***Hair as a Meaning-Making Device***

In the twenty-odd cartoons I’ve collected over the past three months, the 45th president of the United States—Donald Trump—has been illustrated in a variety of ways: a baby, as a cowboy, and a criminal, to name a few. Something that stood out to me in particular was a pattern in the way in which Trump’s hair is depicted. The hairstyle, exaggerated and ever-present, is often used to feminize the president.

These cartoons, considered alongside a set of films including *The Last of the Mohicans*, *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot*, *Turtles Can Fly*, and *Gangs of New York*, have led me to two conclusions. For one, uncovered, unrestrained hair is a symbol of the ideal American woman. And second, cartoonists use this symbol to feminize Donald Trump, revealing that in Trump’s image of self, his hair is actually a symbol of masculinity.

Hair is a symbol—a type of sign that conveys meaning—for Americanness (Barthes). This is evidenced by the fact that “American drug stores are bursting with hair care products,” to the fact that hair is the first quality American women and men notice in a potential mate (Faul, 2015). This symbol becomes more specific in the context of the American woman.

I noticed this first in the mis-en-scène of Michael Mann’s *The Last of the Mohicans* (site). In the audience’s first glance of Cora Munro, we can see that the British woman’s hair is tied up and back, beneath a hat. But as Cora increasingly rejects her identity as a high-class, British lady, her hair becomes liberated. When confronted with Native Americans for the first time, Cora tosses her hat aside—her hair is now uncovered. After arriving at Fort William Henry, we find that Cora’s hair is now half-up. After arguing with her father, Cora’s hair remains down completely. It now looks a lot like the hair of Hawkeye—the American frontiersman.

Finally, as Cora stands next to Hawkeye on the cliff, her hair blows freely: completely unbound, uncovered, and very long. With every action Cora takes to reject England and embed herself in the American frontier, her hair becomes further unrestrained. This evolution is, in fact, pretty rebellious—another American value (Faul). Thus, by the final scene, the hair finds itself at Barthe’s second level of signification, as it stands for itself (hair), plus a symbol: the American woman (Barthes).

Similarly, in *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot*, Kim Baker’s hair is unrestrained—at first. Throughout the movie, her unrestrained, uncovered hair also functions as a symbol for the American woman. On her first embed, Kim uses a tie to prevent her hair from blowing in the wind (which, coincidentally, is the final image we get of Cora). The diegetic meaning of this action is that, in Afghanistan, Kim must conceal her identity as an American woman through restricting. Not too long after that, she must also cover her hair, too. When Kim gets locked out of the compound without a headscarf on, she is in a *significant* amount of danger, simply because her hair is showing—a dead giveaway that she is American.

Unrestrained, uncovered hair is also symbolic of the American woman in Turtles Can Fly. No, Agrin is not American. But her hair, unlike the Iraqi women in the village, does not cover her hair. In fact, the first scene of the movie is Agrin’s hair blowing in the wind—just like Kim and Cora’s. And Satellite, who is obsessed with America, Bruce Willis, and English, is attracted to Agrin because her hair is so conspicuous. He identifies the fact that Agrin’s hair symbolizes the American woman.

So, what does all this have to do with Donald Trump? In the cartoons, Trump is repeatedly feminized with this symbol.

1. Meanwhile, in the cartoons, Trump is feminized.
   1. This shows that his image of self does not reflect how others see him (symbolic interactionism). These cartoons would not work if he did not believe his hair made him masculine.
   2. Portrayed in drag
   3. Obsessed with his looks
   4. The other cartoons, etc.
2. Hair is clearly something that’s important to Trump
   1. Xenophobe’s guide—all American’s value hair, men get hair plugs.
   2. He must think that it is a masculine trait that makes Trump Trump. (Ivana quote). He believes it is part of his face.
3. Contrast this with hair as power among men
   1. GANGS—Hair is clearly a power symbol of masculinity. Trump thinks his hair is a sign of masculinity. In Gangs, Bill the Butcher is macho, and asserts his masculinity through violent character. He is the only character, besides Tweed, to sport such a distinct mustache. He also has a distinct, greasy hair style. His hair is thick and dark. When the men fight (MASCULINETHING TO DO), they pull their hair back, as if to protect it.

Tanya isn’t American, but she might as well be. She displays many classically American characteristics: an openness about sex, and “go-getting spirit,” especially when it comes to accepting a job at an American media group. Tina Fey’s hair is wild when she goes to Iraq, doesn’t know what to do with it. She is brunette and Tanya is blond. Tanya isn’t American, but she might as well be, as she displays all the characteristics of American. The blond aspect can be tacked onto my thesis—the blonder you are, additionally the more American you are.