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The Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Journal 2021

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

The Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Journal 2021

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

Preface

It has been my sincere honor and pleasure to work with the talented authors of the 2021 edition of the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship (MMUF) Journal. The goal of the MMUF program is to directly address one aspect of inequity within higher education by taking deliberate measures to increase diversity within the faculty of colleges and universities writ large. Since 1988, the MMUF has supported over 5000 undergraduate students from marginalized backgrounds with research funding, professional development, and the opportunity to work closely with a faculty mentor, among other experiences, to best prepare Fellows to enter a PhD program in the humanities or social sciences in the near future. For the past 25 years, as a branch of the MMUF program, the MMUF Journal has served to provide Fellows with an avenue to publish their original research. Going through the academic publication process—from submitting an article, to revising one's work through the peer review process, to ultimately preparing and polishing a piece for publication—is a crucial step in the life of a budding scholar. Our hope is that through this experience, our authors feel empowered to continue to publish their work as they progress in their respective academic careers.

The 2021 Journal features contributions by 28 authors from 20 colleges and universities that are part of the MMUF's member institutions. These articles often started as seminar papers or adapted chapters of senior theses and exemplify the breadth and depth of the humanities and social sciences, particularly emphasizing the interdisciplinary work that we find in so many fields today.

In these pages, these authors bravely and boldly explored issues of cultural and racial identities, our relationship to the environment, the immigrant experience, and how there is still so much to be learned from women in history if we continue to highlight their voices and lived experiences. Within these articles the authors offer a strong call to action to protect our environment and to reconsider our land use, to actively examine the often detrimental messages sent to us by popular media, and that we need to continue to use our voices to share the stories of those who have been silenced and disempowered, in both past and present times. These themes not only comment upon many of the main issues facing our communities today, but the strength of their words illustrate their collective activism and the changes these authors seek to make in the world as well.

The road to publication this year was not easy. Our authors persevered through another year of a raging pandemic and the ongoing belated recognition of many inequities that plague our society. The constant stress, anxiety, uncertainty, and fears that COVID brought with it surrounding our own health (mental, physical, and emotional), our loved ones, and our communities makes me even more proud to stand behind the effort and outcome of the works presented to you today in this Journal. These authors were tenacious, brave, and vulnerable both in our conversations about their work and within the prose itself. The meaning of their words will long outlast the current pandemic and I know that they will inspire future generations of MMUF Fellows to be courageous enough to share their important work with the public as well. These are the voices that we need to hear, so please enjoy these articles with care, time, and curiosity and let them inspire you as much as they have indeed inspired me over the past year.

We are excited and proud to share their work with you!

Elizabeth Perten, PhD

MMUF Journal Editor-in-Chief

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(De)territorial Identity: Cultural and Racial Identity in *La Borinqueña*

Abner Aldarondo, *Amherst College*

Abner Aldarondo is a senior at Amherst College, majoring in Latinx and Latin American Studies and Spanish. He is interested in the politics of race and environmental justice in contemporary Puerto Rican art. He is currently applying to doctoral programs in American Studies.

Abstract

I argue that I argue that *La Borinqueña*'s focus on racial and environmental justice issues characterizes Marisol's Puerto Rican cultural identity. I argue that she holds a (de)territorial identity, a diasporic cultural identity not emplaced in a specific location yet is still concerned with the politics of physical space. I first contextualize the political moment in which *La Borinqueña* was created and connect it to racial identities in Puerto Rico and the comic book series. I then discuss "la gran familia puertorriqueña," Puerto Rico's racial harmony myth, and compare how the comic book reproduces and reworks it. Last, I put forward the idea of (de)territorial identity. Ultimately, through this paper I seek to show that political and environmental crises have prompted a shift in Puerto Rican cultural identity.

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Introduction

Superheroes are patriotic figures who represent and defend the nation and through them we debate "questions of political significance and public concern."¹ Edgardo Miranda-Rodriguez originally created the comic book series *La Borinqueña* (2016) to help raise awareness about Puerto Rico's current debt crisis and its impact on Puerto Ricans on the island.² *La Borinqueña* follows Marisol Rios de la Luz, an Afro-Puerto Rican from Brooklyn. She studies abroad in Puerto Rico to conduct thesis research and in an effort to complete her investigation she rashly rushes to a cave before a hurricane strikes the island. As soon as she reaches the cave, a heavy rain sweeps Marisol off her feet, the stream of water carrying her away. She holds onto a rock which suddenly transforms into La Estrella del Camino. Immediately

afterwards, the Taíno goddess Atabex and her sons Huracan and Yucahu appear and bestow upon Marisol supernatural powers able to control the wind, the water, and the earth to protect the island of Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans wherever they reside. After she saves the lives of several Puerto Ricans during a powerful hurricane, Marisol receives the name "La Borinqueña," a reference to the Puerto Rican national anthem. *La Borinqueña* becomes a beacon of hope for Puerto Ricans, in the island and in the diaspora.

Marisol's Blackness and dedication to protect Puerto Rico's environment is an intentional choice made by Miranda-Rodriguez. He explains that the comic book series aims to celebrate the racial diversity of Puerto Ricans and bring attention to environmental issues affecting Puerto Rico. I argue that *La Borinqueña*'s focus on racial and environmental justice issues characterizes Marisol's Puerto Rican cultural identity. I argue that she holds a (de)territorial identity, a diasporic cultural identity not emplaced in a specific location yet is still concerned with the politics of physical space. I first contextualize the political moment in which *La Borinqueña* was created and connect it to racial identities in Puerto Rico and the comic book series. I then discuss "la gran familia puertorriqueña," Puerto Rico's racial harmony myth, and compare how the comic book reproduces and reworks it. Last, I put forward the idea of (de)territorial identity. Ultimately, through this paper I seek to show that political and environmental crises have prompted a shift in Puerto Rican cultural identity.

Debt and Racecraft

In 2014, Puerto Rico attempted to file for bankruptcy due to an unpayable debt of \$74 billion.³ However, unincorporated territories of the United States are unable to declare themselves bankrupt without the approval of the United States Congress. The legislative body denied Puerto Rico's attempt to declare bankruptcy and instead passed a bill called the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act in 2016 (PROMESA). The bill appointed an undemocratically elected Fiscal Control Board (or "la Junta") to manage the island's finances. La Junta has prioritized austerity measures that have reduced healthcare spending, closed hundreds of schools and hospitals, and ignored declining infrastructure. Instead of managing the debt to minimize harm against Puerto Ricans, La Junta's austerity measures have aimed to guarantee a profit for investors.⁴ PROMESA underscores Puerto Rico's colonial relationship with the United States.

A qualitative survey conducted by anthropologists Isar Godreau and Yarimar Bonilla showcases how Puerto Rican racial identification has greatly shifted away from the category of white. Instead, their respondents mostly

identified with pan-national labels like Latino/Hispanic or simply as Puertorriqueños. Godreau and Bonilla argue that the shifting racial identifications of Puerto Ricans is explained by Puerto Rico's political and economic crises, which "have weakened the local state's ability to reproduce" racialized subjects. Godreau and Bonilla put forward that racial identity is a defining product of "racecraft"—a state's institutions and ideologies that support racialized state practices.⁵ In other words, various apparatuses of the state naturalize the racialization of its subjects in culture—specifically cultural identity. Within this framework, Puerto Rico is a non-sovereign racial state: a state in which its lack of sovereignty, highlighted by the debt crisis, inhibit its ability to reproduce subjects who identify with the state's narrative of the nation's racial characteristics. In turn, racial identifications are fluid categories, often in response to socio-political factors, and *La Borinqueña's* commitment to showcase a racially diverse cast of characters can be read as a part of this phenomenon. Resistance to political crises requires the transformation of social formations by creating new political subjects and subjectivities (Hall 2016, 190).

Marisol's racial identification is marked largely by her diasporic identity. Stuart Hall's essay *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* informs my understanding of diasporic cultural identity, for which he provides two definitions. His first definition takes cultural identity to mean a shared monolithic culture "which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common."⁶ This definition of cultural identity stresses common histories and cultural codes within diasporas. On the other hand, his second definition of cultural identity prioritizes specific historical context. Cultural identity takes on new forms because it is "subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power."⁷ Hall's definitions of diasporic cultural identity demonstrate how identity is a "matter of 'becoming' as well as 'being.'"⁸ He draws upon Frantz Fanon's insights on identity to argue that the psychological violence engendered by colonialism necessitates the redefinition of cultural identity. Race defines the inseparable relationship between colonialism and cultural identity. Iyko Day argues that settler colonialism and the construction of race exist in a dialectical relationship and are not separate processes.⁹ Thus, a study of cultural identity in a text like *La Borinqueña* is also a study of the representation of race vis a vis colonialism's ongoing legacies, of which a clear manifestation being the debt.

"La Gran Familia Puertorriqueña"

"La gran familia puertorriqueña," Puerto Rico's racial harmony myth, is a legacy of Governor Luis Muñoz Marín, the island's first elected Puerto Rican governor in 1948. He facilitated the creation of Puerto Rican cultural nationalism via mass media in order to distinguish Puerto Rico from the

United States after it gained the status of Commonwealth in 1952.¹⁰ Muñoz Marín's rendition of Puerto Rican cultural nationalism focused on spiritual values, in opposition to American ones, instead of pride in Puerto Rico as a physical entity.¹¹ This affective quality of Puerto Rican nationalism has sustained the diaspora's strong connection to Puerto Rican cultural identity. Jorge Duany calls Puerto Rican identity a "deterritorial identity" for this reason.¹²

Mestizaje, or racial admixture, defines traditional Puerto Rican notions of race and serves as the foundation for Puerto Rican identity. "La gran familia puertorriqueña" purports that the Puerto Rican subject, regardless of phenotype, is racially composed of Spanish, Taíno, and African roots due to the harmonious mixing of the races. Thus, contributions from all three racial groups can be seen in Puerto Rican culture. As a result, Puerto Rican *mestizaje* utilizes a color-blind rhetoric to emphasize national and cultural identity over race. The Spanish language is also considered an important aspect of Puerto Rican cultural identity. Former governor Muñoz Marín enlisted the help of white Puerto Rican elites to "[produce] and [market] the Commonwealth's cultural nationalist project that would become the hallmark of Puerto Rican identity."¹³ These elites drew upon the thinking of Puerto Rican intellectuals who considered the Spanish language an undeniable fact of Puerto Rican culture to be preserved, a nod to the hegemony of whiteness in their construction of Puerto Rican identity.

African heritage, however, was deemphasized and imagined to exist in certain locations across Puerto Rico. Anthropologist Isar P. Godreau discusses narratives of Blackness in Puerto Rico in her book *Scripts of Blackness*.¹⁴ Godreau utilizes her ethnography of San Antón, a *barrio* of Ponce, Puerto Rico, to guide her discussion of "scripts of Blackness" in Puerto Rico. The phrase refers to dominant narratives that construct a model of what is both Black and Puerto Rican. The focus of Hispanicity in Puerto Rican culture requires the emplacement of Blackness in certain pockets of Puerto Rico, which marks towns with a large Black community, like San Antón, an exceptional feature of Puerto Rico. Consequently, the non-black *mestizo* Puerto Rican subject exists as the center of Puerto Rican culture, devaluing African heritage. Taíno heritage, on the other hand, is romanticized as a national legacy of Puerto Rican identity. Their supposed extinction allowed Puerto Ricans to claim Taíno as a cultural root.¹⁵

Puerto Rican Identity in *La Borinqueña*

La Borinqueña draws upon "la gran familia puertorriqueña" in how it constructs Puerto Rican identity. Marisol proudly claims in the first issue that she is "grifa y pura

negra” or “curly-headed and purely Black”¹⁶ while dancing *bomba*, an Afro–Puerto Rican cultural practice recognized as a part of national Puerto Rican heritage. She relies upon her physical characteristics and folkloric scripts of Blackness to perform her racial identity,¹⁷ in turn a rupture in Puerto Rican understandings of race derived from the 1950s. However, her expressions of Blackness are confined to Puerto Rican scripts and not ones associated with the United States. Marisol performs culturally accepted codes of Puerto Rican Blackness because her Nuyorican identity is a source of tension in the graphic novel series. Sofia, a frequenter of Marisol’s grandfather’s café, identifies Marisol as a Nuyorican due to her Spanish accent. Her perception of Marisol as a Nuyorican influences how she interprets Marisol’s sensibility as a Puerto Rican. After a long night of dancing, Sofia surprisingly asks Marisol where she learned to dance *bomba*, a Puerto Rican folkloric style of dance, so well. Marisol responds “Brooklyn.” Folkloric scripts of Blackness play a part in Sofia’s perception of Marisol. Take for example how early critics of *reggaeton* critics dismissed the genre as unauthentically Puerto Rican due to the urban Blackness embedded in the genre. Tego Calderon, an Afro–Puerto Rican *reggaeton* artist, escaped these critiques by drawing upon the sounds and visuals of *bomba* in his songs and music videos. Since he utilized folkloric tropes of Puerto Rican Blackness, he was considered both a Black and Puerto Rican artist.¹⁸ Marisol’s acceptance as an Afro-diasporic Puerto Rican operates in a similar manner by performing culturally accepted codes of Puerto Rican Blackness. Although Marisol’s sensibility as an Afro-Nuyorican is partially silenced in the effort of making her a superhero, *La Borinqueña* dynamizes essentialist notions of Puerto Ricanness found in the Puerto Rican racial democracy myth for her character to remain relatable to both the diaspora and the homeland.

Although *La Borinqueña* follows typical Puerto Rican notions of race, it does not reproduce them entirely. The comic book series does not locate Hispanic heritage as the center of Puerto Rican culture. It instead identifies Taíno heritage as the foundation of its conceptualization of national identity. The scene in which Atabex and her sons grant Marisol her supernatural abilities to become *La Borinqueña* exemplifies how the comic books series relocates the center of Puerto Rican heritage. Enrique García summarizes the vision Marisol receives from Atabex before becoming *La Borinqueña*:

one side of the spread presents imagery of resistance to the Spanish colonization process that includes the Taínos, nationalist figures such as Mariana Bracetti, and the nationalist revolt “The grito de Lares,” and the second side opposes modern United States hegemony including the struggles of the

LGBTQ communities, the Ponce Massacre, and the plight of the Puerto Rican soldier in twentieth-century warfare.¹⁹

Taíno heritage in this spread marks the ontological beginning of Puerto Rican identity, an identity based on resistance against colonialism. Marisol’s mystical vision shifts indigenous heritage from a cultural root to a political root. The Taíno ghosts that speak to Marisol in *El Yunque* are more than just ancestors: they are her comrades with whom she shares a common political goal.²⁰ Further, representing Taínos as ghosts directly links their presence to Puerto Rico as a physical entity. Thus, the Taíno gods granting Marisol supernatural abilities emphasizes Puerto Rico’s indigenous past via a logic of emplacement.

La Borinqueña’s representation of Puerto Rican identity is reminiscent of nationalist discourses of Borinquen, which imagined Puerto Rico before colonialism. Geographer Matthew Gandy summarizes how diasporic radical literature portrayed Puerto Rico: “as ravaged by colonial rule: its agriculture in ruins, its mineral resources plundered and the landscape blighted by foreign-owned industry. The pre-colonial island of Borinquen had become a kind of mythical homeland in the nationalist imagination, a lost paradise “all pregnant with sweetness,” in contrast with the humiliating stench of the ghetto.”²¹ Although Borinquen discursively operated as a romanticization of a homeland free from colonial extraction, it connected the environmental degradation of the diaspora and the homeland to capitalist processes. Marisol’s position as a diasporic Nuyorican subject allows her to make similar connections. She has experienced first-hand the harm development projects have on the environment and the local community in Brooklyn. For that reason, witnessing a development project in Playuelas angers her.²² Scholar Ivonne M. García calls this subjectivity in *La Borinqueña* “diasporic intersectionality,” meaning that the comic book relies “on the intersectional identities of racialized, gendered, and working-class protagonists”²³ to showcase the Puerto Rican migrant experience. Marisol’s subjectivity as a diasporic Puerto Rican with intersecting identities allows her to recognize capitalist patterns of development that harm the environment.

I consider *La Borinqueña*’s representation of Puerto Rican identity as (de)territorial because although it relies on affective and shared cultural codes of identity (deterritorial), it also relies upon the politics and history of place in its configuration of identity (territorial). Marisol’s political sensibility stems from her Brooklyn upbringing which allows her to recognize that the processes of racial capitalism affects both the homeland and the diaspora in similar ways. The fictional company Dulcinea gentrifies both Brooklyn and Playuelas, effectively displacing Puerto Ricans.²⁴ *La*

Borinquēña's application of a (de)territorial identity functions as a means of solidarity between diasporic and homeland Puerto Ricans.

Conclusion

La Borinquēña combines Hall's two definitions of cultural identity. On one hand, it essentializes Puerto Rican cultural identity by relying on dominant notions of race. *La Borinquēña* also slightly reconfigures the Puerto Rican narrative of mestizaje to create a shared subjectivity between the diaspora and the homeland, which results in a solidarity of resistance between diaspora and homeland. (De)territorial captures the blend between Hall's two definitions of cultural identity: it is territorial because the politics of place is emphasized, and deterritorial because it relies on shared cultural codes. *La Borinquēña's* focus on indigenous heritage links Puerto Rico as a geographical entity to diasporic subjects. This construction of cultural identity includes the Puerto Rican diaspora because it locates the Puerto Rican subject through resistance instead of language. A consequence of locating Puerto Rican identity in its Hispanic heritage is that it emphasizes a shared language, Spanish. Second or third-generation Puerto Ricans who live in the diaspora who cannot speak Spanish or speak a "deficient" Spanish (such as Spanglish) are included in a cultural identity based on *resistance* instead of language. Since *La Borinquēña* associates the Taíno with resistance and located it as the locus of Puerto Rican identity, every Puerto Rican subject committed to social justice can lay claim to be borinquēñ in the political sense, regardless of birthplace, language, or racial admixture. An expansive view of Puerto Rican cultural identity is necessary for sustained solidarity between Puerto Rico and the diaspora in the face of ongoing colonial disaster.

Endnotes

- 1 Fawaz, *The New Mutants*, 3.
- 2 Serrao, "La Borinquēña: Edgardo Miranda-Rodriguez Previews Comic," <https://ew.com/books/2017/06/07/edgardo-miranda-rodriguez-la-borinquena-interview/>.
- 3 Fusté, "Repeating Islands of Debt: Historicizing the Transcolonial Relationality of Puerto Rico's Economic Crisis."
- 4 Naomi Klein, *The Battle for Paradise: Puerto Rico Takes on the Disaster Capitalists* (Haymarket Books, 2018).
- 5 Godreau and Bonilla, "Nonsovereign Racecraft: How Colonialism, Debt, and Disaster Are Transforming Puerto Rican Racial Subjectivities."
- 6 Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," 223.
- 7 Ibid, 225.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Iyko Day, "Being or Nothingness."
- 10 Lloréns, *Imaging the Great Puerto Rican Family*, 111.
- 11 Lloréns, "Ruin Nation," 156.
- 12 Duany, *The Puerto Rican Nation on the Move*.
- 13 Lloréns, *Imaging the Great Puerto Rican Family*, 111.

- 14 Godreau, *Scripts of Blackness: Race, Cultural Nationalism, and U.S. Colonialism in Puerto Rico*.
- 15 Feliciano-Santos, *A Contested Caribbean Indigeneity: Language, Social Practice, and Identity Within Puerto Rico Taíno Activism*, 17.
- 16 Miranda-Rodriguez, et al., *La Borinquēña: Issue #1*. In addition, Marisol reciting these phrases is an allusion to Julia de Burgos' poem "Ay, Ay, Ay, de la Grifa Negra."
- 17 I use folkloric scripts of Blackness to refer to scripts of Blackness defined as "traditional" in Puerto Rican culture.
- 18 Rivera-Rideau, "Loíza."
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Levee Soundscapes, Levee Dreamscapes: The Blues as a Transformative Archive of Black Trauma, Protest, and Politics atop the Mississippi River

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Abstract

As a historical site of labor and race-making, the levee—ubiquitous along the southern Mississippi River on account of the river’s relentless propensity for flooding—was integral to defining the social, economic, and political fabric of the regions lining the southern Mississippi River. Building off of Sarah Haley’s use of the term “Jim Crow modernity,” this paper emphasizes that levee construction was not only a modernizing project but was also used to delineate race in Jim Crow’s South—levee work was always intended to be the Black man’s work. As the tools of violent white contractors and state governments, levees rendered Black citizenship unstable, if not non-existent, and instituted the Black economic and social precarity that defined Jim Crow. Using levee blues—specifically Mississippi Fred McDowell’s “Levee Camp Blues”—this paper will examine how, in response to the trauma inherent to the levee’s position as a site of Jim Crow modernity, Black workers and musicians transformed the levee into a sonic landscape that explicitly asserted a vision of Black human rights absent of the levee’s violence and exploitation.

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As a historical site of labor and race-making, the levee was integral to defining the social, economic, and political fabric of the southern Mississippi River’s environs. Derived from *lever*, the French word for “to raise,” a levee is a structure that runs along a river, preventing the water from reaching in and beyond the river’s floodplain. As the name implies, it is a stretch of raised earth, sometimes reinforced with wood or concrete. The fertile, nutrient-rich soil of the Delta region and river floodplain within Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas produced large amounts of cotton and sugar (and money, for white landowners). These regions were also prone to frequent floods and needed levees to protect the cash crops, alongside the ports and railroads that distributed those crops across the country.¹ These levees, first constructed under the shadow of slavery and

then under Jim Crow, were made to protect and support the white-owned industries of the region. Furthermore, African American labor was almost always used to construct these levees, frequently through forced slave or prison labor.² Alongside their use to control nature, they were also used to control Blackness, becoming a key item in Jim Crow’s toolkit by reinforcing the region’s—and the South’s—social structure that both espoused white supremacy and curtailed Black civil rights and economic independence.

In the hands of violent white contractors and state governments, levees were weaponized to produce and reproduce Jim Crow as a social and economic system. Building off of arguments from historian of the South Sarah Haley, this paper argues that, like the railroads that eventually cross-hatched the South, levees were vehicles of “Jim Crow modernity.” Here I am using the term to emphasize that levee construction and maintenance was not only a modernizing project designed to protect river-adjacent infrastructure and the agricultural interests of the dominant plantation class, but that they were also used to delineate race in Jim Crow’s South—levee work was always intended to be the Black man’s work. As a bastion of Jim Crow modernity, the levee also became the site of opposing conceptions of modernity that resisted the Jim Crow exhaustion of Blackness and natural resources. These counter-modernities, most clearly articulated in blues songs that advocated for a Black political vision divorced from the levee’s trauma, reimagined Jim Crow’s manipulation of the relationship between Blackness, labor, and nature. These competing modernities cast the levee as a landscape of both white brutality and Black dreams—as the two collided, the southern Mississippi River floodplain’s relationship to the river and the Black labor that protected white capital from the river was mediated atop the levee.

Amid its violence, the levee also emerged as the site of a copious amount of Black music production. Most frequently sung in the blues style, levee music was an essential fixture of levee culture. It allowed levee workers and African Americans at large to both process the trauma that transpired on the levee and pen political treatises signing towards a world absent of the levee’s violence. Levee music proved to be not merely a simple an archive of the levee’s brutality, but rather an outlet to impart wisdom, comfort, and political visions concerning Blackness’s relationship to southern labor practices, employers, and the environment. This orientation towards a world that recognizes Black workers as humans rather than as units of labor is what grounds levee music as distinctly Black, and frequently radical, political texts. Both performers and audiences engaged with visions of alternate levee modernities that rejected and replaced a Jim Crow levee modernity founded on anti-Black violence, a denial of workers’ rights, and constant conflicts with the environment.

Through lyrics and melody, African Americans created a decidedly Black sonic space that simultaneously processed trauma and imagined a pro-Black levee modernity that was divorced from the physical levee's brutality.

Emblematic of this sonic space is Mississippi Fred McDowell's "Levee Camp Blues." Though he probably never worked on the levee, McDowell was undoubtedly well-acquainted with it as a physical and social form, having lived in or around the Delta his whole life. This acquaintance is demonstrated by the song's inclusion of several hallmarks of levee music and levee life, such as the presence of hardened levee laborers, the connection between worker and mule, and the tense relationship between boss and worker.

"Levee Camp Blues" features unmistakably haunting, trance-like instrumentals which serve to highlight the melancholy of the lyrics and vocals. McDowell's guitar follows the slow pace of his vocals and both carry a sense of tension emblematic of blues music.³ This tension becomes heightened through pitch shifts that accompany most of the vocals—when McDowell describes the quotidian harshness of the levee, the audience gets a sense of the main character's prior embodiment, as if they are reliving the events on the levee with him. This utilization of tension brings the levee into the performance—the soundscape transforms into the levee, complete with its cruelty, containment, and exploitation. It is only in between verses, when McDowell breaks from his description, that the tension releases, granting the audience reprieve and a chance to process the lyrics and they have just heard the experiences contained within them.

The song archives the experiences of an unnamed—yet intimately relatable to southern Black laborers—levee worker, particularly his relationship to his mules and his captain. The song begins with the following lines sung twice: "Well, I worked on the levee / Till I went stone blind."⁴ Like many other levee labor-related songs, the introduction immediately casts the levee worker as a veteran of the levee camps and their cruelty. While we do not know what exactly led the worker to claim that he has become "stone blind"—perhaps the relentless sun beating down on workers during their long shifts—it is clear that this line references the bodily harm that levee labor enacted onto Black workers. It also legitimizes the events spoken about in the rest of the song, as the song's main character has proven his knowledge of the levee camp and its peculiarities.

Throughout the song there is clear strain between the worker and his captain. The second verse is as follows: "Well, you can't do me / Like you done po' Shine / Lord, you took his money / I declare, you can't take mine." Addressing the levee contractor directly, the worker makes

it clear that he will not be manipulated and exploited by the levee system's predatory pay practices. He explicitly resists the captain's methods of manufactured precarity, leaving nothing to the imagination. With the use of the words "can't" and "I declare," the worker suggests that it is *impossible* for the captain to treat him the same manner. Given that workers were at risk of physical violence if they dared to ask for their pay before the captain deemed it necessary, this would be a scandalous and dangerous act on the actual levee. In the form of song, it marks "Levee Camp Blues" as a melody of protest, resistance, and imagination.

