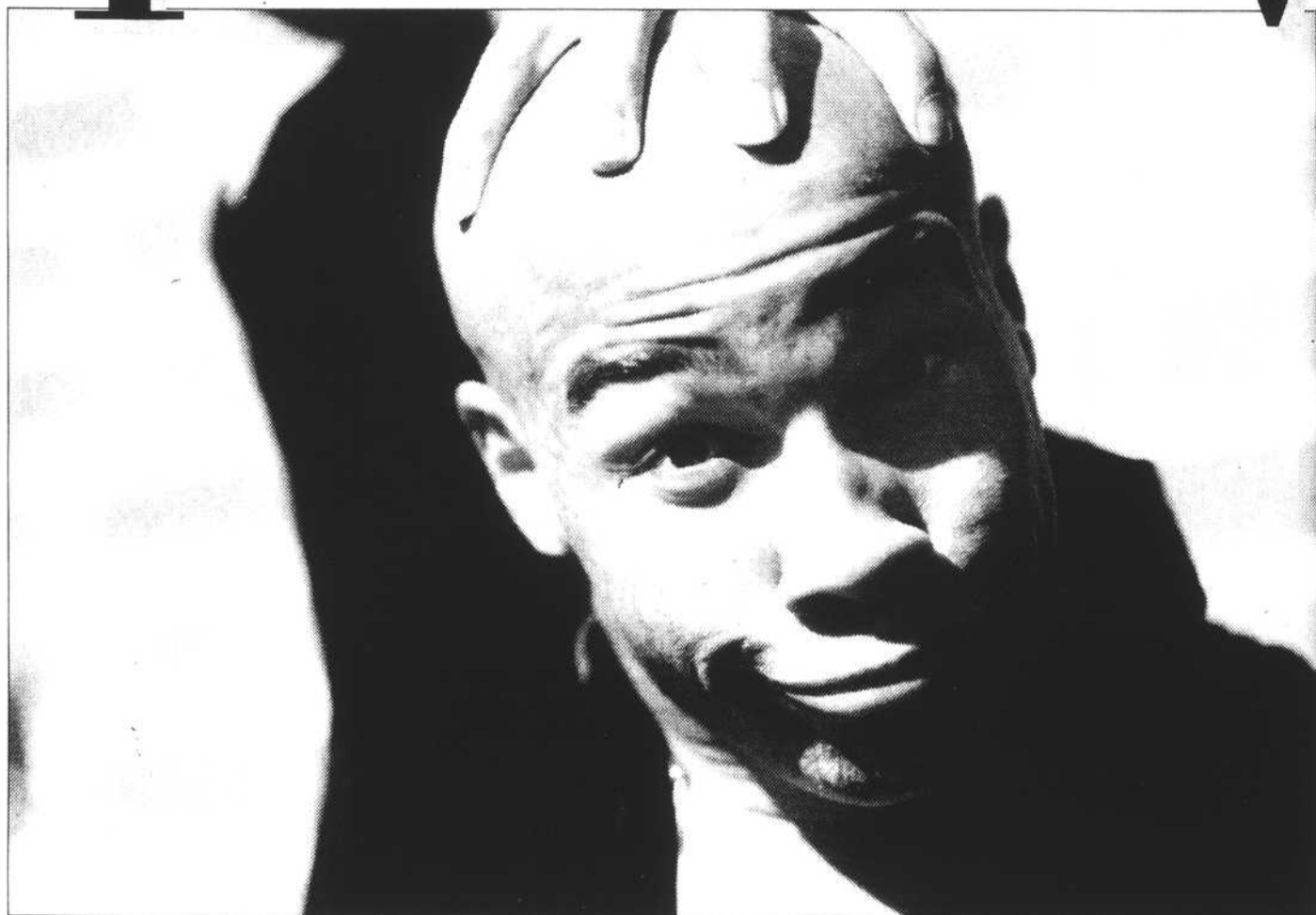


The Written World



CECIL HOWELL, a senior international business and computer-science major, contributed to the book of essays called "The Outsiders: Living in an Alien Culture."

DAWN DIETRICH/DN

'Outsiders' describes adjustments made to American way of life

BY LIZA HOLTMEIER
Staff writer

When Julia Ann Champoux moved to Lincoln from the Philippines, programs such as "The Jerry Springer Show" shocked her.

"Why would people want to share such personal things on television?" Champoux asked.

The sick displays of "Springer" were just one aspect of American culture to which she had to adjust. Champoux, who already knew English, struggled to understand the American version and its colloquialisms. She also had to overcome her dissatisfaction with the structure of American families.

Champoux's experience is one of many told in a new book titled "The Outsiders: Living in an Alien Culture."

The book was compiled by Mourtazo Chadyev, an exchange student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and Richard Kimbrough, a part-time professor at UNL.

Composed of interviews and observations, the compilation of essays draws upon 33 interviews detailing people's experiences as "outsiders" in American culture.

The majority of the interviews involve immigrants who have settled in Nebraska, but a few describe the experiences of blacks, American Indians and people from the blind and deaf communities.

Chadyev and Kimbrough wrote the book, which is available at the Nebraska and University bookstores, in order to give people real-life examples of the obstacles others encounter when entering a new culture.

And although each interview details a unique and personal experience, a few consistent themes dominate the book.

Many of the interviewees address the differences in American family structures and those of other countries. Of all the aspects of American culture, a number of the contributors felt the American family lacked the most meaning in people's day-to-day lives. "In the Philippines, family get-togethers are loud and rowdy," Champoux said. "In America, when you get together with your family, you can't just act silly. It's much more serious and awkward."

