

Attack of the Dead, White Males
(The Big Version)

by Greg Lam, Tom Strong and Francisco Toro

Act I

The setting: A large, collegiate lecture hall. A podium on one side, and a student's cluttered desk, chair and dorm room on the other. In the middle is a projection screen, held up by ionic columns. Somewhere on the stage is a drum set.

The first image is that of a coming attractions movie reel. A series of slides is projected onto the screen: "The following Preview is rated R". "Please, No Smoking in the Auditorium." "This means you!" Music from the soundtrack of Martin Scorsese's The Last Temptation of Christ plays. A voiceover is heard.

ANNOUNCER (VOICE-OVER)

It was a time of passion.

The screen is turned into a playing area for a movie preview by a slide projector. Oedipus and Jocasta enter.

OEDIPUS

Jocasta!

JOCASTA.

Oedipus! Don't leave me!

ANNOUNCER (VO)

It was a time of mystery.

OEDIPUS

I must find out. I must find out the truth.

Teiresius, a blind seer, enters.

ANNOUNCER (VO)

It was a time of discovery.

TEIRESIUS

Yo' man. You do not want to find out what's going on.

ANNOUNCER (VO)

From the director of Raging Bull, Cape Fear, and Goodfellas. Martin Scorsese presents a timeless story of a forbidden love.

OEDIPUS

I DID WHAT?!

ANNOUNCER (VO)

Siskel & Ebert rave "Two somewhat enthusiastic thumbs up!" Jeffery Lyons calls it "The family film of the year!" St. Augustine says "Exciting! Stimulating! Arousing!"

OEDIPUS

I can't see.

TEIRESIUS

Because you poked yo' bleedin' eyes out.

ANNOUNCER (VO)

Columbia Pictures presents: Emma Thompson as Jocasta, Hugh Grant as Oedipus, Keanu Reeves as Kreon, and introducing... Stevie Wonder as Teiresius.

Title comes up: The Last Temptation of Oedipus.

ANNOUNCER (VO)

The Last Temptation of Oedipus. A movie for the whole family. Opens Mother's Day at a polis near you.

They all exit. Lights up on a student at her desk on her phone.

STUDENT

Come on. Come on. Pick up the phone. You gotta be awake, it's only three o'clock in the morning. Hello? Hi, it's me. Yeah, I know what time it is. Well, you know that stupid class I've been taking? Yeah, Ancient Humanities, Greece and Rome, the attack of the Dead, White Males. Well, the final is tomorrow, and I haven't read all year, I've run out of coffee, I've been to three lectures all semester, and I can't remember what my teacher's name is. My God. I've been dreaming about movies with Martin Scorsese and Stevie Wonder for Christ's sake! What? I can? There is a God, and He can help me on my test? Sure, what do I do? Okay. Thanks. Bye. I clutch my syllabus, click my heels together 3 times, and say "There's no place like HUM, there's no place like HUM, there's no place like HUM..."

Music from the original Star Trek TV show plays. Light floods the auditorium. A magical being enters, carried by two smiling stagehands. It is Homer.

STUDENT

My god! Who are you?

HOMER

I have been sent to aid you in your quest for knowledge. The name's Homer. Mycenaean Homer.

STUDENT

Homer? You mean THE Homer? Writer of The Odyssey? The Iliad? And all that other stuff Richmond Lattimore translated?

HOMER

You were expecting maybe Homer Simpson? Of course I'm that Homer.

STUDENT

Wow, It's a pleasure to meet you. But what are you doing here?

A chorus enters. They say most of their lines in unison.

CHORUS

He's here to teach you western humanities, dummy.

STUDENT

And who are they?

HOMER

Introduce yourselves, kids. *They do, singing their names medley-style.* They're our chorus.

CHORUS MEMBER #1

I'm also your paper grader. *To audience, with a smirk.* Remedial English.

STUDENT

But... how can you help me with my test?

HOMER

I shall help you by teaching you about all the wonderful things you have missed by not attending HUM 110, not least of which is my own work. Oh yes, The Iliad. It's a tale spun by the gods above of a great war fought over Helen's love. Which I, with the Muses' tongue which speaks through me, will humbly relate for posterity. It's a tale of armor, and war, and ships, and armor, and spears and fortresses and armor, and sleek-hulled vessels and huge massive monuments and armor, and, uh... hit it...

The chorus begins swaying and humming, slowly, the music to "My Favorite Things."