With these thematic overtones, "Levee Camp Blues" stands as a representative example of "blues epistemology," a term used by historians of the South such as Clyde Woods and Sarah Haley to describe the blues as a system of explanation and imagination. Using blues music, African Americans in the South not only described their experiences, but also their culture and politics. Similarly, in *Blues People*, literary critic and writer Amiri Baraka casts the blues as a distinctly postbellum Black musical form—work-songs, made for and about labor, gave way to music that asserted African Americans' status as Americans and as humans defined by aspects other than their labor production.⁵ Levee blues ardently continue the legacy of the earliest blues songs through their insistence on declaring the necessity of Black civil rights and Black labor rights. In choosing to sing a song that features the rebuffing of a levee contractor (however unlikely the success of that rebuffing would be), Mississippi Fred McDowell is singing of a new world that fits his political vision. This world is one in which Black men could rely on their bosses to pay and treat them with fairness and respect, as Americans and as people. Going beyond archives of trauma, blues songs like "Levee Camp Blues" readily engage in what could be called "Delta Afrofuturism" through their imaginations of physical worlds absent of anti-Black physical and psychic violence.

The song's last verse brings the sonic relationship between worker and levee back to reality, as McDowell sings with annoyance: "Lord, that captain hollerin, hurry / Boy, you know I'm almost flyin' / Well, that captain hollerin, hurry / Lordy and I'm almost flyin' / Lord, he ain't gotta worry a bit, baby / He won't even keep time." Here, the song's worker is referencing levee captains' propensity to overwork their laborers, ignoring the physical limitations of both humans and the mules they used. There is still some resistance to the contractor at play here—the worker, if only in his mind, explicitly names the illogical and cruel nature of the contractor's commands. Furthermore, the worker calls the captain "boy," which diminishes the contractors power with one of the words typically used to diminish African Americans. This subtle (in part because it is somewhat ambiguous whether the worker is talking to the captain or

the audience) reversal of language—undoubtedly intentional because the monosyllabic “Lord” is used in the same rhythm in the next line—allows McDowell, and those listening to and engaging with his performance, to imagine a world in which they have the power to genuinely and vociferously resist white supervisors.

The last line, stating that the captain “won’t even keep time” points towards the temporal shifts that levee workers experienced due to the captain’s desire for profit. Connected to white supremacy’s clock, levee time, like blues songs, droned onwards in melancholic repetition. Levee workers were documented as working shifts as long as eighteen hours.⁶ Their sense of time was intrinsically tied to how much money their bosses wanted. This pursuit of profit meant that bosses forced workers to work long, grueling shifts that warped the workers’ understanding of and relationship to time. A day’s work likely felt like two, which only added to the cruelty of the levee.

“Levee Camp Blues” also prominently features the mule-worker relationship that defined much of levee labor. Besides the earth they moved and the river they combatted, the mules that helped laborers do their work represented one of the most visceral relationships Black levee workers had to nature. Thus, mules are an ever-present figure in blues songs. This sonic popularity existed in the backdrop of the adage frequently attributed to levee contractors: “Kill a nigger, hire another; but kill a mule, you got to buy another.”⁷ The phrase is emblematic of how African American labor was seen by white supervisors in the post-bellum period. As African Americans were not property and mules were, the phrase posits that mules are worth more than Black laborers. According to bluesmen and levee workers, this did not stop contractors from overworking their mules. In “Levee Camp Blues” the mule is given agency, and his muleskinner (a term for someone who drives mules for labor) complains: “Captain, come out drive him / And he won’t go long all around / How can I drive him, captain? / And he won’t go long all around / He won’t eat no oatmeal / Or he won’t even eat his corn.” The mule’s stubbornness is on full-display—in fact, the mule’s ability to decide to not be driven is in direct opposition to the worker’s inability to act against his boss’s wishes. Yet, the mule and the worker also act as allies—the mule is protesting his own exploitation by not eating, striking against the labor that the levee contractor is forcing on his body. This forced labor is so brutal that later in the song, the worker laments that he “couldn’t find a mule / Lord with a shoulder well.” In this sense, the stubborn mule is an extension of the worker and McDowell’s dreams of rebuffing the captain, both insofar as the mule is making use of agency restricted from Black workers and that it is disrupting the wishes of the contractor.

Music, particularly the blues, allowed Black levee workers to both archive and process the white supremacist physical, mental, and structural violence that defined the Delta’s levees. Music transformed the levee into a sonic space intentionally made for African Americans, rather than for their exploitation. With this freedom, artists imagined new worlds that wholeheartedly criticized the world of Jim Crow. Moreover, levee music gave rise to the articulation of a collective political vision surrounding African Americans’ position concerning labor and labor rights. While notions of explicit labor union organizing among levee workers were rare, levee blues provided a space in which African Americans could collectively assert their rights as people and as workers, even if levee bosses did not care to listen to those assertions. Shared knowledges, concerns, experiences, and dreams among levee workers—both those performing and those listening—were created and recorded through the soundscapes that served as the levee’s archive. Through lyric and melody, African Americans made certain that their suffering and their dreams would not be undocumented, giving rise to a levee music culture that encapsulated the life of the Black levee worker and imagined alternative modernities that privileged the humanity of Black workers rather than the exhaustion of their labor.

Endnotes

- 1 Adam Mandelman, *The Place with No Edge: An Intimate History of People, Technology, and the Mississippi River Delta* (LSU Press, 2020), 28.
- 2 Mandelman, *The Place with No Edge*, 17. Mark Thomas Carleton, *Politics and Punishment: The History of the Louisiana State Penal System* (LSU Press, 1984); Harrison Parker, G.A. Killgore, and R.N. Sims, “Annual Report, Calendar Year 1901” (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State Penitentiary, 1902).
- 3 Robert D. Stolorow and Benjamin A. Stolorow, “Blues and Emotional Trauma,” *Clinical Social Work Journal* 41, no. 1 (March 1, 2013): 5–10, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10615-011-0351-4>.
- 4 Mississippi Fred McDowell, “Levee Camp Blues,” Track 1 on *Levee Camp Blues*, 1980, <https://open.spotify.com/track/4Rb6DXeIOzocae2JA3qvso?si=P8wCI0cnTaygFyCP-0fAPQ>.
- 5 LeRoi Jones, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America*. Apollo 6 Editions. (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1963).
- 6 Roy Wilkins, “Mississippi Slavery in 1933,” *The Crisis*, April 1933.
- 7 John Cowley, “Shack Bullies and Levee Contractors: Bluesmen as Ethnographers,” *Journal of Folklore Research* 28, no. 2/3 (1991): 135–62.

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Voluntourism and Performative Environmentalism: Notions of Conservation and Nature in Costa Rica

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Aisha Fuenzalida Butt is a recent graduate of The City College of New York, where she majored in Anthropology and minored in Women and Gender Studies. She graduated summa cum laude and as valedictorian of the Colin Powell School. Aisha's research interests include conservation, sustainability, waste and plastic pollution, and human-animal relationships. Her research explores the sociocultural and ecological effects environmental protections have on local and Indigenous communities in Costa Rica. Following graduation, Aisha will begin her English Teaching Assistantship as a Fulbright Scholar in the Canary Islands, Spain before applying to Anthropology graduate programs.

Abstract

Every year, Costa Rica attracts millions of people to protected areas to participate in conservation activities using social media as a platform to engage with global audiences. At Reserva Playa Tortuga (RPT), Instagram (IG) is a primary means through which the reserve reaches out to a global clientele of environmentalists and voluntourists. Thus, analyzing social media is significant in understanding how RPT's IG opens new avenues of interpretation for how voluntourism is marketed to a global community. This paper disentangles how a marine protected area, RPT, promotes a successful conservation project and interrogates the ways in which they present a model for ecology and nature conservation. How does this conservation model materialize on the ground at RPT in Costa Rica? In what manner do visitors experience the notion of conservation? How are experiences at the reserve and philosophies of conservation marketed back to the outside world? Using an anthropological lens, this study unpacks some of the inherent problems of large overarching models of conservation and how assumptions about environmental preservation overlook the diversity of experiences encountered at the local level. Through the critical analysis of three years of posts and strategic documentation of visual elements in the various images on RPT's IG, I argue that social media presence fosters a gendered, masculine, and romanticized ideology of commodifying and controlling nature in these conservation contexts.

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Introduction

Since 2013, over two million people visit Costa Rica yearly, mainly from the United States and Canada, for the opportunity to experience unparalleled nature and tropical environments (Instituto Costarricense de Turismo, n.d.). Containing nearly 6% of the world's biodiversity, with serene beaches and lush rainforests, Costa Rica is often praised as a leader in sustainability. Over 25% of its land is designated as protected. As the birthplace of ecotourism, it's no surprise that 80% of visitors participate in ecotourism-related activities. Distinct to its neighboring countries, ecotourism is the primary motive for roughly 65% of tourists visiting Costa Rica as of 2017 (Instituto Costarricense de Turismo, n.d.). The tourism industry contributes to 5.8% of Costa Rica's GDP earning over 1.7 billion U.S. dollars per year (Embassy of Costa Rica, n.d.). Protected areas are increasingly becoming the mode in which people experience and interact with nature (West 2006, 610).

At the same time, issues arise when we think about the local implementation of conservation models. Costa Rica attracts millions of people to protected areas to participate in conservation activities using social media as a platform to engage with global audiences. Social media shapes the globally understood model of conservation in producing and reproducing the ideology of what conservation looks like in these contexts through the sharing of images that denote eco-friendly activities and experiences. The critical analysis of social media opens new avenues of interpretation for how voluntourism is marketed to a global community. My analysis of Reserva Playa Tortuga's (RPT) Instagram (IG) page challenges notions that Costa Rica's model for conservation is the ultimate metric for success and unpacks some of the inherent problems of large, overarching models of conservation. How does this conservation model, promoted virtually, materialize on the ground at Reserva Playa Tortuga in Costa Rica? In what manner do visitors experience the notion of conservation? How are experiences at the

Reserve and philosophies of conservation marketed back to the outside world?

In this paper, I center issues of masculinity and whiteness in performative environmentalism in order to challenge preconceived and assumed models of what environmentalism should be from a Western framework. Using Krista Thompson's (2007) and Aileen Moreton-Robinson's (2011) themes of tropicalization and romanticization, I delineate how the model of conservation informs the creation of 'place-images' in Costa Rica and on a grander scale in Latin America. IG posts reflected longstanding tropes where the tropics have been imagined as an exotic lush space for tourist consumption. While Thompson uses tropicalization to express a 19th-century process that "made" the tropics for British audiences, I showcase how conservation and environmentalism are also at play. I argue that global tourism in Costa Rica as demonstrated by social media, and in particular IG, portrays romanticized versions of nature and environmentalism. Social media presence fosters a masculine and racialized way of commodifying and controlling nature, specifically by dominating wildlife in these conservation settings, which are values that actually undermine the environment in the first place. Instagram and other forms of social media provide a public virtual venue for performative environmentalism: individualized campaigns for voluntourists to display conservation actions that center the self instead of environmental issues and communities, peoples, animals, and lands affected by environmental devastation.

Reserva Playa Tortuga is a marine protected area that includes the National Wetlands of the Terraba-Sierpe basin. It's a non-profit reserve located in the Puntarenas province in Ojochal, southern Costa Rica. At RPT, IG is a primary means in which the Reserve reaches out to a global clientele of environmentalists with over 2,500 followers. Thus, analyzing social media is significant in understanding how curators of the RPT IG utilize social media as a tool to constitute an image of the Reserve, Costa Rica, and their conceptualizations of nature and conservation to attract voluntourists (Wearing and McGehee 2013, 121).

During a winter study abroad season in 2019, I studied marine biology in Costa Rica. I spent a couple of weeks at Reserva Playa Tortuga and the surrounding protected area in addition to visiting various protected and unprotected areas all over Costa Rica. As a student at RPT, I participated in many typical ecotourism activities that voluntourists take part in when they visit the Reserve. I subsequently analyzed over three years of RPT's IG posts, documenting the visual elements of over 800 posts (2,025 photographs) with each including up to 10 images or videos. I systematically organized and synthesized data looking for flora and fauna, activities occurring, human presence, and the geographical

origin of posts. Through the analytical lens described above, data reveal how assumptions about environmental preservation overlook the diversity of experiences encountered at the local level.

Romanticization of the Tropics

Utilizing social media, RPT is creating a brand of environmentalism based on a consumable experience that is mediated through the visual. RPT's IG, managed by biologists and other workers at the Reserve, highlights various activities for voluntourists like releasing baby turtles, visiting the butterfly farm, birdwatching, and hikes to see picturesque waterfalls and beaches. This visualization of the tropics is directly marketed to English speaking, young, white, affluent, and college-educated individuals. Over 82% of posts are written in English and numerous urge college students from the U.S. and Europe to volunteer and conduct research. Historically, in the West, modes of thinking about and ways of interacting with the natural world have been humanistic, colonial, and dependent upon the human/nature binary (Van Hooft 2012, 7; Rummel 1975). These hegemonic notions of what is "natural" and what conservation should look like are imbued in RPT's and Latin America's model of conservation regardless of their intentions. The longstanding trope where the tropics have been imagined as an exotic lush space is juxtaposed to the industrialized cities from where many tourists are coming (Thompson 2007). Similar to Thompson's conceptualization of the tropics as a timeless paradise, this romanticization promotes a beautiful, pristine, worth-preserving ecosystem that is consumable for tourists.

Instagram is utilized as an influential instrument in presenting pristine ethereal landscapes to attract the gaze of Western audiences eager to experience the romanticized "natural" topography of Costa Rica. There is a reciprocal relationship between social media and the model of conservation. Social media supports the model and RPT curators and voluntourists also distribute images that build the ideology and sustain the model. Visitors are referred to as "volunteers" and are encouraged to document their stay and tag RPT when sharing their experiences on social media so that it can be reposted onto their official IG. An overwhelming 52% of posts are reposts from past or current voluntourists.

Performative Environmentalism

I had an amazing **experience** at the reserve. I was nervous at first as **I had never done anything like this before** but everyone made me feel so welcome. We got stuck into the amazing activities right away, within an hour of being there we had met our first baby turtle. **It was unreal.** On top of the amazing activities with turtles, butterflies, crocodiles and

birds we had the daily **experiences** with lizards and howler monkeys! . . . **I wish I never had to come back to reality in the UK.** See you soon Playa Tortuga!”

—Samantha, UK (*Home page of RPT Website*)

Volunteering becomes a performative pilgrimage where many set forth to visit the few sacred, green, mainly protected areas in the world. Many seek out such sites for spiritual, “unreal” experiences and to explore their “oneness with nature” (Ross-Bryant 2013, 2). The testimonials on their site, like the one above, and captions on their social media work to affirm tourist’s realness of this “magical” space and, in turn, monopolizes itself as the sole voice of the land. This romanticized view of nature and tropical Costa Rica held by visitors promotes an unattainable expectation of Costa Rica as authentic, pristine, and untouched, which removes and erases an Indigenous presence that goes back thousands of years (Herrera, Lugo, Ulate, and Leitón 2021).

Certain activities practiced at the Reserve, such as the releasing of baby turtles, have become iconic symbols denoting the experiences of those who are environmentalists and embrace such ideals. “Place-image” is used to describe “a widely disseminated and commonly held set of images of a place or space.” Similarly, “destination image” is “a place-image created for the promotion of tourism” (Thompson 2007, 5). The visual iconography captured at the Reserve has become symbolic of the conservation practices commonly carried out in protected areas. RPT’s IG persistently highlights destination images of beautiful beaches, crocodile and snake hunting, time in the butterfly garden, and instances to closely interact with wildlife. The distribution of such images on IG is crucial in the signification of how voluntourists believe they should conduct themselves.

Images of corporeal gestures, poses, and gendered activities found on RPT’s IG (Figure 1) denote instances of performative environmentalism, whereby social media’s implications for conservation are socially informed by voluntourists’ self-centered attitudes, actions, and habits, which are performed through symbolic gestures that center the self instead of environmental issues. Despite altruistic intent, voluntourists often deploy exploitative tendencies, savioristic complexes, entitlement, and exhibitionism. Research on animal selfies has noted a gap in literature (Jevsejevas 2018) around the exploration of hand selfies where 63% of visitors are found posing with or holding wildlife. The most prized to hold are often charismatic species such as baby turtles, crocodiles, and butterflies (Tables 1 and 2). The curation of hand selfies become a peculiar encounter (Jevsejevas 2018) that inserts the photographer and subjects of the photograph into the visual terrain of a camera. It displaces an animal from its daily practices, where a tourist even questioned

why a frog “lives in a wet muddy swamp” (Figure 1). The ecotourism conservation model charges tourists to be saviors and for the chance to present themselves to the world, through social media, as paragons of environmental virtue.

In addition to the extensive literature detailing the dangers of physically holding animals (Jacobson and Lopez 1994; Lenzi, Speiran, and Grasso 2021), these photos reveal an anthropocentric approach of what is conservation. We are, quite literally, the ones who hold nature in the palm of our hand and it becomes ours to conserve or destroy. Hand selfies are an emphatic practice and process of self-imaging (Jevsejevas 2018). Open hands are popularly used to represent protection and cupped hands symbolize the possessiveness of something fragile or delicate. Caressing an animal can be understood as a performative act. These hand positions become environmental mirrors of one’s maternal qualities—a Mother Nature of sorts—devoted to guarding the environment. These images feed into this environmental fantasy, wherein cupping a creature or having “the honor to touch” (Figure 1) makes for a shareable, 100+ likes statement that places oneself on a moral pedestal. The Reserve thus becomes an exploitive space that is spatially carved by and for tourists to affirm their environmental and other identities.

Whiteness and Masculinity

Reserves and other naturesque touristic sites become places to indulge in racialized and gendered transgressions, fantasies, and desires. Moreton-Robinson’s (2011) work centers on white settler colonialism’s persistent wake on Indigenous Australians through examining national and sexual subjects on Australian beaches and their ties to patriarchal white sovereignty. She argues the beach is a crucial site for performativity and identity formation, but I would like to expand upon her definition of the beach as not only a border, but a co-mingled system inclusive of terrestrial and marine sites. I draw from Moreton-Robinson’s work to understand how white possession functions ontologically and performatively within reserves and protected areas through the mainly white tourist body and, in particular, the white male body. In this context, animals and the environment are appropriated as white possession in the name of belonging—reaffirming their gendered, political, classed, and racial identities.

The branding and marketing of “adventure” is classed, gendered, and racialized, appealing primarily to young, white, male, middle class, suburban populations who are prevalently featured in pictures with crocodiles and caimans. In comparison, pictures that feature small animals and hands are majority female. When it comes to an individual straddling and holding down a crocodile,

there is a disproportionate representation in the acts that are being conducted based on gender. Of the 104 images that feature people with crocodiles, 70 feature men mounting and holding them down. These posts are pinned, receiving the most attention as being emblematic of the experience one can have at RPT. When identifying-female posters are holding small charismatic species, this is a more nurturing and feminine way of broadcasting what it means to be an environmentalist.

The white body, especially the white male body, exudes and is dependent upon ideas grounded in humanism such as the division between ‘man’ and ‘nature’ and human dominion over nature (Plummer 2005, 199). Naturesque areas like the Reserve have become sites for competing masculinities that reinforce a possessive logic for the white male, in providing opportunities to conquer the untamed wilderness. Westernized ideas of who can claim nature and space are present on the IG page and reflect some broader themes raised by thinkers Audre Lorde (1984) and Moreton-Robinson. While not every individual who visits Costa Rica and takes pictures fulfils stereotypes of sexuality, race, and class discussed by these scholars, the Reserve accommodates itself for the mythical norm and images on IG support these themes. In Figure 2, a young, white, male eerily smiles at the camera as he straddles and holds down a massive crocodile. They construct themselves as men in relation to the activity of hunting crocodiles. The Reserve’s strategic word choice in using “hunting” for trapping and tagging crocodiles feeds into this romanticization.

Multiple tourists have picked up on this vernacular and used it in their own testimonials and IG captions (Figure 2). For men, adventure takes form in demonstrations of masculinity and power, like “crocodile hunting,” to unleash their inner “Steve Irwin” (Figure 2). A testimonial on their website details a Dutch man describing in excitement how his “best experience was Oscar catching a 3m crocodile” and how the animal “put up a great big fight and we had to drag it to shore with four guys (Reserva Playa Tortuga, n.d.).” As natural proprietors of the species they’re encountering, both men and women participate in the same masculine fantasy and are hoping to gain the same experiences (Halberstam 1998, 15). Helen from the UK describes how she would recommend this to anyone with “a thirst for adventure” and interest in wildlife (Reserva Playa Tortuga, n.d.). Crocodile hunting, ironically in a conservation setting, posits the ill-considered notion that only through accumulation, control, dominion, and ownership of a land and its residents are we able to conserve and protect the environment.

While many voluntourists, either consciously or not, engage in performative environmentalism they also can be found partaking in white saviorism. In the few photos

that include locals and non-white bodies, those individuals become background characters to voluntourists who take center stage as the camera’s main focus (Figure 2). Locals are typically pictured in relationship to voluntourists, the Reserve, or biologists who are “helping” them such as in providing environmental knowledge and sustainability techniques through workshops. White saviorism and performative environmentalism are present in IG photos where locals are dismissed in being seen as possessing any knowledge about their landscape and instead need to be taught a *correct* way to interact with the natural world through those connected to the Reserve.

Conclusion

Further research is needed that explores the relationship locals in Ojochal have with their environments and local perspectives. Building on my preliminary field experience and virtual quantitative research, I plan to complement this project with ethnographic investigations on the ways local populations experience conservation. Yet, social media undoubtedly plays a role in visually defining environmentalism. Costa Rica has successfully built a brand of environmentalism and has done a much better job in protecting their landscapes than many other countries. However, beneath the surface, one needs to be cautious about the tropes and traps one can fall into when abiding by global conservation blueprints. In reality, environmentalism looks different based on local circumstances and individual perspectives. Many tourists are well-intentioned and come with their hearts in the right place, but it’s important to ask “what is my post saying about my relationship to this place and what harm might it be doing?” Regardless of tourists’ objectives, through social media we see a different framework where nature is dominated and continues to be cultivated through white hands—quite literally.

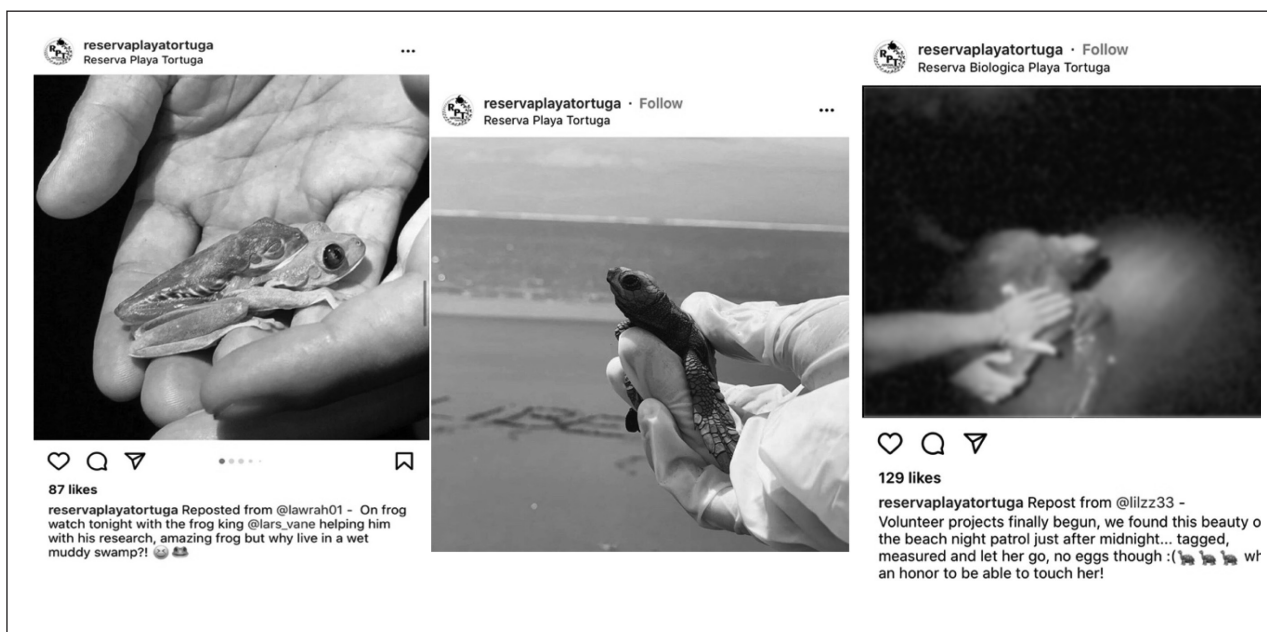


Figure 1. Images from Reserva Playa Tortuga's Instagram, showcasing hand selfies of feminized corporeal gestures when holding wildlife that denote instances of performative environmentalism. Retrieved from @reservaplayatortuga.



Figure 2. Images that showcase the hunting of crocodiles. This indicates a very masculine approach opposed to the feminized images of hands holding wildlife. Retrieved from @reservaplayatortuga.

Percentage of Charismatic Species' Occurrences in RPT's IG Posts (2017–2020)

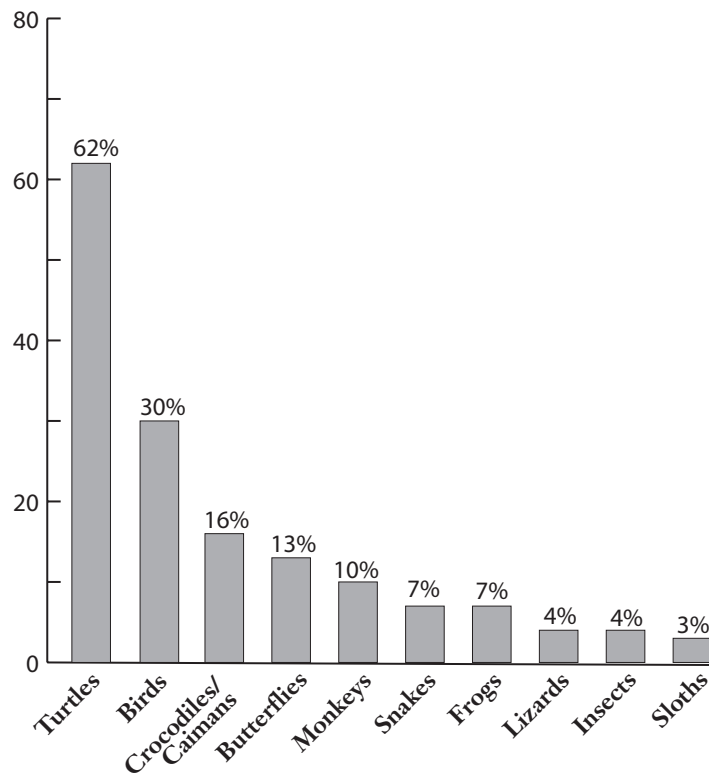


Table 1. Top 10 charismatic species that appear throughout Reserva Playa Tortuga's Instagram page and the percent of posts in which they appear.

