

Undergraduate Research Symposium May 17, 2013 Mary Gates Hall

Online Proceedings

SESSION 2F

THE POETICS OF PARANOIA: USING LANGUAGE TO IMAGINE THE CONSEQUENCES OF DIFFERENCE

*Session Moderator: Phillip Thurtle, Comparative History of
Ideas*

238 MGH

3:45 PM to 5:15 PM

* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

All Up In The Hair: The Significance of Coiffure in Crome Yellow

*Tiffany Loh, Senior, Business Administration (Finance),
English*

Mentor: Charles LaPorte, English

Mentor: Juliet Shields, English

Like their Victorian forebears, Modernist authors have always placed keen emphasis on women's hair, often presenting their luscious locks in vivid and scrupulous detail. Aldous Huxley's *Crome Yellow* (1920) uses hair as a tool of social commentary and trope of the fairytale epic to challenge and even reverse traditional Victorian gender roles and sexuality norms. The tension between the private and public self is also explored; what Modernist women could not say aloud, they expressed through the style, color and length of their hair. *Crome Yellow* constantly alludes to the hair of the female protagonists Jenny Mullion and Mary Bracegirdle, yet the intentions behind the loaded descriptions of their physical appearance are left up in the air. The characterization of an infamous Fallen Woman and modern flapper girl allows distinctions to be made between the Victorian and Modernist eras that determine the emergence of new gender ideals. This paper will use a close reading of *Crome Yellow* and Freudian theories on sexuality to explore the multifaceted significance of hair in the Victorian era so we may fully appreciate the past's influence on modernist eras. A woman's hair became a phallic image used to engender fear in men, which posits a move towards gender equality and the emergence of the suffragette. Hair was no longer just a physical attribute but a body politic that reflected changes taking place in modernist British society of the *entre deux guerres* period.