

# The Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Journal 2009

*A collection of scholarly research by fellows of the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Program*

*Through subtle shades of color, the cover design represents the layers of richness and diversity that flourish within minority communities.*

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# Preface

It has been an honor to assemble this collection of original research from undergraduate recipients of the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship (MMUF). Having welcomed approximately 3,300 undergraduate students into its ranks as Fellows, the MMUF program continues to realize its aim of increasing the number of minority students and others with a demonstrated commitment to eradicating racial disparities that pursue PhDs in the arts and sciences. Indeed, with more than 311 fellows who have earned their PhDs and are now actively teaching, MMUF is making significant inroads in reducing the serious underrepresentation of certain minority groups on faculties across the nation.

The articles presented in the 2009 *MMUF Journal* showcase the original research of fellows who participated in the program during the academic year 2008–2009 as well as recent alumni of the program. This year's *MMUF Journal* spotlights the contributions of just a few of this generation of emerging scholars as they make new forays into the scholarly world. Fellows were encouraged to submit works showcasing their intellectual endeavors, especially the culmination of research conducted under the supervision of their MMUF faculty mentor.

The diverse articles in this year's journal reveal the breadth of perspectives represented in the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship 21 fields of designated study.\* The issues probed in the essays range from Jeff Yamashita's exploration of competing portrayals of Japanese American identity and Maisha Rashid's examinations of contemporary attitudes towards the rights of Arab and Muslim Americans to Donovan Ramon's analysis of historical and modern literary depictions of slavery. The breadth of students' research topics—traversing the globe and spanning disciplines, historical eras and conceptual commitments—shows both their promise in the pursuit of knowledge and engagement with their world(s).

It has been a grand pleasure to once again read and select the articles for the journal. Whether exploring the influence of racial politics on gender performativity, risks associated with the prevalent problem of water contamination, the politics of virtue in status in Italian architecture, or the ambivalent consequences of color-blind politics—these students are examining issues critical to our understanding of underrepresented groups *and* society at large. Their engaging questions and analyses are a testament to the added value—and necessity—of such scholars to diversify the homogenized nature of institutions and provide new perspectives in our quest for knowledge.

We present students' original research in the *MMUF Journal* in continued support of their aim to obtain doctorates and become exceptional scholars. We hope you will enjoy their articles.

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\*Designated fields for the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship: Anthropology, Area Studies, Art History, Classics, Computer Science, Demography, Earth Science, Ecology, English, Ethnomusicology, Foreign Languages, Geology, History, Literature, Mathematics, Musicology, Philosophy, Physics, Political Theory, Religion, and Sociology.



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# Public Policy and the Black-White Infant Mortality Gap

Alicia Adams, *Brown University*

*Alicia Adams, a junior and Human Biology major, grew up in Waukegan, IL and plans to pursue a combined MD/PhD (sociology) after she graduates in 2011. Her aim is to link the social and the biological in order to better address the causes and consequences of health inequality and design potential solutions. Alicia is particularly interested in how the social worlds of marginalized populations alter their bodies and cause illness.*

## Abstract

The black-white infant mortality gap is worse today than it was in 1964, prior to the Civil Rights Act that banned discrimination and desegregated hospitals. Although some research suggests that the reason for the racial difference in infant mortality rates is genetic, this paper investigates the potential sociopolitical causes for higher rates of infant mortality among black women. During the Reagan era, there were substantial cuts in social welfare programs, which had significant consequences on the infant mortality rate, especially among blacks.

Black individuals have often been relegated to the lowest rungs of the social ladder in American society since Africans were first brought to this country. In the early 1600s, slavery was a matter of class, not of race: indentured servants from England originally worked the tobacco fields. It was not until the late 1600s that African slaves were brought to the United States.<sup>1</sup> It was at this time that the racial terms “black” and “white” came into use, thereby creating a “special social category where [blacks] contributed disproportionately to the country’s wealth and acquired disproportionately little of it, a situation that began in the 17th century and continues today.”<sup>2</sup> Despite the formal equality of political rights and freedoms, blacks still suffer from social inequality.

One significant manifestation of inequality is the relative infant mortality rate between blacks and whites. In 1964, the black-white infant mortality ratio was two to one; for the ten years following the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the relative infant mortality rate of blacks fell significantly<sup>3</sup> and

began to approach the infant mortality rate of whites. By 1990, however, the black-white infant mortality gap had increased substantially, and children born in Uruguay had a statistically higher chance of reaching their first birthday than black children born in inner-city Boston, despite their proximity to a world-class medical center.<sup>4</sup> By 2003, the relative infant mortality rate was worse than it was in 1964, with the black infant mortality rate reaching 2.3 times the rate of white infants.<sup>5</sup>

Existing literature has focused on potential genetic explanations for the black-white infant mortality gap. As evidence for a genetic cause, authors often cite the recurrence of preterm birth in an individual woman and birth timing trends among family members.<sup>6</sup> While these correlations certainly exist, they conflate the biological and the social by neglecting the improbability that an individual’s socioeconomic status significantly improves between children and that family members are likely to have shared racial and socioeconomic experiences. Therefore, trends within individuals and families provide insufficient evidence of a genetic cause for infant mortality. The black-white infant mortality gap itself has also been used as evidence of a genetic cause for differing rates of infant mortality, because different races have different frequencies of genetic polymorphisms.<sup>7</sup> This kind of explanation, however, is also a prime example of biological reductionism, as it neglects social factors that could contribute to the higher rates of infant mortality among black women.

The fact that the absolute number of infant deaths in the United States has decreased over time, while the relative rate of black infants to white infants has increased<sup>8</sup> even despite technological advancement, suggests that the black-white infant mortality gap is rooted in the sociopolitical environment. This paper explores the consequences of public policy changes during the Reagan era on the black-white infant mortality gap.

<sup>1</sup> Barbara Jeanne Fields, “Slavery, Race, and Ideology in the United States of America,” *New Left Review* (1990): 102.

<sup>2</sup> Richard David and James Collins Jr., “Disparities in Infant Mortality: What’s Genetics Got to Do With It?,” *American Journal of Public Health* 97 (2007): 1195.

<sup>3</sup> Douglas V. Almond, Kenneth Y. Chay, and Michael Greenstone, “Civil Rights, the War on Poverty, and Black-White Convergence in Infant Mortality in Mississippi,” (2003): 1.

<sup>4</sup> Ann Hartman, “Children in a Careless Society,” *Social Work* 35 (1990): 483.

<sup>5</sup> David, “Disparities,” 1191.

<sup>6</sup> Jevon Plunkett and Louis J. Muglia, “Genetic contributions to preterm birth: Implications from epidemiological and genetic association studies,” *Annals of Medicine* 40 (2008): 167–168.

<sup>7</sup> BP Chaudhari et al., “The Genetics of Birth Timing: Insights into a Fundamental Component of Human Development,” *Clinical Genetics* 74 (2008): 498.

<sup>8</sup> Ashley H. Schempf et al., “The Contribution of Preterm Birth to the Black-White Infant Mortality Gap, 1990 and 2000,” *American Journal of Public Health* 97 (2007): 1255.

## “Reaganomics”

“Reaganomics” refers to the set of economic policies proposed by Ronald Reagan, which aimed to reduce the following: government spending<sup>9</sup> (mainly through cutting funding to social welfare programs), income tax rates, government regulation, and inflation. Reduction of government spending and the change in income tax rates were the two Reagan policy aspects that had the most significant effects on the black-white infant mortality gap.

Before his first State of the Union Address in 1982, Reagan had already secured \$44 billion in cuts for social welfare programs, preserving only programs for those he deemed the “truly needy” and eliminating the programs that served the “greedy.”<sup>10</sup> Ironically, the majority of the seven programs that Reagan exempted from his budget cuts did not serve the destitute. For example, Social Security payments for retirees and surviving spouses, Medicare, and veterans’ compensation and pensions were among the programs protected from budget cuts, despite the fact that these benefits are paid out to qualifying individuals regardless of their wealth or income. At the same time, major cuts were made to welfare programs, including Medicaid, food stamps, and Aid to Families with Dependent Children,<sup>11</sup> programs that, by design, serve the most impoverished and vulnerable members of society.

Changes to the tax code during the Reagan era also indirectly affected the black-white infant mortality gap, by promoting “the upward shift of wealth and of resources on the economic ladder.”<sup>12</sup> The personal income tax bracket was changed from 70 to 28 percent, while the corporate tax rate decreased to 34 percent from 48 percent.<sup>13</sup> While the changes were made in an attempt to encourage investment and entrepreneurship by increasing the amount of capital available to the most advantaged members of society, the changes

resulted in further disadvantage to those at the bottom of the social ladder. In fact, the real income of the poorest two-fifths of society—the most economically vulnerable—actually declined, while the wealthiest 5 percent had real income increases of about 27 percent.<sup>14</sup>

### *Policy Effects on the Infant Mortality Gap*

Risk factors for infant mortality include race, age, and maternal health<sup>15</sup>, and all of these risk factors have a social dimension. The introduction of Medicaid in 1965 made care accessible and affordable for many low-income women and children. The program substantially increased the proportion of women seeking prenatal care within their first trimester, particularly among black women,<sup>16</sup> and also helped to drastically reduce the rates of infant mortality by making pre- and post-natal care accessible to those who were least likely to receive care otherwise. By 1980, 63 percent of black women sought out prenatal care during their first trimester.<sup>17</sup>

When Medicaid funding was cut in the Reagan era, 440,000 families lost their medical coverage.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, while about half of those families were eligible to receive financial support through Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), they lost their financial benefits in addition to their medical coverage after the budget cuts. An additional 40 percent of the families receiving benefits through AFDC had their benefits reduced.<sup>19</sup> The proportion of babies born to families living below the poverty level increased from 18 to 24 percent after Reagan’s budget cuts<sup>20</sup> and nearly one million individuals and families lost their food stamp benefits in the same period.<sup>21</sup>

### *Race as a Risk Factor*

Low birth weight is the most significant risk factor for infant mortality,<sup>22</sup> and it is strongly correlated with race. Black babies are twice as likely as white babies to be of low

<sup>9</sup> William A. Niskanen, “Reaganomics,” Library of Economics and Liberty, <http://www.econlib.org/library/Enc1/Reaganomics.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Ronald Reagan, “First State of the Union Address,” Reagan 2020, [http://reagan2020.us/speeches/First\\_State\\_of\\_the\\_Union.asp](http://reagan2020.us/speeches/First_State_of_the_Union.asp).

<sup>11</sup> David E. Rosenbaum, “Reagan’s ‘Safety Net’ Proposal: Who Will Land, Who Will Fall,” *New York Times*, March 17, 1981, News Analysis.

<sup>12</sup> Hartman, “Careless Society,” 483.

<sup>13</sup> Niskanen, “Reaganomics.”

<sup>14</sup> Bob Buzzanco, “Reality behind lofty rhetoric on Reagan legacy,” *Houston Chronicle*, June 9, 2004.

<sup>15</sup> University of Virginia Health System, “High-Risk Newborn,” University of Virginia, [http://www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/uvahealth/peds\\_hrnnewborn/lbw.cfm](http://www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/uvahealth/peds_hrnnewborn/lbw.cfm).

<sup>16</sup> Alice Sardell, “Child Health Policy in the U.S.: The Paradox of Consensus,” *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law* 15 (1990): 278.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Joel Krieger, “Social Policy in the Age of Reagan and Thatcher,” *The Socialist Register* (1987): 192.

<sup>20</sup> Sardell, “Child Health Policy,” 280.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Congressional Budget Office, “Factors Contributing to the Infant Mortality Ranking of the United States,” Congressional Budget Office (1992), <http://www.cbo.gov/doc.cfm?index=6219&type=0>.

birth weight<sup>23</sup> because black women are more likely than white women to be impoverished, have poor nutrition, be exposed to drugs, alcohol or cigarette smoke, and lack access to a primary care physician. All of the aforementioned factors increase the risk of having a low birth-weight baby. Furthermore, scholars comparing the birth weights of three groups of women—American-born white women, American-born black women, and African-born black women—have suggested a more direct link between racism and the frequency of low birth weight among black American babies. While the birth weights of infants born to African-born black women and U.S.-born white women were nearly identical, U.S.-born black women had infants that weighed significantly less. While the interpretation of these findings is not conclusive, the authors suggest that substantially lower birth weight of children born to American-born black women, compared to white American women as well as black African women, may be due to the experience of racism encountered among blacks in the United States. Perhaps even more telling of this potential link, when the study was repeated a generation later, researchers found that the result that American-born daughters of African-born black women gave birth to very low birth-weight infants, similar to those of the U.S.-born black women in the previous study—suggesting that there may be some critical effect on health for black women born in America that is negatively impacting the birth weight of their children.<sup>24</sup>

The social realities that poor black women face put them at a significantly higher risk for infant mortality and make them more likely to need social services; because of this, poor black women and their babies were the most vulnerable to changes in public policies during the Reagan era. Black women are two to three times more likely than their white counterparts to become pregnant during adolescence,<sup>25</sup> which compounds the risk of infant mortality. Additionally, maternal health requires access to adequate prenatal care and proper nutrition during pregnancy,<sup>26</sup> both of which black women are less likely to have since they are more likely to be living in poverty.<sup>27</sup> The loss of insurance, food stamps, and affordable housing during the Reagan era had dire consequences for black infant mortality rates.

### Poverty as Choice and Racialized Policies

Some whites, particularly conservatives, believe racism was vanquished with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, but some scholars have declared that the situation for blacks in America was worse in the 1980s than it was in the 1960s.<sup>28</sup> Consequently, the existence of underclass blacks came to be seen as a byproduct of poverty, which could be fixed with “education, jobs, and workfare instead of welfare,”<sup>29</sup> rather than a byproduct of racism. The tendency to see poverty as a result of personal economic failure rather than a manifestation of structural violence has contributed to the erasure of discussion of racial struggle as black poverty is no longer perceived as a racial issue, but rather as a personal choice. This approach overlooks the existence and function of institutionalized racism, which disproportionately excludes specific racial groups from “mainstream opportunities for housing, education, occupational mobility, and other lifestyle options.”<sup>30</sup>

Ronald Reagan’s political ideology played a significant role in shifting the blame for poverty away from institutional causes and onto individuals, particularly in promoting economic individualism through the dissolution of big government. Reagan did not support the idea “big government” and adamantly opposed the existence of a government that “protects us from ourselves,”<sup>31</sup> as he believed such a government would hamper individual freedoms. He consistently suggested that poverty was as a personal choice that the government should not be involved with, frequently denying the impact of public policy changes on low-income individuals and accusing people of being unemployed by choice. Reagan’s evidence for this poverty by choice contention was that newspapers were always advertising job openings; thus, there were people looking for workers, but no people looking for work. By framing poverty as a matter of personal choice, Reagan effectively depoliticized the way vulnerability was viewed by the majority of the population, which helped to secure the idea that racism was no longer a problem and further compound the struggles of the marginalized.

Reagan’s ideology did not just depoliticize poverty, however, it *racialized* poverty through a common narrative used to garner support for his proposed welfare cuts. When

<sup>23</sup> University of Virginia Health System, “High-Risk.”

<sup>24</sup> David, “Disparities,” 1193–1194.

<sup>25</sup> Philadelphia Black Women’s Health Project, “African American Women and Adolescent Pregnancy,” Philadelphia Black Women’s Health Project, <http://www.blackwomenshealthproject.org/aaapregnancy.htm>.

<sup>26</sup> University of Virginia Health System, “High-Risk.”

<sup>27</sup> Charles Rex Arbogast, “The Straight Facts on Women in Poverty,” Center for American Progress, [http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2008/10/women\\_poverty.html](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2008/10/women_poverty.html).

<sup>28</sup> Richard Lowy, “Yuppie Racism: Race Relations in the 1980s,” *Journal of Black Studies* 21 (1991): 454.

<sup>29</sup> Lowy, “Yuppie,” 455.

<sup>30</sup> Lowy, “Yuppie,” 456.

<sup>31</sup> Reason Online, “Inside Ronald Reagan,” Reason Online, <http://www.reason.com/news/show/29318.html>.

he was campaigning in 1976, Reagan frequently described a “welfare queen”—which he implied was a black woman—stealing hundreds of thousands of dollars from the federal government by collecting welfare through eighty different names.<sup>32</sup> This story served to feminize and racialize welfare recipients and increase public disdain for social support services by portraying recipients as thieves. A study sponsored by the University of California found that when white people were exposed to the welfare queen “script,” the individual’s support for welfare or social programs like food stamps and Medicaid declined, while stereotypes of blacks as lazy and sexually uncontrolled increased.<sup>33</sup> While all poor women were held responsible for personal failures presumed to have led to their need of welfare, hostility about welfare tended to be directed towards black women receiving welfare benefits.

### **Contemporary Conclusions**

“Reaganomics” had a substantial role in increasing inequality and poverty and decreasing access to medical care, food, and safe, affordable housing for low-income families, with black families disproportionately shouldering the burden. However, despite the end of the Reagan era, his policies and their effects are still quite evident today. Funding for social services, such as low-income housing and job training, among others, has yet to be restored to pre-Reagan levels,<sup>34</sup> income inequality between the upper and lower class continues to rise, and the black-white infant mortality gap has continued to expand as well. Radical change in social welfare policies will be crucial for narrowing the black-white infant mortality gap and equalizing other forms of racial and economic inequality.

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<sup>32</sup> Franklin D. Gilliam, “The ‘Welfare Queen’ Experiment: How Viewers React to Images of African-American Mothers on Welfare,” *Research on Media Coverage* (1999): 4.

<sup>33</sup> Gilliam, “‘Welfare Queen,’” 3.

<sup>34</sup> Dreier, “Homelessness.”

# The Idea of Black Republicanism: Post-Revolutionary Haiti and Early African American Political Thought

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Mentors: Professor Peter Rachleff and Professor James B. Stewart

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## Abstract

This paper argues that in the 19th century some free African Americans largely viewed Haiti as the antithesis to the United States. As free blacks in the North learned, the American republic of the Revolution, at its inception, was not intent on extending citizenship to them. This realization formed the core of the activism that led black and white abolitionists alike to employ Haiti as a trope for protests and black political achievement. Through the exploitation of, and sometimes against, the political symbolisms of post-Revolutionary Haiti, African American leaders bypassed the traditional domestic political forums of the U.S. and instead embarked on a campaign to circumvent the difficulty of expressing certain political thoughts through a diasporic forum of black political achievement and the need for equality.

When in 1776 Thomas Jefferson used slavery as the metaphorical tool to denounce British tyranny, he declared that “*All men are created equal*, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain *unalienable Rights*, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.”<sup>1</sup> That proclamation from a slaveholder not only mirrored the paradoxical state of the early republic but also left the status of African American citizenship undefined. In *Antebellum Black Activists*, R.J. Young argues that early American society often reinforced African American confusion at attempts to create a political identity in the new American republic. As he put it, “If the rhetoric of 19th-century America encourages a certain view of men and women, the practice of that society in regards to African Americans severely undercut that view. The rhetoric said all men were created equal and promised universal manhood suffrage but not for all black men.”<sup>2</sup> Going beyond Young’s argument, my thesis is that

post-Revolutionary America confronted issues of black humanity and citizenship<sup>3</sup> on the one hand, and slavery and its inhumane contradiction to principles of liberty on the other. The emergence of the Haitian Revolution in 1791 further complicated and deepened African Americans’ ambiguous political identity and claims to citizenship inside early America.

Haiti’s emerging presence as a revolutionary black republic in the Atlantic affirmed free black American activists’ aspirations to achieve the ideals asserted in the revolutionary documents of the United States—citizenship, freedom, and self-governance. Even more than the American republic, revolutionary Haiti stood as the most provocative and radical challenge imaginable to the limits that Jefferson and his contemporaries attached to the phrase “All men are created equal.” In the words of Laurent Dubois, the Haitian Revolution transformed “the broader struggles over the meaning of freedom and citizenship that shaped the Atlantic world during the 18th and 19th centuries.”<sup>4</sup>

Although it served as a sustained inspiration of who African Americans could aspire to become, revolutionary Haiti was used reluctantly and inconsistently as inspiration for antislavery protests. This fragmented and sometimes unresolved political consciousness showed the practical limits of the uses of revolutionary Haiti. How did the Haitian Revolution both shape and complicate African Americans’ political consciousness? Why did some free blacks choose to resettle in Liberia instead of the close proximity of the Haitian republic? How did men like Richard Allen, James Forten, Prince Saunders, Benjamin P. Hunt, James Theodore Holly, Martin Delany, Henry Highland Garnet, William Wells Brown, Paul Cuffe, Samuel Cornish, James McCune Smith, and others resolve the political image and influence of revolutionary Haiti in the formation of African American political identity? If we can understand more fully the activism and emerging political thought of these men, their lives can give a clearer picture of the complex, and sometimes dichotomous, political consciousness that dogged the anti-slavery movement. A biographical method wherein the lives of these free men are studied has the potential to uncover the complexities of the abolitionist movement and its unresolved connections with revolutionary Haiti. Through this methodology, my larger project provides for new historical

<sup>1</sup> Virginia, and Thomas Jefferson. 1961. *The American beginnings: the Virginia Declaration of rights; The Declaration of independence, in Mr. Jefferson’s original text, with some of his comments thereon; the Articles of confederation.*

<sup>2</sup> Young, R.J. 1996. *Antebellum Black activists: race, gender, and self. Studies in African American history and culture.* New York: Garland Pub.

<sup>3</sup> Note on title: By black republicanism, I mean specifically the conceptualization of African American inspirational search for a collective mode of political narration to distinguish the sociopolitical endeavors, potentials, and achievements of the African American polity inside the U.S.

<sup>4</sup> Dubois, Laurent. 2004. *Avengers of the New World: the story of the Haitian Revolution.* Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

perspectives to emerge in which the political discourses of the antislavery movement are better understood through the microcosm of its political agents.

I argue that, in juxtaposition to the U.S., the Haitian republic left an indelible mark in the political mind, memory, and attitudes developed by antebellum free blacks about the meanings of American republicanism. Early African Americans developed their ideological struggles against slavery and racism and their political identities in part through the image of revolutionary Haiti. Those images empowered some African Americans to reject both white American and European claims of leadership, political achievement, progress, and ultimately natural rights. Revolutionary Haiti gave African Americans the political capital to not only construct who they aspired to be, but also who they were becoming—enabling African Americans to vindicate their emerging political consciousnesses during the early years of the new American republic. They likewise appropriated Toussaint L’ouverture and other Haitian revolutionaries by making them into their own pantheon of heroes, in lieu of slaveholders like George Washington and Thomas Jefferson who had denied them their humanity.

The sudden and violent emergence of revolutionary Haiti confronted African Americans with rich new opportunities to develop far more powerful claims to liberty and equality than had been possible before 1791, the date of Haiti’s initial slave insurrection. From the time of its violent rebellion to the inception of its nationhood in 1804, images of revolutionary Haiti continually transformed the political mindsets of African Americans as the antislavery movement progressed from the 1790s onward. The political remembrance that it imprinted in the minds of African American activists in the 1790s was reconstructed at each stage of the abolitionist movement—1790s to 1820s, 1830s to 1840s, and late 1840s to the dawn of the Civil War. In this fashion, revolutionary Haiti did not stand as a fixed political memory in the minds of African Americans. Rather, its always-contested political meanings underwent many revisions as African Americans pursued their own struggles for abolition and equality. Although not all African American activists embraced the Haitian insurrection as a revolutionary model, the emergence of a black republic had a transformative impact on the political mind, memory, and attitudes of some key antebellum free blacks about the meanings of American republicanism. While some African Americans developed

their ideological struggles against slavery and racism through images of revolutionary Haiti, others formed their political identities on the tropes of an African regeneration in the continent itself, most notably by resettling in the free colonies of Liberia or Sierra Leone as new centers for freedom. Moreover, while Haiti may have empowered African Americans to reject both white American and European claims of leadership, achievement, progress, and rights, it was not always the first option for African American resettlement. Thus, while the emerging political consciousnesses of African Americans during the early years of the American republic were partially engendered by Haitian revolutionaries, the memory of what revolutionary Haiti meant to black abolitionists in the antislavery movement was complicated. African Americans had a conflicted political consciousness—simultaneously recognizing the triumph of the Haitian Revolution’s aftermath while disagreeing about its place in the ultimate vision of emancipation and citizenship of African Americans.

The initial reactions of prominent black Philadelphians like James Forten in the aftermath of the Haitian Revolution substantiate my claims on the contradictory usage of Haiti. As documented by Julie Winch’s *A Gentleman of Color*, “images of St. Domingo coupled with news of servile insurrections closer to home—Gabriel Prosser’s planned uprising in Virginia—fed racial tensions in Philadelphia.”<sup>5</sup> To allay the fears of whites, and mitigate the criminalization of the image of African Americans as indolent and aggressors, Forten and others of the black middle class publicly endeavored to show that African Americans adhered to good order and respectability.<sup>6</sup> To prove that many African Americans were not like their Caribbean counterparts, the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas garnered the support of white philanthropists to establish the Society for the Suppression of Vice and Immorality.<sup>7</sup> The work of the society promoted the communication of moral and religious instruction to African Americans.

Moreover, there were significant differences in what revolutionary Haiti meant to three important free African Americans, Prince Saunders in the 1820s, James Theodore Holly in the late 1820s and ’30s, and to William Wells Brown in the 1840s and ’50s. Each, within their respective periods, historicized the Haitian Revolution as a trope for fueling African American resistance. Their activism also influenced the adaptability of Haiti’s political image as succeeding

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<sup>5</sup> Winch, Julie. 2002. *A gentleman of color: the life of James Forten*. New York: Oxford University Press. 161–162.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

decades brought new challenges and opportunities in the abolitionist struggle. Yet, the historiography of Haiti's general impact on these three influential figures in the construction of the African American political uses of Revolutionary Haiti is insubstantial. Of the available literature on Haitian emigration, only a few historians address the topic in a sustained manner and none extensively. Winch's biographical account of James Forten, *A Gentleman of Color*, for example, argues that Forten's enthusiastic support for emigration to Haiti coalesced with his admiration of the image of an independent black republic governed by black men. It does not adequately explain, however, from whence this enthusiasm emerged.<sup>8</sup> Forten adamantly rejected the black deportation schemes of the American Colonization Society. Nevertheless, he admired Prince Saunders, a prominent supporter of resettlement efforts, not to Liberia, but to Haiti.<sup>9</sup> Winch's account of the interactions between the two men fails to detail the broader context in which the two may have grown to merge their affinity for Haiti. As a leading sailmaker and a contemporary of the abolitionists' circles of Philadelphia, Forten's knowledge of Saunders's connection to England might have been a topic of conversation even before Saunders delivered his speeches in front of Mother Bethel and St. Thomas Church in Philadelphia in 1818. Forten and Saunders's cosmopolitanism connects them through the Atlantic abolitionist network. To her credit, Winch discusses Saunders's global activism, but in the most tangential circumstances pertaining to Forten's activities in Philadelphia. Though failing to articulate the depth of the links between these individuals, Winch's documentation of their interactions in Philadelphia does illuminate how Saunders's presence in Philadelphia influenced Forten's sentiments beyond his admiration of Haiti's revolutionary triumph.

In *Freedom's Prophet*, Richard Newman accounts for Saunders's influence on Bishop Richard Allen, founder of Mother Bethel and the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Newman shows that despite close association with Saunders through antislavery activism, Allen did not develop a clear position on Haiti, except to say that Haiti provided a moral challenge to the continuance of slavery in America.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, Saunders appealed to Allen's sense of moral piety and compelled the preacher to reconsider Haiti as a place of redemption for African Americans. Newman underscores Saunders's ability to use revolutionary Haiti as a moral guide for African Americans to assert their humanity, thereby easily convincing Allen of Haiti's great value as a symbol of

black redemption.<sup>11</sup> Post-revolutionary Haiti, argues Newman, "became both a political and religious refuge for Allen."<sup>12</sup> Newman, in other words, clearly recognized the importance of revolutionary Haiti's impact on early African American republican thought, but he does not delve deeply enough into the topic to assess its full significance. Newman's focus on Allen as a Haitian emigrationist is indispensable to understanding how Allen thought about black agency. Indeed, his historical analysis of the Bishop complements my thesis, and supports my argument, albeit in a biblical context, about Haiti. The idea of Haiti, Newman maintains, provided a site of ideological escape to nurture African American intellectual life, bolster the political case against slavery, and redeem the African race by "establishing a political asylum for disaffected citizens of color."<sup>13</sup> However, in choosing to focus his analysis on Allen specifically, Newman's work buries the broader meaning of revolutionary Haiti in the biography of Allen's life. As a result, the scholarship limits the macropolitical impact of the revolution in only the micro effects it had.

In contrast to Newman's restricted treatment of individuals, Alfred Hunt's *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America* treats the subject of African American activism in only the most general way. Although he argues, as I will, that the insurrection provided a symbolism of black potential, and that the black republic substantiated African Americans' imaginations of a black civilization, citizenship, and nationalism, he makes these arguments superficially.<sup>14</sup> There is no full examination of how the influence of revolutionary Haiti evolved over time; nor is there consideration of the extent to which the thinking of individual black activists was deeply affected by Haiti's Revolution and its memories. The shortcoming of Hunt's argument is the view that the broad political symbolism of revolutionary Haiti sufficiently explains the origins of African American political thought. The lack of depth in biographical analysis qualitatively diminishes the assessment of revolutionary Haiti's influence on black political activism in the antebellum North. Moreover, Hunt's primary focus is on the Revolution's impact on slaves and their masters in the South, which may explain why his account gives scant attention to the thoughts and feelings of Northern free black activists such as Saunders, Holly, and Brown.

In contrast to the foregoing literature, my research will show that men like Saunders, Holly, and Brown profoundly affected the mobilization of African American opposition to

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Newman, Richard S. 2008. *Freedom's prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black founding fathers*. New York: New York University Press.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 245–263.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 262.

<sup>14</sup> Hunt, Alfred N. 1988. *Haiti's influence on antebellum America: slumbering volcano in the Caribbean*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.

slavery. In short, they served as influential agents in the strengthening of black activists' claims to equal citizenship, hence prolonging the political meanings and memory of the Haitian Revolution in antebellum America. The basic shortcoming of current scholarship is that it either discusses Haiti too generally or does not confront substantially the importance of Haiti in the thinking of prominent free black activists. Newman and Winch's biographies quite rightly treat Haiti as both tangential and topical to their main tasks. If scholars were to look at revolutionary Haiti beyond its overarching meaning, the political minds of Saunders and others associated with men like Forten and Allen might provide an opportunity to strengthen understanding of the interconnectedness of the transnational identity of African Americans and Haitians as seen through the republican lens of these personalities. A biographical sketch of each of these characters—Saunders, Holly, and Brown—demonstrates their profound importance as formulators of revolutionary ideologies using Haiti as an example.

A broad consideration of Saunders's activities offers a wide understanding of free black Philadelphians and Haiti's emerging image in the first two decades of the 19th century. Through his knowledge of Haiti, and his serving as former Education Minister and Attorney General of Haiti, Saunders delivered speeches at Mother Bethel Church and St. Thomas Episcopal Church in Philadelphia where he promoted the idea of black governance based on a Haitian model. He also achieved widespread publication of his writings by appealing to James Forten's organized Pennsylvania Augustine Society for the Education of People of Color and making his works available to William Rawle's Maryland Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery.<sup>15</sup> In short, Saunders's efforts intently showed that Haiti had long ago successfully defied European and American monopolies on claims of progress and civilization. For this reason, Saunders communicated to the public that Haiti would offer the best model for black self-determination.

Primary documents written by men like William Wells Brown and James Theodore Holly reinforce my conclusions about the enduring influence of Saunders's arguments. Brown, for instance, a staunch believer in the ability of his race, proclaimed, "The negro has that intellectual genius which God has planted in the mind of man." In his sketch of Toussaint L'Ouverture, he celebrates the skills of the black general over George Washington's accomplishment:

Each was the leader of an oppressed and outraged people, each had a powerful enemy to contend with, and each succeeded in founding a government in the New World. Toussaint's government made liberty its watchword, incorporated it in its constitution, abolished the slave trade, and made freedom universal amongst the people. Washington's government incorporated slavery and the slave trade, and enacted laws by which chains were fastened upon the limbs of millions of people. Toussaint liberated his countrymen; Washington enslaved a portion of his, and aided in giving strength and vitality to [that] institution.<sup>16</sup>

As Patrick Rael highlights in *Black Identity and Black Protest*, Brown's imagery of L'Ouverture was an attempt to show that Haitians are "examples of the ability of the race as a whole to compete with other nations on equal terms."<sup>17</sup> Theodore Holly's *Vindication of the Capacity of the Negro Race for Self-Government* also celebrated the establishment of a Haitian republic as "the most undoubted evidence of the civilized progress" of black people.<sup>18</sup> James Redpath, though himself a white man, reiterated the points in Holly's argument in his *A Guide to Hayti*:

There is only one country in the Western World where the Black and the man of color are undisputed lords; where people whom America degrades and rivers from her are rulers, judges, and generals; men of extended commercial relations, authors, artists, and legislators; where by the fact [exists] an independent Nationality of immovable stability, and a Government inspired with the spirit of progress. The name of this country is Hayti.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Saunders, Prince, and Maxwell Whiteman. 1969. *Haytian papers 1818. An address delivered at Bethel Church, Philadelphia: 1818. A Memoir presented to the American Convention for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery 1819 [sic]*. Rhistoric publication no. 238. Philadelphia: Rhistoric.

<sup>16</sup> Brown, William Wells, 1814–1884.: The black man: his antecedents, his genius, and his achievements. New York: Thomas Hamilton, 48 Beekman Street; Boston: R.F. Wallcut, 221 Washington St.: Stereotyped at the Boston Stereotype Foundry, 1863.