Top 10 Charismatic Species at RPT	
Animals	Occurrences in Posts (Total of 811 Posts)
Turtles	501
Birds	241
Crocodiles/Caimans	126
Butterflies/Caterpillars	104
Monkeys	78
Snakes	59
Frogs	53
Lizards	33
Insects	30
Sloths	25

Table 2. Top 10 charismatic species that appear throughout Reserva Playa Tortuga's Instagram page and the number of times they emerge in each post.

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“Blackish Blueberries Everywhere”: De-Romanticized Soul Food in *The Bluest Eye*

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Abstract

This paper examines the representation of berries and berry cobbler in Toni Morrison’s novel *The Bluest Eye*, placing particular emphasis on how the “Soul Era” (1960–1978) influenced her use of the soul food motif. While past scholars have written about the depiction of food in *The Bluest Eye*, they have only sought to explore the significance of food in the novel, not why food is such a prominent motif in this narrative about the damaging effects of racism. I argue that Morrison uses the soul food dish berry cobbler to critique the celebration of “soul” in 1960s–1970s Black American culture, an era that tended to be much more romantic and uncritical towards the culture than Morrison. Specifically, Morrison depicts the cobbler in an unflattering way to show how soul food is not always a community binder in African American communities, as was often thought. Rather, I argue that in *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison uses references to berry cobbler to display how white supremacy can prevent soul food’s ability to strengthen the Black community.

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Introduction

“Soul food” is an intriguing term, characterized by a feeling—soulfulness—rather than a direct reference to a specific culture or region. However, given the 1960s connotation of the word “soul” with Blackness,¹ the phrase most commonly refers to Southern Black cuisine, birthed in slavery, and taking inspiration from Southern, African, indigenous, and various other culinary traditions. The cuisine became fashionable during the “Soul Era” of the 1960s and 1970s, as a wave of social movements in the U.S. asked Black people to embrace their Blackness and often represented the Black community as a unified, organic entity.² Such movements included the Black Is Beautiful movement,

the Black Power Movement, and the Black Arts Movement (BAM). During this time, (soul) food was frequently characterized as the social glue that kept the harmonious Black community together.

Writers and cultural figures often depicted soul food and food in general as if it contained numerous qualities to heal, unite, and produce nostalgia for Black people, a prideful cornerstone of Black American culture. Edna Lewis, the now legendary Black chef and cookbook writer, began a revolution in the 1960s and 1970s to dig Southern/soul cuisine out of its shameful connection to enslavement, often emphasizing the cuisine’s importance in the Black Virginian community of Freetown in which she grew up (Franklin 3). Meanwhile, Amiri Baraka, the founder of the Black Arts Movement, wrote of soul food’s sentimental, nostalgic qualities in 1968, saying that sweet potato pie tasted like “memory” (97). James Brown, the most important musical figure in the Black Power Movement and often referred to as “the King of Soul,” marks the end of his song “Make it Funky Part I” by singing “Neckbones! Candied yams! Turnips! Smothered steak. Smothered steak! Grits and gravy! Cracking bread . . .” “Make it Funky Part II” then begins with “Be up on your thing, brother. Snap peas, Mobile gumbo, hunk of cornbread, buttermilk” (Brown). The song as a whole expresses a message of Black pride through belttable lyrics and a danceable beat meant to enjoy with others in a communal embrace of Blackness. Its opening and closing references to soul food attest to the importance of the cuisine in the era’s understanding of the Black aesthetic. The song positions the consumption of soul food as one of the inherent qualities of being Black—the race’s “funkiness.”

Toni Morrison is a writer who, through her insider position deconstructs this romantic idea of a coalescent Black community and organic view of soul food. Throughout her career, Morrison used her prose to assert her sympathetic, yet critical eye towards the Black community. Her writing was not only concerned with outside forces that plagued the Black community to which she belonged, but also the internal fissures and tensions within it. She came of age as a writer during the “Soul Era,” which is reflected in her debut novel, *The Bluest Eye*. The novel, written throughout the 1960s and published in 1971, depicts soul food in ways that disrupt this romantic vision of a unified Black community. While the “Soul Era” spoke of (soul) food’s ability to bring Black people together, I argue that *The Bluest Eye* depicts soul food, in this case, a berry cobbler, as something that can both reflect and contribute to the disunification of the Black community and harm of Black people. This contrast is due to outside forces such as white supremacy and Eurocentric beauty standards that prevented the vision of the supposed harmony community the “Soul Era” ran on.

By reviewing some of the existing criticism surrounding Morrison's depiction of food, we see how though past critics have considered the motif's connection to race, they have failed to consider cultural history or recognized the nuanced significance of certain dishes in Morrison's work. Several critics have discussed the representation of food in Morrison's novels, all appreciating it as an important motif in her work. However, there is a hole in this criticism when it comes to identifying that Morrison's skepticism towards the "Soul Era" influenced *The Bluest Eye* as well as exploring the specific significance of her imagery of soul food, an area of food with deep importance both to the "Soul Era" and Black American history. The section "Hunger" in the *Toni Morrison Encyclopedia* claims that food and hunger negotiate and define racial politics in the novel and that food imagery frequently acts to elucidate characters and their relationships to each other. However, the chapter does not reference *The Bluest Eye* specifically nor cite instances of soul cuisine that appear in Morrison's work. The critic Emma Parker *does* analyze soul dishes from *The Bluest Eye* in "Apple Pie Ideology and the Politics of Appetite in the Novels of Toni Morrison," though does not recognize them as such. Instead, she contends that when the character Pauline abuses her daughter Pecola for dropping a berry cobbler, this exemplifies Pauline's value of whiteness. Parker fails to view the symbolic cobbler as more than a general conduit for sweetness, not questioning why Morrison chose to write about cobbler as opposed to any other sweet. In contrast, I recognize the cobbler as a Southern Black dessert, meaning that Pauline calls attention to her Black Southernness by baking it, but ironically distancing herself from Black community in the scene in which it appears. Additionally, unlike past critics, I unpack Morrison's representation of cobbler in a much more culturally and historically specific manner.

We see Morrison's critique of the "Soul Era" and its romanticization of soul food in the Black community through the characterization of Pauline Breedlove. Specifically, her divergent reactions to smashed berries in childhood and adulthood reveal the breakdown of her Black pride and ability to have positive relationships with other Black people. In the novel, Pauline recalls when she met her husband Cholly when she was a teenager, it "*was like . . . that time when all us chil'ren went berry picking . . . and I put some in my pocket . . . and they mashed up and . . . [m]y whole dress was messed with purple, and it never did wash out. Not the dress nor me. . . . I could feel that purple deep inside me . . . all of them colors was in me*" (Morrison 116). Morrison writes this memory as an idyllic scene of Black community enabled by food, very much in tune with messaging during the "Soul Era." Here, berry picking enforces a relationship between Pauline and other Black children. Pauline does not appear upset that the berries get smashed, or that the berry juice permanently stains her dress. Instead, she relates the instance positively

to Cholly's tickling her foot (Morrison 117). In her youth, she embraces both Black love and her "coloredness," i.e., her Blackness.

In adulthood, however, Pauline desires the love of white folk over Black and is no longer comfortable with her Black self. This is reflected by her outrage when Pecola spills a berry cobbler that Pauline has just made for her white employers, spilling berry juice everywhere. This change in Pauline reflects how white supremacy and the enforcement of Eurocentric beauty standards, the subject of the entire novel, can turn children who embrace their Blackness to adults who embrace white supremacist values to their and their family's detriment. We can point this change in Pauline to when she moved to Lorain, Ohio. Pauline has consistent interactions with white people in Lorain, unlike she did in her native Alabama. She likely encountered more racism and messaging that she was racial inferiority once up north (Morrison 117). Additionally, she asserts that "dirty" Black Ohioans were unkind to her, pointing to a divide between Southern and Northern Black Americans, and how the Black middle and upper-class shamed the Black working-class (Morrison 117). These divisions prevented Pauline from forming relationships with other Black people with whom she could experience Black pride, or at least Black acceptance like she did as a child. The Breedlove's sink into poverty once up North additionally reinforce Pauline's hatred of herself for being an impoverished, "dirty" Black woman.

The novel ties the mental breakdown of Pauline's self-image and relationship to Blackness to her tooth physically breaking down and rotting, a malady that would obstruct her ability to enjoy berries as she used to. By doing this, Morrison makes the connection between Black community and Black pride and food consumption. The tooth falls out soon after Pauline and Cholly first move to Lorain. "[T]he weakened roots, having grown accustomed to the poison, responded one day to severe pressure, and the tooth fell free . . . But even before the little brown speck [in the tooth], there must have been the conditions, the setting for it to exist in the first place," Morrison writes (117). Pauline's tooth, like her positive relationship to Blackness, has rotted, due to being accustomed to the poison to the white supremacist society in which she lives.

In addition to the increase in the discrimination she likely experienced after moving, Morrison describes Pauline's internalization of white supremacy as coming from film. Through cinema, she learns to associate whiteness with domestic harmony, cleanliness, wealth, and "physical beauty," "the most destructive idea in the history of human thought" according to Morrison, yet a "virtue" to Pauline (Morrison 122). Apropos of this, Pauline's tooth comes out

while seeing a film starring Jean Harlow, her hair styled to look like the actress's. "*There I was . . . trying to look like Jean Harlow and a front tooth gone. Everything went then. . . . I let my hair go back, plaited it up, and settled down to just being ugly,*" she recalls (Morrison 123). The loss of the tooth reinforces to Pauline that she is ugly and poor, the rotten tooth likely a result of a lack of dental care. Her life and appearance contrast with the white, wealthy Harlow, whom American society praises as beautiful. The loss of the tooth represents and cements Pauline's association of Blackness with poverty, ugliness, and dirtiness, and whiteness with wealth, beauty, and cleanliness. Going to the movies was the "severe pressure" that made both Pauline and her tooth snap, but she was already under the "setting" of the white supremacist forces especially strong in Lorain (Morrison 117). Missing a tooth, Pauline's ability to chew food became impaired; her ability to have a positive relationship with other Black people, whose relationships are strengthened through food as was prescribed by the "Soul Era," is destroyed due to white supremacy.

Flashing forward to adulthood, Pauline works as a domestic servant for the white Fisher family, now equating whiteness with wealth, cleanliness, and "physical beauty," while associating Blackness with poverty, dirtiness, and ugliness (Morrison 122). Pauline thus prefers the company and affection of this white family to that of her own "ugly" Black family (Morrison 45), escaping "the disappointments of her life by seeking refuge in the[m]" (Carpenter 82). Pauline feels acceptance and love from the Fishers; however, their affection for her is dependent on her being "the ideal servant" (Morrison 127). Pauline thus becomes a white person's fantasy of a Black person in order to win their affection. The Fisher's love for Pauline depends on her never making a mistake that would reveal her humanity or subjecthood in the Fisher home.

Pauline's signature dish that she cooks to please the family is her berry cobbler. After abolition, "fruit cobblers . . . were . . . familiar foods in Southern Black homes," a dish that evolved from the tradition of enslaved people baking fruit for their English masters (Douglass Opie 19, 55). Pauline, a Black Southerner who moved to Lorain from Alabama, feels love and importance when she bakes the pies, since she makes them perfectly and for white enjoyment.³

Pauline chooses to call attention to her Blackness by baking this soul dessert for the white, urban Fisher family. However, this is neither done to try to hide her Blackness, as Emma Parker argues, or to exemplify her non-existent Black pride. Rather, she uses the soul food to perform a version of Blackness created to appease the white world. Characteristic of African American women during the 1940s, the things Pauline does in public, including the food she prepares, is

with intent, only showing the public what she wants them to see (Williams-Forsen 95). Pauline is comfortable displaying her Blackness in this setting because baking the dessert goes along with her subservient, pristine performance of Blackness to appease white people.

The cobbler also reveals Pauline's shame over her impoverished Black self and her desire to hide it while in the Fisher's home. When first pulled out of the oven, Claudia observes that the cobbler's purple juice only "burst[s] here and there through the crust" (Morrison 108). The pie's dark berries, like Pauline's Blackness, are mostly hidden beneath a sweet, white crust. Pauline is masking her plight as an impoverished, Black woman through the sweetness and perfection she performs and enjoys in the white home. The berries represent Pauline's true self, which is constrained by the sweetness of the white, wealthy home. Soul food is *not* an agent that strengthens Black community here but reflects a Black woman's hatred of her Black self and her wish to participate, vicariously and unequally, in a white community. The dessert's connection to Pauline's race is further exemplified by the fact that one variant of the dish is the "brown Betty."

In the scene, Pecola accidentally knocks the pan of cobbler over, "splattering blackish blueberries everywhere" (Morrison 109). Pecola is a reflection of her mother's life outside of the Fisher residence. Unlike the Fishers, the Breedloves don't live in a home with a literal and metaphorical picket white fence. They are poor, are victims of abuse, and aren't pristine. When Pecola knocks the cobbler over, she infects this perfect white household with a negative action, clumsiness, which makes the Breedloves look like "ugly" Black people Pauline believes they are. Pauline, after all, has instilled in her children "a fear of being clumsy," since she knows that such a display of humanity would fracture their acceptance into white spaces (Morrison 38). Pauline's reaction to spilt berry juice as an adult starkly contrasts with her insouciant acceptance of it from her youth. She abuses Pecola because she exposes their family's imperfection by spilling the cobbler, threatening the Fisher family's affection for Pauline. The exposed berries remind Pauline that her life at the Fishers is a facade. Pauline's true experience of Blackness is like the fallen berries: messy and dark. And now, they're exposed, dirtying up the clean, white floor. Pauline's true life is no longer hidden beneath the white crust, the "sweet" front that she performs inside the white home for white approval.

Pauline's appropriation of the cobbler to please the Fishers harms Pecola physically and psychologically. Claudia relates a description of when the cobbler spills, recalling that:

[The juice from the berries] splashed on Pecola's legs, and the burn must've been painful, for she cried out. . . . In one gallop [Mrs. Breedlove] was on Pecola and . . . knocked her to the floor. Pecola slid in the pie juice, one leg folded under her. Mrs. Breedlove yanked her up by the arm, slapped her again, and in a thin voice with anger, abused Pecola directly and Frieda and me by implication. "Crazy fool . . . my floor, mess . . . look what you . . . work . . . get on out . . . now that . . . crazy . . . my floor, my floor . . . my floor." Her words were hotter and darker than the smoking berries, and we backed away in dread" (Morrison 109).

While Soul Era figures used references to soul food to encourage Black pride and Black community, here soul food weakens Pecola's view of Blackness and her relationship with her Black mother. After the cobbler spills, Pauline turns to comfort the Fishers' young daughter, not Pecola who has just been injured. Her mother's preference for the white family is undeniable. One of the injuries Pecola receives from the cobbler is a burn, notably as it is an affliction of the skin—the cobbler's juice makes Pecola's Black skin feel like a nasty, visually repulsive wound. Morrison uses soul food here to reveal the damage a Black mother can do to a Black child because of her internalization of anti-Black racism and Eurocentric beauty standards. Because of this internalization, it's impossible for Pauline to use soul food to build her relationships to Black people and Blackness itself, like the "Soul Era" thought soul food could. The MacTeer girls are also negatively affected, Claudia noting the abuse and fear they felt. While Pauline uses the cobbler to present a positive view of herself and her Blackness to white society, she simultaneously reinforces the negative view of Blackness that Pecola is learning from the external world in the scene. She contributes to Pecola's psychosis at the end of the novel by teaching her daughter that she should be ashamed of her Blackness.

Through Morrison's representation of berries and the soul dish berry cobbler, *The Bluest Eye* disrupts not only the romanticized view towards the cuisine during the "Soul Era," but the idealization of the Black community as a whole. Morrison argues that the community cannot be as harmonious as represented during the era if it can be fractured by soul food, the very thing that's supposed to unite it. Food is not enough to bind a community, she argues, calling for greater action to address some of the issues in the Black community rooted in white supremacy and its blood brother, classism. While this article addresses soul food in *The Bluest Eye*, this motif calls to be explored in Morrison's other work, such as in *Beloved*, where sugar, bread, and other food play an important role in Morrison's representation of the psychological effects of enslavement. If Morrison is critiquing the glamorized representation of soul food 1960s

Black American discourse, additional research of her novels might explore the question of whether she proposes an alternative way to think about the role of "soul food" in Black American culture.

Endnotes

- ¹ See *Soul: Black Power, Politics, and Pleasure* by Monique Guillory and Richard Green.
- ² For more on this, see Larry Neal's Article "The Black Arts Movement."
- ³ This is a contrast to messaging from "Soul Era" figures like Amiri Baraka, Edna Lewis, and James Brown who spoke of soul food as something meant to bring Black people together, not for Black people to use to please white people.

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Modern Telugu Fiction in Translation: A Case Study

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Abstract

Despite the popular claim that translation facilitates cross-cultural understanding and equalizes relations between dominant and marginalized cultures, the actual practice of translating literature and publishing it instead often reifies hegemonies of power. In this paper I use a Telugu-language text, Kesava Reddy's 1985 novel *Athadu Adavini Jayinchadu*, as a case study to show how the translation and publication of *Athadu Adavini Jayinchadu* into English makes it more palatable to the Anglophone reader, specifically through the emphasis on the novel's relationship to its primary intertext, *The Old Man and the Sea*. I argue that this particular case study exemplifies larger trends of translation from South Asian languages into English in the twentieth century, specifically in their reification of power within the South Asian context. However, I propose that two features within this particular cultural exchange offer an alternative to simply reproducing hierarchies in translations of literature: the neutralization of South Asian language hierarchies through translations into English as well as a new Telugu translation of *The Old Man and the Sea* that situates the text within a South Asian context, thereby truly facilitating cross-cultural understanding.

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Introduction

In a global context, the Telugu language retains traditional characteristics of a "minor" language. Though increased immigration from India makes it one of the fastest growing languages in the United States, it is still primarily spoken in the South Indian states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana (Conrad). While Telugu literary production and infrastructure remains vibrant, Telugu authors tend to have full-time jobs unrelated to their writing and rely on newspapers and magazines to publish their work rather than

Telugu-only publishing houses. Naturally, these features mark the Telugu literary landscape in sharp contrast to the Anglophone one, in which writing is a major industry that supports full-time authors and labor centered around publishing.

These differences between English and Telugu literary production broadly symptomize the relationship between "major" and "minor" languages. Authors writing in "minor" languages such as Telugu must necessarily grapple with the reality that the language in which they write precludes vast global exposure to their work, a compromise with which authors writing in English do not contend. Translation is often proposed as a solution to this problem, in that it makes literature from different languages widely accessible and thus, functions as an equalizer. However, the process and execution of literary translation is both deeply political and politicized.

This paper takes Kesava Reddy's 1985 Telugu novel, *Athadu Adavini Jayinchadu*, as a case study in the politics of translation. As I will illustrate in this paper, the novel's translation into English fails to capture the specific cultural and linguistic importance of the original text and instead focuses on palatability and appeal to a western anglophone audience. This paper then broadens its focus to examine how trends of translation from South Asian languages into English in the twentieth century similarly bolstered preexisting hierarchies not only on a global scale, but also within the context of South Asian. However, there are two redemptive features of this particular case study: the neutralization of South Asian hierarchies *through* English translation, as well as the Telugu translation of an English text that facilitates understanding between American and Telugu cultures. Ultimately, this paper seeks to reveal the multitude of ways in which the hegemony of English operates over a "minor" language like Telugu, from the kind of national and international prominence an English translation receives (that a Telugu translation never could) to the liberties that translators are able to take when working with an originally Telugu text.

Athadu Adavini Jayinchadu: Landmark Telugu Novel or Hemingway Knockoff?

Within the Telugu literary sphere, Kesava Reddy's 1985 novel *Athadu Adavini Jayinchadu* first reached prominence because its style and content marked a specific juncture in the language's literature in which caste and regional hierarchies began to be unsettled. For this reason, the novel later became known as a quintessential Telugu text. However, the novel's primary intertext is Ernest Hemingway's 1952 novel, *The Old Man and the Sea*, suggesting that despite *Athadu Adavini Jayinchadu*'s abiding interest in Telugu-specific issues, Reddy's novel also sought to place itself on a larger

stage of world literature. During his lifetime, Reddy worked as a physician, a profession in which the official documents existed entirely in English, thus proving that Reddy was fully fluent in English himself (Vinod 15). Though little evidence explicitly shows Reddy's having read and been influenced by *The Old Man and the Sea*, the novel is arguably Hemingway's best-known work as, following its publication, Hemingway won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1954. Given Reddy's own obvious interest in literature, his fluency in English, and the worldwide prominence of *The Old Man and the Sea*, it is likely that Reddy did indeed read this book, especially considering the thematic, stylistic, and plot similarities between the two novels. Santiago, in *The Old Man and the Sea*, is an aging man who attempts to catch an enormous fish and in *Athadu Adavini Jayinchadu*, the unnamed protagonist is also an aging man who enters a forest in order to retrieve his lost sow. These protagonists are the primary characters in the novel, except for a younger male character who appears at the beginning and end of each novel (Manolin in *The Old Man and the Sea* and the protagonist's grandson in *Athadu Adavini Jayinchadu*). Both texts also include brief flashbacks to their protagonists' youths, when they each triumphed physically over a black man; Santiago wins an arm-wrestling match, while the protagonist of *Athadu Adavini Jayinchadu* wins a fight against a black American soldier. Both novels employ shorter, action-driven sentences occasionally interspersed with musings from their respective protagonists and both broadly examine themes of masculinity and aging.

In contrast to Hemingway's text however, Reddy's formal use of language elucidates his sociopolitical claims about the need for self-expression by non-elite groups. Prior to Reddy's generation of authors, the wealthier coastal regions of Telugu-speaking areas, referred to as Coastal Andhra, dictated the standards of written Telugu (Purushotham 58). However, in the latter half of the twentieth century and following Indian independence from British colonial rule, Telugu authors from other regions began to write and publish in their own dialects, rather than continuing to adhere to that of Coastal Andhra (Purushotham 59). Reddy, who came from the west Rayalaseema region—a much poorer Telugu-speaking area—employed this region's dialect in his body of work, thereby joining a larger literary movement to undo the hegemony of Coastal Andhra Telugu (Purushotham 59). This movement was also deeply intertwined with the push to break down caste hierarchies in Telugu literature; Kesava Reddy's generation of novelists tended not to be members of oppressed castes themselves but sought to represent them (Purushotham 56). Reddy's own last name signifies the upper-caste to which he belongs (Purushotham 63). Though *Athadu Adavini Jayinchadu* does not explicitly discuss caste, the protagonist is a pig-tender, and thus likely a member of the Erukala community, a group of indigenous people in South India (Purushotham 56). Reddy treats this protagonist

with dignity and respect in the novel, thus “paving the way for the emergence of ‘dalitness’ in literature” as written by actual members of traditionally marginalized castes and functioning as a precursor to a literary movement that would come in later years (Purushotham 59).

Appeals to the Anglophone Market in Publication and Translation

Regardless of the clear situation of *Athadu Adavini Jayinchadu* within a Telugu sphere, both the literal translation of the novel into English, as well as its publication and the ensuing academic scholarship, appeal explicitly to the Anglophone market through suppression of the Telugu-specific details of the text as well as a heavy invocation of Hemingway's name. The English translation loses the west Rayalaseema dialect entirely, which was initially a major source of the novel's significance in the original Telugu due to the stylistic literary innovation it marked. In the original Telugu, when considering the direction in which to walk, the protagonist says, “ఇలాంటి దొరుల వెంబడి నడవడం శుద్దు దడగో దడగో” (Reddy 25). This same sentence is translated into English as: “It is entirely wasteful to walk on [these tracks]” (Reddy 28). The English phrase “entirely wasteful” is technically an accurate translation of the Telugu phrase “శుద్దు దడగో,” but the Telugu phrase exemplifies west Rayalaseema-specific dialect. The official English translation of “entirely wasteful” does not at all convey the informal, slangy nature of the original Telugu; rather, the translation actually reads as formal. The original text's use of the west Rayalaseema dialect belies a larger, storied conflict concerning the dominance of Coastal Andhra Telugu, one with which English-language readers likely have no preexisting familiarity, and thus, one that would not entice these readers to the translation the same way that surface-level signifiers of culture often do.

The translator maintains the Telugu language through the “innumerable references to native trees, plants, insects, and animals,” but this act merely serves to remind the reader of the novel's South Indian background in a way that does not require deeper engagement with Telugu history or culture (Jayaprada 13). Rather than attempting to find the English equivalent (which, in some cases, may not actually exist) for each natural object, the translator uses a Romanized version of the original Telugu and includes footnotes explaining the word. A reference to “vampali trees” is defined at the end of the text as “purple galega, a small wild shrub with deep pink flowers and leaves resembling that of the indigo plant” (Reddy 28, 83). In this way, some semblance of the original Telugu remains in the English translation. In part, the limitations of the translation are understandable—words, ideas, and meaning cannot be

“truly” translated all of the time—but it also panders to the translation’s intended Anglophone audience.

