, "Happy and wise is he who endeavors to be during his life as he wishes to be found at his death." Wise words for any generation.

Okay. Cheer up already. There is no need to be depressed by El Niño's sober lessons about life and death. There is no need to be morbid. Don't worry; be happy. But take time to be serious, as well. Remember that each minute you live

is an investment — and a tornado or a freak accident or a chronic illness might cash in on that investment before you are prepared.

Invest wisely. Material things and physical life will be here today, but they will be gone long before we are ready to say goodbye to them. So invest in the things that really matter — the things that no tornado can touch, and no wicked witch can kill. Each person must decide for herself what really has lasting value, whether it be her family, compassion for all, or the love of God. Wherever your search leads you, whether it is an Emerald City or a dusty Kansas farm, discover the deeper meanings of life, and cling on to them with all of your might.

And remember: be nice to cowardly lions, do not be afraid of the man behind the curtain, and always, always love your Auntie Em.

Move over, Jack Handey. That is enough deep thought to last a lifetime. Or at least until lunch.

Caleb McDaniel is a freshman history major.

MIKE LUCKOVICH ATLANTA CONSTITUTION



MAIL CALL
Society cannot reverse technological advances

I read Michelle Voss's column in the March 9 *Battalion* with interest. I realize there was a tongue-in-cheek tone to the piece, but her position seems pretty representative of many people today. She is correct in stating knowledge is no longer sacred; it hasn't been since the invention of movable type 600 years ago, and it has been getting less sacred ever since, with cheap mass-produced books available to anyone with pocket change.

It is safe to say for all of recorded history many people have viewed the technology of their past as safe and "natural", while labeling the technology of their present as detrimental to society.

There is some emotional appeal to this; many of us (including myself) would be glad to trade our current stinking smog-filled streets for the stinking manure-filled streets of a century ago.

Of course, we can't really make that trade, and we would probably find that our rosy picture of the past would not match up to its gritty reality if we could.

Today we are on the frontier of a new age of information. We can be excited or frightened by our prospects, but we can not turn back the clock.

Mitch Lawler
graduate student

Pregnant women deserve, need support

The anti-choice movement to seek to gain power by belittling the very reproductive experiences of women. The decision to abort a fetus is not easy, and very few women take this responsibility lightly.

Instead of seeking to help women in this difficult time, the anti-choice movement avoids this dilemma by insinuating that all women who make this choice are irrational or ignorant.

Since fetal development is a process only experienced personally

by women, it is interesting so many men believe they should control the experiences with reproductive processes, reproductive control is used to control a wide range of female behaviors.

Another tactic of the anti-choice activists is telescoping the debate to discuss only one aspect of reproductive choice. By focusing the debate over reproduction on the act of aborting a fetus, the anti-choice movement artificially narrows the picture to victimize innocent women.

The radical pro-life movement refuses to acknowledge the societal factors that drive women to seek abortions. Many abortions could be avoided if the child's father would step up and take responsibility.

I applaud the many men who do support their girlfriends or wives through pregnancy, there are many who refuse to do this.

If anyone deserves to be harassed, it is these spineless jerks, not women who are seeking legal abortions.

Amy Hinze
Class of '01