

3-30-2012

An Essay Concerning Human Understanding

Joshua Unikel

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.butler.edu/booth>

Recommended Citation

Unikel, Joshua (2012) "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding," *Booth*: Vol. 4 : Iss. 3 , Article 5.
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.butler.edu/booth/vol4/iss3/5>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Butler University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Booth by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ Butler University. For more information, please contact omacisaa@butler.edu.

An Essay Concerning Human Understanding

Abstract

Cookie Monster is brave and confident. He doesn't care that he can't use his eyes together. He's content with eating cookies, and eating hubcaps, and eating plates. Cookie Monster doesn't go to the pediatric ophthalmologist if there was an ophthalmologist's office on Sesame Street, somewhere between Mr. Hooper's Store, and Big Bird's Nest, and the stoop with emerald green doors. And even if he did go, Cookie Monster wouldn't care about the doctor's explanation as to why in so many instances, in so many episodes of the show, Cookie Monster leads with his furry hands, always reaching out and following his reach, bringing things toward him.

Keywords

Sesame Street, necessities, puppets, imitation



BOOTH



A JOURNAL

March 30, 2012

An Essay Concerning Human Understanding

Joshua Unikel

Cookie Monster is brave and confident. He doesn't care that he can't use his eyes together. He's content with eating cookies, and eating hubcaps, and eating plates. Cookie Monster doesn't go to the pediatric ophthalmologist if there was an ophthalmologist's office on *Sesame Street*, somewhere between Mr. Hooper's Store, and Big Bird's Nest, and the stoop with emerald green doors. And even if he did go, Cookie Monster wouldn't care about the doctor's explanation as to why in so many instances, in so many episodes of the show, Cookie Monster leads with his furry hands, always reaching out and following his reach, bringing things toward him.

Cookie Monster doesn't need to keep appearances or save face. Though his eyes meander and bounce, his gaze is subtly fixed on what he wants. His spherical eyes sit like two dense stars above his dark ellipse of a mouth, and all of it with its gravity pulling everyone to love him. It pulls everyone into forgetting how differently they see the eyes of puppets and the eyes of people.

The doctor that Cookie Monster would never care to visit, the doctor that doesn't exist on *Sesame Street*, might tell Cookie Monster that because his eyes are crossed he lacks "fusion." He can't use both of his eyes at once and probably can't see depth well. To correct his eyes, Cookie Monster would need several eye surgeries. Surgeries that Cookie Monster never gets, a doctor he never goes to, a problem he never sees. He simply pulls things close, close enough to see shape and detail.

This is why no one laughs at Cookie Monster for his eyes. Even if they call his eyes “googly” or “wonky,” it’s affectionate. It lets everyone forget that there’s probably a sadness behind what Cookie Monster shows. Or, at least there’s a sadness that could be imagined behind Cookie Monster’s volume and gestures. Or, at least this is what the boy came to understand, watching *Sesame Street* on his parents’ TV during the days afterward when he got to stay home from school.

Cookie Monster knows that without his wildly waving arms, without his wide flopping mouth, without his loud “Me want cookie!” and “Cookie! Cookie! Cookie!”—without these things Cookie Monster isn’t Cookie Monster. He’s simply a motionless thing for everyone to stare at or laugh at, to whisper about or to pound on.

This is why Cookie Monster is the way he is. There’s a kind of secreted genius hiding behind the way he acts. Or, at least these are things that the boy needed to see in Cookie Monster. These are things that the boy learned from watching Cookie Monster on *Sesame Street* when he was at home from school after another visit to the local Children’s Hospital, after another eye surgery, after another few days home from school. This is where the boy learned that if he talked loudly enough, if he gestured with wild hands enough, if he ran full speed wherever he was going enough, then no one could see what he didn’t want them to see.

This is when the boy started fooling himself into believing that if he acted like Cookie Monster, then he would be treated like Cookie Monster. If he watched Cookie Monster closely enough and acted enough like him, then the boy would somehow feel brave and confident. As brave and confident as he imagined Cookie Monster always felt. As brave and confident as the boy needed to imagine someone could feel, looking like he did.

Joshua Unikel is an MFA candidate and recent Iowa Arts Fellow in the University of Iowa's Nonfiction Writing Program. He also serves as the assistant editor of the *Seneca Review*. His work has recently appeared in *TriQuarterly Online*, *The Normal School*, and *Drunken Boat*.

[← older](#)

[about](#)

[archives](#)

[news](#)

[shop](#)

[submit](#)

© 2012 Booth, A Journal

follow us

[Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#)

elsewhere

[Booth](#) | [Butler MFA](#)