<sup>17</sup> Rael, Patrick. 2002. *Black identity and Black protest in the antebellum North*. The John Hope Franklin series in African American history and culture. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. 224–226.

<sup>18</sup> Holly, Theodore James. A vindication of the capacity of the Negro race for self-government, and civilized progress as demonstrated by historical events of the Haytian revolution; and the subsequent acts of that people since their national independence. A lecture. Published for the Afric-American Printing Co., John P. Anthony, agent. New Haven: William H. Stanley, printer, 1857.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted from "Introduction." *A guide to Hayti*, edited by James Redpath. Boston: Thayer & Eldridge, 1860.

However, the same ideas about Haiti that gripped men like Brown and Holly did not fully echo throughout the African American political spectrum. Lesser-known black activists like Benjamin Hunt declared the Haitian republic unfit for most mixed-race and educated African Americans.<sup>20</sup> Judging from the sociopolitical and economic circumstances he observed in Haiti, Hunt cautioned against what he viewed as a politically and economically precarious public. In an almost declarative tone, Hunt expressed fears that African Americans would become an integral part of the Haitian proletariat. Rooted in 17 years of residency in Haiti, Hunt saw the prospect of black republicanism in Haiti as futile.<sup>21</sup> As he put it, of the 13,000 American immigrants that lived in Haiti between 1824 and 1827, a considerable number of those with modest means returned to the United States. Therefore, he concluded, it would be to the detriment of immigrants to immigrate to a land with curtailed freedoms, limited educational opportunities, and an overly agricultural and politically inept population. Simply put, Hunt dismissed notions of black republicanism and saw no substantial prospects for African American posterity.

Hunt's statements reflect a larger debate between Northern blacks and whites, and amongst black intellectuals, about African American citizenship and emigration. With the rise of the American Colonization Society (ACS) in 1816, whose aim was to colonize free and enslaved African Americans by sending them to Africa, blacks grew increasingly frustrated at whether the American democratic project intended to include them.<sup>22</sup> The divide between Hunt and his black counterparts, and their debate with white Americans, lends some credibility to Rael's assertions that African American spokespersons did their best to spin Haitian imagery into claims of black achievement.<sup>23</sup> Rael argues that the most radical invocations of black accomplishment derived from a Euro-American discourse on nationhood. This assertion implies that the black past was fixated in European notions of republicanism; thereby lessening the philosophical power of claims to black progress.<sup>24</sup> I would argue that this understanding of black protest reduces the image of revolutionary Haiti to no more than an inspirational drive for African Americans. In my larger project I intend to advance an alternate position, namely

that the early literature produced by free blacks show that Haiti provided a paradigm for political claims on nationhood, citizenship, and natural rights, albeit through a fragmented political consciousness. I argue that within the parameters of these claims, some African Americans celebrated revolutionary Haiti as a marker of black achievement. The grandeur of such rhetoric, as seen in Brown's writings, almost mythologized revolutionary Haiti as the embodiment of black civilization, progress, and black republicanism.

By utilizing primary actors like Saunders, Holly, and Brown as well as lesser known actors like Benjamin Hunt as a series of case studies, I believe I can locate the political meanings and ideas of Haiti in African American interpretation of Haitian achievements as it evolved over time, from the early 1800s to the eve of the Civil War. In the process, it becomes easier to historicize these writers' works to create an integrated approach to understanding African American settlement in Haiti as a radical movement to demonstrate black nationhood. This project is, in the final analysis, an attempt to grapple with images of revolutionary Haiti as products of contested political change and memory for free Northern African American activists. The fundamental argument that I press in this thesis is that there are indications—correspondence between free blacks and Haitian officials, pamphlets, newspapers, books of propaganda, and debates on nationalism and emigration—of an emerging messianic representation of Haiti in the political imagination of African Americans. In sum, post-Revolutionary Haiti was the earliest catalyst of the idea of black republicanism. As such, it further encouraged African Americans to argue for inclusiveness into the project of liberty on an equal footing with whites. In the process, Haiti provided the vernaculars of freedom in ways that Europeans could not adequately advance in their enlightenment rhetoric of equality and natural rights.

<sup>20</sup> Hunt, Benjamin S. 1860. *Remarks on Hayti as a place of settlement for African-Americans; and on the mulatto as a race for the tropics*. Philadelphia: T.B. Pugh, 615 Chestnut Street.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 17–20.

<sup>22</sup> Swift, David Everett. 1989. *Black prophets of justice: activist clergy before the Civil War*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press. 24–27.

<sup>23</sup> Rael, Patrick. 2008. *African-American activism before the Civil War: the freedom struggle in the antebellum North*. New York: Routledge. 224–226.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

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# Critique of Patriarchy/Proposal of Equal Power: Chaucer's "Physician's Tale"

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## Abstract

Much of feminist criticism of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* argues that the 13th-century author supported exclusive patriarchy. Discourse on women's rights often focuses on the "Wife of Bath's Tale." The "Physician's Tale," however, offers evidence of Chaucer's critique of patriarchy. In this paper, I argue that the author challenges the authority of the male narrator, the Physician, and then vilifies the two most prominent and powerful male characters of the tale. Chaucer presents Apius as a corrupt judge who preys on young women and Virginius as a father who bends to patriarchy's unjust norms at the expense of his daughter's life. In the form of Nature's strong feminine voice, Chaucer continues to critique exclusive patriarchy and offers an alternative way of social order: one that considers and values gender equality.

Critics have long recognized Chaucer's participation in the paradoxically conservative and subversive nature of literature. His most extensive work, *The Canterbury Tales*, allows, and indeed encourages, myriad readings of Chaucer's political and social stances.<sup>1</sup> In these tales, did he seek to preserve or challenge social conventions? What is the balance between criticism and subtle or overt reinforcement of norms and conventions? Does narration necessarily affirm a set of norms or practices or can narration open up avenues for challenge and criticism? Such questions stem from the powerful way that Chaucer's work urges its readers to critically evaluate their environment. In his seminal book, *Social Chaucer*, critic Paul Strohm asserts:

The socially creative form of the *Canterbury Tales* permits a relatively untroubled contemplation of extreme difference, a degree of difference that could not be acknowledged in the social sphere without danger to the participants.<sup>2</sup>

Building upon this insight, I seek in the following essay to explore the ways in which Chaucer, in the "Physician's Tale," utilizes this power of literature to show-case difference to critique patriarchy, and, more importantly, to propose an alternative.

At the heart of the "Physician's Tale" lies the story, recounted by Livy and other medieval authors, of the noble Roman, Virginius, and his young daughter, Virginia, who becomes the unfortunate object of the judge Apius's desire. With the aid of a man named Claudius who falsely claims that Virginia is unfree and his slave, he seeks to gain control of Virginia. Her father insists that he must kill her to preserve her honor and does so, though later the corrupt Apius is unmasked and eventually commits suicide.

In daring to write of Virginia's fate, Chaucer memorializes her story. Through his decision to have the tale told by an untrustworthy narrator who draws illogical conclusions and depicts Virginia as the victim of the very men who should be protecting her, it is evident that Chaucer here is not concerned with the story's historical accuracy, as the Physician is. Rather, he seeks to question definitions of honor and justice that blindly support patriarchy. Still, by also including a strong feminine voice, Chaucer proposes, and even advocates for, another form of justice and governance.

Several features of the "Physician's Tale" seem to suggest that Chaucer was supportive of patriarchy and blindly subscribed to a definition of honor that excluded women's welfare. The most prominent feature is the Physician himself, a confident narrator who asserts his authority throughout the tale. The very opening line speaks to the Physician's attempt: "There was, as telleth Titus Livius" (VI.1). His strategic reference to a male historian esteemed for recording important segments of Rome's history is an explicit attempt to garner credibility and authority from his audience. He later interrupts his own narration to reiterate the veracity of his story: "... for this is no fable,/ But knowen for historical thing notable;/ The sentence of it sooth is, out of doute" (VI.155-7). The preceding lines are yet other examples of this narrator's efforts at establishing his legitimacy as a narrator. Distinguishing his tale in genre from those of other pilgrims, he makes explicit that his is "no fable" and is therefore rooted in reality, so much so that it may be doubtlessly ("out of doute") verified by historical texts.

<sup>1</sup> All references cite *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston, 1987).

<sup>2</sup> Paul Strohm, *Social Chaucer* (Cambridge, MA, 1989), 231. "A Mixed Commonwealth of Style." *Social Chaucer*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1989. 166-72.

The Physician renews his effort to authorize his role as a narrator and his narrative in several of his concluding lines: “Here may men seen how synne hath his merit . . . Forsaketh synne, er synne yow forsake” (VI.277, 288). The Physician thus assumes a prescriptive tone, citing the events of his true story as grounds for a mandate. He warns his readers that because sin will always be punished appropriately, everyone must avoid committing any form of it. Yet it is this final attempt to establish his legitimacy that best demonstrates the Physician’s undoing as a trustworthy narrator. His conclusion rings illogical and false. Although Apius ultimately hangs dead, the tale’s conclusion does not include a similarly severe punishment for Claudius, a “cherle” clearly complicit in Apius’s crime. Meanwhile, the innocent Virginia has suffered death not for sins committed but to prevent sin. Moreover, the tale does not really explain the social context in which Virginius’s execution of this daughter might have been justified.

Questioning such a strongly expressed but clearly faulty conclusion leads the reader to interrogate the narrator’s legitimacy. Whereas reference to the ancient Livy would seem to grant the Physician credibility, closer examination of his narrative leads to another interpretation. The reader becomes aware there is often much lost in recounting stories; the farther the audience is from the original source, in this case, the Roman historian, the blurrier the line between fact and fiction becomes. The reader is then left asking how much of the tale was actually from Titus Livius, and how much was constructed by the Physician. Chaucer encourages the reader to suspect that the story’s events cannot be as accurate as the Physician portrays them to be if the narrator has to remind his reader of said accuracy. The reiteration of authority in lines 155–156, which initially seemed born of unshakable confidence, in retrospect seems to be evidence of insecurity. Does the narrator interject here because he perceives that he has begun to lose his audience’s attention and trust?

Doubts about the Physician’s authority as narrator provide a useful wedge between the beliefs of Chaucer and the Physician. Indeed, although the latter seems to support patriarchy, a close reading of the text suggests our medieval author does not. Chaucer instead uses the Physician as a tool for criticizing a power structure that excludes the voice of women. Chaucer further enlightens the reader on patriarchy’s danger by presenting two patriarchal figures that, ironically, act as foils for a critique of male dominance.

Apius and Virginius each derive their authority from positions of power exclusive to men: Apius governs the

region as judge, while Virginius is a respected knight. The former is implicitly, and immediately, depicted as a malicious aggressor. He is well aware of the impropriety of his desire for Virginia, and therefore declares it “pryvely.” He concocts his strategy for possessing her in “greet deliberacioun,” suggesting that, although motivated by passion, Apius’s crime was planned with, if not with a clear conscience, then at least a clear mind. The Physician introduces Apius using the term “justice” (VI.121). At the same time, he blurs the line between the multiple definitions of the word. Juxtaposed with Apius’s actual behavior, the assumed conflation of justice, as the government position that a man may occupy, and justice, as the abstract ideal of fairness and equality, becomes ironic and subversive, revealing the author’s critique of patriarchy. In essence, Chaucer challenges the foundation of patriarchy by featuring a definition of justice that is regulated by a corrupt statesman. How valid is this definition, Chaucer seems to ask, if it is vulnerable to men’s manipulation for the immoral pursuit of chaste women?

Virginius, too, poses as a foil for the reader’s reflections on the alignment of virtue and society’s structures of power. As the knight “fulfilled of honour and of worthynesse,/ And strong of freendes, and of greet richesse” (VI. 3–4), Virginius is another figure who derives his authority from positions that only men may occupy: a knight and his daughter’s father and ultimate protector. Chaucer reveals, however, that even this knight is not to be respected. The reader soon learns that the “honour” and “worthynesse” that this knight possesses require him to react to the potential violation of his daughter’s chastity by murdering her. Through Virginius’s fatal actions, Chaucer exposes the injustice inherent with the knight’s definition of honor. For if, as the Physician insists in lines 72–115, protecting one’s progeny is paramount in parenthood, then the narrator’s failure to condemn the killing of Virginia at the end of his tale is evidence of his hypocrisy. Furthermore, Chaucer here challenges a definition of honor that supports the death of a child at the hands of her very own father.

In *Chaucer’s Maiden’s Head: The Physician’s Tale and the Poetics of Virginity*, R. Howard Bloch provides the cultural context for this particular tale. Citing Christian doctrines, Bloch summarizes the ideologies that justify this honor killing:

A virgin is a woman who not only has never slept with a man but who has never desired to do so . . . What’s more, the Fathers argue, since desire is engendered by, and consists in, a look, a virgin seen is no longer a virgin.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> In *Chaucer: New Casebooks* (New York, 1996). 145–56 at 147.

Using these definitions of virginity directly to the only human female in the tale, Bloch concludes that:

not only that Virginia is not a virgin from the moment she is seen, but that her death is inferred from the moment she steps into the street. Virginia is dead, at least as a virgin, the minute she falls under Apius's gaze, by which the action of the story thus transformed into allegory, is complete.<sup>4</sup>

I contend, however, that Apius is not the only aggressor in this tale. Although it is his gaze that terminates Virginia's chastity, it is her father's hand that most strongly upholds patriarchy. The ultimatum he offers her represents the true lack of choice for women within this power structure. Virginia must either experience "shame" in public, or encounter "death" in private; either way, she must "suffre." Under this kind of governance, women are trapped both in public and in private, encountering male aggressors in either sphere. They are victims of a rule that excludes consideration of their perspective and welfare. The very fact that the question of Virginia's proper owner is something that can notionally be settled in a corrupt court demonstrates the way this patriarchy entraps women and robs them of freedom. Despite all her chastity, her "humilytee and abstinence" (VI.45), Virginia is vulnerable to the intrusive male gaze and exclusively masculine definitions of justice and honor. The irony and definitiveness of the innocent Virginia's fate—that her protector is her judge and executioner and that honor and life are set at odds—express the harshness of Chaucer's criticism of patriarchy: the seemingly inevitable fate of women to suffer, by one means or another, at the hands, or through the eyes, of men.

Chaucer, however, does offer an alternative by including another feminine voice in the tale, that of Nature. Although Bloch argues that there is "no internal debate or discussion when Virginius announces to his daughter that there are only two alternatives" (145), I argue that there is, at least, an internal critique of this lack of choices, and what such restraints signify, in the soliloquy of Nature. For although Nature must speak through the flawed Physician, her voice proves so strong that it begs further consideration. Her overture is replete with verbs that signify agency, the most frequent of which are "peynte" and "forme" (VI.12). The former fortifies the notion that Nature holds the paintbrush and has ultimate capacity to depict and create, disqualifying even such skilled male artists as Pygmalion. The latter verb places Nature in the role of creator, her speech asserting that she had control over the beginnings of each

"erthely creature" (VI.21). Such a claim displaces parents. Virginius, for all his accomplishments and reputation, had nothing to do with "excellent beautee" with which his daughter was endowed. Furthermore, through the close association of creation, possession, and power, this claim reconfigures Virginius's rights over his daughter and hence challenges the morality of his actions.

Nature explicitly asserts this authority when she says, "For He that is the former principal/ Hath made me his vicaire general" (VI.19–20), elevating herself to serving directly under God. Her authority, therefore, supersedes Apius's judicial powers as well as Virginius's parental ones. This corrupt patriarchy is temporal, of the earth, Chaucer seems to say. Feminine Nature's, on the other hand, is everlasting and therefore more potent. This is not to say, however, that Nature's speech proposes a complete exclusion of male authority. Instead, it offers an alternative form of governance: "My lord and I been ful of oon accord" (VI.25). That the feminine Nature and the masculine God are of "oon accord" proposes an equal balance of power between men and women.

Chaucer's decision to grant credit to Nature for Virginia's creation has serious implications for this morality tale. Since it was Nature who gave life to the girl, it is only she who can take that life away. Virginius's killing of Virginia is therefore a criminal act, if not in the eyes of patriarchal justice, then in the broader, more important and inclusive court of transcendent justice. This court, Chaucer implies, actually takes both segments of society, men *and* women, into equal account. Thus it is in Nature's speech, and not in the Physician's illogical conclusion, that we find condemnation of this honor-killing. Hers is the voice of true justice. Chaucer's decision to include such a perspective suggests his commitment to gender equality.

Bloch accuses Chaucer of being complicit in the rape and murder of Virginia just by writing of her plight:

My point is really very simple: that Chaucer, in exposing his tale, does to the very characters exactly what Apius, under the guise of fiction, does to Virginia. He deflowers at the very instant he depicts.<sup>5</sup>

I argue, however, that Chaucer's decision to recount this tale does not rob Virginia of her chastity but rather memorializes her, granting her agency if only as an example of patriarchy's fatal effects on women. By including Nature's voice, Chaucer further utilizes the power of literature to "activate" Virginia's meaning. He personifies Nature,

<sup>4</sup> Bloch, *Chaucer's Maiden's Head*, 150.

<sup>5</sup> Bloch, *Chaucer's Maiden's Head*, 152.

a move possible only in fiction, and thereby conjures a strong female perspective that challenges exclusive male authority, echoing the effects of Chaucer's depiction of the Physician as an unreliable male narrator. Chaucer's strategic placement of Nature's speech reflects the value Chaucer places on female perspective. Inserting her words nearly immediately after he challenges the Physician's legitimacy, and before he vilifies two supposedly righteous men, encourages the reader to imagine an alternative form of governance.

Whereas Bloch characterizes Chaucer's act of depiction as "deflower[ing]," Nature's word choice suggests another interpretation: to "peynte" or, to depict, is a productive, not a degenerative act. Nature is not only in "oon accord" with God. Chaucer aligns himself with her as well. Both Chaucer and his female character are artists actively and equally participating in the act of creation. She asserts her power by creating a creature as beautiful as Virginia, and he demonstrates his by imagining a reality that grants women more voice and agency than the society in the tale allows.

# Boxing with the Hands of Time: An analysis of race and disability in *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*

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## Abstract

In *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, Eric Roth portrays the South as a space in which the barriers that may have traditionally divided Blacks and Whites are rendered impotent by the presence of visible disabled bodies. Benjamin Button himself acts as a catalyst for the development of a number of unique kinship networks during time periods when doing so necessitated the ability to see beyond the stigma attached to those who did not fit into widely held notions of normativity, beauty or intelligence. Yet, in the worlds crafted by Roth, the haunting specter of slavery as well as the tangible effects of the overtly racist systems spawned from it seem to meet their match in the body of Button, an individual that even with his upbringing in the Deep South never echoes the bigoted sentiments of those around him in regard to race or ethnicity. This cinematic narrative posits disability as a force that blurs the lines of cultural difference. In *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, whether one is referencing Blackness or disability, non-normative identity is presented as a catalyst for unity instead of how it is far too often taken up, as a border between bodies.

Elizabeth Grosz's contention that the sight of the "freak" provokes a "dual horror and fascination" in the spectator echoes the argument Frantz Fanon put forth almost 30 years earlier that black people are "phobogenic" objects in the white imaginary. We can infer, then, that the twin spectacles of racial and corporeal "difference" elicit similar reactions in the normative collective imagination. . . . Slavery was an aggregate of "the spectacular nature of black suffering and, conversely, the dissimulation of suffering through spectacle." Slave owners used spectacle to disrupt white identification with black suffering while abolitionists used the spectacularly suffering black body to "forg[e]" the "ties of sentiment." White audiences suffered vicariously and pitied the black body while ignoring black subjectivity. . . . America understands race and (dis)ability through visual signifiers.

—Rebecca Adelman, "When I Move, You Move"

"You'll see little man, plenty of times you be alone. You different like us, it's gonna be that way. But I tell you a little secret I find out. We know we alone. Fat people, skinny people, tall people, white people . . . they just as alone as us . . . but they scared shitless." —Ngunda Oti, *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*

Interweaving the struggles of two different groups of marginalized peoples through any sort of narrative structure is a difficult, perilous project. An endeavor that requires a nuanced understanding of history, class, and identity politics, there are few who are able to craft texts with the particular delicacy it takes to find the strands that bind the downtrodden together while still highlighting the myriad of characteristics that may make either culture both unique and, in a certain sense, incomparable. Such a move is particularly dangerous when dealing with the study and/or artistic rendering of disability, as the disabled community within the United States is one that has for years been constantly compared to other oppressed communities as a means of justifying its viability as a culture worthy of scholarly investigation and political attention. Far too often, authors rely on "universalizing approaches to disability in the United States which, rather than conceiving of people with disabilities as members of a distinct minority group, instead highlight the fluidity of disability as an identity category" (Mollow 296).

One who, to my mind, accomplishes such a feat through the visual medium of film is Eric Roth, the screenwriter of the 2008 blockbuster, *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*. In the film, Roth is able to craft a script that does an incredible amount of subversive cultural legwork along the lines of creating coalitions between Black and disabled communities in a fashion that is, almost ironically, as viscerally powerful as it is undeniably subtle. In the film, Roth portrays the South as a space in which the barriers that may have traditionally divided Blacks and Whites—whether they be legal, social, or physical—are rendered impotent by the presence of visibly disabled bodies. Benjamin Button himself acts as a catalyst for the development of a number of kinship networks during time periods when doing so necessitated the ability to see beyond the stigma attached to those who did not fit into widely held notions of normativity, beauty or intelligence.

Yet, in the worlds crafted by Roth, the haunting specter of slavery as well as the tangible effects of the overtly racist systems spawned from it seem to meet their match in the body of Button, an individual that even with his upbringing in the Deep South never echoes the bigoted sentiments

of those around him in regard to race or ethnicity. This cinematic narrative posits disability as a force that blurs the lines of cultural difference; an aspect of one's identity that allows for psychological and behavioral ascendance past the various limitations that hinder so many others. The disenfranchised are empowered in this film; African American characters are able to see the beauty in the disabilities of the protagonist and the same is true vice versa. In *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, whether one is referencing Blackness or disability, non-normative identity is presented as a catalyst for unity instead of how it is far too often taken up, as a border between bodies.

From the outset, it is startlingly clear that *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* is a film that is interested in (on the metaphorical level at the very least) not only the intersections between race and disability, but also the importance of magical realism as a narrative tool that is often used to tell the stories of traditionally oppressed peoples:

Magical realism as a branch in the realistic tradition would probably be seen by early proponents of the genre as heresy. But, as noted, proponents of realism have long redefined and expanded the style's frontiers. During its development in the 19th century, realism embraced distinctly political motivations, wherein the right way to depict reality in fiction was in the representation of the lives of the disenfranchised and lower classes in society. (Interestingly, some 100 years and more later, this same concern has been taken up in magical realism, which is steered by a commitment to "strong contemporary social relevance" [Ríos], and exploration of "marginal characters, ideas, places" [Sellman].) As noted above, analysts and writers in the 19th century began to recognize that much realistic fiction in this mold was wanting, because it ignored the unseen, the unexplained, the mysterious, the illusory, the imaginative, the *felt* in human experience (Pendery 1).

Through Pendery's brief snapshot of both the historical roots and contemporary use of magical realism, it becomes clear why such a form would be well suited to *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*. In both premise and plot, this is a motion picture that is a far cry from what most would perceive as a film that follows a traditional, coming-of-age narrative. For those who must daily combat forced invisibility thrust upon them by hegemony, magical realism serves as a means of escape; a way of thinking and writing that serves to explode the straightjackets that confine our thinking to the realm of what we perceive to be real,

undeniable, unchangeable. Benjamin Button's narrative compels viewers to do away with all they know of a logical, straightforward reality from the very beginning, to embrace the magical as an alternate realm of possibility.

The film requires its watchers to suspend their disbelief from the outset, as an aging woman (who we later find out is Daisy, the title character's former lover) tells her younger daughter of a blind clockmaker named Martin Gateur who constructed a gargantuan clock that told time in reverse instead of forwards. Gateur claims that his intent behind creating this unique timepiece was to invert the flow of history and bring back his deceased son who had lost his life at war; to return all of those young soldiers to the land of the living. This moment in and of itself is worthy of inquiry as it not only sets up the entire plot of the film but also sets up for the viewer the war critique made throughout the story, a move that was perceived by many as a political statement on behalf of the filmmakers in response to the present-day wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Since Benjamin is born around the same time that the clock is constructed, the audience is led to believe that it is in fact the machine, and not some sort of genetic disorder, that causes our protagonist to age backwards. Yet, the clock's presence in this portion of the film is not intended solely as a means of explaining Benjamin's "curious case," it also appears to be part of a much larger, extended metaphor. Gateur's clock fractures the nature of time itself—transforming the temporality of the narrative into a figuratively disabled body of images, sounds, and moments. Each character in the film is in some way rendered "broken" by time. Daisy's physical disfigurement at the hands of a speeding taxi driver is perhaps the strongest example:

Sometimes we're on a collision course, and we just don't know it...if only one thing had happened differently: if that shoelace hadn't broken; or that delivery truck had moved moments earlier; or that package had been wrapped and ready, because the girl hadn't broken up with her boyfriend; or that man had set his alarm and got up five minutes earlier; or that taxi driver hadn't stopped for a cup of coffee; or that woman had remembered her coat, and got into an earlier cab, Daisy and her friend would've crossed the street, and the taxi would've driven by. But life being what it is—a series of intersecting lives and incidents, out of anyone's control—that taxi did not go by, and that driver was momentarily distracted, and that taxi hit Daisy, and her leg was crushed (Roth 196).

As is illustrated in Benjamin's monologue, the film plays with the notion that time itself is a disabler of bodies, that not only can anything happen at any moment to snatch away the bodies we spend our entire lives taking care of, but also that we all are destined to eventually become disabled by old age, the inescapable grasp of chance. As Brenda Jo Brueggeman points out in the essay "Becoming Visible: Lessons in Disability," "If we all live long enough, we'll all be disabled. We are all TABs—temporarily able-bodied" (Brueggeman 3). Gateur's clock, and the particular control it has over the lives of each and every character in the movie, provides a gateway for the audience to a more nuanced understanding of disability and disfigurement not as aspects of one's identity that are shameful and need to be hidden, but rather as natural parts of the human condition to be loved and celebrated, in fact as keys into a broader sense of understanding the world. Gateur himself is married to a "Creole of Evangeline Parish," a fact that Daisy highlights from the very outset of her story. Gateur's wife and so many of the African American characters in the film are individuals to whom the disabilities that are perceived by others as ugly, burdensome, or in Benjamin's case even nonhuman, are merely understood, cherished components of their loved one's lives.

Button's world is one of nursing homes, pygmies, and blind clockmakers, all characters who do not fit into normative conceptions of full human subjectivity. It is the clock that brings all of these separate characters together, enabling the most important relationships within the story to be established. Many of these fundamental relationships blur the lines of not only ableism, but also the overt, legalized Southern racism that existed during the epoch in which the movie takes place. Thus, the magical clock appears not only to fracture time, but history as well. In *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, the introduction of a device that ruptures the very fabric of time itself also serves as a catalyst for the restructuring of the problematic racial norms that governed much of Southern culture during the early to mid-20th century.

Within the film, loving relationships between Blacks and Whites abound, the most salient examples being between Queenie and Benjamin, Benjamin and Ngunda, and Mr. Gateur and his wife. It is worth noting that each of these relationships involve a non-disabled person of color and a White, disabled character. In all of these unions, whether romantic or platonic, there is clearly a shared theme of Black characters being able to accept and cherish disability in a way that non-disabled White characters in the film, mainly, cannot. The

most powerful example of the ableist leanings of many White characters in *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* is seen at the start of Benjamin's life, when his own father, Thomas Button, abandons him for no other apparent reason than his son's disfigured, monstrous appearance. Leaving the newborn with nothing more than a few dollars and a blanket, Benjamin's father abdicates his parental responsibilities and decides to place the infant child on the front steps of an unidentified house. Without a second's hesitation, Queenie, a Black female caretaker of a nursing home in early 20th-century New Orleans, takes Benjamin into her family. Indeed, she even goes so far as to ignore her doctor's claim that "some creatures aren't meant to live," a statement that echoes the problematic, Darwinian<sup>1</sup> perspective of many of the townspeople Benjamin encounters in the beginning of the film who mistreat him because of his perceived difference.

In contrast to his treatment by Whites, it is in spaces and moments dominated by people of color that Benjamin often receives positive attention in his early life. In these instances his condition becomes either one that is empathized with and understood (as with his West African, disabled comrade Ngunda) or it is seen as an ontological state to be improved upon through collective support and otherworldly intervention (e.g., the church scene when Benjamin takes his first steps outside of a wheelchair). This latter moment in the film, of particular importance given its overt intersection of disability and race in a church populated solely by Blacks, also contains a banner bearing a portion of the Bible verse Acts 8:6-7, "For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed." The church is one of the few settings early in the film where Benjamin is not made to feel like an outsider because of his condition. In this fashion, the Black church serves as a space in which everyone is "afflicted" whether in the spiritual or physical sense, thus the presence of disability is not treated with the same disgust or disdain as it is in other sectors of society. A portion of Howard Dean Trulear's essay, "To Make a Wounded Wholeness: Disability and Liturgy in An African American Context," speaks rather directly to this point:

Yet, within [the black church's] historic ethic . . . there lies the power for a truly inclusive fellowship that offers reconciliation between differing parties and critiques definitions of human wholeness that are atomistic, discriminatory, and exclusivist . . . it is within the context of worship that these themes are most clearly and regularly rehearsed (4).

<sup>1</sup> Charles Darwin is invoked here to situate Benjamin's treatment as a child within discourses of scientific racism and prejudice against individuals with disability that were spawned from Darwin's theories about "survival of the fittest" and natural selection.

Thus, the Black church has the potential to offer refuge to those who are shunned elsewhere, to be a place of sanctuary in the midst of a judgmental, discriminatory world that far too often either relegates unwanted individuals to the realm of invisibility or seeks to destroy them all together as a means of maintaining peace and order within a national culture predicated upon the notion of an idealized body: a normal citizen. The Black church certainly serves in this capacity for Benjamin. Despite the highly problematic notion that there is something about him that needs to “healed” (as such a stance plays into the reductive idea that there is something inherently wrong with the disabled individual as opposed to the society that labels them as such), there is a clearly a level of community support and understanding that Benjamin receives at church that he is not made privy to during any other point in the film.

The final instance of this is seen at his mother’s funeral, where Benjamin walks into the chapel and one can audibly hear the vocal support of the church parishioners, the hallelujahs of the church choir wrapping around Benjamin’s now physically strong but emotionally battered body the way his mother’s hands used to. At the times where he is the most vulnerable, the Black churchgoers in Roth’s narrative present themselves as a supportive force for Benjamin, a non-traditional family willing to both push and protect him whenever necessary. They are the few who were willing and able to see the youthful soul hidden behind the aging husk.

With *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, Eric Roth is able to catapult a non-traditional hero to the forefront of the American cultural imagination. A disabled, fatherless man living in a world where neither being disabled nor fatherless was widely considered a normative, acceptable aspect of White male identity, Benjamin somehow finds a way to navigate the unfamiliar, unfriendly universe he lives in. Along the way, he manages to achieve great success in a world that wishes upon his destruction; that in fact depends on his silent invisibility in order to properly function. As viewers we desperately hope for his success, in large part because Roth crafts a narrative in which disability is not something that makes one monstrous, but rather most human. It is Button’s rapidly de-aging body and quickly fleeing time with Daisy that remind us all of just how vulnerable and absolutely temporary the nature of our life on this planet truly is. The very notion of an ideal body is incredibly limiting, and it is the relationships between all of the marginalized characters in this film that make that point hit home. In Button’s world, traditional conceptions of normativity simply don’t fit; there is no place for them in a

universe predicated upon the notion that we are all equally important pieces of the same puzzle, a collage of clashing colors whose beauty is found in our inability, and unwillingness, to blend. Thus, what may be most important to take away from this film is not simply its commentary on race and disability, but rather what potential power that message holds in a reality where corporeal appearance is still a critical component of one’s lived experience. To say it plain, there are too few who are ever allowed to be seen as anything more than their bodies. *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* not only reminds its audiences of this, but also gives folks forced to navigate those sort of boundaries a utopian image to hold onto, a reminder that there is unity to be found in struggle.

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# Paris Is Burning: An Archive of the Tension between Ontology and Performativity

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## Abstract

The following paper examines the film *Paris Is Burning* as an archive of the cultural phenomena known as “balls.” It begins by situating the film within Judith Butler’s theoretical framework of gender performativity, confronting the centrality of race in Livingstone’s work in order to complement Butler’s framework with an account of the way racial politics influences gender performativity. The latter part of the paper focuses on two transgender narratives featured in the film and reengages the question of whether or not gender identity is a consequence of essential or ontological embodiment. It concludes with a critique of Butler’s framework primarily centered on her problematic reification of the well-patrolled epistemological fissure between mind and body.

Jennie Livingston’s 1990 film, *Paris Is Burning*, archives the experiences, trials, and tribulations of a diverse cadre of black and Latino, queer individuals whose lives intersect at cultural events that have come to be known as “balls.” The documentary offers a unique and intimate insight into the ways these individuals manage their lives amidst a confluence of identities that produces a variety of oppressive moments and existences. The present paper attempts to demonstrate how this confluence of identities constructs a multifaceted intersection of performativities that influence not only specific acts and gestures, but a totality of lived performance. The paper will proceed by way of three sections. In the first two, I begin by providing an overview of Judith Butler’s theory of gender performativity and how it applies to the dynamics of ball culture, in order to argue that participants in ball culture manipulate and embody a certain type of social performance defined by gender and sexuality, but powerfully inflected by race. The third section focuses on Butler’s notion of “interiority” and the function it serves for various participants of ball culture. Finally, I conclude with

an inquiry into the ways this notion of interiority precipitates a critical reexamination of the mind/body discursive fissure in Western epistemology and serves as an opportunity to develop a more robust account of the interrelated nature of personal experience and social reality.