Bright armored soldiers,
All marching in phase,
Great armies of vessels,
With their hulls set ablaze
Blood soaked chariots that crash into springs!
These are a few of my favorite things!
When the Gods smite! When the bee stings! When I'm feeling --

During the song, a drummer enters and gets comfortable at the drum set.

STUDENT

Wait a minute. Time out! Surely you do know my time is limited, don't you?

HOMER

Of course I do, and don't call me "Shirley".

The drummer plays a rim shot and exits. The drum set is not used for the rest of the play.

STUDENT

Do you think you can, you know, speed things up?

HOMER

No problem.

Music starts up again, much faster.

HOMER

Pectoral muscles,
All molded in leather,
A breastplate, a codpiece,
Whatever the weather --

STUDENT

HOMER!!

HOMER

Sorry. Sorry. When I get to describe all that armor, why, I just get carried away.

STUDENT

I understand, and will read The Iliad some other time. When I have the time. But right now, I need to get through this test, so can we just get to the point?

HOMER

I suppose it's sort of like this: Shit happens, and then you die and you armor clatters thunderously about you. Such was the burial of Hector, breaker of horses.

CHORUS

Word!

HOMER

Hey they still read me, don't they? Okay, it's time to get on to the next step of our Odyssey.

STUDENT

Our what?

HOMER

Never mind. Tell me, do you have a copy of the syllabus?

STUDENT

Sure... Right here.

HOMER

Uh, hmmm.... Ah yes. After me came the Classical Era's second most memorable poet. Hesiod. Writer of the Theogony and Works and Days, he also had a now little known second career.

Hesiod enters, sits down at desk.

STUDENT

Really? What was that?

HOMER

He wrote an advice column for The Achaean Times.

STUDENT

An advice column? Like “Dear Abby”? Or “Miss Manners”?

HOMER

Yup. He was the first. All sorts of topics, from sex to farming and shipbuilding. “Ask Hesiod” it was called. Here he answers a question from one of his readers.

Voice-over as Hesiod reads letter, and then another as he writes response.

VOICE OF LETTER

Dear Hesiod,

As I am often walking from place to place, I often am confused about where it is proper to piss. Usually I just take off all my clothes and let the piss fly where it may, although a friend told me it was rude after I accidentally soaked his clothing. And while I’m on the subject of penises, when’s the best time to sire children, and is it rude to masturbate in front of a roaring fire?

Sincerely,

Uncomfortable in Athens.

Hesiod considers then starts writing. Voice-over.

VOICE OF HESIOD

Dear Uncomfortable:

Do not piss as you stand and face the sun, but do it after the sun sets and before it rises, and even then do not be naked, for nights belong to the gods. Do not piss either off or on the road while you walk. The devout and wise man squats for this act, or does it against the sturdy wall of some yard. And in your house do not sit by the hearth with your genitals exposed and bespattered with semen. Sire your children when you return from a feast of the gods, not when you come back from an inauspicious burial. Never piss into springs.

Sincerely,

Hesiod.

Hesiod picks up writing material and exits.

STUDENT

Okay, so why is this guy significant? Why should we have to study him today?

HOMER

Well he was... he was... You know, kind of... Um... Old. He’s very old, and that’s why you study him.

STUDENT

I don’t buy that, Homer.

HOMER

Well, tough. You should have gone somewhere else, then. You’re being tested on this, and that should be incentive enough.

STUDENT

But-

HOMER

Look, do you want my help or not?

STUDENT

Yeah.

HOMER

Okay. Then just stop stalling and let's get onto the next subject.
Aha!

Homer snaps fingers. Jazzy music is played. The chorus snaps their fingers.

CHORUS

And now Greek Thoughts, by Archilochus.

Enter Archilochus and a bassist, both dressed as beat poets.

ARCHILOCHUS

The fox knows many tricks, the hedgehog only one.

Cuts off music and chorus with a wave.

ARCHILOCHUS

One good one.

The chorus snaps their approval as the music resumes. They exit.

STUDENT

What the fuck does that mean?

CHORUS

What do you expect? It's only poetry.

HOMER

By a man named Archilochus, straight out of Richmond Lattimore's Greek Lyrics. And that brings us to... Ah yes, the historians. Let's see, first we had Herodotus.

Enter Herodotus, who starts working the audience, shaking hands, etc.

HOMER

His was the first written historical account ever, you know. And who could forget Thucydides?

Thucydides enters, more of the same. He soon runs in with Herodotus, and they jostle for space.