Similarly, the majority of the scholarship on *Athadu Adavini Jayinchadu* focuses on its relationship to *The Old Man and the Sea* because of the position of *The Old Man and the Sea* as a “classic” or “important” novel. By positioning *Athadu Adavini Jayinchadu* alongside *The Old Man and the Sea*, scholars such as S.G. Mohanraj, K. Naveen Kumar, and C. Venkata Subba Rao lend the former novel, published in a “minor” language and thus less internationally well-known, a kind of legitimacy that also subordinates Reddy’s text to Hemingway’s. These same scholars who write about *Athadu Adavini Jayinchadu* tend to be Indian and Telugu-speaking and thus exist outside of the mainstream Western academic sphere. By writing about Reddy alongside an author like Hemingway, they also lend their own academic work a legitimacy and broader appeal that it would not have if it focused solely on Reddy’s body of work. The introduction to the English translation of *Athadu Adavini Jayinchadu* exemplifies this to an extreme: it references the English-language texts John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, William Faulkner’s *The Bear*, Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick*, Joseph Conrad’s *The Heart of Darkness*, Saul Bellow’s *Henderson the Rain King*, Arun Joshi’s *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, and Norman O. Brown’s *Life Against Death* as well as Kumar Sahani’s Kannada-language novel *Chomana Dudi*, the Bengali film *Mrigaya*, and the Hindi film *Khayalgatha* before launching into a more detailed exploration of the relationship between *The Old Man and the Sea* and *Athadu Adavini Jayinchadu* (Vinoda 16–19). In order to justify paying attention to *Athadu Adavini Jayinchadu*, a novel from a “minor” language, both scholars and translators must explore its relationship with canonical English texts. In this way, *Athadu Adavini Jayinchadu*’s international reputation becomes intertwined with *The Old Man and the Sea* without being able to stand on its own.

Twentieth Century Trends of Translation from Indian Languages into English

This English translation of *Athadu Adavini Jayinchadu* broadly exemplifies larger trends of translation from Indian languages into English in the latter half of the twentieth century that primarily reinforced existing hierarchies of power within the South Asian context, not only by pandering to Anglophone audiences, but also through the identities of authors who were typically translated, as they primarily belonged to powerful societal groups. Following Indian independence, the literary economy in the 1950s and the 1960s was primarily controlled by two governmental institutions: Sahitya Akademi and the National Book Trust (Kothati 59). Translations from other languages—primarily English and Russian—into Telugu were extremely profitable

(Anjaneyulu 140). In contrast, English translations from Telugu at this point in time were less financially successful, but Sahitya Akademi and the National Book Trust persisted in doing so in an attempt to raise the English proficiency of the nation (Kothati 61). In the 1980s however, the deregulation of India’s economy led to the influx of private international publishing companies into the market. Given increased national English fluency and the larger push towards globalization, English translations soared in profitability (Kothari 60). The 1996 English translation of *Athadu Adavini Jayinchadu* is in fact part of Macmillan’s Modern Indian Novels in Translation series, the goal of which is to “paint a vivid and general picture of Indian life as revealed by serious post-Independence fiction” (Krishnan 11). This reference to “serious post-Independence fiction” speaks to the kinds of fiction typically published by these international publishing houses: works that were already extremely popular or canonical in their original language. While Reddy’s most well-known work is *Athadu Adavini Jayinchadu*, he had already published three books in Telugu prior, and his profession as a doctor and a member of an upper-caste made his work more likely to be translated than that of more societally marginalized authors.

Though these English translations were clearly not objective undertakings, they did partially neutralize existing hierarchies between Indian languages, and thus, provided one way out of such a hegemony, though clearly remained subject to power dynamics in the Anglophone world. Pascale Casanova, in her chapter “Principles of a World History of Literature” from the book *The World Republic of Letters*, writes that “Certain languages, by virtue of the prestige of the texts written in them, are reputed to be more literary than others, to embody literature . . . Literary value therefore attaches to certain languages” (Casanova 17–18). In the Indian context, during the beginning of the translation boom in the twentieth century, these languages were Tamil, Kannada, Marathi, Bengali, and Hindi. Translations from these languages into English exceeded those from languages like Telugu, Gujarati, Punjabi, or Malayalam. Publishing houses in fact continue to neglect translations to and from “minor” Indian languages (Kothari 62). *Athadu Adavini Jayinchadu*’s English translation, in contrast to its other translations into Hindi and Tamil, allows the novel to exist in a form that is outside of the hierarchy of Indian languages (Rushdie 64).

Telugu Translations in the Twenty-First Century

A 2020 translation of Hemingway’s *The Old Man and the Sea* into Telugu by Swathikumari Bandlamudi and Ravi Verelly—titled *Athade Oka Samudram*—crystallizes both the challenges and value of translations from English to Telugu, given the growth of English as both a lingua franca

for Indians and a continued method of representing India to the larger Anglophone world. A comparison between the experiences of Hemingway and Reddy's translators reveals the dominance of English-language authors over Telugu-language authors even in translations between the languages which are intended, in part, to equalize relationships between cultures. While the English translation of *Athadu Adavini Jayinchadu* lost the traits of the novel that specifically showed its place in Telugu literary culture, *Athade Oka Samudram* remains closely beholden to Hemingway's original text in large part because of the extreme renown of *The Old Man and the Sea*. When discussing their refusal to localize the novel by setting it in a coastal Telugu-speaking area or switching the original text's discussion of baseball to cricket, Bandlamudi said, "[*The Old Man and the Sea*] is a world-class book and everybody knows it" (*An Evening with Swathi Kumari and Ravi Verelly*). An "unfaithful" translation of *The Old Man and the Sea* would have received much more backlash than an "unfaithful" translation of *Athadu Adavini Jayinchadu* based on the global cultural stature of Hemingway's novel. Clearly, the pressure on Bandlamudi and Verelly to preserve Hemingway in their translation exceeds that on Jayaprada to preserve Reddy. Hemingway's Nobel Prize is symptomatic of this larger power imbalance; Rabindranath Tagore was the only Indian citizen to win the Nobel Prize in Literature, and he wrote in English as well as Bengali, in contrast to the twenty-nine authors writing solely in English who have been awarded the same prize.

Despite the power imbalance between cultures Bandlamudi and Verelly ultimately achieve a translation that does, to the best of its ability, facilitate transcultural understanding in a way that the English translation of *Athadu Adavini Jayinchadu* does not. In sharp contrast to the goal of English translations to reach a broader audience, whether within India or beyond it, Bandlamudi and Verelly sought to reach a very specific audience for their translation: students in Telugu medium schools, or students who attend schools primarily taught in Telugu, rather than English (Bandlamudi and Verelly, "A Little Bit Closer to Hemingway"). These students and schools are located in rural, poorer areas. Thus, *Athade Oka Samudram* exists primarily for an educational purpose, to give Telugu youth access to a "classic" novel that they would not otherwise have access to, given their lack of English fluency. Thus, the translators make a greater effort to explain American culture in a way that makes sense to Telugu people. At the end of *Athade Oka Samudram*, Bandlamudi and Verelly include extra material: their retelling of an Indian fable, translated into English as "The Story of Three Fish," a photo of Hemingway and a fish he caught, and finally, Hemingway's acceptance speech for the Nobel Prize, which Bandlamudi explains "conveys the spirit of the novel and the author" (*An Evening with Swathi Kumari and Ravi Verelly*). Bandlamudi and Verelly's

retelling of "The Story of Three Fish" resituates the reader within a Telugu context and thus indigenizes their translation to an extent, while the photo of Hemingway and the inclusion of his speech provide contextual information to an audience that is likely unfamiliar with the near-mythic status that Hemingway holds in Anglophone, and even more so American, culture. Their focus on students speaks to a larger issue in the publication of similar translations: the difficulty of keeping such translations in print. Bandlamudi and Verelly's text is the only Telugu translation of *The Old Man and the Sea* currently in print; the purchase of such translations by schools or universities is oftentimes the only thing allowing these texts to remain in print (Kothari 66). Thus, the educational goals of *Athade Oka Samudram* expose the text's audience to global Western culture in a way that still roots them in Telugu and Indian culture; Bandlamudi and Verelly's choice to do so also increases the likelihood that their translation will remain in print.

Conclusion

The case study examined in this paper of the Telugu text *Athadu Adavini Jayinchadu* and its translation into English, and the English text *The Old Man and the Sea* and its translation into Telugu, provides an apt lesson in the pitfalls of translation. The English translation of *Athadu Adavini Jayinchadu* loses the cultural aspects of the original text that made it socio-politically important. Instead, the translation highlights the American, English-language intertext of *The Old Man and the Sea* in publication and translation, a pattern continued by the scholarship around *Athadu Adavini Jayinchadu* and evident with other translated texts as well. In the twentieth century, English translations of South Asian-language literature not only pandered to Anglophone audiences, but also reproduced existing power imbalances on the subcontinent by translating male, upper-caste authors in higher quantities, and translating more literature from South Asian languages with a higher perceived level of "literariness." However, the English translations also neutralized these hierarchies between South Asian languages by making them more widely accessible. A similar contradiction exists between translations from English to Telugu, as exemplified by the translation into Telugu of Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*. While the Telugu translation is much more beholden to the English text than the English translation of *Athadu Adavini Jayinchadu* is to the Telugu text, Verelly and Bandlamudi's Telugu translation also reaches a higher level of cross-cultural understanding.

There are several important takeaways from this particular case study. The propounded virtues of translation, as a means for bringing different cultures to a level of mutual understanding, are only achieved with a critical translator's pen; a preexisting power dynamic is likely to go

uncorrected both on a macro-level, in terms of publication and marketing, and a micro-level, in terms of specific word choice, form, and style without such a translator. Thus, some degree of responsibility rests with scholars and writers from Anglophone and other dominant spheres to amplify those voices of translators and authors from “minor” languages and to uplift those scholars researching “minor” languages in the academic mainstream.

Given the recent boom in Telugu diasporic populations, it will be fascinating to watch how diasporic writing by Telugu people, in both Telugu and English, changes or reifies the dynamics of publication and translation in the twenty-first century arena of world literature.

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Reproducing the “*Mãe-Preta*”: Representations of a Brazilian National Figure in 19th Century Photography and Early 20th Century Children’s Literature

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Abstract

This paper concerns literary and visual depictions of the archetype of the “*mãe-preta*” during the late nineteenth-century to early twentieth century. Studying the archetype reveals not only the crosscurrents between the history of slavery, gender, and reproductive labor in Brazil but the ways in which the “*mãe-preta*” has been utilized to argue that slavery existed as a benevolent institution within the nation’s past.

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The crosscurrents between the history of slavery, gender, and reproductive labor in Brazil can be seen within the caricature of the “*mãe-preta*,” a figure rendered by Brazilian writers, artists, and photographers during the nineteenth to early twentieth century. The concept of the “*mãe preta*,” as defined by Micol Seigel, is “a composite of enslaved Afro-Brazilian wet nurses and domestic workers, conjured as an archetype” (Seigel 2016). The “*mae-preta*” was a figure imagined by the enslavers and the white artists of the Brazilian elite and then embedded within the Brazilian nation’s understanding of its past regarding slavery.

Enslaved Afro-Brazilian women were at the center of the Brazilian Imperial Parliament’s concerns with how they would sustain slavery in the country after the legal end of the African slave trade in 1833 (Santos 2016). Obscured within that discourse is that the labor of reproducing the children of Brazilian enslavers during this period was also imposed upon many of these women. These women who carried the labor necessary to reproduce the elite of Brazil upon their backs were depicted as the “*mãe-preta*,” rendered through the medium of writing and photography during the late nineteenth-century into the early twentieth-century. This article considers these photographs because they allow one to evidently and visually comprehend how the ideology of benevolence and intimacy shrouded the violence and

exploitation so intrinsic within the relationship between the enslavers and the enslaved. Scholars such as Sandra Sofia Machado Koutsoukos have previously theorized on the nature of these photographs and the purpose behind their production; this article furthers such scholarship on the “*mãe-preta*” archetype by considering the photographs alongside “*Mãe Maria*” [“Mother Maria”], a story written by late-nineteenth to early twentieth-century Brazilian poet Olavo Bilac and published in *Contos Pátrios* [Patriotic Stories] (1904), a popular collection of tales taught to generations of children within the Brazilian elite (Beattie 2001). An examination of “*Mãe Maria*” allows us to see how the archetype found a place not only within the private sphere of the home but at school.

These depictions continued well into the twentieth-century, as they in part informed Brazilian scholar Gilberto Freyre’s depiction of slavery in Brazil as a humane institution. In his 1945 book *New World in the Tropics*, a work meant to render the history of Brazil legible to a wider (read: Anglo-American) audience, Freyre asserted that the relations between masters and slaves in pre-1888 Brazil were “particularly cordial and humane” when compared with other European colonies in the Americas (Freyre 1945). In exploring these objects and narratives of reference, I argue that these representations precede the articulation of this ideology, notably attributed to Gilberto Freyre in his works *Novo Mundo nos Trópicos* [*New World in the Tropics*] and *Casa Grande e Senzala* [*Masters and Slaves*]. Even before Freyre began producing scholarship, the ideology of cordiality and humanity as a feature of an alleged Brazilian exceptionalism was already unfolding itself through literary and visual representations of these women as the “*mãe preta*.”

Fabricated Intimacies: On the Photographs of *Amas de Leite*

In the nineteenth century, representations of these enslaved African and Afro-descendant women within their positions as caretakers of white Brazilian children were reproduced through various mediums, namely through a number of daguerreotypes in which these “*amas de leite*” (a title often translated as “wet nurse”) appear, dressed in a European fashion alongside the children they reared. One of several photographs that visualize this relationship between enslaved women and the children of enslavers is dated 1887, just a year before the abolition of slavery in Brazil, displaying a woman named Joana and Elisa Saboya de Albuquerque (Figure 1).

What reveals the relationship displayed within the photograph is not only the faded face of the image itself but the identifying information written on the back of the photograph: “*Elisa Saboya . . . com a escrava Joana*” [Elisa Saboya . . . with the slave Joana]. The photograph, taken in

the state of Pernambuco in the year 1887, is not isolated, as there are a multitude of existing photographs of these women and the children they cared for; many photographs were taken during the Imperial period of Brazil.¹ Some photos depict the children sitting on the laps of the women, others, like the one of Joana and the girl, depict the child sitting on top of an adorned table or at the edge of an ornate sill, their small bodies propped up by the support of their “*amas*.”

Unlike the photograph of Joana and the girl, the women alongside these children in the images are not always named in the catalog descriptions of the national archive in which the photographs are housed; in the case of the photographs discussed in this article, one can find them in the *Acervo Joaquim Nabuco* [the Joaquim Nabuco Archive]. Rather than a name they are instead identified with the terms “*babá*,” “*escrava*,” “*negra*,” and, consistently, “*ama-de-leite*,” but every image seems to have one fact in common: even in life, these women are monuments. They are monuments exemplifying the posterity of the enslaver’s children and of a system sustained by the gendered labor that defined the everyday experiences of their bondage. In the various representations of each woman, the viewer is meant to see her, but in the act of producing and reproducing her narrative she becomes a lost figment in the retelling of Brazilian history that has pervaded national and global perceptions of Brazil. These shallow representations of these women present the strain of Brazilian history echoed by Freyre. Freyre noted that Brazil was the last nation in the hemisphere to abolish slavery in 1888, but according to him it was home to a form of slavery that was more benevolent than that which manifested in other European colonies throughout the Americas, namely the English colonies. It can be inferred that the photographs were taken for this very purpose: to illustrate this supposed benevolence that would be so present within Freyre’s logic presented and popularized no less than six decades after the pictures were taken. These photographs of enslaved women clad in European clothes of English and French fashion, often articles of clothing from the closets of their own enslavers (Koutsoukos 2005), echoes Freyre’s idea of this unique form of closeness between these women, the children they reared, and the parents of these children.

To fully understand the impact of these photographs and thus their relevance in the shaping of a national caricature, one must understand the dissemination of these pictures. Figure 4, for example, is a *carte-de-visite*, a photograph of 3.5 x 2.5 inches that would be mounted onto cardboard and utilized as a “calling card,” or a portrait that would be distributed widely amongst friends and family. The *carte-de-visite* was also known to be one of the most inexpensive ways of rendering a portrait (Charnes 2004). It is inferred by scholar Sandra Sofia Machado Koutsoukos

that such photographs were taken so that the wealth of a Brazilian slaveholding family to be displayed (2). I further support this idea that the parents of these children were conscious of socioeconomic status, especially if they decided to have the portrait done in a way that enabled and encouraged observation, if not actual distribution. One can imagine that the pocket-sized object that is the *carte-de-visite* roused other slave-owning Brazilians to display their wealth in similar ways. This reality supports the idea that these women are not only monuments in remembrance of a system that depended upon their labor but were monuments that exemplified the wealth of the Brazilians who chose to have these women’s bodies and labor documented and rendered. In the distribution and production of these photographs, the practice was normalized and these photographs, (displaying wealth by exhibiting the intimate attention the enslavers were able to afford their children), not only began to hold space within family photograph albums but within the Brazilian elite’s understanding of their relationship to the enslaved, and later, Black women laboring within the domestic sphere.

Children’s Stories, Collective Memory, and Educating the Brazilian Elite

The reproduction of this narrative of benevolence and cordiality between the enslaved and enslavers in Brazil is not specific to these photographs. Scholars have considered both the photographs and the children’s stories presenting the “*mãe-preta*”; this article supports the idea that these photographs and stories are to be seen alongside each other, and perhaps in conversation with each other, rather than as individual productions. Olavo Bilac, the author the national flag hymn and devotee to the cause of developing a generation of “patriots, not anarchists” (Beattie 2001) wrote stories for a collection of children’s tales often taught to the children of the Brazilian elite during the early twentieth century. One story within the collection titled *Contos Pátrios*, is “*Mãe Maria*,” a story focused on the memories and perspective of a Brazilian man and his relationship with Maria, an enslaved African woman who raised him throughout his childhood. By 1968, there were fifty separate editions of *Contos Pátrios*, which attests to the popularity of the text and the use of it as a primer in the education of wealthy Brazilian children.

(Un)Reckoning: On Olavo Bilac’s *Mãe Maria*

The narrator of Bilac’s story, while reminiscing the memories of his childhood, soon remembers the enslaved African woman who he states lived with him for thirteen years of his life. The narrator, with the intention of expanding upon his relationship with who he calls “*velha mãe Maria*” [“old mother Maria”], prefaces the narrative by stating: “*Comprar e vender escravos era, naquele tempo, uma*

coisa natural” [“In that time, to buy and sell slaves was a natural thing”]. The narrator prefaces his retelling of this woman’s life and his relationship to her with an act of abjection. He does not insert himself within that statement, and this impersonal statement is consequential to the structure of the story he aims to share. In that act of removing himself and naturalizing the conditions *mãe Maria* was subject to as an enslaved woman, he rids himself of guilt or the judgement of the reader. The proposed innocence of the narrator as a mere child caught up in this situation would not be maintained if he did not allude to the evils of slavery. The narrator consciously includes this statement because of the tone and narrative he conveys throughout the rest of the story from that point on, which is this familiar narrative of benevolence. The preface of the story is central to maintaining the narrative of compassion and familial connection that purportedly flows between the child of an enslaver and the enslaved *mãe-preta*. In the naturalization of the position of enslaved African and Afro-Brazilian women in Brazilian homes as a caretaker of white and wealthy children, the narrator excuses himself from sincerely reckoning with the ways in which he benefited from this woman’s bondage throughout his life. Maria truly was present throughout the narrator’s life and witnesses his metamorphosis into a young man. The narrator illustrates Maria’s unwavering devotion to him by including an interaction between them at the arrival of the narrator’s time away at boarding school:

“Oh! Mr. Amâncio!—said the black woman crying on her knees, kissing my hands—how grown and handsome Mr. Amâncio is!”

The inclusion of this ostentatious form of commitment yet again defends the narrator’s pernicious argument that Maria’s position and situation is natural. The years-long relationship between Maria and the narrator is not unlike one proposed within two more photographs: one dated 1860, depicting a young boy named Augusto Gomes Leal and an enslaved woman named Mônica (Figure 2), and another dated 1877–1882 with Mônica and Isabel Adelaide Leal (Figure 3). The more recent image depicts not only Mônica’s age over time but her consistent position within the family as the one allocated the labor of raising the children of the Leal family.

Olavo Bilac and *Ufanismo*

In understanding Bilac’s use of children’s literature as a means to disseminate ideology and develop the Brazilian elite’s understanding of the past, it is important to consider Bilac’s own ideological and collective affiliations as a writer. Bilac is often associated with *Ufanismo*, a lineage of writers with a foundation that can date as early as the sixteenth century. *Ufanismo* is less of a concrete literary movement than

an abounding sense of bourgeois nationalism and pride that teems from one generation of writers to the next. The word itself is informed by the Portuguese verb *ufanarse*: to be overcome with an immodest sense of pride or admiration for one’s own qualities.² That contemporary definition is further supplemented by the word that is used in the title of a book written by a contemporary of Bilac, Afonso Celso (Mendes 1980). In a book published in 1901, Celso uses the term in the title *Por que me ufano de meu país*, [*Why I am overcome with pride for my country*]. Scholar Aurélio Buarque de Holanda attributes the origin of the term to the title and defines it as such (Mendes 95):

“Atitude, posição ou sentimento dos que, influenciados pelo potencial das riquezas brasileiras, pelas belezas naturais do país, etc, dele se vangloriam, desmedidamente.”

[An attitude, position, or feeling of those who, influenced by the power of Brazilian riches, the natural beauty of country, etc., become proud beyond measure.]³

This unwavering pride is reflected within the story “*Mãe Maria*,” particularly in the aforementioned moment in which the narrator avoids addressing how he benefits from the insidious and bitter fruits of slavery. He insists on displaying what the child reader is encouraged to believe is motherly care and commitment. This, in turn, belies the reality that the relationship between him and this enslaved woman is not one of pure compassion but subjugation.

Theoretical Considerations: On the Protagonist of *Ufanismo* and the Absence of a *Lugar de Fala*

Bilac’s hindsight and preoccupations in the writing of this story become clear when considering Bilac’s involvement with the ideology of *Ufanismo*. In the framework of *Ufanismo*, those without such pride and likely access to the proclaimed “Brazilian riches” are given neither agency nor voice. Their presence functions as a means of providing the protagonist of *Ufanismo*, one who is in the position to experience and exploit the proclaimed “power of Brazilian riches, the natural beauty of country, etc.” The narrator is proud not only of his position as the recipient of an unconditional and boundless maternal love but he is proud of his self-proclaimed innocence within this system. The protagonist of *Ufanismo* is not merely one who consumes the fruits of subjugation but one who is willingly blind to the realities that surround them. Bilac’s story provides ways of avoiding the evils of slavery—through depictions of intimacy, maternity, and compassion—which is meant to nurture the seeds of nationalist pride. Maintaining this nationalist pride inhibits one from viewing one’s own participation in systems of subjugation critically and earnestly.

This story bears in its title the name of the enslaved woman, Maria, rather than the narrator's. However, it presents not her narrative but the interiority of a (presumably) white, bourgeois man and a specific depiction of a relationship between him and an enslaved woman. The reader does not witness Maria in her moments without the child nor anything else that she has experienced within the walls of that house. What becomes normalized to children reading this story is the lack of space Afro-Brazilian people are given to be subjective and complex, particularly the women performing the reproductive labor central to elite children's survival and upbringing. The narrator describes one moment in which Maria answers the child after he asks about the scars she bears on her skin:

“Como foi isso, mãe Maria?’ ‘Maldades dos homens, sinhozinho, maldades dos homens . . .’ Certa noite, como ela me contasse uma história em que se falava de crianças roubadas aos pais, perguntei: ‘Você nunca teve filho, mãe Maria?’ A pobre negra limpou uma lágrima, e não respondeu: mudou de conversa, e continuou, com a sua meia língua atrapalhada, a contar a história,—uma dessas compridas histórias da roça, em que há *saci-pererês* e *caiporas*, almas do outro mundo e anjos do céu.”

[“How did that happen, mother Maria?’ ‘The evil deeds of men, little sir, the evil deeds of men.’ One night, while she told me a story about children being robbed from their country, I asked: ‘You never had children, mother Maria?’ The poor black woman wiped away a tear and didn’t respond: she changed the subject of conversation and continued, fumbling, to tell a fable—one of those long stories from the countryside, where there are *saci-pererês* and *caiporas*,⁴ souls from another world and angels from heaven.”]

The writer depicts a moment of pain reflected upon Maria’s face: Maria’s fleeting tear appears to function with the purpose of eliciting a jointly short-lived pity from the reader. There is little focus on her condition beyond that moment, as he then swiftly moves away from her suffering and evades alluding to the conditions of the enslavement in which she continues to live. Black feminist scholar Djamila Ribeiro has articulated in her book *O que é lugar de fala?* [*What is place of speech?*] the manner in which marginalized peoples are silenced by hegemony. Within her intellectual framework, this story is an example of such an instance in which someone is unable to recount their story themselves because of the hierarchical powers that are maintained by the elite. In the context of this story, the elite are both the enslavers (the narrator’s family) and producers of knowledge and narrative (such as writers like Bilac himself and the *carte-de-visite* photographers) to be consumed by those in power. This story, printed numerous times and read by many children, aimed to solidify the presence of Afro-Brazilian

women as marginal and white bourgeois men as the main protagonists of Brazilian history.

Conclusion

Photographers, artists, and elite families across Brazil were invested in legitimizing the ideology that relations between enslaved people and their enslavers were benevolent. The children’s story and photographs I explored in this analysis provide evidence that this ideology was in development even before the abolition of slavery in 1888 and the advent of Gilberto Freyre’s work in the early to mid-twentieth century. Further directions in the study of the archetype lead toward a consideration of later mass-produced iterations of the “*mãe-preta*,” such as the character Tia Nastacia in the nationally beloved book series *O Sítio do Picapau Amarelo* (1920–1940) by writer Monteiro Lobato and its various television adaptations. Ultimately, studying these cultural productions allow us to envision how the “*mãe-preta*” is by no means a natural existence but a figment of the Brazilian elite’s imagination.



Figure 1. Joana and Elisa Saboya de Albuquerque. 1882–1887, De Hermina Costa & Cia., Pernambuco. Fundação Joaquim Nabuco—Ministério da Educação.



Figure 2. *Carte-de-visite*, Augusto Gomes Leal with “*Ama de Leite*” Mônica, 1860, João Ferreira Villela. Fundação Joaquim Nabuco–Ministério da Educação.



Figure 3. Mônica and Isabel Adelaide Leal, 1877–1882, Alberto Henschel. Fundação Joaquim Nabuco–Ministério da Educação.

Endnotes

- ¹ The Imperial Period dated from 1882 to 1889.
- ² This is a contemporary definition from the Collins Portuguese Dictionary.
- ³ All translations are by the author of this article.
- ⁴ The *saci-pererê* and the *caipora* are two figures of Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous (Tupi-Guarani) folklore.