As conceived in the late 1980s when Livingston made this film, the balls are divided into several, separate categorical sections in which various participants compete for recognition and adulation. These themed competitions include categories such as “Opulence,” where competitors attempt to performatively display the essence of luxury and high-class, or “Executive Realness,” which is a category that challenges competitors to persuasively assume the attire and mannerisms of a straight, corporate leader. The segment of the film introducing the general “realness” category of ball culture opens with a panoramic shot of a busy New York street in which several men and women speed past one another. The audio that accompanies this pan is an incredibly rich quote that foreshadows the variety of performativity embodied at the balls. Dorian Corey, a renowned ball veteran of the realness category, declares, “When you’re gay, you monitor everything you do in public.”<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the trope of monitoring runs throughout the film as an implicit and sometimes explicit focus. In this quote and the section of the film that it introduces, one can see it in one of its more prominent positions where the entire category of *realness* is based upon an attempt to emulate, embody, and perform all of the qualities that define straight, heterosexual living—for both men and women. Thus, the competitive aspect of this category is based upon the extent to which participants can convince the judges that they are “real women” (straight women) or “real men” (straight men).<sup>2</sup>

In “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” Judith Butler claims, “[G]ender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather it is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*” (original emphasis).<sup>3</sup> Thus, according to Butler, gender is not strictly constituted by a biological or ontological essence, therefore neither is it a social expression of some ontological essence. Gender is socially constructed, constituted, and performed in its

<sup>1</sup> *Paris Is Burning*, VHS. Directed by Jennie Livingston. 1990, New York, NY: Miramax Films, 1990.

<sup>2</sup> The “realness” category is a competition for individuals who want to emulate both straight women and straight men. The present study focuses exclusively on the theoretical implications of those men who attempt to embody femininity. However, the implications of the men who compete to emulate “real” men demands equally serious theorization and study.

<sup>3</sup> Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” *Theatre* 40, no. 4 (1988): 519.

entirety—in constant epistemological and performative flux. The experiences and actions of participants in ball culture support the theoretical thrust of Butler’s framework as the possibility for these biologically male agents to consciously manipulate their gender in an effort to wholly reunderstand and reappropriate themselves in society as “real” women proves to be entirely real.

Butler goes on to directly engage the question of transvestitism and its appropriation of gender:

The transvestite, however, can do more than simply express the distinction between sex and gender, but challenge, at least implicitly, the distinction between appearance and reality that structures a good deal of popular thinking about gender identity. If the “reality” of gender is constituted by the performance itself, then there is no recourse to express. Indeed, the transvestite’s gender is as fully real as anyone whose performance complies with social expectations.<sup>4</sup>

Accordingly, the transvestite embodies the intersection between consciousness and authenticity insofar as the individual understands the socially constructed nature of gender and consequently attempts to reappropriate the way he or she is perceived in a socially ascriptive society. This reappropriation occurs through acts and stylized gestures. Butler marshals Simone de Beauvoir’s claim that women are “made,” not “born,” in order to explain this process:

to be a woman is to have *become* a woman, to compel the body to conform to an historical idea of “woman,” to induce the body to become a cultural sign, to materialize oneself to an historically delimited possibility, and to do this as a sustained and repeated corporeal project.<sup>5</sup>

Indeed, “ball children,” as participants in ball culture refer to one another, competing in the “real woman” category forge a bridge across gender theory and existential practice. They understand the historical idea of woman and accordingly manipulate their acts, gestures, and bodies in order to “become a cultural sign.” But *what* cultural sign is it that they are trying to become?

Observing participants in the “real women” category compete, one repeatedly sees hips gracefully swaying, lips puckered and painted, and eyes slightly squinted so as to evoke a sense of seduction and allure—all of which seem to imitate the stylized acts and gestures one might see on a high-fashion runway. In fact, within the cultural framework

the balls construct, femininity is ultimately defined by the embodiment of this specific, historicized conception of woman. Thereby, this conception becomes the characteristic boundary of gender performativity in the “real women” category and represents the epistemological and performative boundaries that define gender in ball culture.

Dorian Corey offers us a fantastically rich cultural history of the balls, describing how their defining characteristics shifted from creative production and emulation of movie stars to material acquisition and emulation of famous models. In addition, and somewhat unsurprisingly, almost all of the successful supermodels featured and mentioned in the film are white. Thus, I would suggest that this historical idea of woman is also culturally and racially specific—represented as thin, luxurious, and, of course, white. This is the epistemological substance that defines the performativity of the *women-identified* men in the “realness” category. As such, it becomes clear that what these black and Latino queer men attempt is to induce their bodies to become cultural signs of successful white models. Before seizing their imagined runway and gliding down it with an unimposing but well-defined gait, they first “perm” or chemically straighten their hair so that it appears long and flowing and make up their faces with foundation shades lighter than their natural skin tone. In this way, the politics of race and racism prove to fundamentally influence the historical conception of “woman” with which these women interact.

In her discussion of the ways proximity and context affect performance, Butler focuses on the ways transvestites interact with others, writing “Indeed, the sight of a transvestite onstage can compel pleasure and applause while the sight of the same transvestite on the seat next to us on the bus can compel fear, rage, even violence.”<sup>6</sup> In other words, amidst the bright lights and distance constructed on a stage, transvestitism is appropriate and even desirable; however, once those distancing elements are taken away, transvestites, once entertaining actors, become unwanted sexual deviants. In many ways, the different contexts of balls and the “real world” set up an analogous dynamic whereby some individuals can perform a particular identity at the balls, yet then become radically different outside those spaces (e.g., individuals who are crowned “real women” but live as gay men). Yet, there are several women-identified men for whom balls are not an escape from their monotonous and/or oppressive realities. Instead, these events are useful rehearsals for the potentially dangerous, culminating performance of everyday life.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 527.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 522.

<sup>6</sup> Butler, 527.

Venus Extravaganza and Octavia Saint Laurent are two individuals whose feminine totality of gendered acts transcend the ball space and become actualized in the real world by way of interactions with the persuaded “straight world” and their gay peers who know the “reality” behind their feminine “appearances.”<sup>7</sup> One must ask, however, how do Venus and Octavia imagine themselves? What bearing does the ever-important question of agency have on the intersection of interiority, appearance, and reality?

Butler is generally quite dubious of the distinction between appearance and reality when it comes to the issue of gender performance, and transvestite gender is no exception. Yet, Venus and Octavia do not consider themselves to be transvestites. Throughout several scenes in the film they both make it quite clear that there is indeed some sort of ontological interiority that makes them feel feminine, makes them desire to be fully “woman,” and makes them desire transsexual surgery.

Preceding the scenes in which we get a better sense of the depths of Venus’s and Octavia’s desire to be “complete women,” we are presented with Carmen and Brooke Extravaganza enjoying a day out on the beach. The scene begins with Carmen assuredly declaring, “America’s nice . . . you can be whatever you want; if you have the money.”<sup>8</sup> She then invites us to examine her life experience and body as she reveals the number of surgeries she has undergone to make her the young, beautiful woman we see. She ends by telling us that her most recent and important surgery is the “transsexualism operation” she has undergone—“I am no longer a man; I am a complete woman,” she gleefully proclaims.<sup>9</sup>

The film then transitions into two very intimate encounters with Venus and Octavia, both discussing their aspirations and dreams. First Octavia reveals her desire “to live a normal, happy life, being married and adopting children.”<sup>10</sup> The film then cuts to Venus reclining on her side saying, “I want to get married in a church in white. . . . I want to be a complete woman.”<sup>11</sup> Each of their hopes, dreams, and futures intimately depends upon entrenched, normative conceptions of their gender identity. Both Venus and Octavia articulate very traditional, feminine desires for their

futures, illustrating the gravity and power of their cultural, historical, and epistemological moment.

The proposition of becoming a “complete woman” is an aspiration that many ball children have and some successfully achieve. Several individuals, including Carmen Extravaganza, the mother of the House of Extravaganza,<sup>12</sup> and others have undergone some sort of transsexual operation—either breast reconstructive surgery, genital reconstructive surgery, or both. A variety of meta-theoretical explanations could be constructed for that fervent desire to undergo this type of irreversible surgery. Working within Butler’s framework, one might understand it as an attempt to dissolve the problematic, socially constructed dichotomy between appearance and reality. However, I would argue that the desire to take biological steps to actualize femininity may be more about a desire for the fusion of mind and body that Western discourse has worked so tirelessly to fissure.

If one listens closely to the ways these women-identified men describe their being, their ontology, they describe it as feeling emotionally, intellectually and spiritually female, while their biological sex is technically male. The transsexual operation, then, is corrective in nature—an attempt to force the body to express the spiritual and intellectual essence of the mind. Of course, this assertion is directly contra Butler’s passionate critique of the notion of ontological interiority; however, one still cannot deny the ways in which several individuals in *Paris Is Burning* invoke this discourse of nature and ontology.

In discussing the issue of a discourse of gender ontology, Butler writes:

That gender reality is created through sustained social performances means that the very notions of an essential sex, a true or abiding masculinity or femininity, are also constituted as part of the strategy by which the performative aspect of gender is concealed.<sup>13</sup>

Consequently, the rupture between mind and body Venus, Octavia, and others articulate seems to be a consequence of this discursive attempt to mask the tenuous and performative nature of gender. Indeed, reflecting on the

<sup>7</sup> I make use of quotes here to illustrate the tenuous and problematic nature of these different terms.

<sup>8</sup> *Paris Is Burning*, 1990.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> The word “House” is used to describe a collective of ball children who live and compete together as a single unit.

<sup>13</sup> Butler, 528.

content of the aspirations and dreams Venus and Octavia articulate, the extent to which their social being is influenced by the epistemological construction of gender is quite evident. However, their social position as women-identified gay men still complicates the almost conspiratorial account of gender essence Butler wants to offer. In one sense, Venus and Octavia clearly understand the performative and mutable nature of gender, yet they adamantly defend an ontological conception of their own gender identity.

Butler's framework simultaneously affords and denies Venus and Octavia a robust sense of agency and subjectivity: although they consciously manipulate the social construction of gender by adopting stylized acts and gestures associated with a distinct version of the feminine gender they want to emulate, for Butler, their very declaration of ontological femininity is a symptom of a social discourse which naturalizes gender. Thus, I would argue that Butler's analysis represents and perpetuates a Western discourse that places an almost exclusive emphasis on the primacy of the mind in the development of individual identity, often to the neglect of the possibility of an equally significant conscionable or corporeal self.

Undoubtedly, ontological descriptions of gender have contributed to oppressive discourses and historical structures of power that continue to affect non-white, non-male individuals. However, in fundamentally denying individual corporeal being and essential embodiment with her strict constructivist account of gender identity, Butler contributes to the problematic split between mind and body that can lead to the feelings of political disempowerment and meta-existence so many ball children describe. While the theoretical constitution of gender that Butler offers is incredibly rich and compelling, the cultural archive of non-white, transgendered individuals illustrates the need for theoretical refinement of her framework so that it includes a more robust account of the body and personal experience. In doing so, individuals can work toward a more holistic and comprehensive understanding of the relationship between personal identity and the various social constructs that can mitigate individuality and positive conceptions of the self.

# The Emancipation of an Approximation: The Social Work of Kara Walker's Imagery

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## Abstract

In this essay, I analyze several of Kara Walker's works and discuss how they function to revise the traditional narrative of African American history. Walker works mostly with silhouettes and often relies upon stereotypical imagery to distinguish between her White and Black characters. I argue that, contrary to many critics' claims, Walker's use of stereotypes actually liberates the representation of African Americans from the confines of so-called positive imagery.

How do you invert the mask covering the truth of your experience? How can you convince someone that everything they've been told is a lie? Through paradoxical use of hyperbole, undertell,<sup>1</sup> and the unmodified truth, the abolitionists of the antebellum era, both former slaves and white people who called for an end to slavery, brought together the few literate former slaves to present a single story within their narratives; they especially called for sentimental chronicles that depict the unspeakable atrocities of slavery. For the sake of the cause, the abolitionists could not risk diluting the strength of their pleas; representations contrary to the dominant slave narrative, one that emphasized the horrors of slavery and the slaves' unceasing resistance, were marginalized to make room for the sometimes exaggerated and ostensible autobiography. Subsequent generations who read and heard these texts claimed the stories as their own, and with each retelling aggrandized the tropes preserved by the abolitionists. The present-day populace's remove from the actual events necessitates an approximation of the truth, perhaps even an embellished account that highlighted the events that underscored the abomination of slavery, given the unknowability of that era. As the distance grew larger between past and present, contemporary artists accrued the freedom to reconstruct the dominant narrative propagated by abolitionists. Kara Walker's *Emancipation Approximation* epitomizes postmodern artists' disruption of the status quo. Her critics contend that her work endangers the current attitude towards slavery, as though the viewing

of her whimsical silhouettes could abate the atrocities of the institution. However, I offer a reading of Walker's artwork, which contends that the fantastical nature of Walker's silhouettes highlights the atrocities of slavery even as they make the appearance of downplaying them.

Walker's usage of the silhouette as her medium of choice illuminates the work done by the shadow. Working with the shadow, Walker showcases her reliance upon the work done by her predecessors to cast an unforgiving light upon the institution of slavery. Walker's work portrays a side of slave narratives that is rarely seen due to the propagation of the dominant narrative. She shows the part that must be unearthed, what you read after the dust has been blown off the covers of recovered tomes. She gives her audience a tale of slavery that does not relegate the black American to the sphere of resolute victimization. Rather, in her reconstructed narrative, slaves have at least some control of their bodies and their sexuality. Walker's silhouettes rewrite the traditional narrative of slavery by showing instances when slaves are active participants in their own destruction, through her art she liberates a canonized estimate of truth from the confines of a demanded authenticity, reclaiming for her characters, and the people they (re)present, their captive sovereignty.

With a few significant exceptions, Walker chooses a single color—black—for her silhouettes, regardless of the race of the character. By removing the most obvious demarcation of racial difference, skin color, Walker needs another way to distinguish between her white and black characters. The profiles of her silhouettes rely on common stereotypes to convey the race of the cutout; her black characters are often marked with the exaggerated lips of minstrel iconography. The propagation of the stereotype, if read superficially, would seem to merely perpetuate derogatory messages regarding the black body. A closer analysis reveals the work done through a voluntary representation of oneself as Other, or as loathsome or disdainful. Assuming the role of an African American artist, Walker gains control over her corporeal depiction, allowing her to restructure her persona(e) into whatever she desires. Notwithstanding the fact that within the piece, the black people are not completely transfigured, a willful presentation of the suppressed narrative liberates the victims of centuries of discursive confinement. Opening the locks on tongues and texts, varied portrayals of this central black diasporic tale allow for heterogeneous presentations of the self, since it is not necessary for all to reflect

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<sup>1</sup> For more on the undertell as a literary device, see P. Gabrielle Foreman's "Manifest in Signs: The Politics of Sex and Representation in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*" (100–130) in *Harriet Jacobs and Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: New Critical Essays*, edited by Deborah M. Garfield and Rafia Zafar. 2007 Cambridge University Press.

the desired image. No longer confined by the mandates of a latterly ratified canon, contemporary artists can reflect the multifarious facets of current black identities, giving multi-dimensionality to the immured black mind and body.

The fantasy of the tableau, the world of the shadow, to some critics undermines the social power of Walker's work. Worried that any responsibility pressed on the current populous would undermine efforts at interracial coalition building, defenders of the traditional narrative of slavery seek to keep work like Walker's out of the public's gaze. The images, at first glance innocent and playful, could make the viewer feel safe within the protection of their voyeurism as they enjoy an escorted nostalgic regression to days they never knew but somehow have not dis-remembered. Encapsulated in a room of life-sized silhouettes, viewers can lose themselves in the shadow world, where the racial ambiguity allows for the temporary dissolution of the didactic binary, freeing viewers, for a moment, so that they might enjoy the blithe phantasmagoria before them. However, once they realize the ethnicities of the shadow, the viewer may now feel guilt for the pleasure they take from looking at the piece. This guilt completes the transformation of the viewer into one of the shadow players; one cannot feel guilty for a crime one has not committed. Abducted from the sanctuary of voyeurism the viewer is now partially responsible for the atrocities depicted in the piece, no matter their race, bringing to light the immediate relevance of the subject matter.

Drawing the viewer into her fantasy world, Walker demands that the viewer ask whose fantasy are they viewing? Some of her pieces break the rules of perspective and force the viewer to determine which image is actually supposed to be in the foreground leaving viewers to question how much responsibility they hold in the creation of this world. The viewers' interpretations of the images, as is the very nature of the power of the voyeur, form the ultimate message of the piece. So if they come away with an understanding contrary to the prevailing tale, it is of their own doing, a realization that might result in a social disunity that undercuts the work of decades of struggles for equality. Even with this risk, the many possible interpretations of Walker's work allow for several different conceptions of the black diaspora, freeing the race from the imprisonment of one-dimensionality.

The first of 26 scenes in *Emancipation Approximation*, a grandiose tableau, immediately asserts their power to rewrite the narrative of slavery. Exploiting the metaphor of liberation through flight, Walker declares the sexual sovereignty of the black body. Looking overhead, a hunter on the

far right of the tableau sees a black man attempting to insert the head of the swan into his anus. Dressed in coattails and shoed, unlike several of the other slaves in the piece, the man suggests that flight and corporeal autonomy free him from the confines of a linear narrative of slavery.

The body of the swan betokens the grace and beautifulness of white society; the refined elegance of the planter class. Standing in front of the mansion in the background, the hunter holds the headless neck of a swan level with his hips. The shadow blends the two silhouettes together so that the swan's neck signifies the impotent phallus of the white man. The hunter's gun, standing erect at his side, (re)presents the trope of the impotent white man whose only recourse in overtaking the lascivious black male is the power of his firearm. The black man's homoerotic manipulation of the white phallus, while proliferating a stereotyped sexual superiority over the white man, recaptures a corporeal autarchy denied to the silenced victims of sexual abuse. During the era of slavery, masculinity was in part defined by a man's ability to control his sexuality, to decide when and with whom he would perform sexual acts. Stories that relate the sexual abuse of male slaves are therefore suppressed in the dominant narrative of slavery initially put forth by abolitionists in order to reclaim and preserve the masculinity of the male slave. Presenting the hidden story of the abuse endured by black males and showing that they, too, need to reclaim sexual sovereignty, Walker overturns the dominant narrative that maintains women were the only victims of abuse during slavery.

A common trope in the most prevalent description of slavery postulates that the entire black American population was united in their abolitionist efforts; that they enjoyed a cohesive community that helped each other escape the horrors of slavery. This account ignores the betrayals that occurred when a slave, for whatever reason, revealed to a white man another slave's plan to escape. Scene 10 depicts two black women who appear to be escaping from slavery. Laden with "hobo sacks" they walk past each other with what seems at first to be a kind greeting, suggesting a fabled community that assumes a shared morale of companionship among all blacks. A closer look, however, shows that the women, while indeed greeting one another, do so in such a way that their faces are partially hidden from the other, suggesting a latent distrust. A (re)presentation of division in the black community undercuts the work attempted by the abolitionists who authored the now canonical slavery narrative. Their efforts to aggrandize the resolve of the black race to succeed in overthrowing their white oppressors, strives to

present the race as a powerful force that never surrendered to the paternalism of the institution of slavery. Revealing the duplicity of certain individuals, those who valued the favor of their master over the welfare of a fellow slave, Walker undermines narrative replete with an exaggerated valorization of the black race.

Scene 12 explores the emotional distress endured by a mother separated from her child. The separation of mother and child is used to exemplify what is often argued to be the most horrific consequence of slavery. Abolitionists amplified this abuse to showcase the tragedies imposed by the institution. The scene displays a child suckling on its still attached umbilical cord while its mother lying prone beseeches the child to place its umbilical cord in her mouth in order to reconnect the two. The child, however, capable of surviving on its own, attests to the ability of the black race to function, even if disconnected from the past. Walker gives the black race the power and dignity of responsibility, liberating them from the sphere of the inert victim they were relegated to by popular tropes of slavery.

Scene 18 of *Emancipation Approximation* presents a black woman silhouetted in white sitting upon the head of a barefoot black silhouette of a black woman walking in the grass. The woman silhouetted in white, similar to the two fugitive slaves in scene 10, attempts to cover the aspects of her profile that most saliently reveal her ethnicity. One possible reading infers that the transfiguration expected to occur after an enslaved person gains freedom by running away has failed to produce the anticipated corporeal liberation. The fugitive woman is burdened by the realization that, although she escapes the hardships of slavery, she does not achieve a full corporeal liberation since she will soon have to hide her true past and identity if she wishes to remain safe. Rewriting the traditional conception of freedom, Walker revealed the actual consequences of escape. Regardless of her distance from the plantation, the black woman must endure the crushing weight of a suppressed identity. Even within this most supreme act of self-reclamation, the black body is still enslaved by the demands of a white society that will never accept her true and entire self. Walker's reconstruction of the modern approximation of past events dismantles from its very core this tale most quintessential to the black diaspora.

Several scenes in the piece rewrite the story of the victimized black woman who was too impotent to be able to defend herself. Walker's most original way of challenging the notion that all black women were innocent or incapable of defending themselves is through the use of icons ubiquitous in

the black diasporic vernacular. Scene 13 depicts a white farmer, perhaps an overseer, exposing his swan neck phallus to a young black girl. The girl, who has a somewhat canine head, a foxtail, and paws for feet, attempts to hide her face, turning her head to the side. However, she also peeks through her fingers, curious. Hybridizing the girl with the trickster icon of the fox, Walker mobilizes her character, freeing her from the sphere of the victim. The trickster girl holds the power to deceive the white man into thinking he controls her body. Later in the piece we see how Walker continues to overturn this misconception with images of black women overtaking the white phallus, using it for protection rather than the abuse described in the canonical slave narrative.

The final tableau of *Emancipation Approximation* consists of a pond scene of transmogrified white swans with black human heads. One reading, the one consistent with the postulates of the dominant narrative, speaks to the transfiguration of the black body through the fulfillment of white criteria for beauty. This message posits that in order to be seen as beautiful, the black body must subscribe to the white standard of beauty. It is not a result of the black mind realizing the body's own intrinsic comeliness but the consequence of imbibing the white phallus and the attached imperialism that causes the mind's eye to see the black body in a new glorifying light.

An alternate reading, however, emphasizes how the swans acquired their black heads; on the right side of the tableau, a black woman attempts to insert her head into the swan. Thus through the envelopment of her body by the shell of white beauty, she is able to protect her self from the abuses and atrocities of a society that does not value her. The other transfigured black women in the tableau have their necks bent to the assumedly reflective surface of the water, or in one case, turned back as they preen. This preoccupation with maintaining the façade of white beauty highlights the fragility of the fallacy that such beauty is inherent in all white beings. If, for even a moment, the front were to come down and reveal their true inner identities, the women would become even more vulnerable to the violence they seek to escape. Displaying black women's attempts at passing in a white society, Walker exposes a hidden vernacular, but instead of (re)presenting to the viewer the feared narrative that all black women hate their bodies, she shows that the subscription to white standards of beauty may provide safety from an abusive society. They are forced to withdraw behind the aegis of assumed white beauty.

The last image of the piece depicts at the farthest right of the tableau a racially unidentifiable woman with an ax leaning against a tree stump, drumming her fingers impatiently as the heads of black people roll around her. Walker's use of the bodiless heads can be read as signifying the dismemberment of the black body that is necessary in order for it to be acceptable in our society. Since one hand of the woman covers her face, which is turned away from the audience, the viewer cannot tell if the woman is white, black, or mixed. The possibility that the woman with the ax is black disrupts the commonly held notion that it is only at the hands of whites that black people suffer such abuse. Moreover, with her back to the murderous scene at her feet the woman exhibits the nonchalance and indifference demonstrated by both the past and present killers of the black bodies. She reminds the audience that once they, too, turn away from the piece they become guilty, however passively, of the dissection of the black body.

Walker's work is often criticized for dangerously refuting the dominant narrative of slavery, for showing pictures of black people committing or participating in the very atrocities that made slavery so abominable. A fear of a possible dilution of the gravity of the abuses of slavery causes many people to press for the removal of her work from museums and galleries. An in-depth analysis of the art, however, reveals how the presentation of an alternative past, liberates the black race from the currently ascribed one-dimensional depictions to which we have all grown accustomed. Although, as socially responsible citizens, we must consider the possible negative consequences we might accrue from the display of art such as *Emancipation Approximation*, we must also appreciate the work done through this piece and others like it. Contrary to accusations that *Emancipation Approximation* disrespects and makes light of slavery, the art pays homage to the work done through the abolitionist discourse that strove to create a space for the free expression of the black diasporic culture within our society. The fact that work such as Walker's is able to be displayed in our society speaks to the success of the abolitionist efforts.

# The Aesthetic of the Ascetic: Godly Despair in Early Modern England

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## Abstract

This practical divinity of William Perkins, an Elizabethan Puritan divine, is essential to understanding despair among Puritans in the late 16th century and throughout the 17th century. The practical divinity of Perkins, specifically his *Cases of Conscience*, is emblematic of a conscious and concerted effort on the part of Elizabethan divines in the 1590s both to preempt and to treat a specific malady, despair, among the godly. This introduction, part of a larger thesis, will lay out my approach, which entails an examination of both the theology that undergirded the despairing postures of Puritans and the subjective experiences that influenced how Puritans responded to that theology. I will also define the main objects of this study, Puritans and despair.

Despair forms an inextricable part of the Christian tradition. When Christ hung on the cross at Golgotha, he cried out in spiritual anguish. Those desperate cries express both keenly felt isolation and somber finality, yet Christ's sufferings were merely the first in a long historical progression in which the highest form of spiritual agony—despair—was contemplated, theologized, and combated.<sup>1</sup>

The practical divinity—rules and writings crafted to help the believer through their spiritual life—of William

Perkins, an eminent Elizabethan Puritan divine, is instrumental to understanding despair as experienced by Puritans in the late 16th century and throughout the 17th century. Puritan ministers, or divines as they were commonly called, acknowledged that despair was a serious issue among their flock. Accordingly, the literature, treatises and sermons read and composed by *the godly*, one of the chief terms used by Puritans to refer to themselves, indicate a sustained engagement with despair, which was often precipitated by uncertainty over the assurance of one's election.<sup>2</sup> The practical divinity of Perkins, specifically his *Cases of Conscience*, is emblematic of a conscious and concerted effort on the part of Elizabethan divines in the 1590s both to preempt and to treat a specific malady—despair—among the godly.

The evidence—primarily sermons—points to a four-part conclusion. First, despair, particularly that linked to worries about the doctrine of predestination, was critical to the experience of the godly. Secondly, the seeds of this despair grew out of the particularly dynamic relationship between the divines and their flocks. This relationship, as pointed out by Christopher Haigh, was mediated by the godly belief that it was the “preacher's job to cause a stir, to bruise consciences, to divide the godly from the profane and set them up against another.”<sup>3</sup> However, some of the most empathetic statements written by Perkins deal with despair and how to lift believers from that miserable estate. Third, the mechanism for understanding this relationship is the practical divinity of Perkins. Fourth and finally, the result we find is an ambivalent view where despair is at once valorized and maligned, necessary yet terrifying. One rendering of this ethos is found in a teaching manual composed by Perkins for other divines. In speaking of the “affectations” aroused by sorrow, grief and horror, Perkins admits that, “though it be not a thing wholesome and profitable of

<sup>1</sup> Calvin comments, concerning the depths of the spiritual agony Christ was in, that the cry was “unquestionably drawn from him by intensity of sorrow. And certainly this was his chief conflict, and harder than all the other tortures.” John Calvin, *Commentary on a harmony of the evangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke on the epistle of Paul the apostle to the Hebrews*, trans. and ed. William Pringle (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library), date unknown (Matthew 27:46).

<sup>2</sup> Election refers to the election of individuals to eternal life. This is done at the good pleasure of God (See Ephesians 1:5,11; Matthew 11:25; John 15:16, 19) and His sovereign grace (See Romans 11:4–6; Ephesians 1:3–6). M.G. Easton, *Bible dictionary* (1897, third edition).

<sup>3</sup> Christopher Haigh, *The plaine man's pathways to heaven: kinds of Christianity in post-reformation England, 1570–1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 40; A powerful example of this notion is found in one of George Gifford's (d. 1600) dialogues, in which a Papist complains that godly divines bring “disagreement and division.” The Protestant stoutly replies, “yet he says he came not to send peace but a sword, and to set the father against the son and the mother against the daughter.” George Gifford, *A dialogue betweene a Papist and a Protestant* (London, 1582), 36.

its own nature, yet is it a remedy necessary for the subduing of a sinner's stubbornness, and for the preparing of his mind to become teachable."<sup>4</sup>

Critical to this study is an examination of the two sides of Protestant religion—the objective realm of doctrinal truth and the subjective religious experiences of the godly.<sup>5</sup> During the 16th century, a theological framework was constructed that led some of the godly to despair. Calvin, Theodor Beza and Perkins all taught double predestination, the belief that God chose some to salvation and some to perdition. But with Beza and Perkins there is a shift in emphasis. Calvin declared that predestination should only be considered in relation to Scripture and in Christ. Beza and Perkins, by contrast, insisted that believers could ascertain certain signs of their election through outward works and the use of the practical syllogism.<sup>6</sup> Temporary faith is another common element among the three. A chief fear among the godly was that they did not actually have God's saving grace, but merely a false or temporary grace that would eventually be cast off to reveal their reprobation. This theological edifice, the crossbeams of which were formed by Calvin and Beza, upheld Perkins's theology.

While there were others who influenced this theology, for instance the Heidelberg theologians and earlier English divines,<sup>7</sup> Calvin, Beza, and Perkins form the "trinity of the Orthodox," and are essential to understanding the despairing postures of some of the godly.<sup>8</sup> The subjective experience of despair is seen in the lives of Katherine Brettergh and Sarah Wight. Brettergh was a godly woman who became ill, fell into

despair, and recovered, though she ultimately died of her illness on 31 May 1601. Her life was recorded as *Death's advantage little regarded, and the soules solace against sorrow* (1602). Wight was a godly child of 15 who fell deeply into despair in the midst of Civil War London. In 1647 her trials and ultimate redemption were recorded by Henry Jessey as *The exceeding riches of grace advanced by the spirit of grace, in an empty nothing creature, viz. Mrs. Sarah Wight lately hopeles and restless, her soule dwelling far from peace or hopes thereof: now hopefull, and joyfull in the Lord*. By examining Perkins in conjunction with these narratives, we can glean a fuller understanding of the particular way "the godly" despaired, and what I suggest, is a deeply ambivalent view of despair. Perkins was intent on relieving the despair suffered by the laity, yet he also believed that despair was necessary for a full apprehension of God's glory and entrance into salvation.

Before moving on, however, it is worth recalling and defining the dual focus of this study, despair and Puritans. Luther despaired. Beza despaired. Perkins despaired. These eminent men who oversaw the birth and maturation of the Reformation felt themselves within its suffocating grasp. When Luther wrote of despair, it is in a distinctly theological context. It is not simply a deep sadness or intense melancholia; rather, it is a somber description of a spiritual state. So too it is with Beza, "Calvin's Elisha,"<sup>9</sup> whose letters from Geneva stirred the godly throughout Elizabeth's reign. While apocryphal, it is recounted by various biographers that Perkins, on his deathbed, cried out in desperation.<sup>10</sup> What we see, then, is that despair, though intensely personal, is something to which all are heir.

<sup>4</sup> William Perkins, *The arte of prophecyng, or, a treatise concerning the sacred and onely true manner and methode of preaching*, trans. Thomas Tuke (London, 1607), 109.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Lake, *Moderate puritans and the Elizabethan church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 155.

<sup>6</sup> The practical syllogism is a type of deductive reasoning that consists of a major premise, a minor premise, and a conclusion. Thus Perkins's practical syllogism concerning "whether a man be in the state of damnation or in the state of grace." Major Premise: Everyone that believes is the child of God. Minor Premise: But I do believe. Conclusion: Therefore I am the child of God. (William Perkins, *The workes of that famous and worthy minister of Christ in the University of Cambridge, M. VV. Perkins*. (Cambridge, 1631) [originally published 1608–9].)

<sup>7</sup> The chief Heidelberg theologians were Zacharias Ursinus (1534–83), Kaspar Olevianus (1536–87) and Girolamo Zanchius (1516–90). With regard to English precursors, the most notable are William Tyndale (d. 1536) and John Bradford (d. 1555). See William Tyndale, *Doctrinal treatises and introductions to different portions of the Holy Scripture and An exposition vpon the v.vi.vii. chapters of Mathew*. John Bradford, *A brife and faythfull declaration of the true fayth of Christ: made by certeyne men suspected of heresy in these articles folowyng* (London, 1547) and *An exhortacion to the carienge of Chrystes crosse: wyth a true and brefe confutation of false and Papisticall doctrine* (London, 1545).

<sup>8</sup> Christopher Hill, *Puritanism and revolution: studies in interpretation of the English revolution of the seventeenth century* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1958), 216.

<sup>9</sup> Collinson, *Elizabethan puritan movement*, 80

<sup>10</sup> *Thomas Fuller's the holy state and the profane state*, ed. Maximilian Graff Walten (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938) Vol. II, a facsimile of the first edition, 1642, 91. Although, as noted above, this example is apocryphal, it stirred intense debate in the decades following Perkins's death. His first official biographer, Fuller, denied that Perkins had cried out in despair and defends Perkins's legacy by departing from the biography and offering several explanations for Perkins's shout—among them the temptations of Satan and the fact that Perkins often cried out "Mercy, Mercy!" and this cry was simply misunderstood by those near him. The intense scrutiny put on Perkins's dying declaration points to the unsettling place that despair had in the experience of the godly.

