Paper 3: Memoir and Analysis

Texts:
Margaret Cho’s *I’M THE ONE THAT I WANT*
Maxine Hong Kingston’s “No-Name Woman”
George Orwell’s “Shooting an Elephant”
Review of Helen Buss’s *Repossessing the World: Reading Memoir by Contemporary Women*

Preface:
By viewing, reading, and synthesizing these four texts, we will hopefully approach a deeper understanding of the memoir as a distinct genre that disrupts our binary understanding of fact/fiction, public/private, imaginary/real, history/literature, and political/personal. Discussion on this particular genre will be a jumping off point for us to begin thinking, in-depth, about the role of language in the construction and deconstruction of identity. Through our discussion of the texts, I hope to raise discussion on the issues of gender, race, oppression, memory, family, and the body.

As I have mentioned in an earlier class, “how” a work is written/performed affects “what” is being said. This is a classic case of form informing content and vice versa. You will be writing 6-7 polished pages to explore this in more depth.

Assignment:
There are two options for this paper assignment:

1. Sustained Thematic Analysis Paper: If you choose this option, you will write a 6-7 page sustained thematic analysis of one of the three works listed above. Some steps toward creating such a paper are as follows:
   - Choose a text and a theme you would like to analyze further. For example, if you are interested in working on Margaret Cho’s stand-up act, you could write on the politics of the representation of the female body.
   - Formulate a thesis statement that demonstrates clear purpose, complexity, and originality. In addition, be aware of how this thesis statement will preview the structure of your paper.
   - You should base your paper on a close reading of your chosen text. This is really what’s important in your paper! When you are doing a close reading, you are:
     1. interpreting integral moments or quotations in the text by…
     2. looking at an author’s word, stylistic, symbolic, and/or imagistic choices in order to…
     3. arrive at a deeper understanding of the themes that the author raises.
   - MLA style

2. Memoir/Analysis Paper: This option has two parts to it. First, you will write a 3-4 page personal narrative that will incorporate some of the elements of memoir writings. This personal narrative should address a central theme that you find important. Think about how your stylistic, symbolic, word, and/or imagistic choices help you arrive at a deeper understanding of that
theme. You should, in your narrative, situate yourself within a social/historical context. Keep in mind, the initial premise of a memoir is that it is a narrative of a real life experience that is inflected by its stylistic choices. To begin writing, the first question you should ask is: why would someone other than you read this narrative? In the second part of this paper, you will write a 3-4 page analysis of your own work that will explain the choices you made in writing your narrative. I will be weighing the second portion of your paper more heavily in the grading process. See paper option #1 for a detailed account of the steps you should take in writing your analysis.

**DUE DATES**

**Readings due:**
11/21/06: Maxine Hong Kingston’s “No-Name Woman”
11/21/06: Review of Helen Buss’s *Repossessing the World: Reading Memoirs by Contemporary Women*
11/28/06: George Orwell’s *Shooting an Elephant*

**Assignments due:**
11/28/06: 2 copies typed first paragraph (with a well thought-out thesis sentence)
12/5/06: 2 copies complete rough draft
12/7/06: 2 copies of second draft