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Reading the Bus: Inge's and Steinbeck's Working Class Realities in Transit

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Abstract

The bus is an often-forgotten figure in American literature and popular culture, relegated to the margins in favor of the more aesthetically pleasing and individualized private car. However, it can represent more than its negative qualities like slowness and unpredictability would suggest. The bus' working-class-dominant ridership makes its cultural norms unique: disruptive of typical social power dynamics, offering a connection to pastoral, unindustrialized America, and fostering short-lived but intimate conversations and sexual encounters. This analysis of William Inge's *Bus Stop* and John Steinbeck's *The Wayward Bus* demonstrates this alternative presentation and reintroduces the bus as a unique site for finding narratives by and for the working class.

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Reading the Bus: Inge's and Steinbeck's Working Class Realities in Transit

Consider the bus: slow-moving, crowded, unpredictable at best and unreliable at worst. Known as the "feet of the working class," its literary and popular media portrayals skew negative (Grescoe 7). Its positive physical qualities—environmentally friendly, cheap, and simple to navigate—are often forgotten. Given *The Fatima Mansions'* song "Only Losers Take the Bus" and a description of bus riders by Joyce Carol Oates as "the losers of America," the chance of recognizing bus' merits are slim (211). In a country with sprawling metropolitan areas built with highway money, like Los Angeles and its eight centers of commerce, it is not, however, surprising that buses carry detrimental associations. American values of independence and individualism champion the private car, creating self-fulfilling prophecies of slow and dirty buses. Yet there are so few other places so anonymous and liminal, where the only barrier to access is a twenty-dollar bill. They create a space open to the richness of working-class narratives. William Inge's *Bus Stop* (1955) and John Steinbeck's *The Wayward Bus* (1947) show that buses operate with distinct cultural norms only capable of existing in the six-hour duration of a long-distance ride,

offered from perspectives that are otherwise relegated to the margins of literature.

Current literary criticism about these works reflects the lack of consideration given to buses by larger American culture. Both Inge's play and Steinbeck's novel have been overshadowed by the two authors' more popular works. What rare criticism there is of *Bus Stop* is limited to considerations of gendered power dynamics and feminist thought—in two articles by the same author (Johnson 1998; Johnson 1998). Most interpretations of *The Wayward Bus* have a similar focus on gender and sexuality studies or ignore the novel's content to focus on the circumstances that led Steinbeck to write the work (Allegretti 2004; Welter 2005). The bus falls into the background along with the working-class status of its riders, necessitating reinterpretation. One singular article has been written that discusses Steinbeck's bus as "a staging ground for class contact" rather than a symbol that only represents "poverty but also lack of agency" (Halverson 83). Halverson reads Steinbeck's novel from the working-class perspective of its characters, borrowing from American Studies scholarship to fill the gap in interpretive methods, which attributes buses' rare representation and negative public perception to classism and racism (Lipsitz 2004). The forthcoming analysis uses both approaches to consider the ways in which Steinbeck and Inge's buses facilitate atypical social dynamics rather than analyzing characters as if they existed in a vacuum independent of their transportation method and class concerns.

Inge's Small-Town Love Letter

Compressed and constrained time is a staple of bus narratives, in which a cross-country drive is shortened by transportation, yet lengthened by the longer-than-average duration of bus rides. William Inge explores this effect on people, where intimacies are formed in a moment and dissolve just as fast due to awareness of temporality and impermanence. *Bus Stop* draws out this theme with grounded humor in having its snowed-in bus driver, Carl, proposition a diner attendant, Grace (Inge 207). Grace is reluctant to sleep with him because he was inspired to proposition her by a fellow bus driver who already had, suggesting the existence of a culture of casual sex along transient bus routes. She defends her reputation and says that the other bus driver has only been to her apartment "once," when he cut his hand and needed it bandaged (Inge 164). Whether involved or not—and Carl's following comment that his colleague "speaks very highly" of her hints that she is—matters little to Carl, as sexual fluidity is a nonissue (Inge 164).

The play's intimacies are not only sexual, however, though many of the conversations center on sexuality. What is ordinarily a taboo topic for strangers becomes the

centerpiece in an environment that will not punish openness. The other diner attendant, Elma, is a high school senior new to working the night shift. A rider, Cherie, divulges her history as a small-town girl who became a burlesque dancer rather than marry her cousin. Knowing that she will never see Elma again after the bus is freed provides its own freedom for Cherie, allowing her to share with a complete stranger what most would find vulgar or unmentionable. Yet despite their connection, neither girl attempts to keep in contact, illustrating that their potential friendship is a “fleeting attraction” like Carl and Grace’s, facilitated by transit and unable to sustain itself outside of that setting (Inge 204).

Identities lost and gained are also centered, shifting as convenient in the relatively anonymous environment. Presentations of self are fluid and subject to deception and change, as with Dr. Gerald Lyman, seeming at first to be a charming and worldly academic. His attempt to woo Elma is interrupted by the revelation that he is an alcoholic dodging law enforcement for engaging in sexual conduct with his students (Inge 213). Had he been more careful with his drinking, no one would have been the wiser to his character in a space where individual identities are not scrutinized and anonymity is permitted. Without his arrival by bus, Elma would not have gained maturity or the ability to discern others’ intentions. She proves that relationships in transit are able to effect lasting change on passengers despite their seeming impermanence. They are also able to offer change unlike any other experience. Elma never would have met someone like Dr. Lyman in her small hometown, but the bus widens her world.

Nor would Bo, Cherie’s husband-to-be, have undergone a similar rapid course in maturity if not for his bus trip. He was brutish in his approach to relationships until his behavior was called into question by the other passengers. It appears he is rough-and-tumble at his core until it comes to light that he had never been with a woman and his bravado comes from insecurity and inexperience. By the end of the play, he has learned to show his “tender side” through careful guidance (Inge 192). Norm-breaking behavior becomes open for public comment as all bus riders must endure being in a closed space with one another for an extended period of time, causing introspection unlike what is performed in larger society.

Deviance from the norm is expected and therefore accepted, but only to a point. Grace and Carl’s casual sexual escapades are tolerated—and even poked fun at—by the town sheriff, Will Masters. He questions Carl later about his “walk” in the middle of a snowstorm. Carl gives a standard-issue response, to which Will responds, “I think ya better go upstairs ‘cause someone took your overshoes and left ‘em outside the door to Grace’s apartment” (Inge 207). This

signals his awareness of what Grace and Carl were doing, but that he does not care about this breach of normative behavior that is captured within the bounds of acceptable deviance. He does not tolerate Lyman’s obfuscation of his identity and warns Grace near the end of the play. Will is similarly intolerant of Bo’s unruly behavior as he attempts to wrangle and wheedle Cherie into marrying him. When Bo says he does not need to listen to Will and becomes belligerent, Will checks him and forces him to take a less aggressive approach (Inge 176). It is no coincidence that the sheriff is named Will Masters—he masters wills, permitting some non-normative behaviors but reining in others. His mediating role is crucial in understanding that while transit is liminal and unregulated, there are universal issues that will result in community intervention.

Even with its flawed characters and their questionable conduct, *Bus Stop* portrays a romantic version of life and culture on buses and in the small towns they service. Its presentation of time, though compressed and constrained, is worth enduring for the short-lived yet genuine connections and experiences it offers. It is altogether removed from modernity—its characters’ concept of big city life is Topeka, the state capital. Judgment is reserved for conduct considered universally unacceptable. Its diner may only have one kind of bread and its phone lines may get snowed in, but its community monitors and sustains itself for everyone’s good. In its exclusion of the hysteria of modern city life, *Bus Stop* functions as a needed positive configuration of the bus and the small town without veering into an overt critique of industrialization and modernization. Posed against nothing but itself, the play mirrors the form of the often isolated and ignored transit upon which it is centered.

Steinbeck’s Role Reversal

Steinbeck envisions the Greyhound in *The Wayward Bus* as “big and beautiful,” part of a system that “worked smoothly” (Steinbeck 88). One of the novel’s focalizers, Juan Chicoy, drives an old bus that is “no Greyhound but she wasn’t bad,” displaying an alternate valuation system that does not consider private cars and makes a nonissue of “a little rust” and hubcaps that need paint (Steinbeck 107). Published in 1947 at the beginning of car manufacturing for the general public, the novel occupies the space between the end of the Second World War and its resulting economic boom. It begins with overturning the typical cultural conception of buses like a plea to cling to the pastoral romance of bus rides and unindustrialized America, framing the wealth of social subversions later on. Juan’s bus brings together Americans of varying classes and backgrounds whose probability of interaction would seem low if not for the setting. The bus disguises their differences—as with a girl who performs at nightclubs picking the name “Camille

Oaks” based on a Camel advertisement and a tree—and thus allows for meaningful interaction (Steinbeck 112). Meaningful, but difficult, with sexual trysts and arguments presented as their unsanitized realities as the novel’s perspective shifts multiple times each chapter to re-see the same issues from all angles and subvert usual power structures.

One example comes from the arc of Elliott Pritchard and Ernest Horton’s relationship, the former a businessman on a trip to “see the real people” of America, the latter a veteran and salesman (Steinbeck 194). Typical hierarchical structures would dictate that business owners refrain from socializing with their underlings, yet Elliott trips over himself to impress and recruit Ernest based on selling ability and personality alone. Their anonymous positioning on the bus removes class barriers—for the time it lasts. “[Veterans] are a fine bunch of boys,” Elliott says, “I hope we can put in an administration that will take care of them” (Steinbeck 129). He is clueless about Ernest’s veteran status and is shocked by his “brutality” and “slightly crooked smile” when he responds, “Like after the last war?” (Steinbeck 129). As a character unused to being questioned and terrified of “foreign language or a political party he didn’t belong to,” Steinbeck places Elliott in the ideal environment to undergo critique of his ideology, without any awareness of being critiqued (Steinbeck 206). Here, framed by the bus, he “fumbles with,” then is made to confront, disparities, unable to simplify them as “out of line” and needing to “live a good normal life” while outside his regular sphere of influence (Steinbeck 129). His later attempt to fold Ernest into his business is called out as “very smart, very high-class blackmail,” which causes Elliott to question his morality for the first time (Steinbeck 131). In the suspended pause of bus transit, Elliott cannot simply brush off the comment as he would if he heard a complaint from one of his wage workers—and he responds with anger.

Elliott’s initial rage is cooled by his fleeting personal connection to Ernest. He undertakes a mission to “prove to [Ernest] that his judgment had been wrong”—and fails (Steinbeck 179). Instead, Ernest draws out the cognitive dissonance caused by his earlier comment on Elliott’s business, questioning his self-sufficiency and the ability to assign motives for “young people [losing] their faith in America” (Steinbeck 214). Ernest dismantles Elliott’s argument “as though he addressed a child,” reversing the societal dynamics that would otherwise have made Elliott his superior (Steinbeck 215). He is the grounded working-class reality to Elliott’s upper-class idealism. Their interaction is a fantasy outside the realm of literature, yet the bus provides a believable staging ground for their conflict. Elliott’s worldview is shaken last by Ernest foregoing the anonymity provided to reveal he is a veteran directly affected by Elliott’s oversimplifications. “Don’t worry. I’m not going to tell you about it,” he says, picking up Elliott’s horror, to which Elliott responds,

“I think [our soldiers] should have a voice,” contradicting his previous attempts to speak for veterans and say that the government could not “[owe] them a living for life” (Steinbeck 215). Elliott cannot cope with Ernest’s point and dismisses him, choosing to believe “everybody would make money and be happy”—and that is where the bus lends itself to gritty reality after facilitating an unlikely encounter by virtue of anonymity and quickly formed relationships (Steinbeck 216).

Dynamics of sexuality are also in flux, similar to Inge’s representation of casual sex along bus routes. When not talking to Ernest, Elliott grapples with his desire for Camille. Walking back to Ernest, he falls “sprawling on Camille’s lap” with his “arm between her knees” (Steinbeck 127). The unpredictability of the bus makes his hidden desire plain. His awkward positioning strips him of his respectable upper-class presentation and establishes a reversed power dynamic where Camille is literally placed over Elliott. Her skirt is torn and Elliott “blushes violently” (Steinbeck 127). Violently, used to describe blushing, suggests a rawer component to the fleeting moment, where Elliott has been embarrassed and must struggle to reassert control. “Everyone [laughs],” however, making the bus “not full of strangers” by “some chemical association,” shutting Elliott out from reasserting anything, as is further shown by his attempts at impressing Ernest with his business wit (Steinbeck 127).

After Ernest’s rebuff, Elliott, unaware of the shifted dynamics around him, plays at making Camille his kept woman. Because the bus removes Elliott’s upper-class pretensions, Camille is free to respond to him transparently. Crucially, she interrupts him, finishing his thoughts in a more practical—and humiliating—way. She says he would “take months to . . . surprise [her] with it, but her desires are anchored only in her material reality—Camille will not entertain him because she is “nearly broke” (Steinbeck 220). Elliott’s careful crafting of his proposition falls apart on the bus, in the same way as his business’ identification as blackmail. Instead of capitulating, Camille only shows him “hardness” and “defiance,” not pressured to appease him, where she otherwise would have been viewed as “depraved” for performing in nightclubs (Steinbeck 221). Their working-class method of transportation gives Camille agency to control the interaction. Close to her, unalienated from her as before, he takes note of her makeup and feels “naked” before her, unable to disguise his intentions or, despite Camille’s normatively feminine presentation, compel her to “[be] a lady” about entering an affair with him (Steinbeck 221). Her makeup protects her and shows Elliott what he was attracted to could be a gimmick. Still, he lacks the self-reflective capabilities to understand his vulnerability and takes out the rage he feels toward Camille on the one person unaffected by the otherwise reversed dynamics on the bus—his wife. She tells him that he is “tearing [her] dress” and he responds that he “bought it,”

articulating that the bus works in favor of its working-class passengers who are beholden to capital (Steinbeck 222). It is the opposite of the earlier scene where Elliott's tripping resulted in Camille's torn skirt and his humiliation. Elliott, an outsider, loses his power in an environment where knowledge of capital gains taxes means nothing.

Nothing is what Elliott shakes out to be, stripped of his power in a setting controlled by the working class. At the end of the novel, he is made to wait on Mr. Van Brunt, an elderly farmer who suffers a stroke. While holding Van Brunt's tongue down with a stick, Elliott is "revolted" by his appearance and "laboring chest," unaware that Van Brunt had suffered another stroke as a result of struggling to make ends meet after the war (Steinbeck 234). "Laboring" itself refers to the rapid breaths Van Brunt takes to keep himself alive, but it also flags him as someone foreign to Elliott—a man who has spent his life at work. Both the man's condition and the class he represents converge in Elliott's revulsion. Van Brunt is not a person whose life Elliott would consider valuable—as his present condition is evidence enough of the lengths manufacturers would go to accumulate more wealth. Coming after Ernest's rejection, his reluctant care for Van Brunt takes on a different light. He is face-to-face with another indirect consequence of his own success in industrializing implements of war, but he is still only able to think of himself.

Elliott wonders "why can't it be [him], dying" instead, since Van Brunt is "never going to have to go through anything again" (Steinbeck 234). His response to the inconvenience of helping another human from dying is to victimize himself, unable to understand that Van Brunt has already led a life of greater hardship. He does not realize that his own health and Van Brunt's sickness are the results of the war's social stratification—it would be illogical for him to be dying, but this thought does not occur—Elliott's perception and compassion begin and end with himself. At this moment, he doesn't "want to think about anything," his mind closed off to his original objective of seeing "real America" after discovering that it did not suit his preconceptions (Steinbeck 234). Contained in the bus' inverted socioeconomic structure, Elliott is preserving the symbolic last of small homeownership, rural Americans, whereas he and others like him would have monopolized their livelihoods without remorse or awareness. For the duration of the bus ride, however fleeting, he has to work against the interests of his class, taking on some of Van Brunt's burden in a manner unparalleled by other forms of writing about transportation.

Conclusion

Rather than popular representations of buses, like Kerouac's idea of them as "always covered with butts and

spit" and "[giving] a feeling of sadness," Inge and Steinbeck offer another conception: one of buses as a unique ground for facilitating cross-class encounters and conflict, controlled and focalized by the working class (34–35). Their narratives exist as a challenge to literary interpretations of their novels that only capture one dimension of the narrative or, more simply, construe them as boring and plotless. The function of identity and relationships are subtler than the glamor of a private car, but they are rich in the experience they take from the everyday. Buses' speed can allow for a closer look at America in both physical and interpersonal senses. The literary purpose that both authors suggest buses fulfill translates well onto their current negative perception—a method of transportation that allows for working-class solidarity and power is a disadvantageous one to current power structures. As such, the wealth of subversion and overlooked perspectives that buses promote may warrant their consideration beyond the bookends of analysis and narrative construction.

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Read Between the Letters: A Typographical Analysis of Disney Movie Titles

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Abstract

Within the field of linguistics, typography has transitioned from being considered redundant to a vital part of multimodal communication. Drawing on Nørgaard (2009) and van Leeuwen's (2005) multimodal approach to typography and distinctive feature analysis, in this paper I analyse Disney movie titles. I aim to highlight the wealth that typography (alone) possesses in terms of communication of message and meaning, which is facilitated by using the lens of semiotics. Most importantly, through this paper, I illustrate that the hegemonic gender ideal in Disney that is enabled by the typographic design of the movie titles continues even today.

Introduction

The notion of a "television teacher," first mentioned by K.L. Hoermer (1996), is one that involves the portrayal and strengthening of societal stereotypes thus implying a socialisation of particular behaviour and attitudes which then become emulated by individuals within a society. Such is the power of media and its impact upon us as a global society, through which it feeds ideals and in turn reflects upon our lived realities.

One dominant form of media is animation; we are exposed to various cartoon animations from birth. Disney, in particular, is a popular brand of animation considered by parents and media to be suitable for family viewing and is, as explained by Hoermer, often seen as synonymous with the term "animation" because of its longstanding existence within media and the domain of cartoon animation (Hoermer 1996).

When we think of Disney animation, we do not often pay attention to the movie titles themselves. Yet the letterforms, upon closer inspection, reveal a communication so rich as to weave a tale that hints at what to expect in the movie. Such an analysis of the letterforms is necessary for us to understand the vital role that typography plays in communication and even more so to reveal what hegemonic ideologies are being communicated to Disney's audiences, in particular its youngest and most easily influenced viewers.

The academic literature that explores Disney and gender states that the brand has taken on a progressive

and more inclusive stance to storytelling, with regards to character development and complex identity expressions (England & Descartes (2011); Hoermer (1996); Itmeizeh (2017); Madison (2014); Matyas (2010)). It is clear from the typographic analyses, examined below, that this only applies on-screen, whereas off-screen and in viewing other areas which portray Disney and its characters, such as the typography of movie titles, hegemonic ideals and gender norms are maintained through the typeface design.

In this article Disney movie titles are investigated using typography (and thus semiotics) as a tool for analysis in uncovering the potential meaning that lays within the design of the typeface. The article consists of three parts: (1) an overview of literature covering Disney, gender, and identity, (2) a methodology section on typography and semiotics, and (3) an analysis section which entails a discussion of methodological approaches to typography and why I will be solely utilizing Nørgaard (2009) and van Leeuwen's (2005) multimodal approach. The corpus for analysis will consist of *The Princess and the Frog* (Musker & Clements, 2009) and *Wreck-it Ralph* (Moore & Reardon, 2012), as both animations refer to the central character(s) in the movie title.

Ultimately, I argue that the letterforms found in Disney movie titles communicate the thematic structuring and information to be expected in the movie. These letterforms further detail an expression of the characters in the design of the typeface whilst attaching traditional and prejudicial gender ideology to these characters.

Disney, Gender, and Identity

Disney fairy tales include the stories "The Princess and the Frog," "Rapunzel," and "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," all by the 19th century German authors The Brothers Grimm, who wrote about the folklore and oral traditions of the German women of a particular region. These women told the stories as a way of staying awake at night as they worked (Itmeizeh, 2017).

Today, Disney has grown from animated stories of princesses and princes into an entire brand that has vast merchandise and multiple theme parks. The Disney franchise has a strong influence on children's media and merchandise consumerism and centres around the selling of a certain "girlhood" ideal that is largely defined by gender and the consumption of related messages and products (England & Descartes, 2011).

Gender is defined by the societally created roles and responsibilities of women and men, as determined by their sex. Gender is decided by a particular society's dominant belief of what a specific gender should look like; women are to be "feminine" and men should be "masculine" (Itmeizeh,

2017). More so, gender involves separate attitudes and behaviours that society expects to be learned and imitated via spheres of socialisation, like the family, media, and formal institutions like schools (Itmeizeh, 2017).

Consequently, identity formation is often very strongly influenced by media and Disney cartoon animations, which are typically viewed from a very young age when individuals are at their most susceptible (England & Descartes, 2011). This results in an identity formation heavily embedded in the gender representations on the screen, now taken off the screen, and subsequently into real life (Matyas, 2010).

As society changes with time, so does Disney; or so some scholars like Madison (2014) and Itmeizeh (2017) argue. In respect to gender expression, Disney has included more complex identities in its characters which are supposed to represent the “real world.” This is noted by Madison (2014), who parallels the Disney transitions from traditional gender ideology to progressive gender views with the three waves of feminist movements: Pre-transition (1930s–1960s Disney) with the first wave, Transition (1980s–2010 Disney) with the second wave, and Progression (2012–onwards Disney) with the third wave.

Supporting this notion of Disney’s progression, Itmeizeh (2017) utilises a textual analysis of Disney scripts and finds a balance of the speech elements (hedges, questions, tag questions, and empty adjectives) between the female and male characters. This finding suggests that Disney is progressing toward an egalitarian and inclusive expression of gender ideology and representation. This expression, though, is somewhat inconsistent. Compare, for example, under the Progression period *Brave* (Andrews, Chapman, & Purcell, 2012) to *Zootopia* (Moore & Howard, 2016); where Merida is strong, assertive, and independent, whilst Judy Hopps is portrayed as a soft female bunny cop that requires the assistance of a male fox in order to succeed in her career (Madison, 2014).

Matyas (2010), however, finds that despite the few progressions made by Disney, it still maintains traditional and problematic views on gender and race as evidenced in *The Princess and the Frog* (Muskier & Clements, 2009) which represents its first ever black princess within the domains of domestic work. This is reinforced by England & Descartes (2011) and Hoermer (1996) who observe that even with leading female characters taking on more “masculine” attitudes and behaviours—having both stereotypically feminine and (subdued) masculine qualities—the leading or linked male characters still preserve more stereotypically masculine characteristics while resisting “overly” feminine traits.

Prior scholarly work on Disney and gender has utilised content and textual analysis as the primary means for examination of gender ideology and Disney’s transitions (see England & Descartes (2011); Hoermer (1996); Itmeizeh (2017); Matyas (2010)). However, this work only explores the on-screen behaviours and attitudes of the characters leaving out the other areas in which Disney extends beyond what is on the screen, such as the movie titles themselves which are found on all merchandise and convey messages of their own that are bound by particular ideologies.

Without analysing these other areas that extend beyond the screen, such as movie titles, we miss other aspects of Disney (other domains of semiotics) that contribute toward a certain image of Disney and its characters; that is, being progressive on-screen and prejudicial off-screen. Moreover, we fail to view the bigger picture of Disney’s transition toward becoming wholly progressive and we neglect to identify the gender ideology which influences its audiences.

Methodology: Typography and Semiotics

Typography and semiotics work hand in hand; the former refers to describing the visual domain, while the latter unveils the meaning potential that can be found within said visual domain.

Spitzmüller (2007) describes typography as “the visual appearance of written language, notwithstanding the medium” (p. 4), essentially the typeface. More than this however, typography involves semiotics and produces a particular set of meanings.

With the semiotics of typography, van Leeuwen (2005) offers the notions of connotation and metaphor as a means of describing letter forms as signifiers; the manifestation of the sign. He explains connotation as being the importation of the sign (typeface) into a domain, so that the sign then comes to attach the existing associations (and thus meaning) within that domain. The domain refers to particular groups, cultures, and historical periods (van Leeuwen, 2005) e.g., 1970s hippie associated typeface known as Margin.

Metaphor involves distinctive features (of letter forms) becoming meaningful (van Leeuwen, 2005) through their shared “real-world-like” metaphorical expressions: “Century Gothic, and ‘roundness’ readily lends itself as a metaphor for ‘organicness,’ ‘natural-ness,’ ‘femininity’” (p. 140). Roundness is aligned with femininity because of the imagined curved shape of a women’s body; hence the real-world existences becoming tied with the metaphorical expressions (of letter forms) to create meaning potentials.

Nørgaard (2009) builds upon van Leeuwen's (2005) notion of letter forms as signifiers and notes "discursive import" by van Leeuwen (2005) as being a more accurate replacement term for connotation, describing it as a created meaning potential from when a sign is imported into a context in which it did not previously belong (Nørgaard, 2009). Furthermore, she continues to use Peirce's "index" and "icon" in exploring van Leeuwen's (2005) concept of the metaphor: "Typographically, the same kinds of meaning occur when a typographical signifier either looks like that which it signifies (icon) or invokes the material origin of its own coming into being (index)" (Nørgaard, 2009, p. 147). Typography and semiotics are inextricably bound in the creation of meaning potentials. In doing so letterforms (typeface design) become the tool for which communication embedded in semiotics is realised.

Analysis

Utilising the distinctive feature analysis proposed by van Leeuwen (2006), typeface designs are meant to be viewed within the context (theme) in which the typeface is found. In van Leeuwen's (2006) system of analysis, weight refers to boldness, slope to the cursive, sloping and uprightness of typeface, and expansion to a condensed or widely spaced typeface. Curvature entails angularity and roundness. Connectivity is whether or not letters are joined, touching or self-contained. Orientation is whether letters look lengthened (vertical) or squashed (horizontal), regularity refers to if the typeface is the same throughout, and non-distinctive features comprise of the odds and ends such as terminal loops, flourishes, ligatures and so forth. A multimodal approach to distinctive features has come to include colour (saturation, modulation, hue and so forth), material texture, and movement to also create meaning (Nørgaard, 2009; van Leeuwen, 2005).

The analysis used in this article will focus on letter forms using van Leeuwen's (2006) distinctive feature analysis to examine the movie titles. I will centre on colour, weighting, slope, expansion, curvature, connectivity, orientation, regularity, and non-distinctive features, and what they signify.