Protestants held fast to the Roman Catholic notion of despair as a sin, best elucidated by Thomas Aquinas. In *Summa theologiae*, SS, Q. 20 Art. I, Obj. 2, it is posited that “despair seems to grow from a good root, viz. fear of God, or from horror at the greatness of one’s own sins. Therefore despair is not a sin.”<sup>11</sup> Aquinas counters with the argument that despair leads to other sins (making it a sin) and that despair conforms to the false opinion about God, who “refuses pardon to the repentant sinner, or that He does not turn sinners to Himself by sanctifying Grace . . . and is thus vicious and sinful.”<sup>12</sup> Despair was believed to actively prevent the attainment of hope and faith, which are necessary for salvation. Thus, Aquinas declares despair a more dangerous sin than even unbelief or hatred of God, for despair “consists in a man ceasing to hope for a share of God’s goodness.”<sup>13</sup> Aquinas is keenly aware of the intractable nature of despair; in particular the emotional quality impressed upon one by it. With regard to the dreadfulness of despair, in SS, Q. 20 Art. 3, Aquinas quotes the gloss on Proverbs 24:10 which states: “Nothing is more execrable than despair. For he who despairs loses his constancy in the daily labors of this life, and what is worse, loses his constancy in the endeavor of faith.”<sup>14</sup> For Aquinas, despair is agonizing not only because it leads one away from God, but also because of the terrifying emotional complex it creates. For this, he directs the reader to Isidorus who declares, “To commit a crime is death to the soul; but to despair is to descend into hell.”<sup>15</sup>

This notion, that despair is something uniquely dreadful, courses throughout European literature, from the words emblazoned above the entrance of hell in the *Divine Comedy*, to Mephistopheles’s despairing soliloquy in *Doctor Faustus*, to Satan’s terrible, and sorrowful, rage in Book I of *Paradise Lost*.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the godly would have understood despair as both sinful and emotionally terrifying. As Perkins comments, “For he which despairs, makes all the promises

of God to be false: and this sin of all other is most contrary to true saving faith.”<sup>17</sup>

This increased engagement with despair was felt more keenly by Puritans because of their pronounced emphasis on “heart religion,”<sup>18</sup> an outgrowth of the “experimental” nature of their tradition. At times we even see despair bleeding into suicide, an occurrence of particular concern to divines. An examination of suicide, however, with its accompanying social, political and economic factors, is not within the purview of this study.<sup>19</sup>

Puritans are often described as the “hotter sort of Protestant.” What does this mean? For them the “sensible world comes with a reinforced brilliancy and relief—all the redness turned to blood, all water into tears.”<sup>20</sup> Any definition of Puritans must take into account this heightened spiritual dynamic, which not only manifested itself physically—for instance in the smashing of “popish” relics like stained glass in churches—but mentally as well, in their despairing postures. An incident, indicative of the perennial tensions between Puritans and the state during the reign of Charles I, took place in 1633 in Salisbury.

Henry Sherfield, a devout Puritan, was brought before Archbishop Laud in the Star Chamber for breaking a stained-glass window at St. Edmundsbury, Salisbury. The records show that “the stained glass—said to be very ‘ancient and fair’—depicted the story of Creation in a way which greatly offended Sherfield, who sat in the church facing it for 20 years.”<sup>21</sup> He cited the “profane representation of God the Father—represented as a little old man in a blue and red coat” as affronting him such that he “picked out with his staff the part of the window” with the offending image.

With this intensity in mind we should understand that Puritan—as a modern descriptor, as a contemporary

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), SS, Q. 20 Art. I, Obj. 2.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, SS, Q. 20 Art. I, Obj. 2.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, Art. 3.

<sup>14</sup> *Cogitatio stulti peccatum est et abominatio hominum detractor si desperaveris lassus in die angustiae imminetur fortitudo tua erue eos qui ducuntur ad mortem et qui trahuntur ad interitum liberare ne cesses.*

<sup>15</sup> De Sum. Bono ii, 14.

<sup>16</sup> Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, trans. Henry Wordsworth Longfellow (New York: Modern Library, 2003), Canto III [originally translated 1882, originally published 1321]; Christopher Marlow, *The tragicall history of D. Faustus* (London, 1604) Act. I, Sc. 3; John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2004), I, 84–124 [originally published 1667].

<sup>17</sup> William Perkins, *A treatise tending unto a declaration whether a man be in the estate of damnation or in the estate of grace*, Ch. 40.

<sup>18</sup> See Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *The precisionist strain: disciplinary religion and Antinomian backlash in puritanism to 1638* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 63–105; Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, *The practice of piety: puritan devotional disciplines in seventeenth-century New England* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), intro; Charles Lloyd Cohen, *God’s caress: the psychology of puritan religious experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 137–201.

<sup>19</sup> See Michael MacDonald and Terence R. Murphy, *Sleepless souls: suicide in early modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 15–87, 144–176, Figures 1.1, 7.1; Lawrence Babb, *The Elizabethan malady: a study of melancholia in English literature from 1580 to 1642* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State College Press, 1951), 143–175; S.E. Spratt, *The English debate on suicide: from Donne to Hume* (La Salle, IL, Open Court, 1961).

<sup>20</sup> Walter Horatio Pater, “Aesthetic poetry” from *Appreciations* (London: MacMillan & Co., 1889), 4.

<sup>21</sup> *The culture of English puritanism, 1560–1700*, eds. Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 107.

jeer, as a term loaded with nostalgia—is structurally difficult to define. Lake, in “Defining Puritanism—Again?,” singles out three approaches to defining Puritanism. The first, derived from Patrick Collinson, defines Puritanism as a movement. More specifically it is one that “involves a commitment to further reformation in the government or liturgy of the Church.”<sup>22</sup> This is a particularly precise definition, because it places actions of non-conformity or reform within the sphere of Puritanism, while actions that benefitted the status quo can be set aside as non-representative of Puritanism. The issue that arises with such an approach is that it neglects the experimental and emotional aspects peculiar to the Puritan tradition. And if Puritanism was predicated on attempts at reform in relation to the English Church, it would simply “appear and reappear like the smile on the face of a Cheshire cat, according to the circumstances of local or national politics.”<sup>23</sup>

The second approach, seen in R. Greaves, focuses on Puritanism as a “style of piety . . . producing distinctive structures of meaning whereby the world and the self could be construed, interpreted, and acted on.”<sup>24</sup> Within this approach there are two thrusts. One sifts through the various godly approaches to such practices and ideals as Sabbath observance, household worship, experimental predestinarianism and particular types of providentialism, pointing to Puritanism as a “distinctively zealous or intense subset of a larger body of reformed doctrines and positions.”<sup>25</sup> The focus of the second thrust is on examining the tendencies that construct a distinctive Puritan style, which is accomplished by an appraisal of Puritan thought.

The third approach was developed more recently and can be seen in P. Collinson, M.G. Finlayson and J.C.

Davis.<sup>26</sup> It focuses on “Puritan style” as too closely linked to other forms of reformed or Protestant thought, and as a result argues that:

Contemporaries’ use of the word Puritan and the deployment of images or characters of the archetypal Puritan are now best seen as exercises in literary game playing and polemical maneuver, rather than as references to any very stable or coherent Puritan position existing in the world independent of those literary and stereo-types.<sup>27</sup>

This latter approach is seductive. Many of the caricatures of Puritans, like those disseminated by playwrights angry at godly attempts to close their plays down, or politicians suspicious of godly fervor, worked to marginalize them politically and socially. This approach, however, does not place the emphasis on the mentality crucial in any discussion of the godly.

Lake utilizes an amalgam of the second and third approach, which is the most useful way of describing the godly. Puritanism can be drawn as a “distinctive style of piety and divinity,” which is not composed of distinct “Puritan elements,” but rather should be viewed as a synthesis of certain elements, found among the godly as well as in other reformed movements, that when combined result in a certain “Puritan style.”<sup>28</sup> The result is that “Puritan” emerges as something ideologically and polemically constructed. It is an unstable construct that can be broadly looked at as a variety of Reformed Protestantism dedicated to reforming England and, after 1590, to crafting a new type of Reformed devotion—containing elements such as Sabbatarianism, household worship, fasting and an experimental predestinarianism that “encourages . . . believers to

<sup>22</sup> Peter Lake, “Defining Puritanism—Again?” in *Puritanism: transatlantic perspectives on a seventeenth-century Anglo-American faith*, Francis J. Bremer, ed. (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1993), 3–29; see Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan puritan movement* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1967), 71–92; Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: the rise of English Arminianism, c. 1590–1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 29–58.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 4. This phrase originated with Conrad Russell; see C. Russell, *Parliaments and English politics, 1621–1629* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 121.

<sup>24</sup> Lake, “Defining Puritanism,” 5. See R. Greaves, *Society and religion in Elizabethan England* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1981).

<sup>25</sup> Lake, “Defining Puritanism,” 4. See *The English sabbath: a study of doctrine and discipline from the Reformation to the Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). The term “experimental predestinarianism” was first used by R.T. Kendall. He uses this term because, firstly, “experimental” was the word used by Puritans themselves. Secondly, because of its “useful ambiguity” since it refers to experience as well as the “testing [of] a hypothesis by an experiment.” (Kendall, 8–9) Thus Perkins’s practical syllogism concerning “whether a man be in the state of damnation or in the state of grace.”

<sup>26</sup> See Patrick Collinson, *The puritan character; polemics and polarities in early seventeenth-century English culture*, William Andrews Clarke Memorial Library Paper (Pasadena, CA, 1989), Ch. 3; M.G. Finlayson, *Historians, Puritanism, and the English Revolution: the religious factor in English politics before and after the Interregnum* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), Ch. 4.

<sup>27</sup> Lake, “Defining Puritanism,” 5.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

seek assurance that they were chosen by God for salvation.”<sup>29</sup> But of chief importance is the intensity of their religious experience. Robert Greene, a Puritan writing in the early 17th century, recounts how he told his companions that “the preacher’s words had taken a deep impression upon my conscience . . . [and] they fell upon me in a jesting manner, calling me Puritan and precisian.”<sup>30</sup> This remark is telling in that it reveals the dialectic between the two sides of Protestant religion—the objective and the subjective.<sup>31</sup> These two elements of Protestant religion collided, with spectacular results, in the practical divinity of Perkins.

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<sup>29</sup> See John Coffey and Paul C.H. Lim, “Introduction” in *Cambridge Companion to Puritanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1–18.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in John Spurr, *English puritanism, 1603–1698* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 18.

<sup>31</sup> Lake, *Moderate puritans*, 155.

# “Incidents” of “Signifying” in *Kindred*: Comparing Octavia Butler’s and Harriet Jacobs’s Depictions of Slavery

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## Abstract

In this paper, I compare Octavia Butler’s neo-slave narrative, *Kindred*, with Harriet Jacobs’s canonical slave text, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. I use Professor Henry Louis Gates’s idea of “signifying” within African American literature, to suggest that *Kindred* “signifies,” or revises upon, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. To support this thesis, I assess many of the similarities between the two texts: each of the female protagonists defy antebellum customs, use their sexuality to stymie their master, and must decide between attaining freedom in the North, or remaining enslaved in the South with their relatives. The excerpt below reveals another comparison between the two texts, and highlights what other scholars have argued about these novels. It concludes by positing reasons *why* Butler’s text revises upon Jacobs’s text.

According to Professor Henry Louis Gates’s theory of African American literature, documented in *The Signifying Monkey*, “black writers read, repeat, imitate, and revise each others texts to a remarkable extent” (Gates: 1988, xxii). His theory argues that, in order for African American writers to establish themselves within the literary genre, they must “rewrite the received textual tradition,” which he labels “signifying” (Gates: 1988, 124). He defines this as a way of “defining the relation of the text at hand to the tradition. The revising text is written in the language of the tradition, employing its tropes, [and] its rhetorical strategies” (Gates: 1988, 124). “Signifying” allows African American authors “to create a new narrative space for representing the recurring referent of Afro-American literature, the so-called Black Experience,” which undoubtedly includes slavery (Gates: 1988, 111).

Slavery is the topic of many novels, but a contemporary text about slavery under the genre of “science fiction” might generate skepticism from readers. Octavia Butler’s *Kindred* falls under this category, since it includes the element of time travel. In this text, Dana, a black woman in 1970s California, frequently journeys to her ancestors on the Weylin Plantation in antebellum Maryland. Since *Kindred* is

“science fiction,” readers might question the accuracy of its depiction of slavery. In order to assess its veracity, we could compare it with Harriet Jacobs’s first-hand narrative of being enslaved. Writing under the pseudonym Linda Brent, Jacobs describes her ordeals as the property of North Carolina’s Dr. Flint. Both Linda and Dana use their strong wills and defiance to circumvent an institution in which they do not fit. In the process, they must contend with familial obligations, which eventually result in their physical suffering. By applying Gates’s theory to these two texts, we can determine the larger significance of their textual similarities: *Kindred* “signifies” upon *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, as evidenced by each protagonist’s defiance, familial responsibilities, and physical debilitation.

A major textual commonality is the physical debilitation that Dana and Linda endure as a result of their familial predicaments. In *Incidents*, the longer Linda stays in her garret to stealthily watch her children, the less mobility she has; it becomes challenging to “sit or lie in a cramped position day after day” (Jacobs 114). The second winter of her concealment, she realizes that her limbs are “benumbed by inaction” and filled with cramps from the cold (Jacobs 122). In one of her rare excursions out of her hole, she feels “stiff and clumsy” and doubts that she would ever “use [her] limbs again” (Jacobs 125). Her friends fear that she would “become a cripple for life” (Jacobs 127). Linda even loses her ability to speak, as her “face and tongue stiffen” due to her inability to communicate while in hiding (Jacobs 122). Even when she eventually attains freedom, she is still “troubled with the swelling [in her limbs] whenever [she] walked much” (Jacobs 168). Years later, as she reflects on her hideaway, Linda summarizes that her “body still suffers from the effects of that long imprisonment” (Jacobs 148). As these quotes indicate, the seven years cramped up in the attic have long-range effects on Linda. This is an indirect result of the aforementioned familial conflict: since Linda cannot leave her children behind, she must hide in her grandmother’s attic. However, there is a “loophole of retreat:” staying in the attic nearly cripples her (Jacobs 117).

Dana does not escape physical pain either. She begins the story by informing readers that she “lost an arm on [her] last trip home . . . her left arm” (Butler 8). During her final trip south, Rufus Weylin grabs her left arm when he attempts to rape her. Immediately after murdering him, Dana awakens in her contemporary living room, with her left arm fused to the wall, forcing doctors to cut it off “above the elbow” (Butler 10).

The significance of Dana's mutilation has been debated among several critics. Mitchell, for instance, hypothesizes that this "highly symbolic occurrence" helps paint a complete picture of antebellum slavery. Specifically, Dana's lost arm implies the impossibility of completely leaving the past behind "because history has lingering effects on the present and the future. Having endured the psychological mutilation of slavery, she endures physical mutilation as well" (69). Similarly, Steinberg considers Dana's maiming as a sign that "emancipation did not necessarily mean freedom . . . the bindings of slavery cannot simply be shed by physical absence" (474). Even though Dana is no longer in antebellum Maryland, the lingering effects of slavery are quite unmistakable, as seen by her loss of an arm. Ashraf Rushdy's essay on *Kindred*, by contrast, asserts "Dana's lost arm [symbolizes how] recovering the past involves losing a grip on the present" (138). Her mutilation thus symbolizes her "loss of a grip" on contemporary America.

Perhaps the person who best knew the meaning of Dana's disfigurement was the late Octavia Butler, who, in an interview with writer Randall Kenan, articulated "I couldn't really let her come all the way back. I couldn't let her return to what she was, I couldn't let her come back whole and that, I think, really symbolizes her not coming back whole. Antebellum slavery didn't leave people quite whole" (497–98). The author's own words can help end the speculation about Dana's scar; it is indicative of how slavery changed people in several ways, not least of which physically. Regardless of how readers interpret the symbolism of Dana's mutilation, what is certain is that she physically suffers because of slavery. Similarly, Linda Brent remaining in an attic to watch her children mature, causes her physical disfiguration in the form of limited mobility. The two protagonists' physical suffering reveals how *Kindred* "signifies" upon *Incidents*: slavery leaves physical reminders with both protagonists long after their enslavement ends, to demonstrate how leaving the South is *not* tantamount to leaving the effects of slavery.

Several literary critics have also noted textual commonalities between *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* and *Kindred*. Mitchell, for instance, believes that Butler unequivocally "signifies on the 19th-century female emancipatory narrative, specifically Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*" (52). She thinks that Butler "engages and revises the dominant themes of the 19th-century female emancipatory narrative—such as female sexuality, motherhood, individualism, and community—as she interrogates the construction and nature of freedom for a contemporary audience" (Mitchell 52). Additionally, she applauds Butler's

text for being a "female emancipatory narrative," because it offers readers "a window on the 19th-century black woman's life in slavery" (54). Similarly, Sandra Govan believes that Butler chose "to link science fiction . . . directly to the Black American slavery experiences via the slave narrative" (79). Govan then details the commonalities between all slave texts:

There are detailed descriptions of various phases of bondage as the slave witnesses them and then experiences them. There is the punishment factor, the resistance motif, the glimpse of life-in-the-quarters . . . the quest for education, the slave's encounter with abusive sexual misconduct and immoral behavior . . . the slave's escape attempts, and, finally, the slave's successful escape (81–82).

Not only does *Kindred* share these traits with *Incidents*, but its plot structure also "follows the classic patterns [of slave narratives] with only the requisite changes to flesh out character, story, and action" (Govan 89).

One of the major "changes" apparent in *Kindred*, however, is Butler's use of time travel. Predominantly a device of science fiction works, time travel allows a character to transcend time and live in different eras. Accordingly, Steinberg argues that "by zigzagging the time frame of the novel from past to present, Butler points to ways in which past and present become interchangeable. One might label *Kindred* a sort of inverse slave narrative" (467). Indeed, while Jacobs's slave narrative features a protagonist who travels from slavery to freedom by moving from the South to the North, Butler's main character travels from freedom to slavery through her time travels from 1970s California to antebellum Maryland. Thus, *Kindred* can be considered an "inverse-slave narrative" or a "neo-slave narrative," since Butler's novel revises the format of a traditional slave text using the element of travelling back in time. Accordingly, Gates's theory classifies this type of revision as an example of "signifying" in which "the formal elements of a received structure are indeed present but are repeated in the reverse order of the original" (Gates: 1988, 108). Despite this revision, the "rhetorical strategies of subterfuge, its record of resistance and oppression, and its concentration on the separation of families," which are common to "the antebellum slave narratives," are also evident in Butler's text (Gates: 1988, 468).

While critics like Mitchell, Govan, and Steinberg can endlessly debate *Kindred*, arguably the best source for this novel is the author herself. In a 1991 interview, Butler

labeled her text as “fantasy” and not science fiction, noting “time travel is just a device for getting the character back to confront where she came from,” and “there’s absolutely no science involved” (Kenan 496). Although she implies that readers should not assign her text to the realm of science fiction, her use of time travel makes it difficult not to, given the use of this narrative device almost exclusively in the science fiction genre. Perhaps to prevent this arbitrary categorization, Butler penned a novel that closely resembles the slave narratives of the 19th century. She admits to reading several slave narratives in her research for *Kindred*, and it might initially seem presumptive to assert that she read *Incidents* and revised upon it. However, at the time Butler wrote *Kindred*, “Jacobs was [considered] the first woman to author a slave narrative in the United States” (Gates: 2004, 279). Thus, it is not improbable that she may have had *Incidents* in mind when writing *Kindred*. What is clear, is that the slave narratives that she read followed a format similar to Jacobs’s text, which may account for the similarities between the two novels.

These commonalities between *Kindred* and *Incidents* are overwhelming—including each protagonist’s defiance of antebellum expectations, the familial obligations that inhibit their absolute freedom, as well as the ways in which slavery physically scars them. What is the larger meaning of these commonalities? One interpretation could be that it is all coincidental and that the textual evidence adduced is merely circumstantial. However, as this essay shows, the evidence overwhelmingly suggests that Linda is Dana’s literary foremother. The other interpretation is that Butler wanted her slave narrative to be historically authentic, especially since it includes time travel to facilitate her depiction of slavery. Given the similarities between *Incidents* and *Kindred*, this latter novel falls within both science fiction and African American literature. As per custom with African American texts, Butler’s novel would have to revise upon a previous one; this would not surprise Professor Gates, who maintains that “all texts ‘signify’ upon other texts in motivated and unmotivated ways” (Gates: 1988, xxiv). Regardless of whether or not Butler *intended* to “signify,” the textual comparisons strongly suggest that the neo-slave text, *Kindred*, revises upon the canonical *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.

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# Testing Our Tolerance: American Attitudes toward Limitations on the First Amendment Rights of Arab and Muslim Americans

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## Abstract

James L. Gibson, political intolerance scholar, observed recently in an article that some people think that the U.S. has “entered a new era of McCarthyism” post-9/11 (2008, p. 97). In 2004, a Cornell University study conducted by Nisbet and Shanahan found that 44% of Americans would support some form of limitation on Arab and Muslim American civil liberties. The present study, conducted at the 2009 Ralph Bunche Summer Institute at Duke University, focused on people’s views on the limitations of the premier civil right—freedom of speech. Is there a correlation between the American people’s opinion of Arabs and Muslims and their support for limitations on freedom of speech? A liner regression was run using Gibson’s CID 2006 dataset, which confirmed several hypotheses. Overall, the finding was, the more Americans dislike Arabs, the more likely they are to support limits on free speech.

## Introduction

James L. Gibson, political intolerance scholar argued that, “The United States in the post-9/11 era is said by some observers to have entered a new period of McCarthyism” (Gibson, 2008, p. 97). He also asserts that intolerance today is focused on Muslim extremists and there is a “high level of antipathy toward Muslims in the United States” (Gibson, 2008, p. 105). In the U.S. anti-Muslim sentiments have been fueled by the media’s depiction of Arabs and Muslims as terrorists (Shaheen, 2008). For instance, radio host Mike Gallagher has even suggested segregated “Muslim-only” lines at airports (Duvvuru, 2009).

It is important to note, however, the extremism people cite when expressing their dislike of Muslims is a broadly defined term that has different meanings for different people. Whereas one may think terrorist activities in the name of Islam during 9/11 are extreme, another may think that even believing in the tenets of Islam is extreme.

A study by Cornell University professors Nisbet and Shanahan shows that 40% of Americans would rather not have Muslims neighbors. Additionally, the Council for American-Islamic Relations reports that there have been

two thousand recorded cases of religion-based discrimination acts against Muslims or those mistakenly perceived to be Muslims (Iftikhar, 2007, interview).

Given the overwhelming conflation of Muslims with violence and extremism today, which expose Arabs and Muslims to prejudice, I will argue that intolerance is not only focused on Muslim extremists, but Muslims in general. While the feelings of Arabs and Muslims toward Americans have been discussed by several scholars, how Muslims and Arabs are perceived by Americans has not been well studied. One of the few to study perceptions regarding Arabs and radical Muslims is James L. Gibson. A 2008 journal article on Gibson’s dataset indicates people’s rating of the Ku Klux Klan as 36.7% negative, while feelings toward radical Muslims were 73.5% negative (Gibson, 2008, p. 106). The classification of radical Muslims has a range of possibilities—from terrorist to ordinary Muslim Americans—in the respondents’ minds because the notion of a Muslim or Arab is often conflated with terrorist. While the link made between terrorists and radical Muslims might be understandable given the events of September 11th—it remains unclear if individuals are differentiating between Arabs, Muslims, and terrorism when they express their views about the groups. We might ask if their sentiments towards Arab or Muslims in general converge or diverge with their feelings toward radical Muslims? This study aims to explore precisely these issues.

## Literature Review

The claim that intolerance is directed toward Muslims in most places post-9/11 is supported by a Cornell University study conducted by Nisbet and Shanahan in 2004. Their research studied American attitudes toward Muslims and Islam and shows 44% of the American respondents supported some kind of limitation on Muslim American civil rights. Twenty-seven percent of the respondents supported a statement proposing that Muslims register their whereabouts with the federal government, 26% supported close surveillance of mosques, 22% backed racial profiling of Muslims and people of Middle Eastern heritage, and finally, as many as 29% proposed federal surveillance of Muslim civic and volunteer organizations (Nisbet & Shanahan, 2004).

Some scholars like James Shaheen have suggested that biased and misinformed media reporting using the words Arabs, terrorists, and Muslims interchangeably fanned people’s fear and anger toward Muslims post-9/11 (Shaheen, 2009). Umbrine Abdullah reaffirms this idea: “Public opinion surveys in the United States and Europe show that nearly half of Westerners associate Islam with

violence and Muslims with terrorists . . . stereotypes, affirmed by simplistic media coverage” (Abdullah, 2007, p. 20). Nisbet and Shanahan’s (2004) report suggests “The amount of attention paid to TV news also is associated with public support for restrictions on Muslim Americans” (p. 7).

A series of Implicit Association Tests (IAT) were conducted by Jaihyun Park, Karla Felix, and Grace Lee (2007) to test if implicit prejudice was becoming strong against Arab Americans post-9/11. American college students’ implicit perceptions of Arab-Muslims were studied using scenarios with identifiable Muslim and Christian names. The scenarios have subjects with Muslim and Christian names expressing various political opinions. The researchers predicted that the student respondents will protect Christian and presumably white subject over a Muslim subject in a scenario. As predicted, Study #1 showed “a strong pro-White attitude over Arab-Muslim[s]” (p. 36). In Study #2 they found respondents preferred the historically stigmatized Black group to Arab Americans as well. Park, Felix, and Lee (2007) suggest “that exposure to social information relating Arab-Muslims to negative events (e.g., terrorism) was responsible for implicit anti-Arabic prejudice” (p. 177). Scholars also suggested, when such biases and “religion vilification” become vocalized around the world, they can have negative psychological effects on Arabs and Muslims. Raymond Chow (2005) notes “anti-Muslim hostility in the form of hate speech . . . targets and causes psychological harm to the individual and the group” (2005, p. 120).

A study conducted by Linder and Nosek (2009) suggests that people’s willingness to protest Arab versus white free speech is more complex than one would imagine. In a study of primarily white Americans respondents, the researchers found some implicit ethnocentrism as people demonstrated willingness to protect one’s in-group over minorities like Blacks and Arabs. “Stronger implicit preference for Whites over Blacks was associated with less tolerance for speech against an in-group (Americans) and greater tolerance for speech against an out-group (Arabs)” (Linder & Nosek, 2009, p. 77). This supports other research in identity studies that suggests that people feel threatened by “the other” or those who do not look like themselves (Duvvuru, 2009).

Using the United States Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy (CID 2006) dataset on political tolerance, the study discussed in the article expands on Nisbet and Shanahan’s study on limiting Arab and Muslim civil liberties. This study compares people’s views on limiting free speech to people’s views of Arab Americans, radical Muslims and radical Muslim demonstrations, with the aim of determining if people’s views of these minority groups are positively

correlated with limitations on free speech. If it is positively correlated, then the people’s views toward limiting the freedom of speech of these minority groups will confirm Nisbet and Shanahan’s finding on other forms of civil liberties.

### Theory and Hypotheses

I propose that limitations on freedom of speech should be studied to see how people’s views on these limitations compare to their views of Arab Americans and radical Muslims. Since freedom of speech is a civil right not studied in the 2004 Nisbet and Shanahan study, this study provides an expansion on research on political intolerance against Arab and Muslim Americans post-9/11. In cases of war, the First Amendment right to free speech is the first liberty people exercise when they feel any repression from the government or the general public.

Social scientists have long found that gender, race, education, ideology, and income often have an effect on people’s perception and opinions. Thus gender, race, education, ideology and income were controlled in this study where the main independent variables were people’s perceptions of Arabs, radical Muslims and radical Muslim demonstrations. Religious denomination and trust of people from other faiths were also controlled. All questions relating to feeling were on a scale of least to greatest degree.

Once variables were controlled, feeling thermometer questions on limitation of free speech were used as a dependent variable and the independent variables were people’s perceptions of the Arabs, radical Muslims, the Ku Klux Klan, and radical Muslim demonstrations. The dependent and independent variables were compared in a linear regression model to see whether there was any correlation between people’s perceptions on limiting free speech and their feelings toward the minority groups. The feeling thermometer questions scaled from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Given American’s generally strong views against the controversial group the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), the feeling thermometer question on the KKK was added as an independent variable to see if there would be similarities or differences with people’s views of the KKK versus their views of Arabs and radical Muslims (Gibson, 1987, 427–448). Radical Muslim demonstration was added as another independent variable to see if the people’s views of radical Muslims demonstrations are negative as they have been towards KKK demonstrations in the past few years. This demonstration question was scaled from strongly supporting a ban to strongly opposing a ban on a radical Muslim demonstration.

Based on the literature and theory, the following hypotheses were constructed:

1. The more Americans dislike Arabs, the more likely they are to support limitations on free speech.
2. The more Americans dislike radical Muslims, the more likely they are to support limitations on free speech.
3. The more Americans oppose a radical Muslim demonstration, the more likely they are to support limitations on free speech.

#### Data and Measures

*The Dataset:* The dataset used for this survey was prepared by March Howard, James Gibson, and Dietlind Stolle in 2006 to measure American political intolerance toward minority groups and controversial political groups like the Ku Klux Klan, American Nazis, and radical Muslims. Known as the United States Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy (CID) dataset, this data was collected using face-to-face interviews of 1,001 respondents. Feeling thermometer questions in the survey were measured on a scale of 1 to 10 ranging from dislike to like, with one exception of untrustworthy to trustworthy for a question measuring respondent trust. Correlations and a linear regression were run with the statistical software STATA10.

*Control Variables:* Gender, race, education, ideology, income, religion and trust were controlled in the linear regression model. Gender, race, income and religion were identified by the respondent, while education was measured by highest degree attained, ideology was defined in terms of whether the respondent was conservative or not, and finally trust by a feeling thermometer question of untrustworthy to trustworthy. The race variable was coded into three dummy variables—White, Black, and Hispanic—with White used as the base variable.

*Dependent Variable:* People’s view on whether free speech is worth it if it means tolerating extreme political views was used as the dependent variable for this study. This question therefore narrowly focuses on self-reported ideas about other minority groups (political or ethnic). Thus, it is operationalized as a feeling thermometer of least to greatest support for limitation of free speech if it means tolerating extreme views.

*Independent Variables:* The independent variables were operationalized by the same logic as the dependent variable on a feeling thermometer (like to dislike) of Arab Americans

as an ethnic group, radical political groups like the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), radical Muslims, and support or opposition for radical Muslim demonstration.

One important distinction between groups used in this dataset versus Nisbet and Shanahan’s is that this 2006 dataset only asks questions about radical Muslims, not Muslims as a whole. Thus, it is not appropriate to generalize any sentiments expressed by the sample in this study toward radical Muslims as feelings toward Muslims. While we know that people can conflate extremism and radicalism with being Muslim or Arab, this is not a scientific premise on which generalizations can be made about people’s negative sentiments towards radical Muslims as representative of sentiments toward all Muslims. It can be said, however, that some respondent’s negative sentiments towards the category “radical Muslims” are not limited to terrorists alone.

#### Results and Analysis

The United States Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy (CID 2006) used to run a linear regression demonstrating various conjectures has confirmed two of the three hypotheses. While the original number of respondents was 1,001, there were missing values in each question, which were dropped from the analysis. Therefore, the final N for the study is 717 respondents.

**Table 1: Effect of Independent Variables on Limits on Free Speech**

Variable	Coefficient (std. error)	P> t
Dislike of Arabs	.05 (0.02)	0.003**
Dislike of KKK	-.03 (0.03)	0.359
Dislike of Radical Muslims	-.02 (0.02)	0.319
Opposition to Radical Muslim Demonstration	.20 (0.04)	0.000***
Gender (male)	.02 (0.07)	0.756
Race (Black)	.15 (0.11)	0.180
Race (Hispanic)	.03 (0.12)	0.789
Education	-.08 (0.02)	0.000***
Conservative	-.08 (0.02)	0.655
Income	-.00 (0.02)	0.822
Religion (identify with one or not)	.15 (0.08)	0.065*
Trust in People of Other Faiths	-.04 (0.02)	0.058*
<b>Constant</b>	<b>2.47 (0.40)</b>	<b>0.000</b>

Dependent variable is thermometer rating of Least to Greatest Support for Limitations of Free Speech:  
N = 717, adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.10, \*\*\*P<0.01, \*\*P<0.05, \*P<0.1

*Hypothesis 1:* The more Americans dislike Arabs, the more likely they are to support limitations on free speech. Dislike of Arabs is predicted to be positively correlated with feelings on limitations of free speech.

*Result:* As Table 1 shows, there is a positive coefficient between dislike for Arabs and dislike for radical Muslims that is statistically significant ( $P=0.003$ ). The correlation suggests that the more one dislikes Arabs, the more likely they are to support limits on free speech. While there are some outliers for future research to dissect, the scatter plot below (Figure 1) shows there a positive relationship between dislike for Arab Americans and limitations on free speech.

