

## WHALEN SYMPOSIUM 2016 ABSTRACT

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*My Doll Daisy*, Short Film

Faculty Sponsor: Chrissy Guest, Department of Television Radio

The constant unquenchable thirst for consumption is seemingly ingrained into the human genome. This perpetual desire often results in extremely risky behavior and can lead individuals down a dark path. *My Doll Daisy* is an original short film that satirizes the modern day consumer-driven economy by dramatizing the dangers and consequences of what can happen when someone becomes consumed by materialism. We wanted to use this piece to find out how television and film can be used to make the global issues of greed and selfishness more pertinent to the average viewer and cause them to reflect on their own lifestyle and decisions.

In order to answer this question of social justice, we decided to use Rod Serling's influential television series *The Twilight Zone* as a framework. This pivotal show is steeped heavily in the tradition of using exaggeration and drama to heighten society's awareness of problems plaguing their culture. This exaggeration often manifested in science fiction. Therefore, *My Doll Daisy* is our attempt at using the traditional setting of *The Twilight Zone* to address present day dilemmas that we felt needed to be discussed through the art of storytelling.

To achieve this goal, our group heavily researched both Serling's life and work. Luckily, Ithaca College has access to many of Serling's original manuscripts since he used to lecture here at IC. Therefore with help from Bridget the archivist in the library, we were able to read the scripts from most of the first season of *The Twilight Zone*. Influential episodes included "Where is Everybody?," "Mirror Image," "The After Hours," and finally "The Last Flight," which our film is partially based on. In this episode, we see a woman quickly walk out of a military facility without saying a word. We decided to elaborate the storyline of this background character and turn her into the main protagonist for our film; thus further tying together the connection between Serling's work and ours.

We call this young woman Daisy Cooper. The film chronicles her journey of being sucked into the world of greed, eventually to the point of death. The film begins with Daisy finding some money and going to an expensive clothing store. It is here where she meets Raoul, a devious sales clerk. He cleverly encourages her to purchase a lavish wallet. This starts a vicious cycle where Daisy continually wants more and is never satisfied. Eventually this greed consumes her, so much so that Daisy physically transforms into a lifeless doll. The film ends with Raoul taking her frozen body into the backroom where we see many other women who have befallen this same fate.

Though at first glance such an ending seems bizarre, we wanted it to be our homage to the way *The Twilight Zone* always used science fiction and the macabre to make a point. Our twist ending symbolizes the social justice issue of materialism on multiple levels. Firstly, the transformation is a physical representation of how Daisy has become consumed with the idea of objects thereby inadvertently turning herself into one. Secondly, by also showing the long line of women who have also succumbed to the same fate, we demonstrate the scope of this issue today. Finally, the ending demonstrates the

role that others play, whether it be active or passive, in leading someone down a destructive path. Raoul may carefully plan his words and actions to ensnare victims, but he also keeps the women in his own collection. In essence, even the puppet master is not immune to the poisonous effects that consumption causes.

This project has helped us realize how powerful films can be, especially when they are crafted from a humanitarian viewpoint instead of just solely entertainment. We hope to use this project to reinvigorate the idea of using storytelling as a means of creating social change. We want to follow in the influential footsteps of Rod Serling, who himself had such a special tie to Ithaca College. The presentation will include a slideshow of different still frames and inspirations for the overall look of the piece as well as a short screening of the finished work. We hope you enjoy!

Performance Requirements: Computer or device with Internet access and projector

#### Works Cited

Serling, R. (Writer). (1959, October 2). *The Twilight Zone* [Television series]. CBS Television Distribution.

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Twilight Zone Project Research [Personal interview]. Bower, B. (2015, October).