I selected the movies for analysis—*The Princess and the Frog* (Muskier & Clements, 2009) and *Wreck-it Ralph* (Moore & Reardon, 2012)—because they represent a more inclusive and unique fairy tale narrative as well as include the main characters (by name or by role) in the movie title. *The Princess and the Frog* (Muskier & Clements, 2009) showcases Disney's first-ever black princess and boasts a strong leading female character, whilst *Wreck-it Ralph* (Moore & Reardon, 2012) presents the latest male leading character since *Aladdin* (Muskier & Clements, 1992) and a tribute to

'90s arcade games. By analysing the typography of these two movie titles, we see that both analyses convey dominant and traditional gender binaries of the associated masculine and feminine qualities.

The Princess and the Frog (Muskier & Clements, 2009)

In *The Princess and the Frog* (Muskier & Clements, 2009) the leading female character (Tiana) is strongly dichotomised from the linked male character (Naveen the frog) in terms of feminine and masculine traits of the respective typeface design. In reference to Tiana, the text shows that "P" stresses the female physique which is often idealized as being both thin and curvaceous, whilst the "N" signals a naturalness and feminine trait. Of prince Naveen, the design emphasises angularity, with words that are flat, wide, and self-contained. Words referring to the prince are also bolder and more massive than the words which refer to Tiana, unveiling an unemotional, steadier, and dominating tone to the prince. This is examined in further detail below.



Figure 1. *The Princess and the Frog* (Muskier & Clements, 2009)

"The princess and the frog" features two contrasting typefaces between the words "princess" and "frog," with

the function words (“the” and “and”) being another separate typeface design altogether. “Princess” is displayed in a polished gold colour, connoting high-quality and royalty, with a thinnish regular weighting (van Leeuwen, 2006) that implies timidity and/or being insubstantial. “P” has flicks at the top and bottom of the letter and a slight thickness on the round part, entasis that suggests a natural, maternal, and feminine nature (van Leeuwen, 2006). (The female physique is often idealized as being both thin and curvaceous.) Additionally, an internal pearl-shaped loop terminal is seen as well as a downward orientation next to the word “Frog.” This signals a reaching for roots (down-to-earth character) and a possible reaching or tie to “frog.”

“R” shows both connectivity (just touching the “I”) and a descending orientation (van Leeuwen, 2006); again, an external connection (relation) to “frog” whilst remaining free-standing as not all of the letters are descending. “I” stands upright, without curvature, slope, connectivity, or orientation, and presents the subtle irregularity found in the word.

The bottom parts of “N” are nearly touching the “I” on the left side and has a flick on the right, whilst the middle line of the “N” is slightly thicker and sloping (signalling a naturalness and feminine trait) (van Leeuwen, 2006). “C” also displays entasis, as was seen in “P,” along with a flick on the top part. “E” stands upright, with flicks on every end. A sense of good quality (gold) independence is subtly reinforced here by this double occurrence of uprightness (van Leeuwen, 2006). The “S” letters hold flicks on the top parts and incomplete internal loops at the bottom, while in the second “S” an exaggerated downward orientation extends to the word “frog,” as was found with “P.” All in all, a hegemonic femininity is portrayed through the word “Princess,” with the curves, connectivity, pearl-shaped loop terminal, and flicks of the letters emphasising the qualities of an “ideal” woman.

The function words “the” and “and” are also in polished gold colour—as was with the word “princess”—and aside from the first “the” being slightly bigger than the other function words, there is a maintained regularity throughout in its distinctive features. Regarding orientation, the first “the” appears to be less of a horizontal dimension (flattened) than the latter words (van Leeuwen, 2006). There is no slope or connectivity in these function words, but there is a slight expansion in comparison to the words “princess” and “frog” and a stress on angularity (van Leeuwen, 2006)—the words are flat, wide, and self-contained. This denotes a distinction between “princess” and “frog” and comments on one’s relation to the other, as separate, abrasive, or instable and both being of high-quality and royalty (colour) (Musker & Clements, 2009).

Lastly, the word “frog” is textured and green and indexes frog skin, yet there is a slight gold trim on each letter which implies an underlying high-quality and royalty to the ugliness or repellent persona. The typeface for “frog” is more expanded and heavily weighted than the word “princess” signifying a “taking up of space” (boldness in character) and possible indulgence and assertion (van Leeuwen, 2006). “F” is upright and has an elongated flick to the left and nearly touches “R” on the top part. This suggests it is relating to independence but is differentiated from “princess” due to the colour and texture combination, so a repulsive independent nature (Musker & Clements, 2009). “R” is also upright, although the bottom right has an exaggerated flick (van Leeuwen, 2006). And “O” has an internal gold portrayal of a simplistic crown; a frog on the outside but a royal on the inside. Furthermore, the simplicity connotes a simpler status (prince and not a king) and of a simpler character. Finally, “G” displays two flicks, both inward and a faintly looping outward one. Overall, the flicks in this word, being so different from the ones found in “princess,” show a similarity to an associated medieval font design. This makes sense since the makers of the movie aimed for a “The prince and the pauper” feel that centres in the 16th century (Musker & Clements, 2009). Furthermore, the flicks also resemble a frog-like physique with regards to their toes and amplify the frog characteristic of the design (Musker & Clements, 2009).

“The princess and the frog” typography intensely represents the characters themselves (Tiana and Prince Naveen) (Musker & Clements, 2009) and dichotomizes their personalities in great depth. This is done through the associations held with the particular letter styles and the linked ideologies (such as with the gold colour and royalty) (van Leeuwen, 2006). Moreover, from analysing the typography of *The Princess and the Frog* (Musker & Clements, 2009) we can see a vivid gender binary produced between Tiana and Prince Naveen that parallels that of the hegemonic masculine and feminine type. Tiana is portrayed as smaller, daintier, and dependent on Prince Naveen who takes up space, is domineering, steadier, and thus superior, seen by the thin, curvy, and connectivity of Tiana’s letters for “Princess” versus the larger, wider, isolated, and angular letters of “Frog” for Prince Naveen. The above analysis showcases that even though the on-screen portrayal of Tiana and Prince Naveen is complex and progressive (Musker & Clements, 2009)—Tiana has a job and being an entrepreneur who is not afraid to take risks and Prince Naveen is broke, unskilled, and always infatuated by the opposite sex—off-screen, and on the movie title, a hegemonic gender ideology is maintained that contradicts with the on-screen depiction of the characters.

Another movie which strongly relates a character representation through the typeface design is *Wreck-it Ralph* (Moore & Reardon, 2012). In *Wreck-it Ralph* (Moore & Reardon, 2012), the text embodies the dominant ideal of masculinity (similar to “Frog” of prince Naveen) and thus the leading male character Ralph. The typeface design is dominated by lettering that is heavily expanded, weighted, and vertical in dimension, along with a bold, large, and angular appearance which associates a harsh dominance, strength, and lack of emotion and connectivity.



Figure 2. *Wreck-it Ralph* (Moore & Reardon, 2012)

The typography of “Wreck-it Ralph” is made salient through the bright red colour, connoting violence, love, and courage, which is associated with Ralph’s character (Moore & Reardon, 2012). In conjunction, the boldness and massive size of the text stands out against the background. This relates to the character who is also massive, takes up a great deal of space, and is overbearing and domineering (Moore & Reardon, 2012).

The lettering is very expanded, weighted, and vertical in dimension, providing a visual representation of the character himself both in size and in height, but additionally suggesting a spreading out and taking-up of space. This

includes a connotation of hectoring and intimidation of audiences and conveys an upward aspiration and instability (van Leeuwen, 2006). Furthermore, each letter is upright and angular and lacks in any connectivity (van Leeuwen, 2006). In this context the result is a form of mechanicalness as well as a harsh and masculine nature, whilst the lack of connectivity implicates a sense of fragmentation and separateness. This is all symbolic of the main character himself (Moore & Reardon, 2012).

There is an irregularity in the word “wreck” (van Leeuwen, 2006), as the letters “R,” “E,” “C,” and “K” all accommodate the depiction of the character Ralph and heightens the quality of disruption (wrecking) via this irregularity. “R” and “K” each have one end on the bottom that is longer than the other bottom end and “E” and “C” are both half the size of the rest of the letters. This is representative of Ralph’s size. Ralph is twice the size (sometimes more) of most the other characters (Moore & Reardon, 2012).

However, the word “Ralph” appears to be regular, aside from its appearance of being pulled forward in the centre, with “L” as the most foregrounded letter. This could be again representative of the character, as a big, “in your face,” and most prominent character in the film (Moore & Reardon, 2012).

The lettering style is in accordance with the theme of the movie itself surrounding games and, in specific, arcade games (Moore & Reardon, 2012). This style appears to be related to “Donkey-Kong,” a very popular arcade game which involved wrecking from the ‘80s and ‘90s. The block-like quality of the text resembles the lower quality graphics found in games of that time and thus amplifies the arcade game theme. Overall, the text design vividly depicts the nature and personality of the main character and what to expect in the movie.

From analysing the typography of “Wreck-it Ralph” (Moore & Reardon, 2012) we can see a clear hegemonic masculine ideal portrayed through the letters “Wreck-it Ralph,” which is representative of the leading character Ralph. The letters are bold, expanded, isolated, angular, and vertical, giving off a domineering, superior, unattached, and harsh quality. Most of these letter qualities are also shared by “Frog” in “The Princess and the Frog” (Muskier & Clements, 2009) and is representative of Prince Naveen—who is also a man—but share no lettering design qualities with “Princess,” which refers to Tiana. Rather, the lettering of “Wreck-it Ralph” (Moore & Reardon, 2012) like “Frog” is in direct opposition to the lettering of “Princess.”

Thus, yet again, Disney preserves the hegemonic gender ideology (and binary) through the depiction of its characters off-screen, when on-screen a more complex and

progressive identity of the character is presented: on-screen Ralph is emotional, tries to form connections with others, and is somewhat maternal, whilst off-screen (and on the movie title) Ralph is unattached, dominating, and harsh.

Conclusion

Through the detailed analyses of the movie titles of *The Princess and the Frog* (Musker & Clements, 2009) and *Wreck-it Ralph* (Moore & Reardon, 2012), the expressions of the characters become vividly portrayed in the typeface design. More so, in the subtleties of the typeface, the thematic structuring of the movie is conveyed, along with an outlining of the story to be expected. Such an underlying structure is only facilitated through the meaning potentials created with the aforementioned semiotics. The typographic design of the Disney movie titles plays a vital role in previewing to audiences what to expect from the movie and whether or not it captures their interest, leading them to decide whether to watch the film or not.

Additionally, these titles reveal that although Disney has put in much work to create fairy tales that are more inclusive and progressive, dominant gender norms and ideologies continue to be reproduced through the typeface. This is clearly seen in *The Princess and the Frog* (Musker & Clements, 2009), where the ideal female physique and character is portrayed through the words “The Princess” and in *Wreck-it Ralph* (Moore & Reardon, 2012) where the epitome of masculinity is expressed through the boldness and massive size of the text, which stands out and relates to the qualities “overbearing” and “domineering.”

Lastly, given that only two Disney movies are analysed here, this paper can only gesture to, but not speak for, the rest of the Disney animations and animations in general. A further analysis of animations beyond the “on-screen” would prove insightful to the transitions of cartoon animations into a more inclusive and egalitarian nature.

In essence, typographic analysis is important for the unveiling of subtle communications that may or may not reproduce unjust hegemonic ideologies. Typography communicates a great deal in a very small and unexpected way. Typography tells us something important about its creators while simultaneously reflecting back on our own world.

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The Exploration of Latinx Cultural Norms in Alfonso Cuarón's "Roma"

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Abstract

In Alfonso Cuarón's 2018 film "Roma," 1970s Mexico City serves as the backdrop for a poignant narrative about class conflict, gender norms, and trauma. The film follows the life of a live-in maid named Cleo Gutiérrez and the middle-class family she works for, delving into the trials and tribulations of family strife, the remnants of Spanish colonization, and life amid the Mexican Dirty War. As a semi-autobiographical film, "Roma" provides an authentic portrayal of Mexican life that transcends time. From political turmoil to *machismo*, many of the conflicts in the film remain relevant to Latinxs today. This essay analyzes the film's portrayal of Latinx culture and uncovers what it reveals about the origin and endurance of Latinx norms.

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Introduction

Alfonso Cuarón's 2018 film "Roma" follows the life of a live-in maid named Cleo Gutiérrez in early 1970s Mexico City. Set against the backdrop of the Mexican Dirty War (a conflict between Mexico's authoritarian government and left-wing guerilla groups), "Roma" shows how political turmoil influences Latinx experiences. Although Cuarón created the film as an homage to his childhood live-in maid, "Roma" is unique among Latin American cinema in that it unintentionally represents many cultural themes that have endured in Latinx experiences across generations (Tapley, 2018). Thus, the film serves as a distinctive cinematic perspective that can provide insight into modern Latinx life by showcasing the origin of cultural norms and conditions that continue to affect Latinxs. While most scholars have noted the movie's feminist themes, "Roma" calls for a more well-rounded analysis of its cultural motifs, as well as their modern applications, in order to understand how the film parallels the experiences of many modern-day Latinxs. Therefore, the analysis presented in this paper is novel in that it will dissect

different sociological themes that appear in the film and study its applications in modern-day Latinx life.

Marianismo, Familismo, and Machismo

The film introduces Cleo as a young Indigenous woman who works for a white, middle-class family in the Colonia Roma neighborhood of Mexico City. The family is headed by wife and husband, Sofia and Antonio, whose marriage is crumbling amid the latter's adultery. While Sofia juggles her relationship needs and her family's expectation that she remain married, Cleo deals with an unwanted pregnancy and societal expectations of womanhood and motherhood. At the heart of these conflicts lie *marianismo* and *familismo*, which are the cultural and societal expectation that Latinas to emulate the Virgin Mary and an emphasis on the family over the individual, respectively (Raffaelli & Iturbide, p. 351). Although the Latina gender norm *marianismo* is typically conceptualized in rather negative ways, Cuarón explores how it can be positive for women. As a nanny for the family's four children, Cleo makes a living by adhering to *marianista* values like the "family pillar" norm, which holds that Latinas are central to the family (Nuñez, 2016). Furthermore, her maternal demeanor enables her to serve as a much-needed parental figure for the children, whose father is absent.

However, Cuarón also acknowledges that *marianismo* creates unhealthy standards for women. According to Polish film critic Ewa Mazierska, the film "is based on parallelisms," as both main female characters experience similar circumstances (Mazierska, p. 259). Pressured to conform to the *marianista* expectation of chastity, Cleo ignores her pregnancy until she misses her period for the third month in a row. Furthermore, when she visits the doctor to confirm her pregnancy, she is reluctant to discuss her sexual history. Although Cleo does not want the baby, she does not express this desire until after she gives birth to it as a stillborn in one of the final scenes. Sofia also engages in the *marianista* practice of self-silencing, as well as subjugation to men and the *familista* prioritization of her family's needs above her own. When her mother, Teresa, pressures her to stay with her unfaithful husband for her children's sake even though she wants a divorce, Sofia becomes complicit in Antonio's adultery by hiding it from their children. Regardless of the women's class and racial differences, the social oppression of women in Mexico is evident throughout the film—in one scene, Sofia even muses that "Women, we are always alone" (Mazierska, p. 259). As such, "Roma" exemplifies how cultural norms can intertwine and pressure Latinas to act against their desires.

On the other hand, the men in "Roma" reflect the Latino gender norm *machismo*. Although Sofia and Cleo's

respective love interests, Antonio and Fermin, also have structural differences like race and class, they are both subjected to the same social expectations. *Machismo* is characterized by traditional ideas of masculinity, such as aggressiveness and hypersexuality (Raffaelli & Iturbide, p. 350). Both Antonio and Fermin exemplify the Latinx myth of the *macho* Latino by displaying *machista* behaviors, such as self-centeredness and aggressiveness. An issue with this depiction is that it disregards the influence that the more positive gender norm *caballerismo* can have on Latino men. This norm seems to be absent in Antonio and Fermin's lives, as they disregard the *caballerista* values of integrity and responsibility by prioritizing their own desires over their family obligations. Antonio abandons his family to engage in sexual escapades and Fermin leaves Cleo when he finds out that she is pregnant and denies that the child is his when she confronts him. Rather than portraying *machismo* as wholly negative, however, Cuarón explores how it can be a coping mechanism that has negative consequences. In a monologue that showcases a rare moment of male vulnerability, Fermin reveals that his mother died when he was young, his cousins beat him and he became an alcoholic, but martial arts allowed him to escape his destructive childhood environment. He uses martial arts to feign hypermasculinity, which he uses to cope with his mental health issues. However, Fermin's "man up" mentality causes him to become aggressive towards others: he joins the violent paramilitary group *Los Halcones* and he degrades Cleo and nearly kills her after she confronts him about the pregnancy. As such, Cuarón acknowledges that *machismo* is not only harmful for men, but it has negative consequences for the women in their lives as well, thus compounding the problems that women already face due to *marianismo*.

Post-Colonial Racism and Political Trauma

Although *machismo*, *marianismo*, and *familismo* fuel the conflicts among the main characters in "Roma," Cuarón also weaves other cultural influences into the story. The remnants of Spanish colonialism (namely colorism and racism) are present throughout the film, driving the circumstances that the characters find themselves in. According to CEO of National Hispanic Media Coalition Alex Nogales, "The darker you are, the more Indigenous you are, the more class-less you are" (Gutierrez, 2019). As a descendant of the Indigenous Mixtec whose land the Spanish took, Cleo is a part of the lower class. Likewise, most of the other Indigenous characters and extras in the film are poor live-in maids or street vendors. On the other hand, the family Cleo works for is white (presumably descended from the Spanish) and are middle-class, given Antonio's occupation as a doctor and Sofia's as a professor. Similarly, other white characters have careers that carry prestige, such as jobs in healthcare and entertainment. Although Cuarón places

a Mixtec woman at the center of the story, he acknowledges that Mexicans at the time did not value Indigenous voices and treated white people as superior to Indigenous Mexicans. For instance, the media that characters consume is solely centered around white voices: in different scenes, Cleo watches the American film "Marooned," the French film "La Grande Vadrouille," and a TV episode featuring white martial artist Professor Zovek. Cuarón also explores this idea in more subtle ways, as Cleo only speaks Mixtec with other Indigenous characters when white people are not present, but she switches to Spanish as soon as a white character appears in a scene.

In addition to exploring racial trauma, "Roma" also incorporates political trauma into its story and showcases how it is related to religiosity and *fatalismo*, the belief that one has no control over the circumstances of one's life. As mentioned previously, the film is set during the Mexican Dirty War, which brings significant stressors to the characters' lives. In a scene where Cleo and Teresa go to a furniture store, a protest occurring outside of the store erupts into the Corpus Christi massacre, a historic conflict between student protesters and the paramilitary group *Los Halcones*. Amid the chaos of the shooting, Fermin breaks into the furniture store and points a gun at Cleo and Teresa, as the latter prays in anguish instead of pleading for help or trying to escape. The women's reaction to this traumatic event exemplifies *fatalismo*, or the idea that one's time to die comes when it comes and one has no control over this fate, as their inaction suggests that they surrendered to their potential deaths. Furthermore, Teresa continues to use prayer to relieve her stress when Cleo goes into labor in the next scene, showcasing the importance of spirituality for many Latinxs, who may turn to religion in the face of adversity.

Modern Applications

What is especially striking about "Roma" is that even though the film was originally meant as an homage to Mexico's past, its portrayal of 1970s Mexicans is relevant to modern-day Mexicans. Although politics in Mexico have changed drastically since the time period of "Roma," violence and social inequality persist. According to Columbia University Professor of Anthropology Claudio Lomnitz, "Mexico is a much freer country today, but it is also a much more violent country" (Bruni, 2019). Because of Mexico's Drug War that began in 2006, many Mexicans find themselves in a violence-ridden environment similar to the one portrayed in "Roma." The national homicide rate was 27.8 per 100,000 as of 2021 and a large proportion of the killings associated with the Drug War were carried out by the military and federal police (Vision of Humanity Editorial Staff, 2021; Lajous, et al., 2018).

In a more social sphere, racism continues to affect social dynamics in Mexico. According to Colegio de la Frontera del Sur sociologist María Amalia Gracia, “There has been increased awareness of the problems faced by domestic workers, but racism and behaviors underscoring inequality continue to exist” (Bruni, 2019). In 1994, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), an Indigenous militia, declared war on the Mexican government in demand of basic needs and civil rights for Indigenous people (Godelmann, 2014). After an insurgency in the state of Chiapas, the Mexican government granted Indigenous communities a constitutional right to self-determination (Godelmann, 2014). As a result, this led to the preservation of Indigenous languages and cultures and “the creation of autonomous communities,” according to Director of the UCLA Latin American Institute Kevin Terraciano (Bruni, 2019). However, institutional inequalities still exist, as Indigenous people disproportionately experience poverty and occupy low-income positions in society (Bruni, 2019). This is because Indigenous identity continues to be stigmatized, as “being indigenous gives you a particular social status,” according to Jesus Ruvalcaba, a researcher at the Center for Research and Higher Studies in Social Anthropology (Bruni, 2019). Thus, many modern-day Indigenous people experience similar classism and racism that Cleo and other characters in “Roma” face.

Despite generational and geographic differences, “Roma” also presents issues that are pertinent to Latinxs in the United States and other countries outside of Mexico. Latinx immigrants may bring their experiences from Latin America with them, passing down cultural values to their descendants (Fuligni & Perreira, p. 104). As a result, many American Latinxs—especially those with high enculturation or high adherence to the cultural values of their heritage—have experiences that are similar to those of the characters in “Roma.” For instance, *familismo* is an important formative norm for many U.S. Latinxs, who are socialized to prioritize family obligations, similar to Cleo and Sofía (Grau, et al., p. 145). Other factors can influence Latinas’ development, such as the *marianista* expectations of womanhood that the women in “Roma” conform to. Similarly, Latino men in and outside of Mexico may feel pressured to fit into *machista* notions of manhood, like the hypermasculinity that Fermin displays throughout the film.

Beyond cultural norms, Latinx immigrants may also pass down their experiences to their American descendants in the form of generational trauma. As alluded to before, the factors that drive Latinx immigrants away from their home countries may linger in families, as research has found that trauma can be passed down between generations (Estrada, 2009). Some Latinx immigrants pass down cultural coping mechanisms for trauma to their American descendants,

which can be seen in the high religiosity of U.S. Latinxs compared to the general American population and the importance of *fatalismo* in some American Latinxs’ lives (Añez, et al., p. 154; Taylor, et al., 2012).

Moreover, like the characters in “Roma,” U.S. Latinxs may experience of racial trauma and institutional inequities due to the effects of Anglo-American neo-colonialism and racism in the United States (Estrada, 2009). In particular, colorism can create disparities between white and Indigenous Latinxs that are similar to the socioeconomic inequities seen in “Roma,” as white Latinxs may enjoy the systemic privileges that come with passing as a European American in the United States (Chavez-Dueñas, et al., p. 54). Alfonso Cuarón himself has expressed how white Latinx privilege and ignorance inspired “Roma.” In an interview with *Variety*, he shared, “It was probably my own guilt about social dynamics, class dynamics, racial dynamics. I was a white, middle-class, Mexican kid living in this bubble.” Upon realizing that his real-life nanny was a person, not just a caretaker, Cuarón was inspired to write the screenplay for “Roma” to spread awareness about Indigenous and underprivileged people in Mexico.

Conclusion

In “Roma,” Alfonso Cuarón creates a nuanced narrative about the 1970s Mexican experience that is a rich commentary on Latinx experiences as a whole. By studying the film’s many sociological themes and their modern-day applications, this analysis uses an alternative cinematic perspective to uncover the origins and endurance of Latinx cultural norms. Thus, although many Latinxs across generations, nationalities, and immigration statuses continue to experience adversity similar to that of the “Roma” characters, the film and the cultural themes it explores reveal much about the universality of Latinx values and resilience.

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Look Mourning Mother: The Intervention of Black Women's Friendship Albums in the Genre of Album Keeping

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Abstract

This paper argues that the friendship albums of Black women, specifically Martina Dickerson, Mary Anne Dickerson, and Amy Matilda Cassey, are the products of and intervention in a historically white, elite genre of friendship album keeping beginning with the German *album amicorum*. Scholars have argued that Amy intended her album to be a tool of resistance because of her position as an activist and founder of Philadelphia's Gilbert Lyceum. Instead, this paper argues that the history of album keeping, primarily occupied by white elite educated men and women, made participation in what became the highly feminine medium of album making an act of resistance. In addition to resisting through participation, Black women also transformed the genre of album keeping by using their albums as a space for emotional uplift. This transformation is an additional means of resisting social constructions of Black femininity in the 19th century.

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Introduction

The friendship albums of Amy Matilda Cassey, Mary Anne Dickerson, and Martina Dickerson are some of the most frequently requested materials in the Library Company of Philadelphia's Collection.¹ Amy, Mary Anne, and Martina owned these albums, but the albums contain very few entries by them. Instead, friends, acquaintances, and people of significant influence, like William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass, were asked to contribute entries. They responded with beautifully colored images of flowers and butterflies; handwritten poems, some original, many "selected;" etchings; and prose. The multicolored pages traveled across states. Dr. Jasmine Nichole Cobbs describes the bindings as such:

Ornate Moroccan leather covers with intricate designs. . . . Roughly eleven by nine in dimension, some with more than seventy leaves of paper. . . . Black women's albums bear special inclusions such as gold-leaf embossing and quality paper that indicate their excellence among similar items.²

Amy's album has entries that span from 1833–1856. Its cover is black, worn, and simple compared to Mary Anne's and Martina's. Mary Anne's album likely followed, with entries ranging from 1833–1882 and a bright red cover with gold embellishment. Martina's album has a black cover and gold embellishment with entries ranging from 1840–1846. While this paper will go into greater detail, Amy's album likely served as a model and pedagogical tool for Mary Anne and Martina, meaning it would have to come prior, though this has not been confirmed. The dates of entries are uncertain and cover a wide range of years. This uncertainty is due to only some entries being dated and entries not being produced chronologically. Contributors would open to a blank page to compose their entry, with later entries sometimes filling blank pages between earlier ones. The atemporality of the dated entries confirms this lack of chronological ordering. The wide range of years results from albums traveling with their owners over many years until full or complete.

Martina, Amy, and Mary Anne's albums are three of four friendship albums of Black women currently known to scholars, though more likely existed. The fourth is the album of Mary Wood Forten, which is presently in Howard University's Mooreland-Spingarn Research Center and isn't examined in this paper.³ While we only know of four, these albums were not produced in a vacuum. There was a genre and model these friendship albums entered into and utilized, though they were not bound by it.