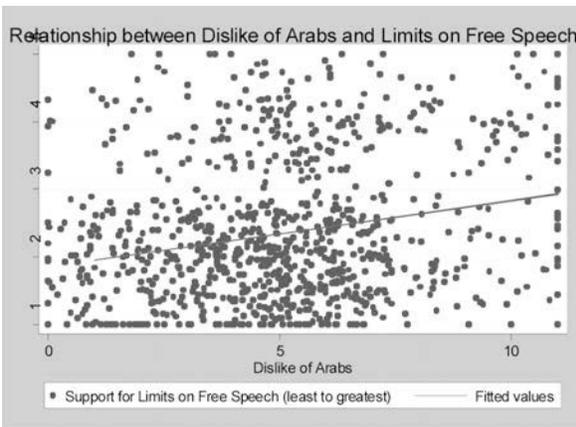


Figure 1

*Hypothesis 2:* The more Americans dislike radical Muslims, the more likely they are to support limitations on free speech. *Dislike of Radical Muslims* is predicted to be positively correlated with limitations on free speech.

*Result:* Interestingly, feelings about *Arabs* have a positive relationship with feelings about limitations on free speech, thereby showing that dislike for Arabs is not only strong, but has a strong relationship with limiting free speech. But for this extreme group, one would expect dislike to be higher and to have an even stronger relationship with free speech. People’s answers about dislike were not strong enough to yield a significant P value ( $P=0.319$ ). This may be because respondents were asked about their feelings about all perceivably controversial political groups in one question—radical Muslims, the KKK, Nazis, etc. The relationships between opinion on limiting free speech and the KKK feeling thermometer responses were also insignificant ( $P=0.359$ ). Americans overwhelmingly report strong dislike of the KKK and most oppose allowing a KKK rally.

Similarly, when they were asked if they would let a radical demonstration take place, they strongly supported a ban, demonstrating an opposition similar to that of KKK demonstrations. People’s views of Arabs and Muslim demonstration were not part of this question and their response to those questions came out significant in relation to limiting free speech. Given the discrepancies, it is reasonable to believe that people were trying to respond to the question about the radical Muslims, KKK and Nazis with strong feelings to dislike. This might be an example of social response bias.

*Hypothesis 3:* The more Americans oppose a radical Muslim demonstration, the more likely they are to support limitations on free speech. Dislike of radical Muslim demonstration is predicted to be positively correlated with limitations of free speech.

*Result:* As Table 1 shows, there is a positive coefficient of 0.20 between opposition to radical Muslim demonstration and support of limiting free speech. The relationship is significant because the  $P=0.000$ . The more one opposes a radical Muslim demonstration, the more likely they are to support limitations on free speech. The scatter plot with the best fit line demonstrated in Figure 2 shows a clear positive relationship between opposition to radical Muslim demonstration and limitations on free speech. The scatter plot below shows this positive relationship.

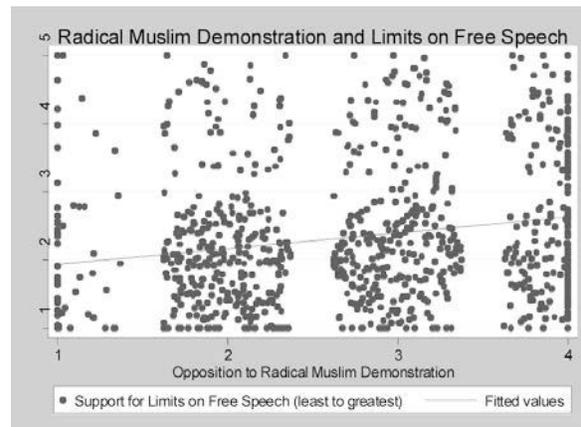


Figure 2

The control education yielded an interesting relationship with limitation on free speech. This was the only negative coefficient of  $-0.08$  that shows that the more educated a person is the less likely they are to support limitations on free speech. The  $P=0.000$  which attested to a significant relationship between education and limits on free

speech. Beta analysis indicates that this is the most significant relationship with limiting free speech relative to other significant results in dislike of Arabs and opposition to a radical Muslim demonstration.

Another interesting relationship was seen that contradicts media representation of intolerance toward KKK demonstrations. Dislike for the KKK did not correlate significantly with limits on free speech, but dislike of Arabs and radical Muslim demonstration was strong enough to be correlated. This conjecture is not strong enough to claim that political intolerance toward Arabs and radical Muslim public demonstrations is higher than dislike of the KKK. But this could be an interesting study for future research.

**Table 2**

Correlation	Limits on free speech	Religious denomination	Trust in people of other faiths	Dislike radical Muslims	Dislike Arabs
Limits on free speech	1.00				
Religious denomination	0.04	1.00			
Trust in people of other faiths	-0.08	0.05	1.00		
Dislike radical Muslims	0.04	0.12	0.01	1.00	
Dislike Arabs	0.23	-0.01	-0.21	0.17	1.00

As seen above, a significant relationship was found between dislike of Arab Americans and dislike of radical Muslims. There is a positive correlation of 0.17 and it has a significance of  $P=0.00$ , meaning there is relationship between dislike for Arabs and dislike for radical Muslims. As the relationship table shows below, the more one dislikes radical Muslims the more chance there is that one dislikes Arabs. This means that people are conflating Arabs in general with radical Muslims even though not all Arabs are radical. Dislike of radical Muslims and dislike of Arabs independently correlated with favor for limits on free speech. Fortunately, dislike of radical Muslims correlated more strongly, showing less dislike of Arabs than radical Muslims. There is a respondent group where the more one dislikes radical Muslim, the more one dislikes Arabs, but this is good news that the negative sentiments towards all Arabs are not as strong as negative sentiments toward radical Muslims.

### Conclusion and Further Study

These results suggest that hypotheses 1 and 3 about Arab and radical Muslims and their relationship limits on free speech are supported by the data. In a larger context, these conjectures add to the 2004 Nisbet and Shanahan study about people's political tolerance of Arab and Muslim Americans by adding people's willingness to limit freedom of speech to the mix.

Time constraints in this study have affected the quality of the model even though every perceivable variable expected by scholars to affect the results were controlled for. For the purposes of future research, it is recommended that more time is devoted to this project. The statistical analysis can also be improved upon if more research is done on the outliers and possible alternative explanations. This topic has the potential to have important policy effects in government and on media portrayal of Arabs and Muslims.

An interesting future study would be to see if the same people who answered that they did not like radical Muslims also said that they disliked Arab Americans. This would yield a lot of information about what kind of people are conflating Arabs with radical Muslims.

In conclusion, I would like to leave the reader on a positive note. My study's control variable for education was most significantly negatively related to increasing limits of free speech—suggesting there may be some truth in the old adage, education decreases prejudice. Despite the prevalence of prejudice against Arabs and Muslims, some scholars have suggested that increased education about Arab and Islamic culture may mediate racism (Park, Felix & Lee 2007). Moreover, research by Rudman, Ashmore and Gary (2001) claims, "educational experience should have primarily positive effects . . . [they] show reduces [in] prejudice and stereotyping" (858). In this study, beta analysis confirmed that education has the most significant P value ( $P=0.000$ ) of all significant variables. Thus, education, and more specifically diversity education, might help reduce stereotypes against Arabs and Muslims, and possibly help decrease the willingness of some to limit Arab Americans' and Muslim Americans' civil liberties.

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# A Magnificent Display of Virtue in the Palazzo Scala

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## Abstract

The paper focuses on the art and architecture of the palazzo Scala, designed by Giuliano da Sangallo, and its relationship to the patron Bartolomeo Scala, a prominent politician in Florentine Renaissance society.

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## Introduction

Around the mid-15th century, an Italian architect named Leon Battista Alberti wrote one of the century's most influential treatise on architecture, entitled *De re aedificatoria*.<sup>1</sup> It was during this time that the Florentine palace architectural style began to take its distinct form. Lavishly decorated facades with splendid interiors were designed in orderly classical arrangements. Wealthy Florentine patrons commissioned architects to design magnificent palace structures. By studying ancient texts and the ruins of ancient monuments, notable architects of the period like Giuliano da Sangallo designed public, private and sacred structures in creative and contemporary ways. They used classically inspired decorative motifs and classical orders. Architects aspired to create original designs that referenced their classical predecessors, but more specifically, spoke of the status of the patron commissioning their design. Patrons desired new forms of architectural expression in order to increase their reputation and prestige within Florentine society.

There was a fine balance between ostentation and frugality. The concept of magnificence, as was first introduced in the ancient texts, encouraged extravagant spending on a grand scale but also in moderation so as to keep within a measure of decorum.<sup>2</sup> Men of notable political standing within Florentine society necessitated magnificent dwellings suitable to their position, reputation and rank within society.

At the same time, their dwellings were also to reveal the virtue of their patron's character. In Florentine society, magnificence was a virtue.<sup>3</sup> In the palazzo Scala, Giuliano da Sangallo incorporates a unique floor plan and decorative sculptural program, which emphasizes the virtue and ideals of an affluent Florentine magnate and Chancellor, Bartolomeo Scala.

## Background

Construction on the palazzo Scala began around 1473. Its patron, Bartolomeo Scala, came from humble beginnings and was the son of a tenant miller, born in 1430. He was educated in law and became a tutor for the Borromeo family. Vitaliano Borromeo was one of the leading feudatories of the Milanese state, a rich landowner, banker and patron whose house was decorated inside with artwork that featured Aesop's Fables. His house is credited with providing the inspiration for the sculptural frieze inside the Palazzo Scala courtyard.<sup>4</sup> Because of Scala's flare for poetry, writing, and oratory, he developed connections to Florence's most powerful and influential political families, including Count Filippo Borromeo, and Pierfrancesco de' Medici. His political aspirations and relationship to the Medici family helped to establish him politically. He became chief secretary to Lorenzo de Medici in 1457 and became the First Medician Chancellor of the republic of Florence in 1465. His political position was one of great prestige and nobility. Throughout his career, Scala remained a committed and devoted confidant to the Medici family.

Scala married Maddalena Benci, the daughter of a merchant, who brought with her an average-sized dowry. Because of his intellectual accomplishments, he was known to be arrogant on occasion. Scala needed a dwelling suitable to his newly established elite position within Florentine society. Although versed in the taste and culture of the Florentine upper classes, Scala did not have the benefit of a well-established family name or an ancestral plot to build over. In order to be considered equal in status to the

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<sup>1</sup> *De re aedificatoria* was widely circulated and meant to be a revision of a much earlier architectural treatise written in the first century BCE by Vitruvius. Alberti's architectural treatise outlined principles for the construction and adornment of public, private, and sacred space. It, however, provides more detailed clarification and is an improved version over the original source.

<sup>2</sup> James R Lindow, *The Renaissance Palace in Florence: Magnificence and Splendour in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2007), 79.

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<sup>3</sup> A.D. Fraser Jenkins, "Cosimo de' Medici's Patronage of Architecture and the Theory of Magnificence," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 33 (1970): 165.

<sup>4</sup> Allison M. Brown, *Bartolomeo Scala* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 15.

Florentine elite and a man deserving of honor and respect, Scala needed a clever architectural schema that could assert his political position within Florentine society without the use of heraldic devices. Imitating the plan of the palazzo Medici and embellishing it with unique architectural features provided him an ideal schema. Scala purchased inexpensive undeveloped land in the northeast section of Florence in the Borgo Pinti and hired architect Giuliano da Sangallo to carry out his vision.

### Influence

Florentine patrons, artists and architects were influenced by the writings of humanist scholars like Alberti, Biondo, Perotti and Grapaldus. Humanist scholars in turn revised the ideas first introduced in ancient texts from authors like Aristotle, Cicero and Aquinas.<sup>5</sup> Alberti was amongst a select group of humanists and artists struggling to define and interpret the architecture and decoration of the ancient Roman *domus*.<sup>6</sup> Humanists, going by the advice of ancient texts, helped to encourage an examination of the roles of individuals within society in relation to their dwellings.<sup>7</sup> The design and articulation of exterior and interior space in the ancient Roman *domus* were to represent the individual's rank within society. The wealthy were to require appropriate interior space to receive and entertain guests whereas the poor were only to require shelter. Not only was it necessary to emulate the layout of interior spaces within the ancient Roman *domus*, it was also necessary to emulate the status or moral stature of the individual who would reside within. The *al antica* style was one that was to adapt magnificence and splendor in moderation so as not to incite envy or be vulgar in luxury. Palace architecture and the division of space within had to provide a careful integration of magnificence equal to the moral stature of its patron.

Conduct, behavior and decorum were all highly valued ideals within Florentine society; ideals evident in various portraits and sculptures produced during the period. In 1474, during the period when the palazzo Scala was first constructed, a portrait of Ginevra de' Benci was painted by

Leonardo da Vinci. In it, Ginevra faces the viewer with a calm expression. She is dressed casually, unadorned by jewelry or dress that would normally befit a young bride. Instead, Leonardo has chosen to emphasize her inner disposition. Her countenance was sober. She had an unusual beauty, one that emphasizes her modesty, chastity, and intellect; a paradigm of an ideal woman.<sup>8</sup> Ginevra de' Benci achieves recognition for her poetic and intellectual abilities.<sup>9</sup> She was portrayed as having an idealized beauty, one that stemmed from her inner nature, and knowledge. Like Leonardo's painting, the artwork of the palazzo Scala was to convey Scala's inner disposition, intellect and moral character. Like Ginevra's guise, it should be virtuous, but not vulgar in ostentation or lavish display.

The commission by Bartolomeo Scala provided an interesting challenge for Giuliano for many reasons. Scala lacked the prestige of an established family name. Unlike the Medici family, Scala does not have an ancestral plot to build over.<sup>10</sup> He was also indebted to the Medici family for his fortune and his rise to political power. Thus, Giuliano needed to design a dwelling suitable for a wealthy powerful magistrate without overstepping bounds of propriety with respect to Scala's rank to other powerful families, namely the Medici family. It was, after all, Alberti who recommended that, "any person of sense would not want to design his private house very differently from others and would be careful not to incite envy through extravagance or ostentation."<sup>11</sup> Giuliano had to be careful not to incite envy amongst the Medici family, yet at the same time needed to design a dwelling suitable for Scala to receive prominent members of society and dignitaries. In the palazzo Scala, Giuliano erected a magnificent dwelling fitting to Scala's rank and introduces a unique program of architectural decoration that emphasizes Scala's moral views.

### The Palazzo Scala

One of the key architectural features of the palazzo Scala that best demonstrated Scala's philosophical and moral views was the planning and decoration of the courtyard space. Giuliano was not the first to conceive the atrium as the

<sup>5</sup> Linda Pellicchia, "Architects Read Vitruvius: Renaissance Interpretations of the Atrium of the Ancient House," *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (Dec. 1992): 377-416.

<sup>6</sup> The most controversial aspect of the ancient Roman *domus* was the placement, appearance, and location of the atrium. Architects wanted to recreate the central component of the ancient Roman house plan, the atrium, as it was first conceived by the likes of Vitruvius, Cicero or Pliny the Younger around the first century BCE. Variations abounded due to the often obscure language in the ancient texts. Due to various interpretations, palace floor plans took on unique expressions.

<sup>7</sup> Georgia Clarke, *Roman House-Renaissance Palaces. Inventing Antiquity in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 6.

<sup>8</sup> David Alan Brown, *Virtue and Beauty: Leonardo's Ginevra de' Benci and Renaissance Portraits of Women* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 12.

<sup>9</sup> Mary D. Garrard, "Leonardo da Vinci: Female Portraits, Female Nature," in *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History* (New York: Westview Press, 1992), 63.

<sup>10</sup> Philip Mattox and Howard Saalman, "The First Medici Palace," *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (Dec. 1985), 331.

<sup>11</sup> Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*. Translated by Joseph Rykwert and Robert Tavernor (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1988), 298.

central core of the palace plan<sup>12</sup>—there were many variations to the planning of palace floor plans. The palazzo Pazzi, palazzo Rucellai, and palazzo Medici show two- or three-sided atriums; some asymmetrical in plan with disproportionate porticoes. The plan of palazzo Scala is most similar in plan to the palazzo Medici, likely designed by Michelozzo. Although the latter was built much earlier, between 1445 and 1457, it provided an excellent model for Sangallo. Given the relationship Scala had to the Medici family, emulating the palazzo Medici would be considered an outward expression of praise.

Like the palazzo Medici, the palazzo Scala was constructed with a four-sided centrally located atrium symmetrical in plan with surrounding porticoes. The proportion of the loggia at the palazzo Medici is large in relation to the atrium's surrounding porticoes. In the palazzo Scala the porticoes are proportionately equal to each other. In the palazzo Medici porticoes have an elaborate combination of groin and barrel vaults. In contrast, the palazzo Scala porticoes have barrel vaults. The palazzo Medici is grand in scale sitting three stories high with a rusticated façade. The palazzo Scala sits only two stories high. The façade has stucco on its exterior as opposed to the rusticated masonry of the palazzo Medici. While Giuliano emulated Scala's mentor, he modified the plan to suit Scala's lower rank. Although the plan is smaller in scale than the Medici plan, Giuliano provided a luxurious design in the palazzo Scala by adding a chapel to the ground floor plan and using architectural embellishment, coffered ceilings and sculptural reliefs to dress the interior in a splendid decor.

The palazzo Scala was the first to incorporate a chapel in a ground floor plan. Giuliano cleverly manipulated the progression of space towards the chapel, axially aligned with the entrance of the palace, to enhance the reputation of the patron. Adding a ground floor chapel was a contemporary addition to the palace floor plan. The Medici chapel was located on the *piano nobile*. In *The Patron's Role in the Production of Architecture*, Pellecchia argues that Scala was trying to do things "one better."<sup>13</sup> While I concede Pellecchia's suggestion that Scala was alluding to his desire

for status, I would challenge the interpretation that he was trying to compete with the Medici family.

Certainly, having a special concession of altar rights and permission to have mass and other rites of the church celebrated in the chapel allows Scala to be viewed favorably, increasing his reputation and prestige amongst his peers. In keeping in the style of magnificence, having a chapel within the palace is suitable for a man in Scala's position. Because the palace is only two stories, however, space for a chapel is limited, thus alignment of the chapel with the entrance of the palace was not only to capitalize on Scala's public perception, but Giuliano's attempt to make the best use of the plan. The chapel is also smaller in relation to other rooms within the palace, indicating it would have been decorated rather modestly.<sup>14</sup> Scala was given special concession because of his relationship to the Medici family. Scala was indebted to the Medici family for helping to bestow him with this honor.

Giuliano's repertoire and knowledge of the antique style is extensive. In his Vatican sketchbook, Giuliano redesigns capitals, classical orders and proportions for the Parthenon in Greece and other ancient monuments. In his sketches, Giuliano proves he is capable of imaginary reconstruction.<sup>15</sup> Nowhere is this more evident than in his design of the Medici villa at Poggio a Caiano, commissioned from Giuliano shortly after the completion of the palazzo Scala. In its plan, Giuliano incorporates the same attention to a progression of space and axial alignment. Pellecchia argues that Giuliano was experimenting in the coffered barrel vault at the palazzo Scala to prepare the way for the coffered barrel vault at Poggio a Caiano. Again, this seems unlikely given Giuliano's knowledge and creative ability. There is an advanced level of architectural elaboration in the coffered vault at Poggio a Caiano with an attention to classical arrangement and proportion. A detail in the courtyard at the villa at Poggio a Caiano shows Giuliano's ability in articulating a colonnaded wall with arches. It is similar to what is done in the side exterior wall of the palazzo Scala. One would find it hard to believe these ideas and skills were not already inherent in Giuliano when he designed the palazzo

<sup>12</sup> Prior to the discovery of the Pompeian atrium house, architects were forced to look to the remains of ancient ruins and ancient texts for classical inspiration. Pellecchia provides an in-depth survey tracing the evolution of the atrium as conceived by Renaissance architectural theorists between the 14th and 16th centuries from Alberti to Palladio. Architects also referenced cloisters in monasteries because their arrangement, proportion and function remained consistent through time. A cloister provided an excellent model for the atrium within the interior of the palace plan. The atrium brought the exterior world into an interior setting.

<sup>13</sup> Linda Pellecchia, "The Patron's Role in the Production of Architecture: Bartolomeo Scala and the Scala Palace," *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (Summer 1989), 274.

<sup>14</sup> Philip Mattox, "Domestic Sacral Space in the Florentine Renaissance Palace," *Renaissance Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 5 (2006), 667.

<sup>15</sup> Beverly Louise Brown and Diana E.E. Kleiner, "Giuliano da Sangallo's Drawings after Ciriaco d'Ancona: Transformation of Greek and Roman Antiquities in Athens," *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 42, No. 4 (Dec. 1983), p. 334.

Scala. Its austere exterior in comparison could, therefore, be intentional.

The austerity of the palazzo Scala façade in relation to the palazzo Medici's façade indicates that Sangallo tried to downplay luxurious details. The façade is almost completely void of decoration; rustication, lanterns or torch holders, articulated pilasters, and emblematic heraldry. It has an 18th-century balcony above the entry.<sup>16</sup> The sober exterior seems fitting to Scala's moral disposition; elegant yet simple and careful not to incite envy. Alberti would have approved of Sangallo's choice. He wrote, "Extravagance I detest. I am delighted by anything that combines ingenuity with grace and wit."<sup>17</sup> The façade emulates the façade of the palazzo Medici in its deceptive delineation of three stories. Given the space constraints of the palazzo Scala, the idea of exceeding the magnitude and luxury of the Medici palace would have been an unfair endeavor. Scala is emulating his mentor, not trying to outdo him.

#### The Apologues of Bartolomeo Scala

While Scala lacked the prestige of a well-established family name, he used his intellect to assert his political position within Florentine elite society. The *Apologues of Bartolomeo Scala* is Scala's unique contribution to the architecture of the palace.<sup>18</sup> The courtyard decoration incorporates sculptural reliefs with moralizing tales about human nature of Scala's own invention. The 12 apologues come from a selection of Scala's writings in *Hundred Apologues* originally presented to Lorenzo de' Medici as a gift. Scala uses architectural decoration to pay tribute to his mentor. Likewise, Giuliano followed Alberti's recommendation to embellish the decoration with tales that give moral instruction.<sup>19</sup> Scala's *Apologues* have the added benefit of reinforcing his humble beginnings, his rise to power, and his political, philosophical and social views.

In the sculptural panel entitled *Negligentia*, Draper associates the iconography of the relief, Scala's own coat of arms and the upward ladder sitting atop Apollo's temple,<sup>20</sup> with the theme of ascent from squalor, and is directly related to Scala's personal success and triumph over poverty.<sup>21</sup> In yet another panel entitled *Iurgium*, the figure of strife represents a metaphor for Scala's work ethic and his personal struggle to achieve success.<sup>22</sup>

During this period, artwork often depicted metaphors for underlying moral messages. In "Lorenzo Tornabuoni's History of Jason and Medea series," Campbell discusses the practice of adapting classical-based texts and moralizing tales in *spalliera* panels and *cassoni* paintings viewed within the Renaissance home. Textual and visual sources were adapted and reinvented because it was important that their moralizing message resonate for the audience viewing them.<sup>23</sup> Narratives were therefore filtered and edited. Like Tornabuoni's *spalliera series*, Scala's sculptural reliefs are deliberately coded to resonate with an intended audience. The moralizing tales have an esoteric subject matter, placed in a very prominent location within an interior space. Affluent members of society and dignitaries visiting the palazzo Scala would have been intrigued by their didactic messages which also expressed the philosophical and moral views of their patron.

Whether the idea to decorate the atrium with the *Apologues* was prompted by Giuliano or Scala remains to be resolved. There is also a problem of attribution concerning the artist of the sculptural reliefs. While Bertoldo is widely credited with their execution, it is highly conceivable that Giuliano had a particular interest in the decorative details and may have a hand in creating them himself.<sup>24</sup> Giuliano, who is attributed with creating the frieze of the chimney-piece at the palazzo Gondi, as well as in Florence, obviously has considerable skill and ability in the sculptural arts. He also created a compilation of drawings of ancient Roman

<sup>16</sup> Leonardo Ginori Lisci, *The palazzi of Florence: their history and art*, Translated by Jennifer Grillo (Firenze: Giunti Barbèra, 1985), 531.

<sup>17</sup> Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*. Translated by Joseph Rykwert and Robert Tavernor (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1988), 298.

<sup>18</sup> The sculptural reliefs are unlike prior examples used in architectural decoration within the atrium. The large sculptural reliefs are connected in continuous panels around the courtyard and are mounted over a series of pillars.

<sup>19</sup> Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*. Translated by Joseph Rykwert and Robert Tavernor (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1988), 299.

<sup>20</sup> The metaphor is originally credited to Petrarch's *De Remidiis utriusque fortunae*.

<sup>21</sup> James David Draper, *Bertoldo di Giovanni, Sculptor of the Medici Household. Critical Reappraisal and Catalogue Raisonné* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992), 253. In *Negligentia*, Negligence marries sleep and gives birth to a host of unworthy children including; Leisure, Idleness, Yawning, Laziness, Hunger, Prison, Filth, Sloth, Disorder, Poverty, Carelessness, Despair, and many others.

<sup>22</sup> In *Iurgium*, the figure of strife is seen as a monster, with long sharp fangs protruding from his mouth, wandering the world with no place to rest.

<sup>23</sup> Caroline Campbell, "Lorenzo Tornabuoni's History of Jason and Medea series. Chivalry and Classicism in 1480's Florence," *Renaissance Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (2007), 14.

<sup>24</sup> Ulrich Middeldorf, "Giuliano da Sangallo and Andrea Sansovino," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (June 1934), 108.

monuments in the Vatican sketchbook, *Codex Barberini*. In the sculptural relief *Praedium*, there is a resemblance to the compositional style of a sculptural relief in the ancient monument of Julii St. Remy (Fig. 13) that would point to Sangallo's influence in the palazzo Scala courtyard sculpture. Once again, Alberti is influential here as he encourages the study and adaptation of architectural motifs in ancient monumental architecture in order to reinvent them for use in modern applications.

Scala's *Apologues* preach the virtues of austerity and self-reliance in the form of classically based moralizing tales.<sup>25</sup> Scala's wisdom, ethics and moral views in the moralizing messages of the *Apologues of Bartolomeo Scala* help to establish him as an intellectual man of moral excellence, deserving of his political position. In lieu of status symbols and heraldic devices to assert Scala's political authority, the *al antica* style in the decorative frieze helps to assert Scala's right to power and the legitimacy of his political position.<sup>26</sup> Thus Scala was portrayed in a fashion to highlight his position as an affluent member of society, equal in status to the Florentine elite, but humbly indebted to the Medici family for his success and aware of his rank in relation. While the palazzo Scala is known for its sumptuous decoration, it should be equally credited for keeping within standards of decorum as it relates to Scala's unique personal situation.

## Conclusion

In *Roman House-Renaissance Palaces*, Clarke emphasizes the need to explore the character of the Renaissance palace in relation to its connection within its city, patron's biography and architect's works.<sup>27</sup> Studying the palazzo Scala's architecture, Scala's personal biography, and Giuliano's works, helps us to discern the ideals of Bartolomeo Scala and more importantly see how they reflect the concept of magnificence, virtue and decorum in Renaissance society.

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<sup>25</sup> Allison M. Brown, *Bartolomeo Scala* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 317.

<sup>26</sup> Georgia Clarke, *Roman House-Renaissance Palaces. Inventing Antiquity in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 39.

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# Modeling Future Hurricane Climatology

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## Abstract

This study focuses on the novel method proposed by Emanuel to downscale the impacts of climate to global hurricane frequency and intensity. Primarily, we examine sub-scale variability of several parameters important to this model and propose refinements for future research. We also explore the applicability of the downscaling model to past, present and future climates. By applying this method to several existing climate data sets, we can infer the geographical distribution and intensity of hurricanes in the future. Results from a test run in the Southwestern Pacific under several global warming scenarios are examined.

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## Introduction

Forty percent of the world population lives within 100 km of a coastline (IPCC 2008), making it critical to understand how this substantial population will be impacted by coastal storms such as tropical cyclones. Hurricane climatology is a burgeoning sub-field of atmospheric science that examines how the characteristics of tropical cyclones change on time-scales from years to eons. Historically, this study was limited to the interannual variation of storm frequency and intensity within the limited record of hurricane activity from 1850 to present. Recently, this field has significantly expanded as public concerns about the impact of tropical cyclones on coastal regions and the global energy market coincided with increasingly fervent debate on climate change and two consecutive hyperactive hurricane seasons in the Atlantic basin (Emanuel 2005). This study focuses on the novel method proposed by Emanuel 2006 (hereafter E06), which attempts to bridge the gap between tropical cyclones and long-term climate dynamic models. In seeking to adapt to some of the inevitable impacts of climate change that will occur over the next century, this study looks to advance our understanding of the climate-hurricane linkage and how we can best prepare for the storms of the future.

## The Downscaling Model

In E06 and Emanuel et al. 2008 (hereafter E08), a downscaling model was developed which accepts certain climate scale inputs and uses one method to generate hurricane tracks and then the Coupled Hurricane Intensity Prediction Scheme (CHIPS) to predict intensity. CHIPS is an operational model used frequently to predict storm intensification in the North Atlantic.

The track generation scheme begins with random seeding of tropical disturbances in space and time. This ensures that disturbances do not form too near to the equator or below a certain threshold of existing vorticity (the existing rotation of a fluid). The disturbances are initialized with peak winds of 25 knots (kt) and no warm-core. As such, most do not persist long before dissipating (defined as having winds below 40 kt), following closely to observations. Then, those disturbances that do persist are moved as a weighted average of the ambient flow at 850 and 250 hPa plus a constant beta-drift correction, represented symbolically as follows:

Using the above method, the tropical cyclone (TC) is integrated forward in time by 30-minute time steps, while the climatology of the wind field is also linearly interpolated in space and time. If the TC's intensity falls below 13 meters/second (m/s), lifetime exceeds 30 days, or track travels outside the domain (4–50° N, 5–110° W in Atlantic basin), then the storm is terminated.

After the storm track is produced, the intensity is evolved through the lifetime of the TC using the CHIPS model. Ultimately, this model is forced by potential intensity (PI) and the spatiotemporal variation in sea surface temperature (SST). PI is the maximum intensity a storm can achieve based on a vertical integration of temperature and available moisture in the tropospheric column in addition to SST and sea level pressure (SLP; Bister and Emanuel 1998). The one-dimensional ocean model includes a mixed layer at SST and a linearly decreasing temperature profile afterwards. As the storm progresses along its track, the ocean-atmosphere coupling in CHIPS assumes that the TC responds primarily to changes in SST below the eye-wall. The result is a synthetic hurricane track with information on position, maximum wind speed (in knots) and minimum SLP.

### Improving the Downscaling Model

E06 identifies two potentially problematic issues with the current downscaling model arising from a lack of temporal resolution. These problems are only reflected in the intensity evolution, which is forced by monthly climatologies of PI and SST. The model progresses in 30-minute time steps, linearly interpolating between monthly climatologies of these quantities, constructing a stationary background climate. This method assumes smooth transitions at grid points from one month to the next and the use of SST as a sufficient proxy for upper ocean thermal structure. However, turbulent fluctuations or eddies cause transient features to occur in the thermal structure of the upper ocean. One prominent example is the Loop Current, a persistent, yet fluctuating feature in the Gulf of Mexico (GoM) between Cuba, the Yucatan Peninsula and the Mississippi Delta. The Loop Current is particularly important because it is frequently responsible for the rapid intensification of storms due to its anomalously deep reservoir of warm water. Hurricane Andrew in 1992 and Katrina in 2005 are just two examples of storms that significantly increased in size and intensity after passing over the Loop Current. The transience of this feature makes rapid intensification in this region notoriously difficult to forecast. Thus, sub-monthly variability of upper ocean thermal structure should be included to improve the intensity evolution in the downscaling model (Emanuel 2004).

The PI values generated in this study are derived from NCEP reanalysis data (Kalnay 1996). In order to remove the seasonality of PI, a polynomial curve was fit to the mean year for each grid point (Figure 1) and then subtracted successively from each year of the reanalysis record. The result is a time series of PI anomalies for each grid point, with the seasonality removed. Any other sub-monthly or inter-annual variability remains in the anomalies and provided a basis for Fourier analysis of the PI signal for each grid point.

In proceeding with the Fourier analysis, we are interested in two characteristics of the signal: the magnitude of anomalies and their frequency of occurrence. In order to quantify the perturbation amplitude, we must determine what distribution is typically assumed by PI anomalies and then calculate a measure of variability for that distribution (i.e., variance for a normal distribution). Figure 2 shows a histogram of daily PI anomalies in the Gulf of Mexico for all Octobers and includes a normal probability plot which shows where the distribution conforms or departs from

normality. It also provides the results of the Jarque-Bera test for normality, a common statistical tool for classifying distributions. Similar plots were produced for four other representative sites in the global tropics. Since the Jarque-Bera test is particularly sensitive to skewness in distributions, it disqualifies several distributions that were otherwise quite normally distributed (as evidenced by kurtosis and general shape).

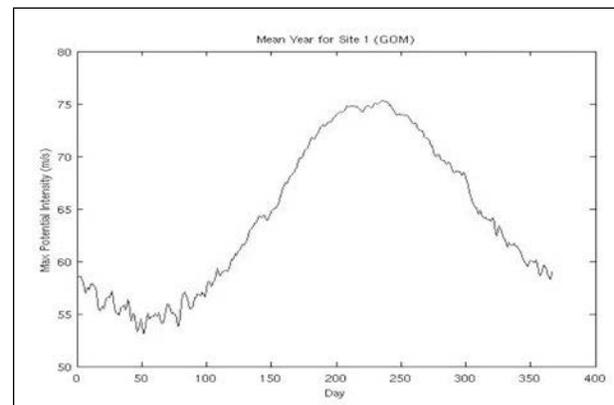


Figure 1. Mean year of potential intensity (in m/s) for a site in the Gulf of Mexico.