HOMER

His History of the Peloponnesian War still sends modern historians into orgasmic frenzies.

WOMAN IN AUDIENCE

Loud. Oh Thucydides!

MAN IN AUDIENCE

Louder. Oh Thucydides!

HOMER

And then there was Tacitus-

Tacitus enters, enters the fray with Herodotus and Thucydides. It gets violent.

HOMER

-who reported on the various intrigues of the Roman empire.

A Oasis Pizza Delivery Girl enters.

OASIS PIZZA DELIVERY GIRL

And I'm Helen. Who ordered a Greek pizza with everything?

HOMER

That'll be me. Thanks.

Pulls a coin from his toga. Who knows from where? He gives it to her.

She exits. Homer takes a slice of pizza and sets the rest off to one side, where it is promptly devoured by the Chorus.

HOMER

Eating. Yes, history is such a vital and important part of any culture, and the legacy left by these fellows was immense. However, there was absolutely nothing funny about any of them and I can't remember them too well anyway, so LEAVE! Get off the stage! Go on, get!

HERODOTUS

What?

TACITUS

You can't do this!

THUCYDIDES

I'm a famous historian!

Homer pushes them off stage.

HOMER

Look, there are no small parts, only small actors.

HERODOTUS

Go to Hades!

THUCYDIDES

Asshole!

TACITUS

Fuckin' Greek!

He takes a slice of pizza. The historians exit.

/ Stop */*

A voice is heard from offstage.

POLITICALLY CORRECT PERSON

I've had just about enough of this!

HOMER

It's a bird!

STUDENT

It's a plane!

CHORUS

It's Politically Correct Person!

Politically Correct Person and the Multicultural One descend furiously to the stage.

MULTICULTURAL ONE

We're mad as hell and we're not gonna take it anymore!

P.C.P.

That's right! And that was just one bad pun too many!

STUDENT

Who are you?

P.C.P.

Allow me to introduce myself! I am Politically Correct Person! And this is my finely tuned sidekick, The Multicultural One! We fight for standpoint epistemology, proportionate and appropriate representation of each and every ethnicity, gender, and orientation, and the end of Eurocentric domination of world events.

STUDENT

Oh.

P.C.P.

I have a dream! I dream of a world where I am free to play Ultimate Frisbee with my African American brothers and sisters! I have a dream! I dream of a world where I can discuss Zen meditation techniques in HUM conference without fear of reprisal! I have a dream!

The Chorus begins to get into it, with shouts of "Yeah!" "All right!" "Sounds good!", "Et Cetera!"

P.C.P.

I dream of a day when our gay and lesbian he-roes and she-roes can cruise through their Senate Confirmation Hearings for the Supreme Court! I have a dream! I dream of making six figures a week doing university lectures and book signings!

The chorus gives a tremendous cheer.

P.C.P.

Friends, it's time for us to end the oppression.

CHORUS

Let's go!

The Chorus charges out the door.

STUDENT

But I just want to pass tomorrow's test.

M.O.

The HUM test? What does it matter? Let the test go. You can find another equally good.

HOMER

Hold on a second. This stuff has been studied for centuries. These are the classics.

M.O.

No, you look. This class of yours is circling the drain as we speak. It's wasted, it's obsolete, and it's worth 1.5 credits for no reason whatsoever.

HOMER

But an education in the classics is what has set Reed apart for its entire history. You can't just --

P.C.P.

Listen here, Homer - if that is indeed your real name - you either shape up and include women and minorities in your syllabus, or you and your precious HUM 110 will be axed from the curriculum -

M.O.

Tarred!

P.C.P.

Feathered!

HOMER

Er... allergic

M.O.

Racked!

P.C.P.

Sacked!

M.O.

Sliced!

P.C.P.

Diced!

HOMER

Love to. Can't. Gotta meet with my broker.

M.O.

Whipped!

P.C.P.

Audited!

M.O.

Differentiated!

P.C.P

Mined!

M.O.

Varnished!

P.C.P.

And forced to watch reruns of ALF in the psychology building!

M.O.

And then, we'll use our super-powers on you.

Homer gulps.

P.C.P.

Think about it. Come, Multicultural One. We have minds to open, quotas to enforce, men to bash...

M.O.

Bye bye!

They exit.

STUDENT

Oh, no Homer! The test is in a few hours, and I have to learn about women and minorities too?

HOMER

Oh yes. I've just remembered the huge contributions that women and minorities gave to Classical Society -

P.C.P.