This paper argues that the friendship albums of Black women are the products of, and an intervention in, a historically white and elite genre of album keeping, beginning with the German *album amicorum*. Therefore, the decision to engage in the practice of album keeping was not a common leisure practice for Amy, Mary Anne, and Martina as it might have been for their white female counterparts. Scholars have looked to the entries of Amy's album, for example, to argue that she intended the album to be a tool of resistance because of her position as an activist and founder of Philadelphia's Gilbert Lyceum.⁴ Instead, this paper argues that the history of album keeping, primarily occupied by white, elite educated men and women, made participation in what became the highly feminine medium of album keeping an act of resistance. The resistance is not dependent on the albums' content or the status of their Black female owners, but their historical context. Additionally, by transforming the medium after entering the genre, Black women could resist social constructions of Black femininity in the 19th century by using their friendship albums as spaces of emotional uplift, which was not generally the purpose of earlier albums.

Unlike much research on the friendship albums of Black women, the German *album amicorum*, and the Victorian autograph and friendship albums of white women, this paper puts these historical artifacts in conversation with one another to build a timeline of the genre of album keeping and emphasize the intervention of Black women's entry into the practice.

German *Alba Amicorum*

The original model for Amy, Mary Anne, and Martina's friendship albums was likely the *album amicorum* (plural: *alba amicorum*) of Germany in the 16th century. University students owned these *alba*, which other students and professors signed.⁵ English professor and expert on *alba amicorum* Dr. June Schlueter and Classics professor Dr. Markus Dubischar describe the *alba*'s contents and the process for soliciting entries as:

Alba amicorum were owned by educated Protestant men of birth who solicited signatures from fellow students and professors. Typically, a contributor would inscribe a motto, offer a quotation from classical literature, then write a dedication to the album owner. He would end the entry with his signature and, usually, the date and place of signing. When the album owner travelled, he would carry his album with him, seeking signatures in foreign lands. Many kept their albums active for decades, collecting not only words of admiration, friendship, and wisdom but also watercolour paintings.⁶

Schlueter and Dubischar utilize the *alba* to trace the adventures of English author Henry Wotton through the *alba* he signed. There were many for them to check, as album keeping was standard and encouraged among elite white men. Philip Melanchthon of Wittenberg, a renowned scholar, recommended all traveling scholars keep an *album amicorum*.⁷

While there are stylistic similarities between the friendship albums of Black women and *alba amicorum*, their differences are apparent when one considers the inaccessibility and purpose of *alba amicorum*. Schlueter explains, "the bound album of tributes served the album owner as a memento of his travels as well as a testament to his personal and social worth."⁸ The album was not meant solely for the memory and enjoyment of its explicitly male owner. It was primarily meant to prove that person's status, education, and character. This element is still seen in the 19th century friendship albums of Black men, like Daniel Alexander Payne. Payne was a contributor to Amy's friendship album, who presented his friendship album in place of his letters of introduction for seminary school, which he had forgotten. The Head of Evangelical Lutheran Church told him, "Sir, you might travel around the world with this album, without any other testimonial to your character."⁹ Signatures in *alba amicorum* were proof of young scholars' interactions with other scholars, professors, and dignitaries. Schlueter and Dubischar remark that nearly every signature in the albums Wotton signed belonged to "noblemen, scholars, and men of high estate, including dukes, landgraves, princes, and kings . . . album owners were . . . men of privilege."¹⁰ The purpose of these albums originally was to confirm the status and therefore the character of educated, white, wealthier men, who were their primary owners, contributors, and readers.

As elite, white male scholars produced *alba amicorum*, many entries are in Latin and Greek. For example, an entry in Benedictus Rosmutius's album kept from 1574–1578 says: "*Nobilissim[o] & erudissimo Viro. D. Benedicto R[os]mutio perpe[t- uam] memoriam e[am?] scribebat Io[ann]es Lobarto[x] Regiomunti 2[x] Junii A[nn]o 15[xx].*" (brackets in original)¹¹ which translates to, "For the most noble and erudite man, Sir Benedictus Rosmutius, Io[ann]es Lobarto[x] wrote this perpetual memory at Regiomunti. 2[x] June 15[xx]."¹² English scholar Dr. Raashi Rastogi explains, the *alba amicorum* "follow a standard formula"¹³ and belong to "a genre of commonplace notebook that was populated by one's friends rather than oneself."¹⁴ This genre, of a community-produced literary work composed of both original and "selected" works usually addressed to the owner or a greater audience, is the model that Victorian friendship albums and the friendship albums of Black women utilized.

Victorian Autograph and Friendship Albums

During the 16th century, *alba amicorum* were not common in England. However, travelers from Germany brought theirs to England and requested signatures.¹⁵ Schlueter and Dubischar present a description of the *album amicorum* from one of Wotton's plays. This excerpt provides a non-German European perspective of the practice of album keeping:

Whenever our travelers are men of letters, they are equipped on departure with a well-bound book of blank pages called an *Album Amicorum* and do not fail to visit the scholars in all the places they go and present it for them to sign their names. . . . There is nothing that we do not do to obtain that honour, believing that it is a thing as unusual as it is instructive to have met those learned men, who are so much acclaimed in the world, and to possess a specimen of their handwriting.¹⁶

It was not long until the English co-opted this practice in the form of the Victorian autograph album or Victorian friendship album. Scholars have used these terms interchangeably to describe identical albums. The production of the Victorian autograph album resulted from interactions between traveling Germans, Dutchmen who also kept *alba amicorum*, and the English.¹⁷ Album keeping also became very popular in what is now known as the United States of America due to trade, travel, education, and commercialization during the Romantic period.¹⁸

Men used Victorian autograph albums, but they soon became a ubiquitous object and activity for elite white women in England and the United States, with blank albums being "marketed as high-status commodities,"¹⁹ according to Dr. Thomas Lawrence Long, professor of nursing and women, gender, and sexuality studies. Linguistics and rhetoric scholar Dr. Lisa Reid Recker argues that postbellum prosperity allowed middle-class daughters "to enjoy an unprecedented amount of leisure time . . . spent maintaining autograph albums as well as other ephemeral memory objects such as diaries."²⁰ Long describes the contents and intentions of the Victorian friendship album as:

. . . memoranda of visits with family or friends who would write autographed lines of verse, usually dated. These books often became for their owners commonplace books of favourite verses and song lyrics or scrapbooks of pressed flowers, sketches, and other mementos. They could also document fair copies of original verses by their owners or friends. Typically they were begun when a young woman was still in school prior to marriage, and the albums created a memento of family members

and of personal and family connections before a young woman left her father's home to live with her husband.²¹

Owning a friendship album and having the time and literacy to participate in album keeping was a mark of elite status. Most album keepers were elite white women, and album making products were marketed towards them.²² White women primarily used autograph albums to remember their lives before marriage, not as a display of character or a letter of recommendation, as *alba amicorum* did. Though stylistically similar, they were no longer intentionally crafted for prestige. Communications professor Dr. Katie Day Good explains the "memorial" aspect of autograph albums and white women's friendship albums, which were:

deeply social objects: by the mid 1800s, the word "album" referred to any blank book in which friends left "memorials" to one another . . . 'the friendship album was a place for inscribing autographs, poetry, prose, and wishes from friends.' . . . Many used albums to mix textual and visual tokens, including *cartes de visite*, the small calling cards left behind by contacts after a social visit. Other "memorials" included homegrown items like pressed flowers and locks of hair prized for their social associations with a certain person, place or shared memory.²³

These multimedia elements are not present in Black women's friendship albums. However, themes of memorializing friendships and relationships cross over racial categories.

Black Women's Friendship Albums

Even though historians have access to four friendship albums of Black women, album keeping was not an accessible or encouraged practice for Black women. Albums were meant for ladies, and Black women were not ladies. Theorist Anna Julia Cooper describes this discrepancy with a hypothetical regarding the restrooms on public transportation where: "our train stops . . . I see two dingy little rooms with 'TOR LADIES' swinging over one and 'TOR COLORED PEOPLE' over the other."²⁴ This racial distinction produced a market for friendship albums where according to Cobb:

Everything about friendship albums of the early nineteenth century indicates that they were exclusively for white consumers . . . these mass-produced items . . . represent the gentility of the lady of the house, . . . In its signification of literacy and middle-class appetite, the friendship album as genre excluded antebellum African Americans.²⁵

Amy, Mary Anne, and Martina were thus not considered ladies and entered a genre with an extensive, frequently ignored history. That very history makes their engagement

a deliberate and conscious act, an act of resistance against narratives of Black womanhood.

It is important to note that while Amy was an activist and an adult who consciously chose to curate a friendship album, that is not the case for Mary Anne and Martina, who were very young girls when they began their albums. Amy's album likely served as an educational model and pedagogical tool for the Dickerson sisters. The sisters were educated by Sarah Mapps Douglass, an activist and educator who contributed multiple entries in all three albums. Additionally, Amy's album was widely circulated during her lifetime. A poem from her album and an almost identical cover page are present in Martina's album, which was started later. Cobbs explains that these albums were pleasurable for owners, but there was a purpose and audience beyond the owner, unlike white friendship albums. The albums of Black women could be used as lessons in literature, social development, and penmanship for students,²⁶ such as Mary Anne and Martina. These albums were likely used to teach Mary Anne and Martina the "literary and pictorial expression of sentiment."²⁷

Sentiment and sentimentalism are significant themes in the literature relating to friendship albums across racial categories. It could be well argued that sentimentalism is present in the albums of Amy, Mary Anne, and Martina in the delicate floral images that grace the pages. However, Black women's friendship albums extended beyond surface-level sentiment. Additionally, these albums could not be sentimental objects during the lifetime of their owners. Sentimentalism prioritized relationships between affect and morality to argue that an ethical person is one who feels. However, Black women were, in Cobb's words, "sentimental objects and not feeling subjects."²⁸ Amy's album is an act and tool of resistance because of her choice to engage in a practice that negated her existence as a lady and a feeling human being and her decision to use and transform that medium to fit her needs. This choice may have been motivated in part by her participation in the Female Literary Association, which aimed to prove equality to "those of our fellow beings, who differ from us in complexion,"²⁹ by "performing a gentility typically reserved for whites."³⁰ The Female Literary Association saw respectability as a means of resisting narratives presented about Black women and demanding recognition of their humanity as complete, feeling, Black women. Historian Dr. Mary Kelley explains, "those who collaborated in the production of the albums took for themselves the markers of taste to which white women had laid exclusive claim and made them into an instrument they could use in the battle against racial prejudice."³¹ The act of album keeping is resistant even before consideration of the context of the albums.

Black women resisted the withholding of femininity and humanity from them by participating in the feminine medium of album making. The intentionality of this intervention can be seen within the albums. An example is the inclusion and placement of the "Boroom Slave" engraving in Mary Anne's album. This engraving follows a "Mother's Joy" print and poem. Based on the presence of publishing information, the "Mother's Joy" print seems to have come with the album, though the original poem based on the image was not. The whiteness and femininity of the girl (represented by florals, soft cheeks, curves, and white skin) in the "Mother's Joy" print contrasts considerably with the "Boroom Slave" that follows. While the "Mother's Joy" print illustrates the publisher's and society's intended consumers of these albums, young white ladies,³² its juxtaposition with the "Boroom Slave" captures the deliberate disruption produced by Black women's participation in album keeping. The interpretation of resistance through engagement in the medium, rather than the specific context of the albums alone, can also be seen in the introductory poems of Amy, Martina, and Mary Anne's albums.³³

Black Women's Transformation of Friendship Album Keeping

In addition to resisting through participating in album keeping, Black women resisted and transformed normative practices within the genre. Not only did Black women engage with a practice that was not designed for them, but they also made it their own, further resisting societal expectations of Black femininity. One of many ways they did this was by destabilizing definitions and expectations of motherhood, challenging surface-level sentiment that marked previous friendship albums. Cobbs explains, "African American friendship albums . . . illustrate the ways in which Black women writers took up sentimental pastimes, reproducing popular print to suit their own practices of community."³⁴ While the theme of motherhood is present in albums regardless of race, the albums of Amy, Mary Anne, and Martina all feature poetry mourning the loss of mothers.

Mary Anne's album features a poem she wrote, "To My Dear Wille."³⁵ This poem seems to be a memorial for her dead son William, which differs from the standard practice in the genre of Black women's album keeping, where the entries are written to or for the owner and later circulated to a broader audience. An interpretation that would fit better with the other entries is that the poem was also to herself, mourning the loss of her motherhood. Mary Anne memorializes her son vaguely, as "youthful," "gentle," and "fair,"³⁶ and focuses on how his death is, "The hopes of fond parents / lie buried in gloom / For the pride of their hearts / So cold is the tomb,"³⁷ indicating that this poem is a memorial of her job of mothering rather than solely a memorial of William.

However, later in the album (though they often were not filled out linearly), Mary Anne writes another poem about William, “There was a flower.”³⁸ These two poems are her only contributions to her album. There is a drastic shift in tone and focus in this second poem. While the first poem is gloomy and hopeless, concentrating on the loss of her son, this one has a more blissful tone, focusing on her son’s rebirth in Heaven. Here she writes, “Look mourning mother, to his home above thee; / look to the early called redeemed so soon. / Look stricken father: he who joy’d to love thee, / Lives where the morning sees no darkening moon.”³⁹ Rather than the general and distant descriptions given prior, Mary Anne now describes William as a flower, “a bright eye’d blooming boy.”⁴⁰ The shift in tone, style, and focus between these two poems indicates that the friendship album has provided space and support for Mary Anne to mourn the loss of her son and her role as mother, a shift from the typical practices of Victorian albums.

In addition to providing time and space for the album’s owner to grieve, Black women’s friendship albums also offered space for contributors to provide support to grieving mothers and for the grieving of contributors. In Martina’s album, there is a poem signed “YJ Grice” titled “To Miss Martina.”⁴¹ This poem was written after the death of Martina’s son, also named William. In the piece, Grice offers encouragement and support to Martina as she mourns her child and attempts to navigate societal expectations of her as a mourning mother. Within Amy’s album, Daniel Alexander Payne acknowledges Amy’s request for him to contribute to her album before memorializing his dead wife and daughter across four pages of the album. In his entry, Payne compares Amy’s sweetness to that of “two other flowers which [he] once had the pleasure of cultivating in his garden.”⁴² Similar to Mary Anne’s final poem to her son, Payne describes his daughter and wife as a flower, a “Rose” and “Rose-Bud,” plucked from Earth by God to beautify Heaven. In writing of the mothering done by his wife, the practice of album keeping allows Payne the space to grieve his daughter and wife’s deaths.

Conclusion

These mourning poems across the albums illustrate the intervention Black women made in the genre of friendship albums after entering the field. Their albums go beyond replicating previous practices or engaging in sentimental leisure activities. Instead, they are tools to uplift themselves and their communities. In addition to the expectation of “social uplift” that may have been placed on the producers of the albums,⁴³ friendship albums provided a means of “emotional uplift.” They provided a space for mourning through the album’s pages and a community of support while grieving through collaborative album making. These albums

were not mere products of a period of sentimentalism, as has been argued, but intentionally curated community tools of uplift and resistance. As such, Black women did not simply take up the practice of friendship album keeping as their white counterparts practiced it. Nor were the albums of Black women carefully constructed tools of resistance based on the context within them alone. Instead, Black women like Amy, Martina, and Mary Anne resisted social constructions and expectations of Black femininity through engaging with and transforming the historical genre of friendship album keeping.

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We Will Fight Back: 920 Everett's Fight Against Eviction in Los Angeles Chinatown

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Abstract

Popular media presents gentrification as an undefeatable force, but what about the successful cases? What about the residents that fight and are able to stay in their homes? Through a collaborative visual ethnography, this paper and accompanying documentary, linked to in the Works Cited, dive into the story of 920 Everett in Los Angeles Chinatown with the support of Chinatown Community for Equitable Development. This tenant fight displayed the power of community and resilience, creating hope that the right combination of institutional prevention and mitigation measures may lead to resident success.

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Introduction

"Please open the door. We just want to talk to you. We don't want to lose our homes" (Vivi). Low-income, ethnic neighborhoods are experiencing gentrification all over the world, and residents are increasingly powerless in the face of their landlords who want to develop market-rate apartments. Or are they?

On September 29, 2019, six Southeast Asian immigrant residents of 920 Everett demonstrated outside of their new landlord's home in Brentwood, California after receiving a 60-day notice to evict their Los Angeles Chinatown residence. Growing up with housing instability in New York

City's Chinatown myself, my research asks broad questions about ethnic spaces, gentrification, and community organizing. What are the histories of immigration and racialization in the United States that created spaces like Chinatown? What causes gentrification in low-income ethnic neighborhoods? How are residents and community members being affected? What can be done to stop or slow it down? These questions have led to the current project conducted at Chinatown Community for Equitable Development (CCED), a multi-generational, multi-ethnic, all-volunteer organization in Los Angeles (LA) that promotes community power through organizing and education. With the support of CCED, my research focuses on 920 Everett's effort to organize against their landlord through various tactics including media awareness, legal aid, officers as mediators, and more. I am presenting their successful organizing through a short visual ethnography completed with various interviews. This paper includes a brief history of LA Chinatown, a literature review on gentrification and community organizing, a methodology section, and the results of my fieldwork with CCED. This excerpt from a longer paper is meant to be understood with my collaborative short documentary, linked to in the Works Cited section below.

A Short History of Los Angeles Chinatown

According to Jan Lin, Chinatown in Los Angeles was seen as an area "plagued by vice, moral decay, and poor sanitation," and was subject to multiple construction projects such as Union Station in 1938 and eventually China City and New Chinatown which displaced members of the Old Chinatown (112). Because of the Chinese Exclusion Act, Chinatown members found a new identity in entrepreneurship and community by creating Cathay Bank to offer loans for businesses. Similarly, family associations supported the transition of recent immigrants, connecting them with members of society and providing financial support when necessary. In the 1960s, the flow of immigrant labor and capital increased, expanding the demographic and economic influences of Chinatown to include immigrants from Southeast Asia (Lin 116).

Mike Davis, a prominent urban geography scholar, explains how the 1970s brought in capital investment that elevated Los Angeles' status in the global economy, coinciding with the emergence of elite arts and civic center complexes such as the California Plaza, Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), and the Walt Disney Concert Hall. In 2003, the development of the Metro Gold line brought a renewed interest in tourism and urban redevelopment to Chinatown, including benefits such as new jobs, economic growth, and tax revenues. This came at the cost of displacement (Lin 113). While Jan Lin cites Davis to explain that internationalization supported the development

of Chinatown, in reality Chinatown is being gentrified and left with little to no support from the local government. For example, the Business Improvement District (BID) exists as a modern-day reinforcement of racial segregation that refuses its residents' needs in favor of those with the ability to pay. While "culture is increasingly perceived as a component of production in urban economic development," it is not the culture of the residents living there that are being preserved and promoted but rather a caricature of what it means to be Chinese (Lin 118).

Gentrification and Community Organizing

Gentrification—often regarded as a race issue where white Americans encroach on ethnic spaces—is a structural condition resulting from the history of racialized dispossession, which has made many low-income people of color neighborhoods targets for urban renewal (Hom 198). However, anyone from a higher-class status entering a low-income ethnic space can be considered a gentrifier and upper-to-middle class Asian Americans moving "back into" the neighborhood as a reminder of the childhood they once had there are no exception (TiDo). Laureen Hom, a Professor of Political Science, goes on to describe that gentrification also includes symbolic displacement that occurred historically, physically, economically, and politically, emphasizing that gentrification is not merely a process of spatial displacement (Hom 199).

These processes of displacement must be stopped. John Betancur argues for the importance of place-based social fabrics for vulnerable communities who rely on stable support systems and are constantly confronted with factors of race and urban restructuring. Brittany Morey, Gilbert Gee, Salma Shariff-Marco and others highlight the importance of ethnic enclaves in alleviating discrimination and stress for recent immigrants, depending on nativity and time in the United States.¹ There is an urgent need for spaces like Chinatown. Research by Loretta Lees, Sandra Annunziata, and Clara Rivas-Alonso outline two major tactics to prevent gentrification: *institutional prevention* (public housing policies, enforcing tenant rights, and community planning tools) and *mitigation measures* (delaying eviction, compensation). They provide examples of successful campaigns where community members organized outdoor spaces with the media's support and display how women work with a national political party to build housing (348). Leila Ghaffari, Juan-Luis Klein, and Wilfredo Angulo Baudin offer similar strategies of tenant protection, controlling ownership and development, and community empowerment. These strategies are crucial in preserving ethnic enclaves like Chinatown as a system of support for low-income racial, ethnic, and immigrant groups.²

My research reaffirms the work of my predecessors and concludes that spaces like Chinatown, which provide crucial cultural and capital resources to minority populations, must remain to cultivate a sense of belonging amidst a society rife with discrimination. To do this, I offer another example of a successful organizing campaign and the various tactics employed by tenants and organizers alike. Furthermore, I suggest the importance of documentation and display its role in empowering those involved and those in the periphery.

Methodology

This study was conducted as a collaborative ethnography in a rapidly gentrifying Los Angeles Chinatown with CCED where residents without legal protections were subject to eviction. My goal was to learn about and ground my study in the community's experience with methods such as participation observation, semi-structured interviews, and audio-visual documentation to create an accessible documentary for CCED to use.

I visited Los Angeles Chinatown twice a week for five to eight hours over six months to immerse myself in the environment. Each time, community members were notified of my intention to conduct research on everyday activities. For interviews and filming, I rented documentary equipment from Pitzer's Media Studies department and received written consent from interviewees. Most interviews were less than forty minutes and semi-structured. With an automatic transcription service, I was able to tag and label the findings and use a grounded theory method to allow concepts to emerge from the data. The interviewees included 920 Everett residents, CCED organizers, surrounding community members, and a lawyer with Los Angeles Center Community Law & Action. The findings are reflective of the community's experiences and include a variety of perspectives to describe how gentrification affects immigrant residents in Chinatown and the organizing efforts to combat it.

Findings with 920 Everett

CCED Community Organizing

Through word of mouth, CCED found out about 920 Everett and decided to take it on as a site to fight when tenants were issued a 60-day eviction notice by their new landlord who intended to redevelop the apartment as a market-rate high rise, effectively gentrifying the neighborhood and raising its property value. All of 920's residents are Southeast Asian from Cambodia, Vietnam, and Thailand, and of low-income class status, living paycheck-to-paycheck and renting their homes. With CCED's help, the tenants created a tenant association and held weekly meetings on Sundays to discuss the progress of their organizing.



Figure 1. Jiang, Xiao Fang. *A 920 Everett resident in front of her home.* September 2019. Author's personal collection.

Through June and July of 2019, the landlord refused to respond to the tenants and organizers' plea for conversation. In August of 2019 CCED held a press conference outside of 920 Everett to raise awareness which brought the community and a larger LA audience together. In September of 2019, the 920 Everett tenant association held a demonstration at their landlord's home in Brentwood, California almost two hours away. Despite 920 Everett being a building of six units, over fifty people showed up to demonstrate, a testament to the importance of place and community.

CCED provided the resources and experience for a successful demonstration. At nine in the morning, people brought buckets to bang on, safety vests to direct traffic, and collectively worked together to create posters on the sidewalk while experienced organizers prepared multilingual chant sheets to include all participants.



Figure 2. Jiang, Xiao Fang. *Alejandro from Hillside's Tenant Association in support of 920 Everett.* September 2019. Author's personal collection.

Media Tactics

By utilizing the media to spread awareness, 920 and CCED were able to garner sympathy and pressure the landlord. A journalist from *LAist* covered the story from Grandma's (of 920) perspective,³ emphasizing her health in relation to the stress caused by the pressure of eviction. CCED also took advantage of online petitions like change.org to garner over 1,300 signatures⁴ in support of the tenants

and went on Yelp⁵ to leave the landlord negative reviews on his business, elucidating the owner's malicious actions. As of recently, CCED has also taken to Facebook⁶ and Instagram⁷ as means to connecting with younger demographics on social media; creating infographics, posters, and events to invite a larger audience. These diverse tactics capitalized on the power of media in today's society to spread news and spark movements.

Will of Tenants

Khinn, a Southeast Asian immigrant who has lived in 920 for 15 years, was one of the most outspoken tenant organizers. She did not coerce other tenants to organize. Rather, her tactic was one of self-motivation. When describing her approach, she says, "because I told them I'm not gonna say no more. One word from me. You want to do it? You do it. You don't want to do it. It's fine." She led by example and beckoned others to act on their free will.

During the demonstration at the owner's home the tenants took the initiative and walked up to his door, trying to start a discussion. Throughout the demonstration they spoke on megaphones, explaining why they were there to fight for their homes and what it meant to them.⁸



Figure 3. Jiang, Xiao Fang. *Craig from CCED talking to the police officers.* September 2019. Author's personal collection.

Later on, the owner's wife talked to Khinn, asking her why she and the other tenants had come to their neighborhood to embarrass her and her husband, as described by Khinn in the excerpt below:

Then the owner's wife come for me. They say, "you look very nice person. How come you come here, disturb my neighbor, and make me so embarrassing?" And I answer her back. I say, "well, ma'am, we do not come here disturb your neighbor or make you look embarrassing. You want to make yourself embarrassing. You the one who want to make your neighbor disturbed, not us. You . . . follow your own footstep, fall down, and you blame on me. I'm not gonna take that. I'm so sorry. You know and

I told her too I say, you know, ma'am, you have a family. Children play to live, warm play. Nice home. We . . . love the same thing that you do. Okay?"

It is moments like these when tenants like Khinn claim their agency by speaking up to those with power to cut across class barriers and talk as parents who both want to provide a roof and home for their children. Khinn later admitted that she felt empowered to fight back and do something because of the outpour of support from community members.

Legal Support

Working with CCED and the 920 tenants behind the scenes was Gina, a lawyer with the Los Angeles Center Community Law & Action (LACCLA). Gina explains that she supports the tenants by:

Let[ing] them know that if the state comes after you or if a landlord uses the state to come after you, I can step in because I have a bar card, and I can go to court. And that's the work that I can contribute. But meanwhile, like, that's never enough, right? Y'all [CCED and tenants] gotta pop off and do your thing.

At weekly tenant association meetings, she provided her legal expertise and explained complex legal paperwork to help defend them in court. Yet, she acknowledges that her role is insufficient and must be supplemented by the work of the organizers and tenants. Gina explains why she continues to do this work:

Every case that I'm working on is reinvigorating, because every single case is about activating one of our members, encouraging a tenant to become politicized and radicalized to fight back against the various systems of oppression that are impacting their lives.