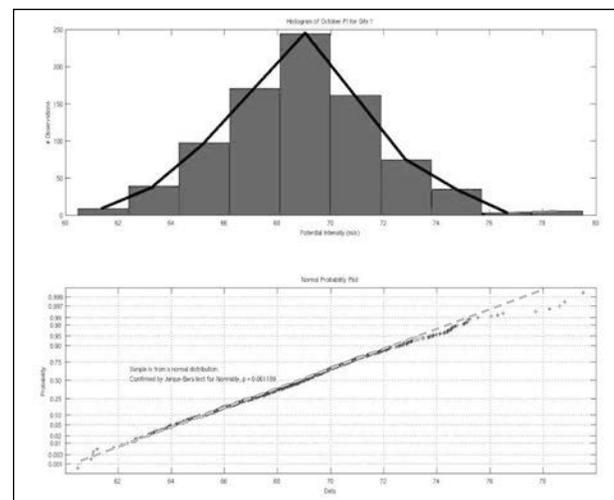


Figure 2. (Top) Histogram of potential intensity anomalies in October for a site in the Gulf of Mexico. (Bottom) Normal probability plot and results of Jarque-Bera test for normality.

To determine the typical period of PI perturbations, spectral analysis is pursued. A power spectrum is a plot of power vs. frequency, or the amount of information from the signal that oscillates at some frequency. It is a useful tool for

finding oscillations or characteristic time-scales embedded within noisy signals. In Figure 3, we provide a log-log plot for the power spectrum of PI anomalies at the GoM site. The plot indicates that the signal has a peak frequency response at  $14.5 \text{ yr}^{-1}$ , or a period of approximately 25.2 days. For other sites in the global tropics, perturbation time scales appear to be consistent with this particular location in the GoM. To the right of the peak, the slope of the power spectrum is plotted, indicating that power is a  $f^2$  function of frequency. In the global tropics where PI is well resolved, power spectra of PI anomalies remain consistent with a  $-2$  power law as the period goes to zero. Emanuel (2008) indicates that “there is no theory for what this power spectrum should look like, though the power of the temperature perturbations should scale as  $f^3$ ,” Refinement of the current downscaling model to include sub-monthly PI variability shows promise given these two quantities. Regions where tele-connections cause significant perturbations of PI on sub-monthly time scales will now include much greater variability in the model, making the statistics of the overall climatology more robust and sensitive to remote influences.

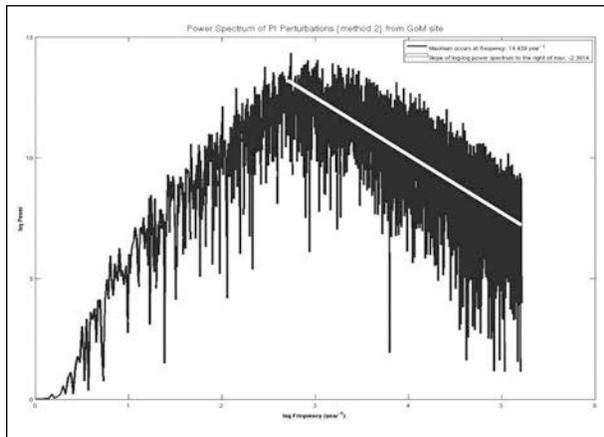


Figure 3. Power spectrum of potential intensity anomalies at a site in the Gulf of Mexico. White line is a linear fit from the peak frequency to small periods—indicates power law.

#### Application to Future Climates

Over the last several years, the debate over the relationship of climate change to TC frequency and intensity has been the most well publicized area of the field. While several modeling and theoretical studies have supported this link (Emanuel 2005; Webster et al., 2005), other prominent studies have contradicted this finding (Knutson 2008; E08). This study adds an important dimension to the field by utilizing the Community Climate System Model 3.0 (CCSM3)

along with several different scenarios for future emissions in an attempt to parse differentiated patterns of future hurricane climatology.

Results from CCSM3 and GFDL climate models are presented hereafter; the results from the GFDL model are provided by Emanuel for comparison. Although the use of CCSM3 and GFDL models to predict the impact of climate on hurricane climatology was initially explored in Emanuel (2008), this study extends that analysis to include examination of two other global greenhouse gas (GHG) emission scenarios: A1FI and B1.

The IPCC emission scenarios were developed to provide different images for how global GHG emissions and concentration might change in the future. Each scenario takes into account different modes of demographic development, socio-economic development, technological change and governmental policy. The A1FI scenario, at the higher end of the emissions spectrum, models a world of rapid economic and population growth, in which the primary aim of technological development is the continued fossil intensive energy infrastructure. The B1 scenario, at the lower end of the emissions spectrum, models a world with similar population increases as the A1 scenarios, but instead with aggressive development of alternative energy infrastructure, a global economy rapidly transitioning to service and information, and a reduction in material intensity (IPCC 2000).

#### Results and Interpretation

The results produced by the downscaling model include a representative sample of 1,000 storms modeled from the input climate. The A1FI and B1 scenarios are each split into four 20-year periods from 2020 to 2099. One of the limitations of the current study (a result of limited computational availability) is that the only basin studied here is the Southern Hemisphere (SH) basin, which includes the region surrounding Australia and the Indian Ocean. What follows is an analysis of the modeled change in hurricane climatology over the period 2020–2100 as measured by a variety of different metrics for TC activity. The primary hypothesis to be tested is a rise in South Pacific hurricane activity as a result of global warming and a corresponding increase in sea surface temperatures.

Figure 4 provides a plot of the annual frequency (number of TCs) predicted by the two models used for each of the two scenarios projected over an 80-year period. It should first be noted that in all four cases, a jump in TC

frequency is observed from the 1980–2000 period to the 2020–2039 period. However, further analysis is mostly inconclusive. This number provides a useful diagnostic test, as most previous literature on long-term shifts in hurricane climatology adopt frequency as the primary metric to measure total TC activity. This result provides an equivalent comparison on indeterminate shifts in TC frequency using the downscaling method.

We can next examine the change in distribution of observations of storm activity over an average year. In Figure 5, we explore the percentage change from 2020 to 2100 in monthly observations of TCs for both models and both scenarios. The only significant changes reproduced by both models are a 60% decrease in observations in the Austral winter under A1FI and a 40–60% increase in observations in the Austral winter under B1. Despite the apparent significance of this result, it is important to remember that while TCs form all year round in the SH basin, there is typically less than one storm a month between May and November (E08). Thus, smaller changes in absolute observational frequency for these months result in larger percentage changes in the long run. The major shortfall in using frequency as a measure of hurricane activity is that frequency is not a good indicator of the destructive potential of TC activity for human populations when taken in isolation.

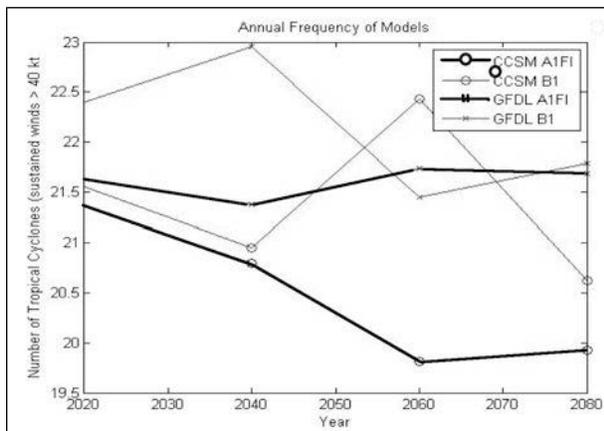


Figure 4. Annual frequency of tropical cyclone for CCSM and GFDL models predicting activity for IPCC scenarios A1FI and B1.

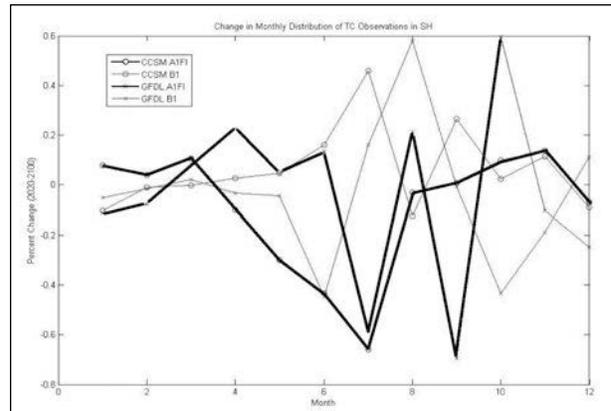


Figure 5. Percent change in monthly frequency of TC observations for two models and two scenarios over period 2020–2100.

One other method of analysis is the Power Dissipation Index (PDI), developed by Emanuel (2005) as an aggregate index of storm duration and intensity. PDI is calculated by integrating the cube of maximum wind speed ( $k_s$ ) over the lifetime of the storm and then applying a convenient scaling factor. It may be represented as:

$$PDI = \int V_{max}^3 dt$$

where  $\int$  is the scaling factor (hereafter  $3.02e-9$ ). This particular index is utilized because real monetary damages sustained in any given storm typically scale as a cube of the maximum wind speed (Emanuel 2005).<sup>1</sup> Figure 6 shows the evolution of PDI throughout the 21st century for the two models and emissions scenarios. All of the models show remarkably little or contradictory trends. Contrary to the marked decrease in PDI described in E08 under the A1B (a fusion of the two studied here) scenario in the SH, no similar pattern is observed here.

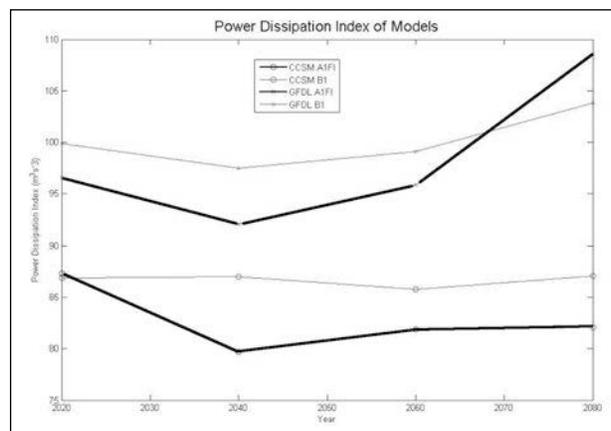


Figure 6. Power Dissipation Index (PDI) for models and scenarios studied over period 2020–2100.

<sup>1</sup> This damage power law neglects to take into account weak storms that are primarily flooding events.

The inconclusive nature of most of these analyses suggests that many strides still need to be made in this field. As evidenced earlier in this study, there are many theoretical considerations, motivated by experimental data, which show that this model must be improved with respect to sub-scale variability. As these shortcomings are overcome, the results of climatological analysis should yield a clearer picture of the response of tropical cyclones to different emissions scenarios. Studies like this, however, will hopefully advance our ability to predict the long-term risk profiles faced by many coastal communities.

In designing coastal defenses and planning future deployment of critical near-shore infrastructure, such as oil platforms, we need to be fully apprised of the risks posed by a shifting climate. Only by including this information in a fully integrated approach of mitigation and adaptation can we be sure that we are fully addressing the risk posed by the climate crisis.

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# For the People, By the People: Secondhand Shopping Spaces

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## Abstract

This work is an ethnographic study of secondhand shopping spaces in Berlin and their role in altering gender roles and the economic nature of clothing stores. Accompanying the text is a series of photographs that aid in better conceptualizing the innovative deviancy of these sub-cultural spaces.

## Introduction

The air is cold and brisk. The sidewalk running alongside Bergmanstrasse is flooded with scurrying young adults. Their dress includes loose shirts and tight pants. The women wear tights and oversized flannel shirts. Sporting skinny jeans and cowboy shirts the men walk beside the women as they seek out their destinations. The bright sun illuminates the scene causing me to squint as I look up at the bright mural appearing to be from the '70s. Adorned with floral prints and giant-winged bees the mural is made up of vivid red, pink, and yellow hues. The painted scene contains silhouettes of embracing couples engaged in interracial love-play and a diverse group of smiling children. Nearing the entrance, I see the word "cinema" painted in multi-colored letters. *This place is no movie theater.* Climbing the steps, I'm confronted with a peculiar, defiantly standing lower half of a male mannequin. He wears a pair of brand-new industrial gray pants. The half-mannequin stands on a barrel that has the word "timezone" on it (Figure 1). On one side of the centralized half mannequin form is one awkwardly posed female mannequin with a simple black dress on. She is eerily bald.



Figure 1.

The store I am standing in front of is Check Point. As a leading second-hand clothing store of Berlin, it is situated near Bergmanstrasse, a noted area in the independent hipster scene of Berlin. At such secondhand clothing stores the consumer acts as a producer. This means the same people who religiously flock to the store for new cultural material provide the bulk of material. In creating a new phenomenon out of "old" culture, the secondhand clothing store is drastically post-modern. With the fashion sources of the hipster subculture, or secondhand clothing stores, employing recycled material of the consuming masses, an empowered marginalized working class becomes realized. In these post-modern spaces, shop windows and mannequins serve as aesthetic markers of the dichotomy deconstruction (in terms of consumer/producer; masculine/feminine) that occurs in Check Point, the secondhand clothing store.

The progression of culture in urban districts around the world is causing quite a stir in terms of gender identity. When shopping for secondhand clothing individuals are consumers at gender-ambiguous stores—with gender-ambiguous sections. This secondhand clothing, provided and consumed by the masses, enlists behind-the-counter employees to do more than cashiering. Moreover, employees of many secondhand stores also act as appraisers deciding which items will be bought and sold. As such, secondhand spaces are sites of recycling and reassigning identities associated with material culture. This paper will examine the blurred division, in terms of gender and class, which occurs in secondhand clothing stores.

## Gender

Many theorists and scholars have noted the performativity of gender. Gender roles are assigned at birth in accordance with the displayed sex of the child. This is when the act of gender begins. Before the child has sufficiently opened his eyes, society makes strides to situate the child in the constraints of the static gender binary. The sex of the child is usually the primary focus of the doctor and everyone in the delivery room: "Congratulations, it's a boy." We see the congratulations-it-has-a-gender phrases on balloons, cards, and other congratulatory texts given to the mother. As it is, the sex of the child appears to seriously obscure the primary focus of the event at-large: a new person entering the world. As a child is born, the birth is validated by the assignment of a gender. ("Oh, you had a baby! So, what is it? Boy or girl?") As such, material culture, such as clothing, holds a major role in the assignment of gender. The first aspect of the clothing assignment begins with colors. Baby boys wear

blue. Baby girls wear pink. In our society, blue stands as a symbol of strength and masculinity, while pink exists as a symbol of softness and femininity.

To further foster the ideology of the gender dichotomy, clothing stores are sectioned in gender. Commonly in retail stores we see designated sections for men and women's clothing. This sectionalization of clothing stores in accordance with gender warrants further division with age groups considering the girls and boys sections at retail stores. However, in secondhand clothing stores this gendered division is less apparent. Serving as substantial reflections on the trends and fashions of the past, secondhand fashion stores dismiss the static gendering of clothing. In clothing stores like Check Point, the gendering of clothing is presented as a humorous aspect of fashion as gender is generally limited to the hyper-gendered mannequins (Figure 2). Beside a one-euro gender neutral "junk bin" full of random items in the foyer of Check Point stands a rack with wedding dresses. The dress section includes the fully traditional style of the '60s, beaded ornate dresses of the '80s and the varied styles of today. At the end of the rack, is a mannequin dressed in period-neutral dress—wigless and wearing overdone blue eye shadow and heavy eyeliner. Her gaze is spacious as she pouts and looks blindly over those who enter the foyer. Leaning against the dresses, groping as many as she can, her body is fixed in a position of severe desperation. She appears as a sort of guarder of femininity as she forbids the inhabitants of the store to aptly view the selection of dresses in her grasp. The scene of this mannequin is clearly humorous as she exudes a pristine femininity despite being positioned beside a one-euro bin where gender is hardly visible.



Figure 2.

The main shopping floor of Check Point also dismisses constraints of gender binaries with every rack and shelf falling somewhere in the midst of sexual intermediaries. Entering the main shopping floor my attention is immediately drawn towards the bright pink ceiling with stark red crown molding. The form of the ceiling screams excessively rocked out regality with three massive hanging chandeliers aligned in the center. Illustrating post-modernity, the base of each chandelier is encircled with a thin ring of neon light attached to the ceiling. The golden tapestry sustains the regal air of the shopping floor with an extravagant embroidered woodblock print pattern. Two inconspicuous mirrors stand in the back corners of the store and burgundy velvet curtains are pulled along the back as if framing a stage. In one front corner of the main floor is an expansive checkout table beside which is a shelf of gender-neutral hats and gloves. Opposite the shelf on the left-hand wall are five unisex dressing stalls. The dressing stalls, with their flimsy curtains, are all decked out in leopard print.

Like many of Berlin's secondhand stores, Check Point also offers a small collection of new clothes that are kept in the front of the store. The new garments collection is composed mostly of jeans. The new clothes are contained and just barely sectioned off. However, they are not excused from effects of the secondhand clothing phenomenon. Seated on the floor beside a table of brand new women's jeans is a distraught-looking mannequin with a black, longhaired, ratty wig (Figure 3). The mannequin casts a distraught gaze on those daring to peruse the new.



Figure 3.

The store's main attraction, as made apparent by consumers' focus, is by far the secondhand clothing selection. And the gender distribution is, at best, vague. Looking at the active shopping floor one can see dynamics with more

women on the left and more men on the right, but these dynamics are hardly strict. On the left side there are dresses and skirts. And on the right side there are men's coats. However, in the back middle, there are racks of pants that are totally gender ambiguous. As an American unfamiliar with the European sizing system, I had no way of knowing if I was looking at male or female jeans as I perused this section. Without the guidance of gender, one must rely on taste and size to determine what to buy. Without signs or symbols displaying strict sexual expectations for the shoppers, men and women are much more likely to dismiss gender and purchase a gender-ambiguous T-shirt or vest. The vests all hang together, completely void of any division. With only one rack for vests, both men and women shop from the same rack at Check Point. The entire store displays the nature of sexual intermediaries. There are few sections that catered to specific gendered styles, with the exceptions being the rack for dresses. While some garment racks, like those for dresses, are entirely used by women, others like those of vests are totally void of gender. Men and women shop from the same the same racks and shelves.

All secondhand clothing stores in Berlin, however, are not concerned with the deconstruction of gender. In fact, some preserve and protect strict gender divisions. In the Charlottenburg neighborhood stands a Russian-owned store by the name of Madonna (Figure 4). From the sidewalk, one can see the display window with the word "exclusive" spelled out for the passerby to see. Behind the glass are a cradle of designer shoes and a vase of synthetic flowers. In the window, a fully dressed mannequin complete with a wig and sunglasses, clenches a purse with a raised hand of wealth. Upon entering the store with all female fashions, the attendant, speaking in a rich Russian accent, swiftly asks me if I need any help. She sits behind her desk in the back of the store facing the window. Declining her help, I begin examining the store. Initially, I notice an awkwardly arranged row of purses all lying back in ways so that I can hardly make out many of their forms. But then I realize their awkward arrangement makes their luxury labels visible. I notice how neatly the Escada and Dolce & Gabbana labels line up. Suddenly, the focus of the store becomes very apparent. The store's shoe collection is made up almost entirely of heels, with the exception being a few pairs of fashionable sneakers. When exiting the store I look back to the woman offering a hearty "*Tchuss!*," to which she responds with a flimsy nod. Although projecting images of elitism like designer labels and the word "exclusive" on the window, even luxury secondhand stores like Madonna challenge industry control.



Figure 4.

### Class

Rather than relying on major corporations for material, secondhand clothing stores rely on the masses to provide the clothing. For privately owned secondhand stores the process of acquiring material usually involves an individual bringing in his or her used clothing in exchange for money. Thus, the employees of the department store decide what the store is willing to buy and how much they will pay for it. The terms of the exchange are most typically determined by the condition of the garment (i.e., how well it has been preserved) and its assumed marketability (i.e., will it sell?).

In most secondhand stores, the hiring process is quite stringent in regards to experience and style. Most of the employees at secondhand stores have had experience working in other retail stores. It is necessary for survival that some workers also be "used" in terms of retail experience if the secondhand store is to survive economically, because workers are responsible for fostering development of the uniquely diverse trends that exist in the secondhand clothing store. In fact, it is necessary that the employees not be alienated from their work. Instead, they must be engaged in some strand of a secondhand trend in order to predict what people will buy—requiring both a valuable skill and tremendous responsibility. In speaking with one employee at Colours, a secondhand clothing store in the same Kreuzberg neighborhood as Check Point, she described her daily responsibilities to me like this:

"It's not an easy job. But it is a lot of fun. Whenever someone comes with clothes they want to sell, I have to look at them piece by piece. Then I decide what works and what does not. We cannot take everything. Some things are too old and in bad condition for our store. Or maybe we have too much of one thing to take more."

—Barbara, Colours employee

The employees are not the only ones who must take more responsibility in the secondhand clothing store. As all the clothes are used, the consumers also act as producers. Dismissing the role of corporations, the secondhand clothing store empowers the margin, those who have little say in what cultural material is mass-produced. Most consumers are in the margin. While secondhand clothing stores essentially rely on material that was produced by corporate elites, the secondhand material is rightfully owned by the masses as they bought it from some corporate clothing store. The material provided by many secondhand clothing stores comes directly from the hands of the consumers. In the space of the secondhand clothing the culture of the margin is displayed and celebrated. The material sold is not just the bare material. But also, the culture that goes along with it. The means of acquiring material from the masses make the secondhand clothing store unique in its ability to closely reflect the culture of the masses. People become consumers of their own culture, rather than chasers of the American Dream that tells them they must look and be richer.

The power of the corporate clothing stores lies not in their ability to physically produce clothes, but rather in their ability to determine what is “new.” The power of corporations relies on the masses buying their material, not owning it. Essentially the corporations rely on the masses wanting something that they do not already have. In the standard producer/consumer dichotomy of capitalism, elitist corporations maintain their static role as producers because of their hold on controlling trends through a phenomenon Marx described as commodity fetishism. When individuals consume clothing in capitalist markets, Marx argues that they do not do this out of a necessity for more material, but rather out of an irrational desire to consume that is exploited and provoked by the elite who compete through marketing and advertisements for the labor (in form of money) of the masses (Spickard 2001). Comparably, the fetishism of commodities is similar to sexual fetishism of something like cigars where an individual receives sexual pleasure from the image and act of smoking.

## Conclusion

The phenomenon of secondhand clothing creates a space of possibility. Fostering the development of the individual the secondhand clothing store allows individuals to borrow from styles and trends of the past to create a personal style free of bureaucratic gender assignments and class hierarchy. As individuals act as the producers and consumers of material in the secondhand clothing store, the ruling role

of corporations is dismissed. In accordance with this dismissal, we see mannequins serving as outlandish and humorous projections of gender, as made apparent by the wedding dress mannequin. The marginalized masses are empowered through the control of their own material. The producers of the material culture provided in the secondhand clothing store are the masses. The garments from the homes of the masses are the source of the clothing provided in stores like Check Point. The secondhand clothing spaces where the material culture of the masses comes together exist as spaces with blurred gender and class division.

The source of the cultural material in secondhand clothing stores is so broad that the division common of corporate clothing stores is not sustainable for the secondhand clothing store. The material provided by most secondhand clothing stores does not reflect a single style because as individuals rarely do we reflect individual styles. Not many people are entirely preppy or gothic. And since the individual contributes the clothing to the secondhand clothing store, we have the material experiences of different individuals coming together to reflect the blurred divisions in terms of gender and class that we all possess. For the shopper, the secondhand clothing store offers an array of stylistic choices that are not hindered by class and gender division. With so many periods and styles available, it is nearly impossible for a secondhand clothing store to adequately suggest some type of style over another with mannequins and shop windows. It would not be good for business. The consumers are diverse and the material is diverse. In the contemporary setting, secondhand clothing allows authentic self-expression.

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# A Comparative Study of Latina/o Literatures: Memory and the Longing for Home [an excerpt]

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## Abstract

This research focuses on the diversity within Latina/o literatures by mapping the idiosyncrasies, which vary by both geographical location and national origin. With an emphasis on the writings of Helena María Viramontes and Judith Ortiz Cofer, this project will discuss the overlapping historical contexts for their work and the ways they imagine complex Latina/o identities across borders. Further examined is the way by which Latina/o narratives construct identity as a function of memory and the longing for home. As a comparative study, this project will also explore the definitions and experience of borders and the manner by which language in these works serves to dissolve the traditional idea of genre. In developing connections that point to the similarities of construction and expressions, this research will simultaneously illustrate the range of experiences within Latina/o literatures. This work also explores multiple frameworks for the concept of “home,” with *Home* denoting an envisioned and utopic Eden and *home* signifying the geographic location from which one comes to the United States.

In “Avant-Garde or Borderguard: (Latino) Identity in Poetry,” Maria Damon argues that the home “is geopolitically no place” but that it “still has a vibrant existence and can be located” (482). Damon looks critically at poetry as a form of discourse in which identities are formed and new ideals developed by means of poetic-subjective language. The close study of narrative and this poetic-subjective language provide a context for which my work explores the inherent relationship of language and poetics to the emergence of memory and longing. This relationship can be found across forms in Latina/o literatures. It is an argument that demands the dissolution of the limitations that “genre” imposes on the works of Latina/o writers. Through a close reading of *Under the Feet of Jesus*, a novel written by Helena María Viramontes, and *The Latin Deli: Prose and Poetry*,

a collection of short stories, essays, and poems written by Judith Ortiz Cofer, I work to illustrate how lyrical representations of memory, longing and home bridge the experiences of the urban, east coast depicted in *The Latin Deli* and the rural, southwest of *Under the Feet of Jesus*. In this comparison, Cofer’s vision of the home space (“El Building”) is held in juxtaposition to Viramontes’ depiction of the open land of the Southwest. This comparison serves to illustrate the shared experience of Puerto Rican and Chicano migrant workers—namely that of the border experience—while acknowledging the individual historical contexts of U.S. relations with Mexico and Puerto Rico.

Migration to the United States from Puerto Rico began in the early 1800s, while Puerto Rico was still under Spanish rule. Records indicate that in 1838 Puerto Rican merchants in New York City formed the Spanish Benevolent Society<sup>1</sup>, but it was the U.S. acquisition and occupation of Puerto Rico in 1898 that radically altered conditions on the island. Economic displacement enabled the U.S. to recruit Puerto Ricans as a source of cheap labor and the beginnings of what would become the mass exodus was launched. “Between 1900 and 1909, U.S.-owned corporations recruited more than 5,000 Puerto Rican men, women, and children to work on sugar plantations” (Whalen 8). The promotion of emigration took Puerto Ricans as far as Cuba, Ecuador, Louisiana, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Illinois, California, and Hawai’i.

Puerto Rican poet Judith Ortiz Cofer’s “The Latin Deli: An Ars Poetica”<sup>2</sup> illustrates the identification with *home* and the longing for return. The poem speaks to different Latino communities. In spite of the identifications that can be attributed to Ortiz—as Puerto Rican, as an “East Coast” identity and as writing from the urban neighborhood perspective—she writes, instead, of the *Latin deli* which, for the Puerto Ricans who “complain that it would be cheaper to fly to San Juan than to buy a pound of Bustelo coffee here,” the Cubans “perfecting their speech of a ‘glorious return’ to Havana,” and the Mexicans who “pass through, talking lyrically of dólares to be made in El Norte,” it serves as a portal to *home* and each is reminded of his condition. Although the differences of their “U.S. identities”—the citizen, the exile, and the migrant—are pronounced, there is a shared longing for the Home that each one has left behind.

<sup>1</sup> In 1844, one merchant settled in Bridgeport, Connecticut, while 1860 census records revealed ten Puerto Ricans living in New Haven (Whalen 4).

<sup>2</sup> Notably, *An Ars Poetica* translates into *An Art of Poetry*. The poem is taken from Cofer’s collection *The Latin Deli: Prose and Poetry*.

Culinary citizenship is the closest relationship the migrant or immigrant has to Home. The *Latin* deli is a portal by which the migrant is sustained. “The desire to remember home by fondly recreating culinary memories cannot be understood merely as reflectively nostalgic gestures” (Mannur 13). The Puerto Rican, whose home remains a colony of the United States, pays the exorbitant prices stamped across labels of “canned memories.” The Cuban, by contrast, proselytizes with other Cubans of a *glorious* return, a description that evokes celestial visions. The Mexican passes through. His stays are only brief enough to economically benefit. For each one, Home is Edenic—a utopic palace of existence. It is where the cost of coffee is low, change possible, and family awaits your return. These Edens are often places that no longer exist, save in *their dreams and their disillusion*s. Memory lends itself to distortions. “Such distortions of actual memories underscore how the immigrant’s memories of the past are always reflected in and refracted through the shards of a mirror which nostalgically restructures how memories are seen” (Mannur 12–13). This nostalgic restructuring enables the Edenic ideals of Home to remain intact. The deli market’s memories and its owner serve as a proprietor of emotional sustenance.

Memory is used and employed to cope with the traumatic uncertainty of the unfamiliar, because even for those for whom Home has never materialized, it exists. It has been envisioned and spoken of countless of times and across generations and thus, the image of Home is more familiar than the unfamiliar of their present condition. The utopian home nation state in which colors are lush and food abundant is one that Cofer’s *Patroness of Exiles* must deliver; in her *Latin Deli* she conjures up products “from places that now exist only in their hearts/closed ports she must trade with.”

The Jones Act of 1917 provided United States citizenship to all Puerto Ricans. This act remains the one radical difference between the diasporic movements of Puerto Ricans and Mexicans to the U.S. With the Jones Act came a surge in migration from Puerto Rico. “Between 1920 and 1940, the Puerto Rican population in the States grew from fewer than 12,000 to almost 70,000” (Whalen 13). The

attempt to industrialize the island in 1948, a primary objective of U.S. investors in the launch of Operation Bootstrap/*Operación Manos a la Obra*, was unsuccessful in replacing the jobs it displaced in agriculture and a second wave of migration arrived in the U.S.

Like the Mexican migrant, Puerto Ricans served as seasonal workers who annually faced unemployment when the harvest was over. Unlike the European immigrant who had left his nation behind, the Puerto Rican could return Home; the migrant worker is the transnational commuter. Under industrialization initiatives, agricultural work on the island vastly diminished and work was again sought in the United States. *The Puerto Ricans: A Documentary History* cites that the statistical curve of emigration from the Island is in exact correlation with the curve of employment on the mainland, citing that many feel they “got stuck” because of money.<sup>3</sup> It is in this “getting stuck” that the dreams of a glorious return are manifested.

Closed ports—cost of return, political exile, seasonal employment—are physical borders that the Latina/o contends with. Remarking on the physiological affects of physical borders Damon notes, “The borderline condition is one of constant anxiety—productive, creative tension as well as destructive, soul-killing anxiety—a no-place utopia, a limbo of nightmare and dream possibilities” (479). The anxiousness caused by this state of limbo yields an inability to distinguish between what is imagined and what exists. It is between the imagined and the existing that the differentiation must be made—not the *imaginary* and *reality*. In communities for whom the stories of lyrical lands for which one languishes are as real as the tenement building or the small red house of crumbling bricks<sup>4</sup> in which they live, home *is* this lyrical and lush. It is home as they imagine it to be, but is by no means is it *imaginary*—a word which suggests a cognizance of the fanciful object as intangible. In this maintained vision of Home the hope for return remains.

The contrast between the tenement as home and the imagined Home is echoed in “American History,” an essay by Cofer that offers a portrayal of this urban border from the lens

<sup>3</sup> The statistical curve of emigration from the Island is in exact correlation with the curve of employment on the mainland. If employment is scarce, the reflux increases correspondingly (Wagenheim 248).

<sup>4</sup> Reference is made here to Sandra Cisneros’s *The House on Mango Street*. “But the house on Mango Street is not the way they told it at all. It’s small and red with tight steps in front and windows so small you’d think they were holding their breath. Bricks are crumbling in places, and the front door is so swollen you have to push hard to get in. There is no front yard, only four little elms the city planted by the curb. Out back is a small garage for the car we don’t own yet and a small yard that looks smaller between the two buildings on either side” (Cisneros 4). The texts provide a Chicana/o complement to Cofer’s *The Latin Deli* as a parallel portrayal of Home through the urban experience.

of adolescent understanding. The importance of a physical living space/house permeates the texts of Latina/o writers and particularly those who attempt to capture the urban experience. “The Puerto Rican tenement known as El Building . . . was, in fact, the corner of Straight and Market; not ‘at’ the corner, but *the* corner” (Cofer 7). It is the foundation upon which the migrant constructs for her/himself a new narrative, where shelter is sought and the conditions of a new life endured:

At almost any hour of the day, El Building was like a monstrous jukebox, blasting out *salsas* from open windows as the residents, mostly new immigrants just up from the island, tried to drown out whatever they were currently enduring with loud music (Cofer 7).

Cofer describes the cold gray of winter in Paterson, New Jersey and observes with detachedness the environments she inhabits. The point of fixation for the adolescent narrator is Eugene. It is through his presence that the narrator begins to contrast her experience to that of the American ideal, eventually coming to a subtle realization of the borders in which she is confined.

Little is described of El Building until the end of the essay. The preceding pages are filled with observations and details of Eugene’s house, which are visible from the fire escape outside of her window. “Eugene and his family had moved into the only house on the block that had a yard and trees” (Cofer 8). This “American home” with its yard and trees is juxtaposed to El Building, which the narrator observes “looked particularly ugly, like a gray prison with its many dirty windows and rusty fire escapes” (Cofer 14). Her scrutiny of El Building is paired throughout the essay as a comparison of worlds:

It was not until Eugene moved into that house that I noticed that El Building blocked most of the sun and that the only spot that got a little sunlight during the day was the tiny square of earth the old woman had planted with flowers (Cofer 10).