We heard that!

HOMER

-- a subject I'm sure will come up in regularly spaced intervals throughout the syllabus!

STUDENT

That's not funny, Homer.

HOMER

I know. That means, of course, it's time for...

VOICE OVER

Booming. THE REIGN OF THE PHALLUS!!!!

Lights turn off. The awesome theme music to "2001: A Space Odyssey" starts to play. The lights slowly rise on a huge seven foot phallus on the stage. An apeman approaches it and bows, grunting happily. He is promptly challenged by an apewoman, and a wrestling match begins. He suplexes her and knocks her down, but as he celebrates she sneaks behind the phallus and knocks it on top of him, revealing Friedrich Nietzsche in all his splendor. Then a referee interrupts with a whistle.

REFEREE

Offensive foul! Extreme silliness! Five yards! First Down. The Phallus is hereby removed from the syllabus!

Nietzsche carries the Phallus offstage.

APEMEN

Do you believe this? I'm not even getting credit for this. I gotta talk to my adviser.

STUDENT

Is this supposed to be meaning something Homer? Cause if it is, I don't get it.

HOMER

Patience, my child. Rome was not built in a day.

STUDENT

Patience! I don't have any patience! I grew up on MTV and Geraldo. If information isn't packaged in ten second sound bites, I lose it!

HOMER

Fascinating. How about this for a sound bite? And now Greek Thoughts, by Hipponax.

Snaps finger. A nun wearing boxing gloves is seen above the screen. Beside her is the rat.

STUDENT

Oh no! Not again!

NUN

Hold my habit, somebody, while I hit Boupalous in the eye. I can hit with both hands and I never miss punches. Nyah! Nyah! Rrrrr.....nyah!

She decks the rat and knocks it off the screen.

STUDENT

That does it. I'm throwing it all away and transferring to Carleton. Everything's supposed to be a little bit better there.

HOMER

Ah, poets. If I weren't one of them, I'd love to lop all of their heads off. Which of course brings us to Plato, and the philosophy wing of this course. The scope of ancient philosophy was immense. The early Ionic thinkers included Thales, one of the first great sages, his student Anaximander, Heraclitus, who received personal commendations from Solon and C.D.C. Reeve, and the early atomist known as Democritus.

They all enter and stand in a line, dressed in blue togas.

HOMER

Then there was the revolution in Athens led by Socrates and Plato, which produced an equally extraordinary group of later thinkers, such as Celsus and Hypatia, the most noted neo-platonists, Diogenes, who enjoyed self-stimulation in public, and, of course, Aristotle

They all enter in red togas.

HOMER

Their views may have been widely different, their complex ideas always opposing each other, but they held this in common: a love of thinking and a love of rugby.

Pause.

STUDENT

I'm sorry, did you say rugby?

HOMER

Rugby. *Pause.* And now it's time for the Philosophers Feud All Star Rugby Extravaganza!!! In the white togas today we have the Burly Ionian Thinkers!

The Ionian Thinkers shake their fists.

HOMER

And on stage left, in the blue togas, we have the Rampagin' Platonic Epistemologists!

The Platonic Epistemologists shout and dance.

HOMER

And now, announcing this clash of the titans is none other than the one, the only Socrates of Athens!!!

Queen Music is heard for Socrates' entrance.

HOMER

With, of course, on standby, Crito.

The players line up for a kickoff.

SOCRATES

All right folks. This is Socrates of Athens, high above courtside at the Coliseum. By my side is, of course, Crito *Pronounced Creeto*.

CRITO

That's Crito.

SOCRATES

CREETO!

CRITO

Yes, Socrates.

SOCRATES

Oh, and the game is underway.

Ball is thrown in from offstage.

SOCRATES

Whoeeie! Democritus fields the kickoff! He's zigging and zagging, fiddling and diddling. I sense a try coming up. Look out!

Democritus is sacked by the opposing team.

SOCRATES

Did they get him? They caved him.

They proceed to pummel him. One pulls out a whip.

SOCRATES

He's down. As he was turning to the gate in front of his house, Democritus was not happy. He was ashamed and confused. This is one of the most dramatic stories in the history of sport. Some play, eh Crito?

CRITO

Of course, Socrates.

The players begin a scrum.

SOCRATES

Now there's a scrum. They're pushing, trying to get the ball. A mass of sweaty, muddy, exquisitely oiled young bodies pushing and squirming and-

CRITO

Yes, Socrates!