Chadyev felt the same way when he came to the United States. "Family relationships looked very cold to me," Chadyev said. "Parents and children just didn't seem to communicate."

In Chadyev's and Champoux's countries, family members lived close to one another and frequently spent extended amounts of time together. In the United States, children visited their parents only on holidays, Chadyev said.

Interview subjects also commented on the materialistic nature of American society.

"They felt Americans are people who are too much concerned with their financial well-being and their financial future," Chadyev said.

“Family relationships looked very cold to me. Parents and children just didn't seem to communicate.”

MOURTAZO CHADYEV
UNL exchange student

But while many lamented Americans' misplaced focus on economic success, most appreciated the United States as a land of opportunity.

They felt this opportunity began in the classroom. Kimbrough commented on the experience of Mila Saskova-Pierce, an associate professor of modern languages and literature at UNL.

"She said that in Czechoslovakia, she was so fearful of making mistakes in the classroom. If she missed one, they would say, 'Why didn't you study harder?' In America, you miss one, and they say you did well. She felt the praise was better than the condemnation," Kimbrough said.

Many felt the education system in America also provided more choices.

"In America, people could take any subject they're interested in," Chadyev said. "Where I come from, we had six classes we had to take. Even people who had no interest in it still had to take it."

This rigidity carried over into the freedom to choose one's profession. During a trip to Moscow, Kimbrough sat on the airplane with a man who wanted to be an artist. However, under the communist regime of the time, this profession was not an option.

"Essentially, they like the freedom here," Kimbrough said. "Some think that America is a bit chaotic because it's too free. But many of them see this opportunity better than Americans see it."

Kimbrough and Chadyev hope the book will help U.S. citizens appreciate their own culture while opening their eyes to the strengths of others.

The two first met in Chadyev's home country of Tajikistan, located in central Asia, while Kimbrough was teaching there.

The two became friends when Chadyev came to America to go to school. While attending a picnic of a mutual friend, Kimbrough and Chadyev began discussing the difficulties people encountered in a world where global connections were ever-increasing.

They thought it would be interesting to compile the stories of immigrants living in Nebraska.

Work on the book began in June 1997. Chadyev found the interview subjects using his connections in the international community and got the book printed locally at MKR Printing Inc. in Crete. Kimbrough and Chadyev asked the interview subjects 80 to 100 questions about their views on their new culture: What did they like and dislike about it? How did they perceive their new culture's education system, food, marriage customs and sports as compared to their own? What kind of obstacles did they encounter during their assimilation?

Chadyev and Kimbrough plan to market the book to Nebraska schools, which recently have received a legislative mandate to incorporate multicultural topics into their curriculum.

But they believe the book would be of interest to anyone who has contact with people from other cultures.

"I always tell my students, 'One thing you need to understand is: It doesn't matter whom you meet, that person knows something you don't,'" Kimbrough said.

Pitt embodies death in 'Meet Joe Black'

BY JASON HARDY
Senior staff writer

Movie Review

Human mortality has long been a cinematic theme, but few big-screen embodiments of death and the afterlife are as stylish and sexy as "Meet Joe Black" star Brad Pitt.

With the possible exception of George Burns, of course.

Universal Pictures' latest release, "Meet Joe Black," a remake of the 1934 film "Death Takes a Holiday," is the story of a man called upon by death for a lesson in life. Bill Parrish (Anthony Hopkins) is a wealthy businessman who meets Joe Black (Brad Pitt), the physical embodiment of death. Black makes

a deal with Parrish and prolongs his life in exchange for a tour of emotions and experiences.

Sounds like a ripping good time, huh?

Unfortunately, the two do little more than attend board meetings and family dinners. Nothing flashy or exotic really takes place until Death gets horny.

Despite being relatively slow-moving, "Meet Joe Black" offers an interesting view of the nature of death and its relationship to mortal man. There are a lot of nice moments and humorous

twists throughout the three-hour duration of the film, but ultimately the ending is completely drawn out, and the film would have been more focused and enjoyable had it been condensed to about two hours.

Pitt does a good job as the inexperienced Joe Black. Having spent all of eternity killing people, Death is a little lacking in social graces, and Pitt's piercing eyes and blank stares convey completely his character's naiveté. Black stumbles through his time on earth with a childlike astonishment and finds pleasure in a lot of life's little things. Pitt also does a fine job exploring death's more greedy and spoiled side by acting stubborn and unemotional.

Black's eventual love interest turns

out to be Parrish's daughter, Susan (Claire Forlani), who is wooed by Black's mysterious appearance and charm. Unfortunately, Forlani's acting job isn't quite as appealing. Her character is vague, and the bewildered confusion she carries throughout the film only makes it more frustrating and boring.

Despite a weak leading lady and a drawn-out conclusion, "Meet Joe Black" does have numerous side plots and characters who make the film worth watching. Unfortunately, the film's strongest character, Bill Parrish, isn't developed nearly enough. His eventual enlightenment is never really explored, and the audience is left to just accept his zest for life without seeing him live it

The Facts

Title: "Meet Joe Black"
Stars: Brad Pitt, Anthony Hopkins
Director: Martin Brest
Rating: PG-13
Grade: B
Five Words: Death gets some time off

Hopkins does deliver a quality representation of his character's inherent goodness, and the film as a whole has a lot of creative shots and cinematography. Unfortunately, because of its lengthy running time, by the end of "Meet Joe Black," death seems fitting and somewhat appealing.

But that's to be expected when death is as cute as Brad Pitt.