The prison of El Building keeps its residents from planting seeds. They can sow no story for themselves, because El Building will not let them. There is no earth and no light. To *own* one’s own home is the objective. “My father . . . kept assuring us, we would be moving into our own house”<sup>5</sup> (Cofer 10). To return *Home* is the dream of the collective—migrants straddling the border of constrained decisions:

I had learned to listen to my parents’ dreams, which were spoken in Spanish, as fairy tales, like the stories about life in the island paradise of Puerto Rico before I was born . . . my parents talked constantly about buying a house on the beach someday, retiring on the island—that was a common topic among residents of El Building (Cofer 10–11).

Cofer qualifies these dreams as generational. Although she “learned to listen” to them, they were “spoken in Spanish”—untranslatable into English. With dreams told as “fairy tales,” Puerto Rico is painted as an island of enchantment. Yet, even for the migrant for whom this enchanted isle exists, it is not a place where he will return to work. The residents’ talk of *retiring on the island* and its existence becomes synonymous with a reprieve from mainland conditions.

The world of Eugene is decorated with sunshine, red hair, ivory faces, and a white nurse’s uniform. Yet, the narrator’s world is found in the gray and cold of Paterson, the black girls who humiliate her, the rust of fire escapes and women dressed in the black of mourning. The only brightness was the door, “painted a deep green: *verde*, the color of hope” (Cofer 14). Segregated from the world by this *Verde-Esperanza*, the door is both the entrance and exit out of an otherwise colorless existence. “I walked out to the street and around the chain-link fence that separated El Building from Eugene’s house. The yard was neatly edged around the little walk that led to the door” (Cofer 14). For the non-migrant, hope is everywhere—movement possible and borders nonexistent. It leads to his front door. For the migrant and the children of migrants, there is a chain-link fence outside his door—a border of containment.<sup>6</sup> The border experience is not limited to the east coast or Puerto Rican experience, but is shared across geographical contexts. The demand upon the migrant to continually adjust is an attempt to fragment the community who lives in the borderland which Anzaldúa defines as “a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. . . . The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants” (3). The 1800s saw the illegal immigration of Anglos into Mexican territory and in 1836, with the acquisition of Santa Anna, Texas became a republic. Like the Puerto Ricans who awoke one morning to discover they had become American citizens, overnight *Tejanos* became foreigners on their own lands.

<sup>5</sup> “They always told us that one day we would move into a house, a real house that would be ours for always. . . . Our house would be white with trees around it, a great big yard and grass growing without a fence. . . . this was the house Mama dreamed up in the stories she told us before we went to bed. . . . The house on Mango Street isn’t it. For the time being, Mama says. Temporary, says Papa” (Cisneros 4–5). *The House on Mango Street*.

<sup>6</sup> In *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Anzaldúa recounts the containment by a chain-link fence surrounding her ancestral land. “My father’s mother, Mama Locha, [also] lost her *terreno*. . . . *El cementerio estaba cercado*. But there was a fence around the cemetery, chained and padlocked by ranch owners of the surrounding land. We couldn’t even get in to visit the graves, much less bury her there. Today, it is still padlocked. The sign reads: ‘Keep out. Trespassers will be shot’” (Anzaldúa 8).

Chicana novelist Helena María Viramontes portrays *Home and Return* from the rural Southwest—an experience which, although in contrast to the industrial and urban of Cofer's east coast depiction, complements an understanding of mutual longing. Like the Puerto Ricans who “got stuck,” for the Chicana/o this distance from home and the longing for return are an illness that can only be remedied by financial relief:

The desire to return home was now a tumor lodged under the muscle of Perfecto's heart and getting larger with every passing day. . . . The money was so essential to get home before home became so distant, he wouldn't be able to remember his way back (Viramontes 82–3).

The economic constraints of life at *Home* drive the migrant to seek work in the U.S., while the conditions of financial duress created by work in the U.S. make the return *Home* seemingly impossible.

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# The Violence of Color-Blind Politics: De-Realizing the Loss of Race

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## Abstract

This essay examines how Chang-rae Lee's novel, *Native Speaker*, allows for a reconceptualization of U.S. color-blind politics, particularly in its insistence on the disappearance of race as a requisite for progress and the implications of this loss conceptualized as gain. Instead of considering color blindness in conventional terms as signifying an end of racial prejudice, I would like to explore its implicit violence in disavowing the loss of race, in denying that race can be lost at all. I assert that it is only through mourning this loss that we can move forward as a nation. Mourning compels a complex reexamination of the self, which allows for new means of identification to be realized and fashioned. Rather than suggesting a mere fixation with the past, grieving strongly anticipates the overcoming of loss that invariably points to the future.

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"As the uncontested superpower on the world stage today, the United States is . . . the guardian of a European tradition of modern liberal humanism, one now mobilized to declare that the project of human freedom has been accomplished within the domestic borders of the nation-state."

—David L. Eng, "The End(s) of Race"

In this quote, David L. Eng posits the United States as the "uncontested superpower" of the modern world, one that has espoused and achieved the Enlightenment ideal of "liberal humanism." But he also suggests a defensive urgency, where the United States seems incited, compelled to assert itself as the leading progressive force of the modern globalized world. In his essay, "The End(s) of Race," Eng reveals that we now live in a time of professed color blindness, "when race appears in the official political discourse in the United States only as ever 'disappearing'" (1479). Obama's victory in the 2008 presidential elections particularly seems to mark the beginning of a new age where the United States is moving towards the culminating realization of a post-race

society. But rather than sanguinely accepting these trends as signifying an end of race and racialization, Eng emphasizes the need to examine the basis and implications of these official proclamations of color blindness. Is race truly disappearing or merely puppeted in a "disappearing act" to promote a fiction of progress (1480)? To what extent is post-race rhetoric used to frame a United States ready and poised to "disseminate" Enlightenment ideals and "enlighten" the rest of the world, to legitimate our "war on terrorism" and infiltration into other nations because their human rights violations can only be made "right" by our intervention?

While not denying the tremendous progress that has been made, it is still important to interrogate what progress means for the United States and in what ways we are progressing as a nation. In her seminal text, *Immigrant Acts*, Lisa Lowe reveals that, in U.S. politics, progress is urgently promoted through the violent negation and forgetting of historical discrimination. She focuses particularly on the history of U.S. citizenship, where the "political emancipation" of disenfranchised groups is presented as a narrative of progress that resolves "American liberal democracy as a terrain to which all citizens have equal access and in which all are equally represented," a narrative that ultimately denies the origins of citizenship as a category created to privilege the rights of white males at the exclusion of nonwhites and women (27). In this paper, I would like to reconceptualize what Lowe calls a "violent forgetting" to reframe it in terms of "loss" that is de-realized and never mourned. Unlike "forgetting," which simply suggests a failure to remember, "loss" carries an urgency of something missing, something that calls out to be recognized and remembered.

At a time when the realization of a color-blind society seems so imminent, an assessment of what is being or nearly lost can allow for a new, critical perspective of our current condition. Does the U.S. no longer have a cause to grieve? Or have we become afraid to grieve because that suggests a fixation with loss, a paralyzing preoccupation with the past antithetical to the image we desire to project as the leading progressive force of modernity? It is imperative to note that the U.S. conception of progress asserts positive gain through the disavowal of loss, calling for the simultaneous celebration and dissolution of difference. This is particularly apparent in the election of minority politicians, where the incorporation of their colored bodies into the realm of U.S. government is exhibited as a victory for race that ironically precipitates its "disappearance." As these figures color and diversify the public face of the United States, their political success also deconstructs and disavows difference, rendering it "ghostly."

Progress, therefore, not only entails a gain, but also a loss, one that remains hauntingly present because it is never allowed the space to be mourned.<sup>1</sup>

As a part of a larger intellectual project studying the conditions of U.S. modernity in terms of loss, this essay examines how Chang-rae Lee's novel, *Native Speaker*, allows for a reconceptualization of U.S. color-blind politics, particularly in its insistence on the disappearance of race as a requisite for progress and the implications of this conceptualized as gain. Instead of considering color blindness in conventional terms as signifying an end of racial prejudice, I would like to explore its implicit violence in disavowing the loss of race, in denying that race can be lost at all. I do not mean to suggest, however, that racialized classifications should remain fixed. Rather, their deconstruction needs to be troubled and reexamined. Merely conceiving the disappearance of race as a gain fails to acknowledge a loss of particular means of identification that can render the self unintelligible and essentially lost. As race is unseen, to what extent does it also leave the self unseen?

Eng suggests that proclamations of color blindness within official U.S. discourse are unsettling because they may only serve the political purpose of maintaining a progressive public image. I argue that this rhetoric becomes even more problematic when it calls for the sudden identification with an amorphous, ambiguous post-race society and the disavowal of race as something that is being lost. I assert that it is only through mourning this loss that we can move forward as a nation. Mourning compels a complex reexamination of the self, which allows for new means of identification to be realized and fashioned. Rather than suggesting a mere fixation with the past, grieving strongly anticipates the overcoming of loss that invariably points to the future.

### Unintelligible, Unsanctioned Grief

Chang-rae Lee's *Native Speaker* draws readers into the conflicted mind of Henry Park, a Korean-American male who is losing his family and his own sense of self. As Henry struggles with the death of his son, he also grows estranged from Lelia, his Caucasian wife. Lee significantly juxtaposes the steady dissolution of this multiracial family with a failed political endeavor towards color blindness. But rather than presenting a United States unready to

embrace "otherness," I argue that Lee calls attention to a failure of color-blind politics. He suggests that its inherent violence in de-realizing the loss of race, and particularly the stabilizing conceptual structures race provides, leaves these losses dangerously unaccounted and unaccommodated. The novel ultimately reveals a United States that cannot deal with, or indeed, conceive of, loss. A country that must, in effect, learn how to mourn.

In the novel, Henry and Lelia's marriage begins to fall apart after their son, Mitt, dies as the result of a "*stupid dog pile*," the innocent, rough play of a bunch of rowdy boys (105). It is an incident unmarked by racial malice, but Lee reveals that this absence of race is precisely what renders Mitt's death incomprehensible. While Henry weakly accepts the event to be a senseless "accident," Lelia cries: "That's a word you and I have no business using. Sometimes I think it's more like some long-turning karma that finally came back to us. . . . Maybe it's that Mitt wasn't all white or yellow. . . . Maybe the world wasn't ready for him" (129). Lelia confesses a haunting suspicion that Mitt died because of the perceived illegitimacy of their interracial union. But the innocent, inexplicable conditions of his death and the progressive trends of the time make her avowals of grief appear unfounded and anachronistic.

I argue, however, that her avowals are neither; the "unintelligibility" of Lelia's grief poignantly reflects our current, confused transition into a post-race society. While the fact that Mitt does not die from an explicitly racist act suggests a degree of societal progress, Lee calls attention to a loss that is bewildering because it cannot be explained away with race, but race continues to be suspected as a "ghostly" cause. Rather than a complacently color-blind U.S., I would contend that it is this painful unknowability and unintelligibility that defines our modern condition. Mitt's death ultimately leads Lelia to mourn the loss of a certain racialized order. However, in a society that adamantly asserts its progressive color blindness, such grief is unsanctioned. This disavowal of race as something that can be lost, however, never allows its disappearance to be properly mourned.

Lee captures the confusion and repressed melancholy of an insistently post-race United States in Henry's elegiac reflection of his son's death:

<sup>1</sup> When I refer to the "ghostly" presence and "haunting" loss of race, I allude particularly to Avery Gordon's discussion of these terms. She describes haunting as "an animated state in which a repressed or unresolved social violence is making itself known . . . those singular, yet repetitive, instances when home becomes unfamiliar, when your bearings on the world lose direction, when the over-and-done with comes alive" (xvi). I believe that this acutely defines the status of race within an insistently *post-race* United States.

You pale little boys are crushing him, your adoring mob of hands and feet, your necks and head, your nostrils and knees, your still-sweet sweat and teeth and grunts. . . . How pale his face, his chest. . . . You can hear the attempt of his breath, that unlost voice, calling us from the bottom of the world (106–107).

Henry imagines a mob of “pale little boys” crushing Mitt, “adoring” him as they make his face and chest paler through suffocation. Lee uses the site of Mitt’s body to dramatize the violence of U.S. color-blind politics. As the child of Henry and Lelia’s interracial marriage, Mitt is adored as the physical testament of a more diverse and tolerant United States, but here we also witness the ironic complement of progress—the violent dissolution of difference. Mitt’s body disappears anonymously into a heap of entangled limbs, his colored, mixed identity completely subsumed and suffocated by a mass of overwhelming whiteness. Contrary to political proclamations that assert the disappearance of race as a positive gain and a marker of progress, Lee describes this disappearance as profoundly painful, because when race is rendered unseen, so is the self.<sup>2</sup>

### Conceptualizing a Politics of Loss

Although Henry and Lelia’s marriage suggests a movement towards color blindness from a public and political standpoint, Mitt’s death exposes the repressed, unresolved racial and cultural tensions that underlie their interracial union. We come to realize that Lelia has never stopped viewing her husband along racialized terms, labeling him as an “emotional alien” and effectively mistaking his silence and repose as a horrifying indifference towards his son’s death (5). Moreover, Henry never challenges her

claims, revealing his own inability to conceive a sense of self apart from those stereotypes. Lee suggests that the couple assigns and assumes racialized blame because the disorienting loss of their son draws them to the order and intelligibility that can be found within the conceptual structures of race. The reduction of their marriage to this racialized shell, however, also reveals a couple that never truly understood or formed deep relational ties with one another, relying so heavily on Mitt to bind them together that they become lost without him. Lee, by contrast, dissuades readers from simply faulting these two individuals by re-presenting and re-imagining this private domestic conflict—the steady dissolution of a multiracial family—in the public political realm, revealing a United States that cannot realize itself as a post-race society.<sup>3</sup>

To the extent that this couple is confined by racial conventions, John Kwang, the charismatic councilman, emerges as one who attempts to deconstruct those conventions through his mayoral campaign, his call for color blindness. I suggest, however, that the characters’ inability to fully mobilize themselves behind Kwang’s cause suggests a failure of U.S. color-blind politics to provide them with a concrete structure to hold onto during times of crisis. When an explosion kills Eduardo Fermin, a volunteer for Kwang’s campaign, and Helda Brandeis, a female office janitor, the public immediately deems the incident as a hate crime. All of Kwang’s speeches urging greater tolerance are ignored, or forgotten, in favor of the ironic simplicity of racialized order, mirroring Lelia’s pained, confused response to Mitt’s death. The frantic investigation and proliferation of theories blaming various racial groups ultimately reveals a United States averse to mourning, one that tries to resolve grief through action. This intense focus on uncovering the guilty

<sup>2</sup> We are left only with Mitt’s “unlost voice” as the last resonant trace of his unique identity. But instead of viewing this final image as signifying a spiritual liberation from sullied flesh, I would like to trouble the easy and often too eager dismissal of the physical body because that corporeal site serves as the strongest, clearest testament of an individual’s humanity. Here Mitt’s voice appears disturbingly dispossessed of a body or, rather, a body fully realized for all its brilliant shades of color. In my larger research project, I not only examine the implications of an emerging post-race, but also post-*human* society, particularly with respect to technological innovations such as the Internet. Individuals are now able to construct an infinite string of cyber identities completely independent of the lives they lead in the material world. But what is lost in the process, what are the consequences of dissociating the self from the physical body, and to what extent does that diminish our humanity or render us nonhuman?

<sup>3</sup> In the chapter, “Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Asian American Differences,” of her book, *Immigrant Acts* (2003), Lisa Lowe critiques a scholarly tradition where popular Asian American texts are strictly read in terms of a “generational theme,” where familial conflicts are confined within the private domestic space and merely attributed to the cultural particularity of this racialized ethnic group in a way that obscures the important sociopolitical influences, “the immigrant histories of material exclusion and differentiation” that strongly precipitate and exacerbate these conflicts (63). I argue that Lee does not merely juxtapose the dissolution of an interracial, multicultural family with a failed political attempt to realize a color-blind U.S. society, but rather through a conflation of private and public space, domestic and political issues, demonstrates how these losses are deeply intertwined, their cause mutually reinforcing.

culprit, however, actually demeans the lost lives, because their deaths are never allowed the proper time and space to be grieved.<sup>4</sup>

But as a profound turning point in the novel, this explosion forces Kwang to recognize the flawed nature of his politics, compelling him to change. In a conversation with Henry, he cries: “They want me to respond to their theories of who’s responsible, whether it’s blacks, whites, the Asian gang leaders. . . . What they want from me is a statement about color. Whatever I say they’ll make into a matter of race” (273). Here Kwang realizes the limitations of color-blind politics, how this post-race rhetoric cannot be articulated during times of racial strife because the media will invariably spin anything “into a matter of race.” Until this point Kwang’s politics conformed to a persisting U.S. discourse about race, insisting on its necessary disappearance for progress, while violently disregarding the haunting attraction of race, its ability to render the self and the world intelligible. Only after the explosion does Kwang challenge the norms of minority politics by withdrawing from the public scene, refusing to make the “statement about color” demanded and expected of him.<sup>5</sup> It is within the “(in)articulate silence” of his absence that Kwang urges the people to grieve for the lives that have been lost and to reflect on how lost they are without race.<sup>6</sup> But because this call for collective mourning is lost in a vague, symbolic gesture, the public misinterprets Kwang’s disappearance as a sign of cowardice, a lack of care. Even his supporters “want him to go on television and eulogize his dead, to make a statement to the city with his best public face” (301). Rather than honoring the

dead, this clamor for a public eulogy stems from a desire for an official proclamation to expel grief. The public wants Kwang to revive his forceful momentum and demonstrate that he, too, is undefeated by grief. Merely conceiving grief as something that must be swiftly overcome or suppressed, precipitates a curtailing of the mourning period necessary for true recovery and prevents the recognition of how grief can be productive.

In her essay, “Violence, Mourning, Politics,” Judith Butler emphasizes that grief exposes the limit at which we cease to be individual selves moving independently about the world and are, in fact, deeply related and dependent on others. She reveals that mourning is not simply about coming to terms with that which has been externally lost but that it forces recognition of how one becomes internally lost due to the missing object, rendering parts of the self missing, as well. For Kwang, the death of Eduardo precipitates an emotional, physical breakdown in which he is described as appearing, “old and weary. . . . Perhaps for the first time in his public life, he mumbles, his voice cracks” (293). While the public views Kwang as a defeated man on the verge of political ruin, Lee actually portrays a man who is lost in the depths and despair of grief. To save his campaign, Kwang is urged to bury his grief, yet his inability to do so is less a reflection of an individual fault but of his humanity. The tragic failure is not Kwang’s but rather a United States incapable of embracing a mourning politician or to conceive of the political sphere as a space where productive, collective mourning can occur. In the novel, Eduardo and Helda’s deaths go un-grieved, the loss of their lives de-realized, as the

<sup>4</sup> Judith Butler conducts a compelling study about humanity measured in terms of what counts and does not count as “*grievable life*,” accentuating that those lives capable of being mourned are acknowledged as more human than others (20). She discusses this with particular respect to the treatment of supposed “enemies” of the United States during times of war, and conceivably during times of no war, where these “enemy” lives are simply de-realized, as if they never existed and, therefore, cannot be lost.

<sup>5</sup> Due to page constraints, this essay radically (and, indeed, violently) simplifies Lee’s plot by not discussing the complexity of Henry and Kwang’s relationship, particularly how the former is employed by the transnational firm, Glimmer and Company, to spy on the politician. Eduardo is also an employee of the same firm, whom Kwang actually has killed after discovering that the student volunteer was betraying his cause. Kwang’s grief is therefore complicated, compounded, no doubt, by the guilt of his crime. Tina Y. Chen provides a particularly helpful analysis of Henry’s role as a minority spy and his unique relation and position within Glimmer and Company.

<sup>6</sup> King-Kok Cheung has examined the distinctive forms of Asian American silence and how they come to be articulated and represented within various fictional texts. In her book, she refrains from making a too rigid distinction between “undesirable silences” and “enabling silences,” allowing for an ambiguity that is particularly appropriate with respect to Kwang, whose withdrawal from the public political scene gives rise to what I call an “(in)articulate silence,” a palpable silence that is lost to the public and, in many ways, renders them lost, while still containing all the potential to be fully realized, to inspire the people to engage in a collective silence where they can truly mourn their collective loss (20).

media shifts its focus entirely to Kwang's political scandal. Accused of using "racialized, undocumented capital" to fund his campaign, Kwang is expelled from the U.S., and the loss of this charismatic political figure is eventually de-realized, as well (128).<sup>7</sup>

In her essay, Butler critiques nations that assert the necessary, violent obliteration of the other in the name of self-preservation. She presents, instead, an alternative theoretical framework for a nonviolent world politics organized around the notion of loss asserting: "[grief] furnishes a sense of political community . . . by bringing to the fore the relational ties that have implications for theorizing fundamental dependency and ethical responsibility" (22). Butler urges "individual" states to recognize that they are part of a "political community." Accordingly, she challenges them to deeply reflect on how their actions may cause other nations to incur losses that may in turn precipitate losses for the self, or a loss of the self. While Butler conceptualizes this politics of loss in the global context of foreign affairs, I contend that it is also applicable to the treatment of color blindness in the U.S. Our current political environment, which insists on the disappearance of race, often posits race as the "other" that must be obliterated. But if race is re-conceptualized as the "other" that can be lost, that when missing will provoke a sense of disorientation, both within the self and between the self and the external world, its disappearance can be properly acknowledged and mourned. I insist that mourning compels a recognition of the stabilizing identification structure race provides in a way that will ultimately allow for a restructuring of the self along alternative forms of identification.

*Native Speaker* essentially presents a United States choked with loss in order to accentuate the violence of de-realizing that loss, to inspire readers to learn how to mourn. To the extent that grieving serves as the ultimate avowal of an individual's humanity by demonstrating a respect and concern for the life that has been lost, a nation that has become incapable of grieving not only demeans the lives of its human subjects left unmourned, but also reveals a palpable loss of its own humanity, its inability to feel, to sense the relational ties that emerge in the disorientation of loss.

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<sup>7</sup> In the novel, Kwang modifies the Korean *ggeb* into an informal, multi-racial banking system that circulates capital investments between its members and, ultimately, helps to fund his political campaign. Unlike U.S. color-blind politics, which violently de-realizes the loss of race, I argue that this organization overcomes race by stressing the importance of physical, bodily contact, thereby *humanizing* capital transactions. Kwang's *ggeb* is, however, ultimately disbanded for illegally accepting monetary contributions from "illegal aliens." The phrase "racialized, undocumented capital" is taken from Jodi Kim's article, "From *Mee-gook* to *Gook*." Kim critiques a United States that thrives economically from the labor and capital generated by undocumented laborers while criminalizing this capital the moment it enters the political sphere and threatens "the racial order of American electoral politics and capitalist distribution of wealth and power" (127). J. Paul Narkunas also provides an interesting study of how *Native Speaker* explores the notion of humans as capital and ethnicity as commodity, while also revealing the potential of "humanizing," of personifying capital in a resistance against the hegemonic forces of the global capitalist market.

# Desvelos: Reflections on Discrimination and Art in Seville, Spain

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## Abstract

This article explores the difficulties of a Spanish city in embracing its own diversity vis-à-vis the daily discrimination experienced by people of African descent in Seville, Spain. Drawing on the experiences of African American exchange students at the Universidad de Sevilla, it highlights how this discrimination impacted understanding of their own Black identities and their overall experiences abroad in Spain. The students whose stories I recount are African American students who hail from different universities in the United States as well as many different regions in the country. They include semesterlong and yearlong students, all of which have come together in attempts to make sense of their study abroad experience—so distinct from those of other members of their universities that people hardly believe their stories. Along with their stories I look at the presence and purpose of *Desvelos*, a temporary art exhibition in Seville, and how it linguistically and literally represents an “unveiling” of the racism that persists in the city.

“I don’t even think I’m in Spain, I think I’m in a place called ‘Black people suck.’” This is what an African American student told me after recounting a few of her least favorite moments during our time studying abroad together in Seville, Spain. She recalled how, earlier that day at an Internet café, one Spanish customer was unhappy with the number of Black people in the room and asked one of the waiters to do something about it. “I’ll never forget the day I got counted,” she said, remembering how the Spanish patron physically counted the number of African descendents in the room. She was frustrated and fed up with the cold shoulder that she and many other students received unexpectedly due to the color of their skin when they decided to study in Spain.

The student was not alone in her harsh evaluation of the city. During my semester abroad, I heard many stories of the difficulties African American students faced there, and I

personally experienced the vibrant racism that lurks in the city, particularly towards people of African descent.

These experiences could be categorized as the result of culture shock. However, the semester of being addressed as *negra* (Black girl), *chocolate con leche* (chocolate with milk), *Mama África* (Mother Africa), or *bonbon* (a chocolate candy), for many African American students, was indicative of more than an uncomfortable adjustment phase. After the head of the police forces in Seville announced the commencement of randomly checking suspected illegal immigrants in the streets for proper documentation, all students were encouraged to carry copies of their passports. However, this advice was specifically directed toward African American students, after the police chief stated that he’d start the search with the illegal African immigrants “*porque es más fácil encontrarlos*”—because it is easier to find them (television news report).

The first time one study abroad student witnessed one of these “random” searches it was of a conservatively dressed Black man on Tetuan, a popular shopping street; she was completely shocked. She noted, “I almost didn’t recognize what was happening at first. I’d seen the news report, but I didn’t believe it would actually happen. I couldn’t believe the police really came up to this Black guy and asked for his ID versus anyone else on the street. It made me worry about what would’ve happened to me if they’d asked me for ID, because all I had was my student ID (card).” Fortunately, the man had his passport and was left alone. His example, however, was enough to make many students understand that the threats were real. They’d sarcastically joked among themselves, saying, “Don’t forget your passport. If you forget yours, they’ll send you to Morocco, but if I lose mine, they’ll kick me back to Senegal,” insinuating a type of color politics. Statements like these highlighted three important understandings members of the group held of themselves and of their perceptions of the general Spanish public.

First, although African American, nearly all students quickly realized that the only identity they bore to many Spaniards was simply continental African. Second, they also realized that for the general public there existed a sliding scale of acceptance depending on where you were perceived to come from. For example, unlike the majority of students from their universities, many were told that it was impossible that they were American and were accused of falsifying passports despite their iPod and Starbucks coffee-toting hands that clearly identified them as American. Often a second form of ID was needed for the simple purchase of a

T-shirt. Finally, although most *Sevillanos*, Spaniards from Seville, never seemed excited to see Black people, there was a noticeable preference for North Africans, for whom the lighter-skinned African Americans were often mistaken, over members of African countries farther south. It was not clear, however, if this perceived tolerance could be attributed to a color or cultural distinction made regarding the Arab countries of the north.

During informal conversations, many students recounted other experiences. A frequent occurrence was how female African American students, no matter how conservatively dressed, were assumed to be prostitutes and asked for sexual favors by Spanish men on the street. One student noted, “But I get (sexual) comments like these every day from police officers, construction workers, and just random guys in the street. I’m always thinking—but I’m wearing a pea coat and I have a book bag! I clearly look like a student and not a prostitute. God forbid something actually happens to me and I have to ride the ambulance with that guy.” She was upset because she realized that the comments directed towards her were not about her clothing she put on that day but rather the color of her skin—which she’d never be able to take off. For this student, it was disappointing to realize that people would not judge her according to her character or the morals by which she defined herself but rather by traits of lasciviousness and vice that others associated with her race.

Perjorative racial assumptions were not limited to strangers but also occurred inside the academy. I experienced incidents in which professors made comments about Black bodies or inferences to the sexual “nature” of Black people. One day a professor gestured toward me and asked, “*Y todos saben que las mujeres negras tienen la leche caliente. Es verdad, ¿no?*” And everyone knows that Black women have hot (breast) milk. That’s true, right? Aside from my shock, disgust, and embarrassment, I, too, found myself asking a question that one of the other students mentioned that he had begun to ask himself: “What happened here? Did all the Black people in the world come here and do something wrong that I don’t know about?”

While such racist experiences were puzzling and at times difficult to deal with, towards the end of the semester Seville offered us a gift from which we drew inspiration. It came in the form of art. If you walk anywhere around Avenida de la Constitución, one of the main streets leading to the heart of Seville, you can’t help but notice the temporary art exhibition, *Desvelos*. A collection by the Cameroonian

photographer Angèle Etoundi E. of over 50 enormous images, it depicts the beauty and creativity of African women and, at the same time, cries out against their marginality.

The title of the exhibition, *Desvelos*, comes from the verb *desvelar*, which literally means to “unveil” or to give attention to an action that you wish to achieve. The title speaks directly to a hope of a more open-minded Seville. The exhibition does not simply unveil the beauty of African women but also the racism that still remains in the city. Ironically, *Desvelos* can also be translated as *no dejar dormir*—to impede sleep. It commands attention and impedes “sleep,” or the marginalization of problems of racism that victims experience in Seville.

This eye-opening exhibition offers a positive step towards the work of addressing racism not only in Seville, but throughout Spain. While the portraits make no sounds, their images are clearly in dialogue with passersby, as their presence is engaging and unavoidable. As one Spanish man said, “When I first saw them, I thought they were very strange. I thought, ‘What are they doing here?’ I didn’t like the posters because they did not reflect Seville, my city. But now I am used to seeing them. I even recognize some of the women’s faces, and I like some of the pictures. I think it is good to see things about other cultures.” In many ways, the exhibition *Desvelos* seems like the antithesis of what a city like Seville would honor and display, given the experiences of some of the African American students studying abroad in the city. However, perhaps the exhibition represents both a siren that alerts others to the way that ethnic minorities have been mistreated and a beacon, calling people toward the unfinished work that lies ahead.

The *Desvelos* exhibition ran in Seville for nearly two months. During that time, I passed the street nearly every day and observed a variety of reactions. Some people initially seemed very confused, while others thought the women were absolutely beautiful. Still others mocked the women—vandalizing the artwork or taking pictures in lewd positions with the art. Despite some negative reactions, the successful display of art in a city like Seville speaks volumes. While the vandalism and abuse the exhibition received may insinuate otherwise, I believe it helped immigrants and *Sevillanos* alike realize that not all people think alike and that some wish to promote the expression of cultural diversity in Seville.



Figure 1. Vandalism done to the title piece of the exhibition.

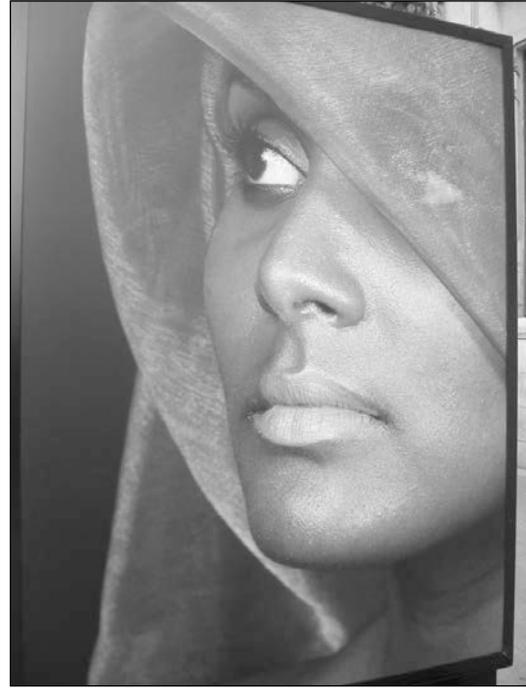


Figure 2. One of the untouched pieces in the exhibition.

*(Photos taken by the author)*

# Geochemistry of the Northampton Landfill: Are the Soils and Water Contaminated?

Maya Wei-Haas, *Smith College* Mentor: Robert Newton

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## Abstract

During July of 2007, arsenic was reported in concentrations exceeding the Environmental Protection Agency's recommended maximum contaminant level of 0.01 mg/L in a private well located down gradient of the Northampton landfill. As a first-year Mellon Mays Fellow, I analyzed groundwater and surface water chemistry data collected by the environmental consulting firms Stantec, Fuss & O'Neill and Gradient Corporation to determine the source of arsenic and the risk of contamination for the surrounding wells. Results of this analysis suggest the presence of a leachate plume and support that arsenic is mobilized from the aquifer itself and is not directly released from the landfill.

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## Introduction

Increasing numbers of people worldwide are reporting the dire consequences of arsenic-polluted well water. Symptoms of arsenic poisoning include blood vessel damage and cancers of the skin, bladder, and lung (Bagla, 2003). Arsenic contamination results from many anthropogenic and natural processes, including industrial waste, agricultural pesticides and herbicides, and weathering of rocks (Bissen and Frimmel, 2003). Recently, scientific attention has focused on groundwater arsenic contamination due to the natural mobilization of arsenic from the aquifer materials (Welch, et al., 2000; Parisio, et al., 2006). This study documents a similar case, in which decomposition of contaminants from a city landfill results in reducing and anoxic subsurface conditions, increased mineral weathering, and the release of arsenic into the groundwater.

During July of 2007, the presence of arsenic was reported in concentrations exceeding the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) recommended maximum contaminant level (MCL) of 0.01 mg/L in a private well located at 981 Park Hill Road, Northampton, MA, down gradient (south) of the Northampton landfill. Thick layers of iron precipitate (flocculent) were observed in Hannum Brook

immediately south of the landfill, suggesting the release of leachate, a solution rich in organic materials and ions due to the percolation of precipitation through compacted waste. Although it is unlikely arsenic is directly leaching from the landfill, leachate may play an important role in the mobilization of arsenic from the surrounding rock material.

Through an analysis of the association between the Northampton landfill and the chemistry of the surface water, groundwater, and iron precipitate, this study aims to propose a plausible source and mechanism for the arsenic contamination.