The ball slips out towards SR. Heraclitus picks it up, hides it behind his back, and attempts to sneak away.

SOCRATES

Oh and Heraclitus has sneaked away with the ball! They're chasing him down!

They charge off the stage. Sound of gunshots.

SOCRATES

Oh, what a collision! They'll have to stop play for that.

CRITO

You are correct, Socrates.

SOCRATES

Well, now that we have a break in the action, we'd like to remind you that this match is brought to you by Snapple, the most refreshing drink around, whether your engaged in a furious game of rugby or simply relaxing by the fire with a nubile young slave boy.

Slide of Snapple bottle.

SOCRATES

Crito?

CRITO

Made from the best stuff on earth!

SOCRATES

Okay. Play's resuming again. A couple of tries have been scored, but I've missed them. Here goes Aristotle... Fiddles and diddles... what an arm... Holy Cow! That's some kind of pass. He's tossed it to Hypatia, she's tearing down the line, this could be a try... aren't I terrible, I'm always rooting for them... they're my students, you know -- Hey! O.K.! Did she make it? I missed it. She didn't. No, she did!

They reenter, in slow motion. They chase a player down, but not before she crosses the goal line.

SOCRATES

Slow motion She's broken free! She... Could.... Go.... All... The... Way... *Normal speed* Yes! She made it! A try! BY THE DOG! BY THE DOG! BY THE DOG!!!! The Giants win the pennant! The Giants win the pennant! I mean... Free Snapple for everyone!

EVERYONE

Huzza!

They all charge off stage.

STUDENT

Oh, Homer, what was going on there? This is all so confusing.

HOMER

That was some game. I swear, those Platonic Epistemologists are terrific rugby players.

STUDENT

Homer!

HOMER

What? Oh, let's move on. I see next on the syllabus is...

STUDENT

And now for Greek Thoughts, by Sappho. *Pause*. What am I saying?

Sappho enters.

SAPPHO

Some there are who say that the fairest thing seen on the black earth is an array of horsemen; some, men marching; some would say ships; but I would say she whom one loves best is the loveliest.

Sappho exits.

STUDENT

I guess that wasn't too bad. Homer? *Homer is weeping*. Homer, what's wrong?

HOMER

That...was beautiful. *Sniffing*. She even mentioned ships! If only she didn't ruin it with that last line...

Virgil enters shyly.

VIRGIL

Excuse me. are you Homer?

HOMER

Yes.

VIRGIL

I just wanted to say, I'm you're number one fan. Could you perhaps sign an autograph?

HOMER

Brightening. Sure. And who shall I make it out to?

VIRGIL

Virgil. *Pause*. *Aeneid* Virgil.

HOMER

Oh.

VIRGIL

You know my poem?

HOMER

Oh, yes.

VIRGIL

Well, did you like it?

HOMER

Oh, I loved it. Loved it smashingly, considering that everything about it seemed uncannily familiar. Yes, characters, plot development, story format, jacket photo, rhyme and reason! Let's face it, your piece of crap poem was pretty much a straight ripoff from my work!

VIRGIL

A ripoff! What are you talking about? My Aeneid was meant as a tribute to your work, you should be honored...

STUDENT

Uh, Homer?

HOMER

Honored? Honored? Look, I have only one thing to say to you: theft of intellectual property! I oughtta sue your ass for copyright infringement!

STUDENT

I don't have much time left...

VIRGIL

You nitwit, there was no copyright law in antiquity!

HOMER

Yeah, you Romans can always come up with some technicality can't you? You creep!

VIRGIL

Why, I...

HOMER

Jerk!

STUDENT

Homer...

HOMER

Sssssssophist!

VIRGIL

Are you done yet?

HOMER

Why, yeah, I guess so.

VIRGIL

You want to come back to my place?

HOMER

I thought you'd never ask.

VIRGIL

Well come on. I've got this suit of armor that'll look just wonderful

on you...

They exit.

STUDENT

But Homer...Wait! Oh, great, what do I do now?

Blackout. A pair of slides alternate in different colors: "Intermission." Elevator music plays briefly, and then a voice over: "And now, for your viewing pleasure, an exhibition of ancient Greek art with musical accompaniment." Slides are shown of Greek art along to "The Blue Danube". The slides grow progressively more porno-graphic with time. From backstage heavy breathing and the clanking of armor can be heard. The Multicultural One screams "Cut! Cut!". Music stops, light rises.

M.O.

Dragging film. What kind of show is this, anyway? Exits.