## Study Site

The Northampton Sanitary Landfill is located at 170 Glendale Road in Northampton, MA (Figure 1). Northampton is positioned immediately east of the "Arsenic Belt," a provenance of arsenic-rich rocks extending from Maine through Massachusetts. The landfill is located in the recharge zone of the Barnes Aquifer, which flows predominantly to the south and discharges into the Connecticut River. This region is composed of a 30-meter thick layer of unconsolidated sands and gravel, deposited by glacial meltwater streams during the retreat of the last continental glaciers in the late Pleistocene epoch. These deposits are derived from Paleozoic era metamorphic and igneous rocks that lie to the northwest and are underlain by the Mesozoic era New Haven Arkose Formation.<sup>1</sup>

The Northampton Sanitary Landfill originally opened in 1969 as a 21-acre, unlined pit, which was capped in 1995 with 40-mil, high-density polyethylene (HDPE) plastic. The currently operating landfill is 40 acres and is composed of four lined cells, the first two of which are no longer in use and thus were capped during 2004 and 2006. The remaining two active cells accept up to 50,000 tons of municipal solid waste annually (DPW memorandum, 2007). The City of Northampton recently proposed a fifth, 20.5-acre cell expansion in the currently undeveloped region north of the landfill. This looming expansion intensifies the urgency of evaluating the landfill's impacts on the surrounding region.

## Methods

Environmental consulting firms Stantec, Fuss & O'Neill and Gradient Corporation monitor the groundwater and surface water chemistry biannually in city-owned monitoring wells surrounding the landfill, privately owned

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<sup>1</sup> High-energy rivers that flowed through a Mesozoic era basin (formed due to a fault) deposited the sand and mud that compose the rocks of the New Haven Arkose Formation. The term "arkose" refers to sandstones composed of at least 25% of the mineral feldspar.

wells of Park Hill and Glendale Road residents, as well as Hannum Brook. Chemical data from these reports is analyzed for trends and anomalies, focusing on the chemistry of two monitoring wells (MW-1 and MW-B) and surface sampling sites (S-5 and S-6) from 1995 to the present (Figure 1).

## Results

A study conducted by Gradient Corporation (2007) revealed that arsenic was undetectable in groundwater directly beneath the landfill. This study also demonstrated that five out of nine wells located south (down gradient) of the landfill contained detectable arsenic concentrations, ranging from 0.44 parts per billion in MW-NM to 9 parts per billion at 981 Park Hill. Arsenic was detected on average at 8 parts per billion in MW-Q, located directly north of the landfill.

The down gradient wells and surface sampling sites show significant differences in chloride and nitrate concentrations (Stantec, 2007). The chemistry of the up gradient surface water collection site, S-5, reveals consistently lower chloride concentrations than the down gradient sampling site, S-6 (Figure 2). Water chemistry of the up gradient well, MW-1, shows consistently greater nitrate concentrations (3.5 mg/L to 15 mg/L), than the down gradient well, MW-B (0.05 mg/L to 0.42 mg/L) (Figure 3).

Chemical trends in MW-B reveal an overall significant increase in both iron and manganese concentrations since the 1995 capping of the unlined landfill (Stantec, 2007). Pre-capping, iron concentrations ranged from approximately 26.20 mg/L to 48.30 mg/L, compared to the post-capping range of 0.03 mg/L to 19 mg/L between 1996 and 2000 (Figure 4a). Similarly, manganese concentrations ranged from 2.32 mg/L to 4.40 mg/L pre-capping, compared to the range of 1.10 mg/L to 3.8 mg/L between 1996 and 2000 after the unlined landfill was capped (Figure 4b). However, since the capping of the landfill, the concentrations of both of these metallic cations significantly increase, despite the curiously large biennial variations in iron and manganese. The trend in iron is significant at the 95% confidence level ( $t = 2.12$ ,  $P = 0.024$ ), while the trend in manganese concentration is significant at the 90% confidence level ( $t = 1.82$ ,  $P = 0.043$ ) (Figures 4 a and 4b).

## Discussion

The detection of chloride, a common leachate indicator, in consistently greater concentrations down gradient compared to the up gradient wells, suggests the presence of a leachate plume emanating south of the landfill (Figure 2).

In the unlined, 1969 cell, any breach in the 40-mil HDPE cap would allow for the percolation of rainwater through the waste material and the aquifer sands and gravel into the groundwater. Although road salting may possibly contribute to chloride concentrations of surface water, there are no major roads near either surface sampling site. Furthermore, unbalanced sodium and chloride concentrations suggest that road salt does not significantly influence chloride concentrations. On average chloride is in excess of sodium 0.65 moles at the down gradient well, S-6, yet only 0.16 moles at S-5. This indicates a non-sodium source of chloride, an observation that supports the presence of a leachate plume.

The trends in nitrate also reflect the presence of a leachate plume. The negligible nitrate concentrations observed in the well south of the landfill suggest the presence of strongly reducing conditions in the groundwater (Figure 3). Decomposition of the organic material common in leachate would result in the consumption of dissolved oxygen and thus anoxic subsurface conditions. Continued organic matter decomposition may utilize nitrate ( $\text{NO}_3^-$ ) as an electron acceptor, which reduces the compound to nitrite, ammonia, or nitrogen gas, resulting in the observed lack of nitrate present in the down gradient groundwater (Figure 5).

Since reducing conditions may also cause the reduction and mobilization of iron (III) and manganese (III/IV) from minerals, the elevated concentrations of these metals provide further support for the proposed leachate induced reducing subsurface conditions. Wetlands adjacent to the landfill contribute to the elevated concentrations of iron and manganese observed in the groundwater (Stantec, 2007). However, immediately following the 1995 capping of the unlined landfill, both iron and manganese concentrations observed in MW-B significantly decline, which reflects the influence of leachate on groundwater chemistry (Figure 4). Since that time, despite some variance in values, the iron and manganese concentrations have significantly risen, with iron exceeding pre-capping concentrations during the October 2007 analysis (Figure 4). This trend suggests the escalating reduction and mobilization of iron and manganese from the aquifer materials as a result of increasing amounts of leachate entering the groundwater.

Increased mineral weathering may play an important role in the presence of arsenic in the wells located south of the landfill, including the well located at 981 Park Hill Road. Arsenic commonly forms complexes with iron and manganese oxides, hydroxides, and sulfides. As observed in

previous landfill studies, the mobilization of these minerals results in the release of arsenic species into the groundwater (Keimowitz, et al., 2005).

The detection of arsenic in wells located south of the landfill, but not beneath it, indicates that arsenic is not leaching directly from the landfill. This observation, however, does not eliminate the hypothesis that leachate plays an important role in the mobilization of arsenic. Development of reducing conditions due to the decomposition of leachate organic material will not occur immediately upon the introduction of contaminants into the groundwater (Figure 5). Therefore, it is expected that arsenic should only be detected further along the groundwater flow path.

Arsenic was detected in very few of the surface sampling sites around the landfill, which may reflect the proposed redox controlled mobilization mechanism. When the groundwater emerges at the surface, as observed in the tributary to Hannum Brook, the reestablishment of oxic<sup>2</sup> conditions results in the oxidation and precipitation of red iron oxyhydroxides or ferrihydrite called flocculate or “floc” (Parisio, et al., 2006). Previous studies support that arsenic may co-precipitate with iron hydroxides and sulfides in oxidizing conditions (Mandal and Suzuki, 2002). Recent research indicates that arsenic is commonly associated with the floc deposits indicative of landfill leachate (Parisio, et al., 2006). If presence of arsenic in the flocculent is found, it would corroborate the proposed reduction-oxidation controlled mobilization mechanism. Analyses of floc composition are currently in progress at Smith College.

Several challenges remain in the present analysis of groundwater and surface water chemistry surrounding the Northampton landfill. Anomalously elevated specific conductance in MW-1 (Stantec, 2007), suggests possible leachate contamination of this well. An average concentration of 8 parts per billion arsenic in MW-Q provides further evidence for contamination immediately north of the landfill. This contamination indicates that MW-1 may be an inaccurate measure of background ion concentrations. An additional challenge to the present study is the lack of clarity in spatial trends of water chemistry due to the limited number of down gradient monitoring wells. More frequently collected data from more monitoring wells is required for accurate analysis of leachate plume location and extent.

## Conclusions

Current water chemistry data for the groundwater and surface water at sites surrounding the landfill suggest the presence of a leachate plume, which may account for the elevated arsenic concentrations. This study supports that arsenic is mobilized from the aquifer itself and is not directly released from the landfill. Elevated iron, manganese, and arsenic concentrations present in the groundwater reflect reducing conditions, which result from the decomposition of organic material in the leachate plume. Equilibration of anoxic groundwater and precipitation of iron and manganese upon surfacing may account for the extensive floc deposits observed in the tributary to Hannum Brook. However, further study is required to confirm these conclusions.

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<sup>2</sup> “Oxic” refers to conditions in which the groundwater contains oxygen, whereas “anoxic” refers to the opposite condition in which no oxygen exists in the groundwater.

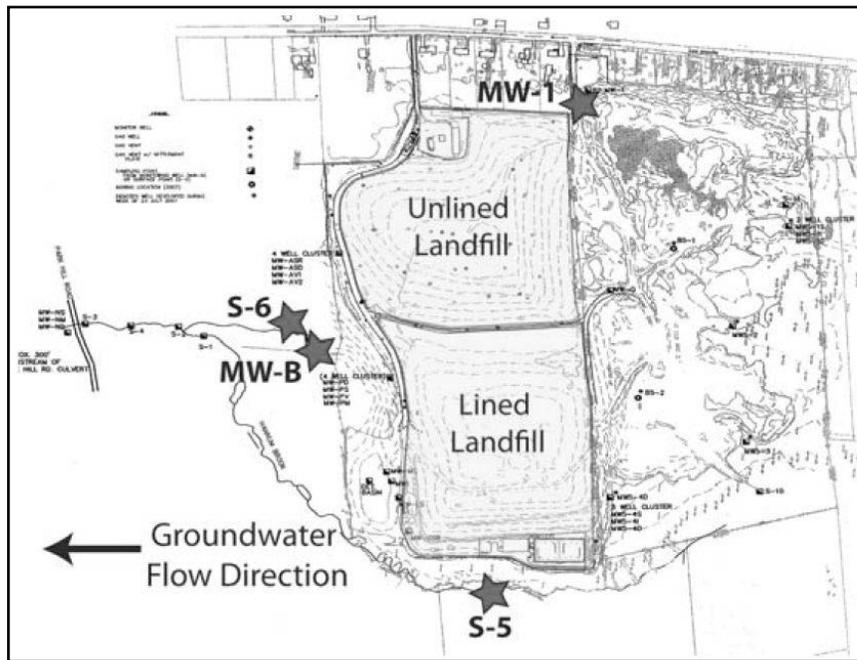


Figure 1. Topographic map of Northampton landfill with monitoring wells (MW) and surface water sampling sites (S) labeled (star). Figure adapted from Fuss & O'Neill's report on groundwater and surface water chemistry (2007).

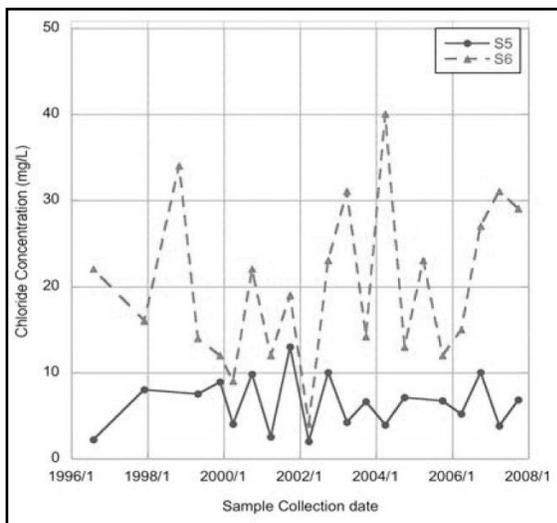


Figure 2. Graph comparing the chloride concentration at surface water sites collected from Hannum Brook. S-5 is upgradient of S-6. Note the consistently greater chloride concentrations of S-6 to S-5.

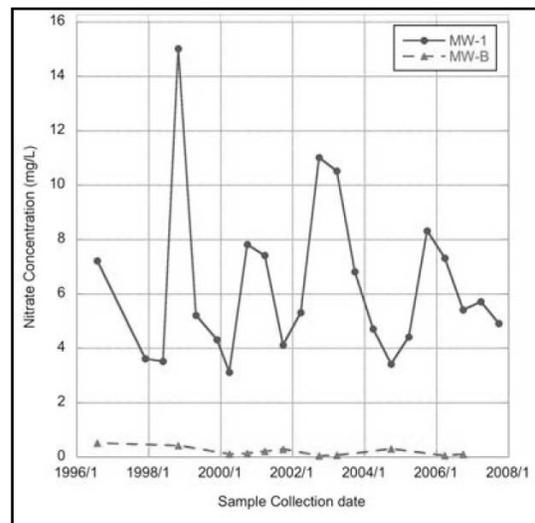


Figure 3. Comparison of nitrate ( $\text{NO}_3^-$ ) concentrations for MW-B and upgradient MW-1.

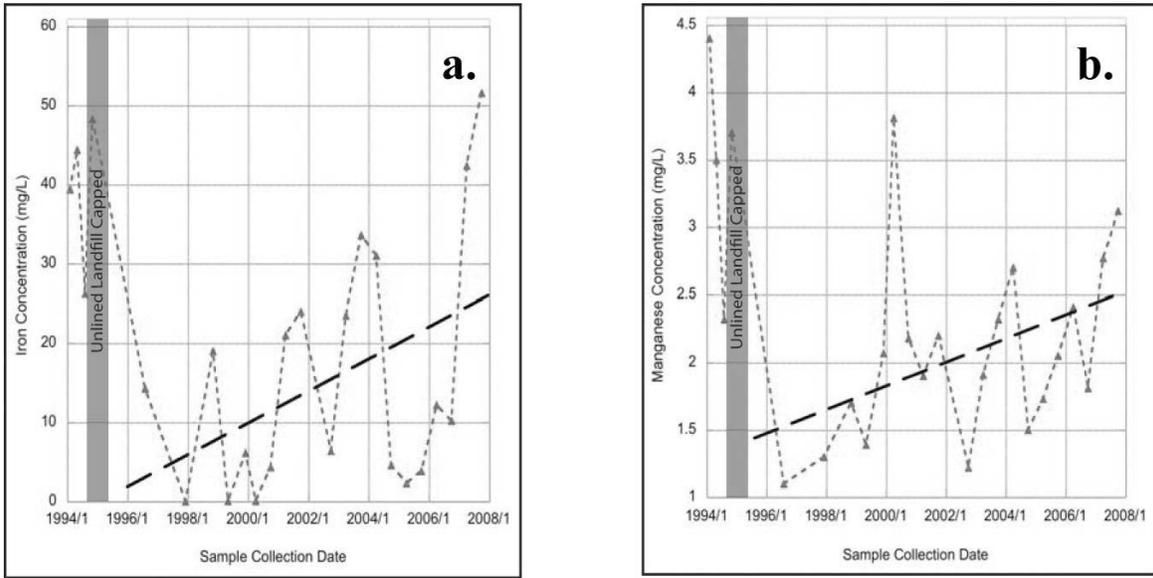


Figure 4. Concentrations of iron (a) and manganese (b) for MW-B from 1994 to the present. Dashed line indicates the significant increase in iron since the 1995 capping of the unlined landfill.

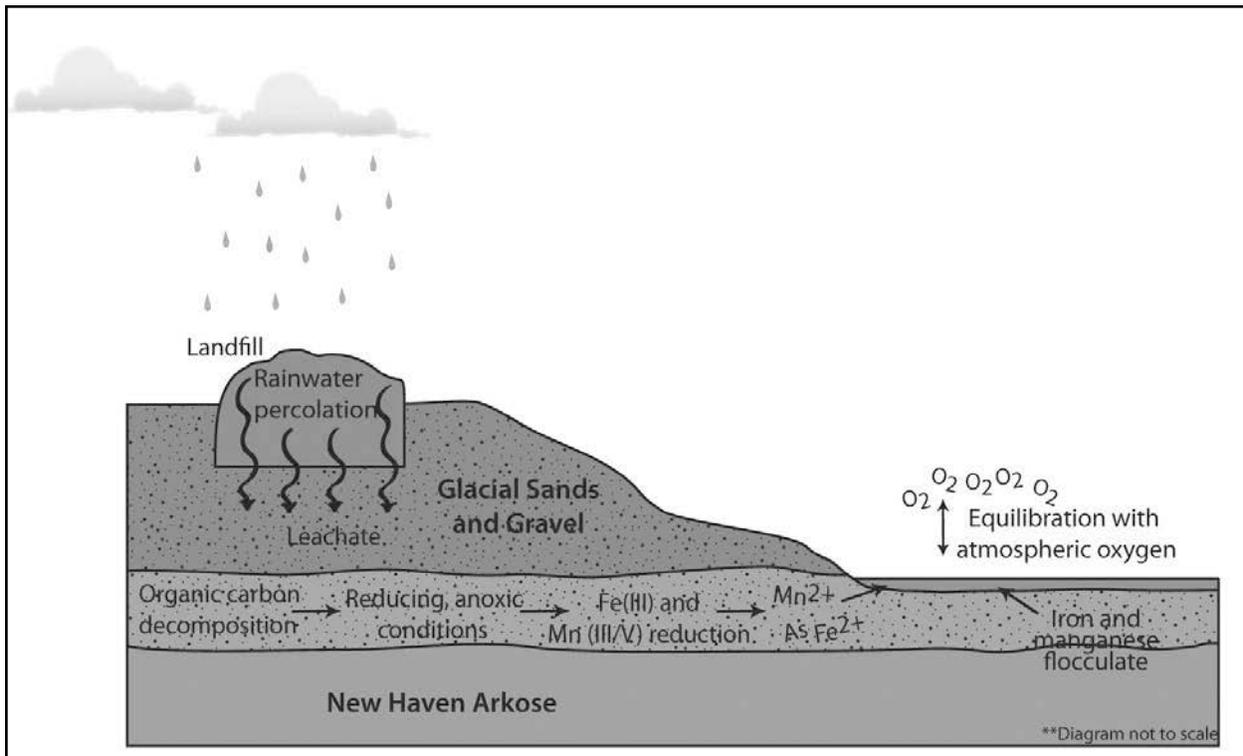


Figure 5. Model of proposed mechanism for arsenic mobilization from the rock material.

# Conflict of Interest: Japanese American Identity after World War II

Jeff Yamashita, *Macalester College* Mentor: Professor Christopher Scott

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## Abstract

When the 442nd Regimental Combat team, the all-Japanese American fighting unit who risked their lives to prove their loyalty to the U.S., returned home from the European campaign, their community began to reflect on the combatants' experience during the war and their identity as Japanese Americans. Only a few years later, the onset of the Cold War, in which "ideological drives toward U.S. nationalism and legitimation of material abundance promoted tendencies to embrace a common national character and a 'seamless' American culture," forced Asian American writers, especially Japanese Americans, to write in a manner which did not upset the balance of acknowledging "class divisions in American society and to address grievances about economic or racial injustice."<sup>1</sup> With this constraint, Japanese American writers were compelled to discuss the identity of their community in a way that did not upset the prevailing discourse about race and nation within the United States. Two authors in particular, Senator Daniel Inouye and John Okada, used their literary works to disrupt this dominant notion of identity.

In this paper, I will explore memory and fiction as means of shaping historical understandings of the past by comparing Senator Daniel Inouye's memoir with John Okada's fictional work, *No-No Boy*, and other minority voices of the Nisei soldiers in the 442nd RCT. In doing so, I attempt to reveal conflicts within the Japanese American community in respect to their identity as Japanese Americans. I will argue that Inouye and Okada both not only comment on the construction of Japanese American identity but ultimately critique the American national identity.

Senator Daniel Inouye, who was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his valiant actions on the Gothic Line in northern Italy, served in the 442nd RCT as a 2nd Lieutenant, and his memoir mirrors the dominant perspective of the Japanese American community. Inouye's memoir is filled with patriotic sentiments. His experiences have shaped the public opinion of Japanese Americans by exposing the monumental sacrifices of the men of the 442nd RCT. The dominant discourse is upheld in Inouye's memoir<sup>2</sup> because of his patriotic demeanor in assuring America that the Japanese Americans were loyal citizens. Inouye's voice serves as the authoritative dominant narrative of the Japanese American movement because he embodies the "ideal" Japanese American citizen which was reinforced through his status as a United States Senator, illustrious accolades accumulated during his time in the service, and the many sacrifices he made for the betterment of the American society.

John Okada, the author of *No-No Boy*, was "the only Japanese American nonjournalistic writer to deal with the Nisei resistance."<sup>3</sup> Okada, like Senator Inouye, also volunteered for the armed forces by serving as a Japanese translator in the Pacific campaign. However, Okada went in a divergent direction from Inouye's understanding of their participation in WWII. *No-No Boy* was not based on Okada's own life but was modeled on the life of Hajime Jim Akutsu, who supported the small cohort of resistance against the internment of the Japanese American mainland population.<sup>4</sup> Okada's novel sought to expose the injustices of the internment camps and reveal the conflict of "the Japanese American identity he could accept without a sense of self-division or self-denial."<sup>5</sup>

Both works were written during a period in which Cold War ideologies promoted a U.S. nationalism and liberalism which embraced "a common national character," and more importantly, the "Asian American writers who were published [during the Cold War era] appeared to confirm the era's reigning discourse on Americanization and to avoid denunciation of racial injustices."<sup>6</sup> Furthermore,

<sup>1</sup> Ling, "Race, Power, and Cultural Politics," 360.

<sup>2</sup> The memoir traces Inouye's childhood experiences, WWII experiences, law school education, and his involvement in the U.S. Senate up until 1967. Inouye was sworn into his senate seat in 1963, and his memoir highlights his patriotic contributions to the American society. The three forewords in his memoir were written by former President Lyndon B. Johnson, former Vice President Hubert Humphrey, and former Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield. The forewords foreshadow the memoir's message that Inouye proved his citizenship through his courageous actions during his life.

<sup>3</sup> Chin, "Come All Ye Asian American Writers," 53.

<sup>4</sup> Chin, "Come All Ye Asian American Writers," 54.

<sup>5</sup> Ling, "Race, Power, and Cultural Politics," 376.

<sup>6</sup> Ling, "Race, Power, and Cultural Politics," 360-61.

Inouye's memoir gained national recognition because it was "reduced to making sociological documentation of the immigrants' struggle and [his] accommodation to assimilation" at a point in which "Asian American writers [like Inouye] found that autobiography was almost the only commercially publishable form available to them."<sup>7</sup>

Before I address the two conflicting views of the role of Japanese Americans in their inclusion into the dominant American narrative, I would like to first comment on the predicaments of the dominant American nation's public history and memory of the Japanese American community during and after WWII. The public history of Japanese Americans in WWII silences many dissenting voices and memories within the Japanese American community. Although public history is shaped by memory, many "historians and museums of history need to be insulated from any attempt to make history conform to narrow ideological or political interest."<sup>8</sup> By having a dominant discourse that overshadows all alternative perspectives, public history reflects an agenda that supports the dominant group. Accordingly, the Japanese American community benefitted from a campaign where they presented themselves in a manner in which the mainstream American society could accept them as fellow citizens—"patient, docile, and law-abiding traditions"<sup>9</sup>—and therefore silenced any detrimental form of counter memory. After WWII, many "Asian American writers were excluded from participating in 1950s literary discourse on race and ethnicity" and were subjected to support the construction of an American national discourse.<sup>10</sup>

With the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Japanese Americans became targets due to their racial and ethnonational identity and the American's perception that all Japanese Americans supported the Japanese war effort. The United States government contended "protection against sabotage can only be made positive by removing those people who are aliens and who are *Japs* [sic] of American citizenship."<sup>11</sup> President Roosevelt deemed that the only feasible policy to prevent any espionage by Japanese Americans would be to "evacuate the Japanese and place them in assembly centers and eventually in internment camps" because "that their [Japanese Americans] *racial characteristics*<sup>12</sup> are such that we [United States government] cannot understand or trust even the citizen Japanese."<sup>13</sup>

Despite Japanese Americans on the continental U.S. as well as in Hawaii being interned, many young Japanese American men believed that "participation in the defense of their country was the best way to express their loyalty and to fulfill their obligation as citizens."<sup>14</sup> The men of the 442nd RCT gave up their "education and [their] happiness to go to fight a war that [they] never asked for" in order to invalidate the criticism and accusations of their espionage and treachery.<sup>15</sup> However, this account of the dominant narrative of the 442nd RCT silenced others that emphasized the image of a sacrificial group whose aims were honorable and courageous.

Inouye's narrative conflicts with oral accounts of other Japanese American soldiers especially in the reasons that led men to volunteer for the 442nd RCT. Inouye sums up the dominant reaction to enlist in the army as being led by a belief that "despite every derogation and disparagement, Japanese-Americans fought for a place in the war effort, no matter how small or menial."<sup>16,17</sup> Although some Japanese Americans were more than willing to sacrifice themselves to the cause of defeating the Axis's Powers, other motivations to enlist were silenced because they counteracted the struggle to restore the faith of the American society towards the Japanese Americans. Tadao Miyamoto, a 442nd RCT volunteer, enlisted because "his brothers, cousins, and boyhood friends, lured by the adventure of leaving the islands, had joined."<sup>18</sup> Another volunteer, Roy Kobayashi, "signed up because he had nothing to do at home" and "thought that even going into the army would be better" because "I wanted to enjoy myself while I was still alive." Larry Kukita, another volunteer, "was simply tired of being in Hawaii and thought he would never have an opportunity like this again . . . [to] leave and see some of the world."<sup>19</sup> Such perspectives which were not motivated by patriotic sentiments were perceived as destructive to the agenda of social inclusion because they portrayed the Japanese Americans as adventure-seeking men rather than those sacrificing themselves for the greater good of the Japanese American community.

In contrast to the glorification of the 442nd RCT men volunteering for their country, Ichiro Yamada, the protagonist in Okada's *No-No Boy*, resists the draft and is subsequently sentenced to jail for refusing to serve. Once the war

<sup>7</sup> Ling, "Race, Power, and Cultural Politics," 361.

<sup>8</sup> Yoneyama, "For Transformative Knowledge," 325.

<sup>9</sup> Ling, "Race, Power, and Cultural Politics," 361.

<sup>10</sup> Ling, "Race, Power, and Cultural Politics," 361.

<sup>11</sup> Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 390.

<sup>12</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>13</sup> Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 392.

<sup>14</sup> Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 400.

<sup>15</sup> Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 402.

<sup>16</sup> Inouye, *Journey to Washington*, 68.

<sup>16</sup> Inouye, *Journey to Washington*, 68.

<sup>18</sup> Duus, *Unlikely Liberators*, 61.

<sup>19</sup> Duus, *Unlikely Liberators*, 61.

is over, Ichiro is released from jail and returns back home to Seattle, but he is confronted by his past in encounters with old friends who did enlist in the army. His stance on the war leaves him subject to shame and discrimination by the other Japanese American veterans. In the novel, Japanese American veterans adamantly believe that their service in WWII gave them the privilege of assuming an identity which did not garner any racial hatred or scorn from the larger society. At the end of the book, however, one of the veterans who is cruel to Ichiro reaches a “sudden realization of the emptiness of the assimilationist bargain he has naively accepted.”<sup>20</sup> Despite portraying the dominant assimilationist narrative in which Japanese Americans “earned” their American identity through their sacrifice on the battlefields in Europe, Inouye’s memoir in Okada’s novel exposes the false reality and disillusionment experienced by the “glorified” and “loyal” veterans. Ultimately, Ichiro, by not serving in the army is offered insights into the hypocrisies of the American identity; even though it gives him a marginal position within the Japanese American community.

Ichiro’s story, however, was silenced by the larger Japanese American community. The “negative community response to Okada’s book [lay] in the Japanese Americans’ internalization of mainstream assumptions about their social status and in their consequent passivity toward the no-no boy issue” and this amnesia prevented any opposition to the dominant narrative which was exemplified by Inouye’s memoir.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, “Okada’s silence may reflect the inner conflict resulting from his awareness of the controversial subject he chose to address, his realization of the difficulty of his moral choice, and his assessment that the effects of the internment experience and of postwar pressure to conform and belong were still taking a toll on his community.”<sup>22</sup>

With their sons shipping off to basic training and eventually to the European front, the dominant family response emphasized sons participating in an honorable way to fight for a country that mistreated them by interning, harassing, and discriminating against them. Senator Daniel Inouye’s father, for example, felt wholeheartedly that America had been good to the Inouye family and, in reciprocity, Inouye “must try to return the goodness of this country.”<sup>23</sup> Moreover, while Inouye was fighting the Nazis in Italy, his mother and father would write to him explaining that while concerned they “were naturally proud” and that Inouye “had a very great responsibility” to bring honor to his family.<sup>24</sup> Not all families held these sentiments. Many

other Japanese American parents had mixed feelings about their sons’ departure to the war front. They were reluctant to see their sons go to war but ultimately “accepted the situation as inevitable.”<sup>25</sup> For example, the Sakamotos, a family from Seattle, were one among many families “whose sons, in spite of themselves, were forced to fight on both sides in the war between Japan and the United States.” Sakamoto “did not talk about his family’s situation,” however, because it would deter from the image that the Japanese Americans had no special ties to the motherland and thus were fighting fully for the United States.<sup>26</sup> Many families who did not support the dominant discourse were forced to assume it because their opposition would have fragmented the Japanese American community and undermined their “good citizen” perception to the American society.

Unlike Inouye’s parents who felt honored by his enlistment into the army, Ichiro’s mother, Mrs. Yamada, feels contempt towards those parents who allowed their sons to fight against the motherland. Mrs. Yamada “refuses to admit that Japan [had] lost, calls those Japanese Americans who enlist in the U.S. military as ‘traitorous countrymen’ and . . . awaits the ships that she imagines will be sent by the Japanese government to take her home.” Moreover, Mrs. Yamada feels a “sense of pride, which rests on the belief that it is she who makes Ichiro say no” to the wartime draft. This portrayal of the parents in Okada’s novel undermined the social project that Inouye and other prominent Japanese Americans tried to construct by displaying a pristine image of Japanese Americans as loyal citizens who shared a common bond with the mainstream society. Okada’s novel, in which Ichiro’s mother is positioned as an intrusive character who demands Ichiro to assume a Japanese identity which excludes any hybrid or American elements, breaks this generalization. Ultimately, Mrs. Yamada symbolizes the schism within the Japanese American community, particularly those who refused to accept the assimilationist project.

The 442nd RCT relied heavily on the notion that Japanese American men were patriotic soldiers on a mission to change the hearts and minds of the American public by relinquishing any ties with the homeland Japan and strengthening their desire to become fully accepted American citizens. After the infamous day of the bombing of Pearl Harbor, many younger Japanese Americans felt a “deep sense of personal disgrace. They were far removed from the ways of the old country. All their lives they had thought of themselves as Americans. And now, in this time

<sup>20</sup> Ling, “Race, Power, and Cultural Politics,” 364.

<sup>21</sup> Ling, “Race, Power, and Cultural Politics,” 375.

<sup>22</sup> Ling, “Race, Power, and Cultural Politics,” 376.

<sup>23</sup> Inouye, *Journey to Washington*, 85.

<sup>24</sup> Inouye, *Journey to Washington*, 99.

<sup>25</sup> Duus, *Unlikely Liberators*, 59.

<sup>26</sup> Duus, *Unlikely Liberators*, 126.

of crisis and peril for Americans, they were cast from its trust and seemingly lumped with the enemy by official policy.”<sup>27</sup> Although the dominant narrative emphasizes the fact that many of these Japanese Americans fought blindly for America, some of the Japanese Americans still held ties to the motherland and were not overjoyed. When news of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima reached the men via a special correspondent from the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, “the Japanese American soldiers did not care what happened to Japan. They were one hundred percent American, and they wanted to prove that all the time,”<sup>28</sup> but this prevailing discourse silences the evidence that some were not overjoyed. “Since Hiroshima was the prefecture from which the largest number of immigrants had come . . . many of the Japanese American soldiers still [had] grandparents, aunts and uncles, and cousins living there. They must have felt differently about the bomb.”<sup>29</sup> This dichotomy clearly depicts a complex scenario in which the dominant discourse praises the men of the 442nd RCT as American heroes who used the military as a form of social resistance while a small minority voice was being silenced. The dissenting and marginalized voice, however, questioned the notion that the Japanese Americans of the 442nd RCT had fully demonstrated their loyalty to America by detaching themselves from their relatives in Japan.

Although Inouye paints a broad generalization of the Japanese American soldier experience, Okada interrogates Japanese American identity even further. Inouye’s ideologies of identity are solely based on assimilating to the dominant perspective, whereas Okada’s “voice does not totally dissolve into the dominant one.”<sup>30</sup> Even though these two works reflect the conflict within the Japanese American community, their exploration also raises questions about the greater national American identity. In a nation that is known to the international community as the “melting pot” of the world, American identity came under attack by minority groups trying to reconfigure their own identity and position within the greater national identity. Through issues of citizenship, loyalty, and patriotism, Okada and Inouye both use their work to critique their minority positionalities and, ultimately, comment on the majority assumptions of the American national identity. We can recognize that Okada and Inouye both used their influence and writing to not only comment on Japanese American identity formation but disrupt and question the dominant narrative of American history.

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<sup>27</sup> Inouye, *Journey to Washington*, 67.

<sup>28</sup> Duus, *Unlikely Liberators*, 23.

<sup>29</sup> Duus, *Unlikely Liberators*, 230.

<sup>30</sup> Ling, “Race, Power, and Cultural Politics,” 374.



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