Despite what might be seen as taxing work, Gina is proud of her contribution because of how it directly activates members of the community to claim their rights and fight back.

Police Officers as Mediators

During the demonstration, the landlord called the police when the tenants approached the door, trying to negotiate. They approached the scene right as everyone was packing up and getting ready to leave for the day after four hours of protesting and the landlord's refusal to engage. As the officers arrived Craig, one of the organizers, approached them to thoroughly explain the purpose of the demonstration. The officers then mediated a conversation with the landlord where both sides agreed to certain conditions such as: only tenants and one organizer with no audio-visual documentation could be present. A week later, a representative

from Kothari's management company, Envoy, agreed to collect their rents.

Immigrant Landlord

The landlord himself is also an immigrant from India who moved to the LA for new opportunities and could perhaps relate, to an extent, to the ethos of the tenants who were working toward the same American Dream. Being a relatively new business owner, his management company, Envoy, handled his business with 920 Everett. Unlike individuals who hide behind mega corporations and cause mass gentrification, Kothari was easier for the tenants to target through demonstration, especially since he lived within a reasonable distance.

Support in Brentwood

Furthermore, many Brentwood residents showed their support by stopping to inquire, honking their cars, or grabbing an infographic to learn more about the situation. In fact, toward the end, Kothari's next-door neighbor stopped to talk to Craig and other tenants about the situation. With a genuine interest and outpour of support, Kothari could feel the pressure from his neighborhood.

Conclusion

As shown with 920 Everett's case, there is a possibility of fighting eviction and winning through a combination of institutional prevention and mitigation measures such as, community organizing, media tactics, legal accessibility, officers mediating, and the unique perspectives of tenants, the landlord, and neighbors. Popular media regularly displays stories of eviction and displacement, and this is meant to bring awareness to the notion that the right combination of collaboration, cohesion, and community can lead to success!

Yet, it must be acknowledged that this is an exception, not a norm. Typically, gentrification is talked about in reference to inclusionary zoning where mega-corporations displace hundreds of residents in favor of market prices and higher profit margins. While the city has tightened some of the loopholes, more can be done to secure the rights of the tenants rather than the developer such as changes to inclusionary zoning, policies allowing for the transfer of private land to public land, and more financial investment from the city, state, and federal level for affordable housing as Samuel Stein recommends. 920 Everett's landlord, Kothari, accepted their monthly rent payment but then sold the property to VF Development in January 2020, who tried to evict the tenants again but was unable to do due to the COVID-19 eviction moratorium. While tenants have attempted to pay their rent, Victoria Vu, the owner, has often sent them back in hopes of starting a 60-day eviction

quit notice to redevelop the property as market-rate apartments. The fight against gentrification is a never ending one that will require the continued renewal and effort of community members from any given community to stand up and claim their space. Together, with the right policies and initiatives, low-income communities may finally have a chance to fight for their homes.⁹



Figure 4. Jiang, Xiao Fang. *A barbeque celebration after successfully fighting eviction*. October 2019. Author's personal collection.

Endnotes

- ¹ From *Ethnic Enclaves, Discrimination, and Stress Among Asian American Women: Differences by Nativity and Time in the United States* by Brittany N. Morey, Gilbert C. Gee, Salma Shariff-Marco, Juan Yang, Laura Allen, and Scarlett L. in Gomez.
- ² From *Toward a socially acceptable gentrification: A review of strategies and practices against displacement*.
- ³ <https://laist.com/news/this-vietnamese-grandmother-went-from-china-town-to-brentwood-looking-for-the-landlord-trying-to-evict>
- ⁴ <https://www.change.org/p/american-collateral-buyers-llc-robert-and-rosa-chow-stop-the-evictions-of-refugee-immigrant-tenants-in-los-angeles-chinatown>
- ⁵ <https://www.yelp.com/biz/envoy-property-management-los-angeles>.
- ⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/ccedla>
- ⁷ <https://www.instagram.com/ccedla/?hl=en>
- ⁸ <https://youtu.be/hjRG3vWHPs8> 920 Everett: We Will Fight Back Documentary
- ⁹ Upon completion, the documentary was screened with the tenants and organizers. Everyone exclaimed at how amazing and inspiring their story was, making them feel motivated to continue fighting for their homes despite new ownership threatening to evict them.

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“Miss Hojabi Knickers”: Examining Gender, Nation, and Narration in Kamila Shamsie’s *Home Fire*

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Abstract

The concept of citizenship is a recent intervention in ongoing scholarship linking gender and national narratives. This project applies Kwame Anthony Appiah’s “literary nationalism” theoretical framing to the novel *Home Fire*, a retelling of *Antigone* within the British-Pakistani Muslim community. I argue that defying gendered nationalist narratives creates a new political community within the liminalities of culture.

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Introduction

Homi Bhabha’s seminal 1990 anthology *Nation and Narration* introduced the process of national identity negotiation through narrative. Since then, a plethora of scholarly work has examined the intersection of national narratives, gender, and citizenship in contemporary fiction and politics.¹ However, in the field of literature about terrorism and security, gendered analyses of citizenship and the nation-state tend to be overlooked.

Remedying this gap and touching on many of these concerns, Kamila Shamsie’s novel *Home Fire* (2017) emerges as not only a retelling of Sophocles’ Greek tragedy *Antigone*, but also as a poignant statement on British Muslim identity. This novel tells the story of three siblings who are dual citizens of the United Kingdom and Pakistan—the older sister Isma and twins Aneeka and Parvaiz—as Parvaiz joins the Islamic State while Aneeka and Isma are in London and the United States, respectively. Parvaiz is killed while trying to leave ISIS and the novel explicates Aneeka’s efforts to bring his body back to the U.K. instead of burying him in Pakistan, to the anger of the Muslim Home Secretary Karamat Lone,

who opposes repatriation. *Home Fire* therefore centers on the question of citizenship and national belonging—like the original *Antigone*—for members of Western countries who join groups like ISIS while adopting a gendered lens.

Despite the rich historical cosmopolitanism of Britain (Calhoun 431) and the shifts in technology that have allowed for increased global connection, Britain, like other Western nations, has experienced an increase in xenophobic and white nationalist rhetoric and policy in recent years. It is against this political backdrop that *Home Fire* was published in 2017, a year after the Brexit referendum that many saw as a litmus test for the future of the far-right in the UK. These restrictive nationalist discourses have limited access to full rights of citizenship for those who fall outside of such established cultural boundaries. Therefore, the merging of the gendered, cultural hegemony of the nation and the biopower of the state necessitates Aneeka’s construction of a new diasporic “nation” that can be the site of repatriation for Parvaiz’s body. Through this status, which simultaneously disrupts traditional links between women and the nation, I argue that Aneeka creates a home and a type of citizenship *within* the liminalities of culture, resisting the nation-state as a site of belonging.

National Literatures and Gender

Public and national narratives—including folktales, mythologies, and recollections of historical events in addition to fiction and poetry—uphold the construct of the nation-state by reinforcing the cultural boundaries of the nation. These forms of literature dictate norms of belonging within the nation not only through the idealized behavior of characters and historical figures, but also in determining which types of identities—based on class, race, ethnic background, religion, and so forth—are acceptable for or assimilable into the national framework. Furthermore, media and journalism mirror the central themes of these literatures, necessitating the examination of how multiple narrative forms construct the nation.

Gender intersects with narrative to demarcate the boundaries of the national community; assimilation into gendered assumptions of behavior specifically precludes the full and equal participation of women within the nation due to the restrictive roles engendered by nationalist mythologies. There are two primary roles that women embody in the context of the nation. First, they are constructed as the image or symbol of a nation, typically in relation to the physical land or soil, inviting comparisons between the purity of the land and the woman’s body and denying them sexual autonomy (McClintock 30). Second, they are characterized as the mothers of the nation, holding the responsibility of passing down facets of national identity through mythology and folktales (Yuval-Davis 1997).

Disrupting the Narrative of the Nation-State

Through countering the problematic gendered assumptions of the nation by allowing women within nationalist narratives to enact their own autonomy, literatures of nationalism and literary nationalisms can forge a new, more inclusive, site of citizenship. Homi Bhabha has previously articulated this redefinition of nationalist borders, writing, “it is in the . . . overlap and displacement of domains of difference . . . that the intersubjective and collective experiences of *nationness*, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated” (2). In locating culture at the divisions and gaps of national identity, Bhabha creates space for the emergence of national identities from the gaps between nationhoods. Kwame Anthony Appiah carries forward Bhabha’s argument by explaining how literary nationalisms emerge from the borderlands, as “literatures of nationalism are typically about the limits of nationalism, and to explore identity, too, is to probe its limits, the shiftiness of its boundary conditions” (Appiah 521). He further notes the imaginative power of literature in disrupting the nation-state, since “literary nationalisms subsist on boundaries they sometimes cannot help dreaming away” (Appiah 519), supporting the malleable quality of the boundaries that define literary nationalisms.

Appiah’s notion of “literary nationalisms” suggests the possibility of a nationalism that stems from the erasure and disruption of national borders and that is only available through fictionalization. Whereas nationalist literature reinforces the nation-state construct, literary nationalisms reject the traditional boundaries of the nation, and thus allow for the creation of a new space—a new nation—that fosters a gender-egalitarian citizenship. The disruption of traditional national narratives allows diaspora populations, caught between the gaps of national and cultural boundaries, to claim citizenship status in the place they reside (within the text). *Home Fire*’s five locations—Amherst, U.S.; London, U.K.; Raqqa, Syria; Istanbul, Turkey; and Karachi, Pakistan—demonstrate how a single family will integrate multiple cultural beliefs and practices to carve out a unique diasporic “national” identity. The following reading of *Home Fire* thus demonstrates the transformative power of reclaiming agency and belonging within nationalist narratives through the novel’s overarching framework and format as a literary nationalist novel.

Literary Nationalism Expressed Through the Self in *Home Fire*

I argue that Aneeka is an active participant in disrupting traditional national borders and boundaries, embodying the diasporic literary nationalism that Shamsie advocates for in this novel. There are two key aspects of Aneeka’s construction of self that prove critical in this engagement: her

sexual liberation and her love for her brother, which render her as a romantic hero. The last two sections of the novel, concerning Parvaiz’s death from the perspectives of Aneeka and Karamat Lone, the Muslim British-Pakistani Home Minister who strongly opposes Parvaiz’s repatriation, reveal the greatest about Aneeka’s construction of self in relation to the new nation that emerges through Shamsie’s adoption of the form of a literary nationalist novel.

Sexual Liberation

As explicated by Foucault’s theory of biopower (136) and Achille Mbembe’s extension of “necropolitics” (11), the state determines the life or death of its citizens. One form of this process occurs through propaganda that defends a central national identity. The second-to-last section of *Home Fire* interrupts Aneeka’s grieving process over her brother’s death with clips and excerpts from Western media and propaganda. By formatting the novel in this way, Aneeka herself becomes the meeting point of the national borders between Pakistan and Britain, dissolving the traditional borders of the nation-state.

One such media headline reads: “HO-JABI! PERVY PASHA’S TWIN SISTER ENGINEERED SEX TRYSTS WITH HOME SECRETARY’S SON.” The first line of the ensuing article names her as “Aneeka ‘Knickers’ Pasha, the 19-year-old twin sister of Muslim fanatic Parvaiz ‘Pervy’ Pasha” (Shamsie 214). When she arrives in Pakistan, where the burial is set to occur, with the intention of bringing her brother’s body back to England, the cousin who meets her there to give her accommodations calls her “Miss Hojabi Knickers” (Shamsie 220).

The nickname “Pervy” Pasha stems from the captions of an earlier news clip that spells Parvaiz’s name as Pervys. The immediate negative sexualization of his name and identity finds its way to his twin, as the word “Hojabi” references public speculations that she had begun a relationship with Eamonn—Karamat’s son—only to get her brother’s body back to England. Additionally, because the nickname is also an English perversion of an Arabic word (hijab, which translates to modesty), affixing “ho[e]”—implying “sexual promiscuity”—to the word replaces the original meaning of “hijab” with its opposite. Not only does this word privilege English over Arabic as a linguistic signifier of national belonging, but it also privileges masculinist readings of the word “hoe,” as it denies Aneeka’s sexual freedom by attacking her religious and dual national identity. The second word in her nickname, “Knickers,” is a play on her own name, Aneeka which is another major facet of her identity. Because this nickname refers to her relationship with Eamonn, it effectively ridicules her British identity, severing her relationship with the nation she considers her homeland.

Caron Gentry and Laura Sjoberg explain how women who participate in violence are perceived as “mothers, monsters, or whores” (197). Aneeka’s treatment by the press, and by extension Britain and Pakistan, for wanting to see Parvaiz simultaneously characterizes her as a “monster” (for defending a terrorist) and a “whore” (for sleeping with Eamonn, a representative of the British nation through his father). This nickname therefore intends to sexualize and demean her through her faith and name to deny her both of her national identities, leaving her culturally nationless. However, it is through her ownership of her sexual autonomy that she constructs her own political community through the gaps in her own identities, illustrated by the nicknames. This autonomy is demonstrated when Aneeka removes her hijab to signal her consent to have sex with Eamonn, beginning their relationship (Shamsie 70).

The gendered expectations of cultural reproduction again appear when Karamat notes that he did not want Parvaiz’s body to “sully our soil” (Shamsie 193), another phrase that goes viral on the Internet. This language connects to the earlier theoretical framing of gender and the nation, wherein the purity of the land is compared to women’s bodies. In response to the “foreign intrusion” on British soil (embodied by Parvaiz), Aneeka, as a woman, is expected to counter the “sully” of the land by not supporting her brother’s repatriation.

The origination of Parvaiz and Aneeka’s nicknames from the media also exemplifies how national narratives rely on propaganda. The continued discourse about Parvaiz’s repatriation by news outlets represents the merging of the state and its representatives. These representatives go on TV to discuss the question of whether Parvaiz’s body should be repatriated, thereby negotiating the state’s privilege of citizenship even in death in a manifestation of biopower and necropolitics.

Loving Her Brother

Aneeka is portrayed as a classically romantic hero. This helps her to redefine the boundaries of the nation and its culture. A striking example of this occurs during Karamat’s section where he notes that “[Parvaiz] was in a coffin made out of slabs of ice, a prince in a fairy tale” (Shamsie 241) and the “tiny embroidered flowers on the white cloth” of Aneeka’s dupatta (Shamsie 236) that evoke fairytale imagery. Most revealing, though, is an exchange between Karamat and the Pakistani High Commissioner over Aneeka’s public vigil in Pakistan at her brother’s tomb. In the conversation, the Pakistani High Commissioner asks Karamat if he recalls “the madness of love. Remember your Laila-Majnu . . . the lover so grief-stricken at the loss of the beautiful beloved that he wanders, in madness, in the desert. This beautiful girl in a dust storm has managed to become

Laila and Majnu combined in the nation’s consciousness” (Shamsie 240). While the Pakistani nation maps Aneeka onto a national folktale—the story of Majnu, who goes mad searching for his lover Laila in the desert—it is through her embodiment of Laila and Majnu simultaneously that she claims the new national identity located at the crossroads of both of her cultures. The story of Laila and Majnu is transnational; initially an Arabic tale originating in Saudi Arabia, it spread to Persian, Turkish, and other languages of the Indian subcontinent to become a folktale well-known throughout the region. Therefore, the universality of the Laila-Majnu tale throughout a broader Muslim diaspora (and adopted by other religions and cultures) points to the way Aneeka has transcended the boundaries of both nations that claim her. This story therefore embodies the fault lines between cultures—the very interstices that Bhabha and Appiah name—precisely because of its wide influence.

Aneeka intentionally renders herself into the image of a romantic hero when, after breaking the wooden casket containing her brother while visiting his body in Pakistan, a dust storm occurs. Because these events are told from Karamat’s perspective, the reader lacks Aneeka’s perspective on the comparison between her and Parvaiz to Laila and Majnu. Despite this, between her ruminations on grief in the section of the novel narrated from her perspective, where Shamsie writes, “everyone died, everyone but the twins, who looked at each other to understand their own grief” (187) and her speech directly to the cameras after the dust storm, where she “paint[s] lips onto her dust mask” (Shamsie 237), she demonstrates her agency in narrating her own self. Because her nickname of “Hojabi Knickers” is the site of the creation of a new diasporic “national” identity, the agency that she accesses through her performance to the media allows her to narrate a nation for herself. She becomes the architect, claiming ownership over her nickname and establishing a new identity through it. Through this new “national” identity, she protects Parvaiz (as she shields his face in the dust storm) by giving him citizenship in this new diasporic nation that she has created. Aneeka’s love for Parvaiz is the foundation of the new nation that she creates for herself, and that she solidifies with her death at the novel’s conclusion, as she can reunite with her brother.

This reading of *Home Fire* subverts the traditional mapping of the family unit onto the nation, especially within the context of postcolonial narratives wherein the mother “takes on the status of metaphor . . . generalized and generic . . . stand[ing] in for the national territory and certain national values” and produces a son who becomes a national hero or narrator (Boehmer 29). In the novel, Aneeka’s older sister Isma acts as the “national mother” if Aneeka is the one who forges the nation, as Isma is a mother figure for Parvaiz and Aneeka due to their orphaned status. When Isma goes

alone to meet with Karamat at the novel's end, while Aneeka is in Pakistan, he thinks that she is "*probably a virgin* . . . and wondered when he'd become the kind of man who reacted in this way to the sight of a woman with a covered head who made no effort to look anything but plain" (Shamsie 247). Karamat's line of thinking reflects his perception of Isma as the "pure, virginal" mother against the "monster/whore" construct that Aneeka embodies. However, because Aneeka reclaims her agency as she forms a new diasporic "national" identity in the absence of Parvaiz (the "national heroic son"), Isma escapes the gendered trappings of her role as the "national mother." Shamsie's creation of a new literary nationalist novel therefore allows women to redefine their place within the nation, granting them agency in their roles in the budding political community. The new "nation" forms out of Parvaiz's death—and the subsequent absence of the "national son"—and the love and grief that Aneeka experiences, transcending national borders.

Conclusion

Through Aneeka's indirect acceptance of her nickname of "Hojabi Knickers," she simultaneously embodies both British and Pakistani nationalities while also rejecting them in order to create her own community that exists at the gap between both cultures, which can constitute a new home for Parvaiz. Through my application of Appiah's theory of literary nationalism (as distinguished from nationalist literature, which reifies national boundaries rather than challenging them) to *Home Fire*, I argue that Shamsie creates the possibility for a new political community that would be more inclusive than the traditional modern nation-state. The experimental form of parts of the novel, in addition to the broad diasporic coverage of the text, opens pathways for future exploration into the role of diasporic literature in the canon, as well as further contributions to the intersections of gender, nation, and narrative theory.

Endnote

- ¹ For further reading on gender, the nation, and citizenship, see Cynthia Enloe's "Bananas, Beaches, and Bases" (1990); Deniz Kandiyoti's "Identity and Its Discontents: Women and the Nation" (1991); Nira Yuval-Davis's *Gender & Nation* (1997); Randi Davenport's "Thomas Malthus and Maternal Bodies Politic: Gender, Race, and Empire" (1995); and Anurekha Chari's "Gendered Citizenship and Women's Movement" (2009).

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Visuality of Violence: An Examination of Images Depicting Racialized Political Violence

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Shakila Khan is a recent graduate of Hunter College. Her primary academic interests relate to political aesthetics, critical theory, and feminist political theory. Her work is motivated by a shared interest in politics and the arts, including film, oral history, and photography. Shakila has been awarded several research fellowships including the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship and the Mellon Public Humanities Grant for her research on the documentation of violence, specifically the Abu Ghraib torture photographs. During her time at Hunter, she also helped build the Asian American Studies Oral History Archive. Her previous roles have related to other forms of audio storytelling including being a Researcher at the Museum of the City of New York for a podcast about coming-of-age in New York City and a Research Assistant at the Chicago History Museum for their oral history exhibit, American Medina: Stories of Muslim Chicago.

Abstract

Photography has been long intertwined with political violence. This article considers the role of the U.S. military in Iraq during the post-9/11 age, and specifically, examines the photographs from the Abu Ghraib prison. Relying on the work of philosophers Guy Debord and Jacques Ranciere, this article views the camera as a political tool and argues images contain social relations. Drawing from political theorist Yves Winter, this article also views political violence as performance necessary for the existence of the state and asserts that the performance exists not for the spectators, but the performer. In theorizing the space of Abu Ghraib and presenting the case of the 2004 torture photographs, this paper highlights how the state draws its powers from spectacles of force. The visibility of violence has been largely undertheorized in political theory and Winter provides a framework for thinking about how all of political life has been condensed into the performance.

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“When we speak of ‘shooting’ with a camera, we are acknowledging the kinship of photography and violence.”¹

Introduction

Visual culture theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff writes that between 1839—the year French artist Louis Daguerre invented early photography—and 2012, an estimated 2.5 trillion photographs were taken.² Mirzoeff adds that in 2016 alone, 1.2 trillion photographs were taken, concluding that the number of photographs people take annually since is approximately a third of all pictures taken up until 2012.³ This statistic is especially pertinent when thinking about vision and the existing militarized gaze at sites such as prisons, checkpoints, and borders. My goal is to explore how photography plays a role in these places and to do this, I analyze the 2004 Abu Ghraib torture photographs to investigate how state violence is perpetuated through visibility. I examine photographs not only because of their importance as an art form but because “it gives visible access to the ways in which the social order operates.”⁴ When images are viewed in this way, that is, read through political questions rather than moral or ethical ones, one understands how the social order functions and proliferates its power. Political theorist Mark Reinhardt believes that contemporary political scientists have tended to ignore the way power is related to vision and considering this, I show how the state relies on visibility, in particular, photography, to establish its authority.⁵

I organize this paper into three sections. In the first section, I provide background to Abu Ghraib and the torture that took place during the 2003–2011 occupation of Iraq. In the second section, I explain my theoretical frameworks on photography and political violence. In the third section, I apply these frameworks to three images from the Abu Ghraib archive.

Background

The Abu Ghraib prison is in Abu Ghraib, an Iraqi city located 20 miles west of Baghdad, Iraq’s capital. Since its opening in the 1950s, the prison has always been a site of violence. In 2003, during the first year of the occupation, Iraqis detained at the prison were routinely sexually tortured and photographed by U.S. military soldiers. The camera’s presence during these acts created a theater of violence, where interrogators would perform sadistic acts of brutality and then circulate the photographs to friends and family back in the United States.⁶ On April 28, 2004, these photographs were leaked and then broadcast to the public by CBS’s *60 Minutes* in a segment titled “Court Martial in Iraq.” Subsequently, other journalists and media organizations published the photos as well, including Seymour

Hersh of *The New Yorker*, prompting conversations about the display of detainee suffering.

The literature that emerged from this moment focused heavily on individual ethics with scholars asking, should photographs of violence be viewed? Should they be circulated? What are the ethics in their distribution and framing?⁷ These are important questions, but to think about images in this way, as much of the literature does, is to place a burden on the individual when engaging with images. These individual moral qualms take away from how vision is utilized by structures of power. I pose that thinking about images, as an art form and an object of ethical and philosophical deliberations, is to see them as objects containing and creating social relations.

Theoretical Frameworks

Viewing images as social relations is an idea from French philosophers Guy Debord and Jacques Ranciere, who both look beyond what is captured in a specific moment of a photograph. Debord writes, “The spectacle [is] not a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images.”⁸ Similarly, Ranciere argues that images show a “regime of relations between elements and between functions.”⁹ He adds, “The image is never a simple reality. Cinematic images are primarily operations, relations between the sayable and the visible, ways of playing with the before and the after, cause and effect.”¹⁰ Ranciere says the relationships are not referring to what has happened and what has taken place, but the operations that make up the nature of what we are seeing.¹¹ In other words, there is more to an image than the content depicted in it, including the conditions that allowed the photograph to exist in the first place. One additional point to Debord and Ranciere which I would add is that not only do photographs reflect the political conditions of the current social order, but they also create them. At Abu Ghraib, the social relation between detained people and torturers already existed before the images, but an additional layer of the hierarchy was created the moment the photo was taken.

I connect the theories of Debord and Ranciere to the work of political theorist Yves Winter. Drawing from Niccolò Machiavelli, Winter defines political violence as “historically specific effects of strategies and tactics deployed against the background of a given balance of forces.”¹² For Winter, a Machiavellian perspective on political violence is not associated solely with the violence of tyrannical and authoritarian governments, nor does it argue for a complete abolishment of violence. Rather, a Machiavellian perspective depoliticizes violence by bringing it into the forefront and asking what exactly categorizes it as “violent” and what that categorization produces.¹³ For Winter, violence produces

political effects by appealing to an audience. He writes that most forms of political violence are “designed to be seen or at least to leave behind visible traces, even when they take place in the secrecy of the torture chamber.”¹⁴ He adds that rarely is political violence aimed at the person it is targeting, but instead, is for “the passions of an audience.”¹⁵ In other words, violence is performance and it is the orchestration, staging, and sensory experiences that produce political effects. The resulting response includes fear, shock, horror, and pleasure.¹⁶ Winter then provides several readings from scenes of *The Prince* and cites the example of Cesare Borgia in the Romagna to argue that state-making is both witnessed and staged. The “theatricality” is critical to the political function of violence.¹⁷

The images that emerged from the Iraq War and the Abu Ghraib archive can be viewed similarly to Winter’s examples from *The Prince*. It is through this articulation of political violence as a performance that renders political effects that I view the torture at Abu Ghraib. My point of disagreement with Winter’s claim is for whom the violence is created. For Winter, these performances are for the public and what makes the spectacular violence effective is that it “turns third parties from witnesses into spectators.”¹⁸ He says political violence must have an addressee in place, which for him this is the masses—the third-party voyeur-turned-participant.¹⁹ Consequently, Winter’s focus is on the spectator. I argue that the performance is not for the audience or those spectating, but, instead, for the performer. In other words, to use the Machiavelli metaphor, the performance of violence is for “the prince.”

The violence at Abu Ghraib is then considered for other performers because it is how the performers create community. Scholar Solomon-Godeau claims that the Abu Ghraib images, like lynching postcards, contain a “self-representative” aspect in their existence and distribution; it is how the participants and witnesses “constitute and affirm themselves as a collectivity [and] a community.”²⁰ Solomon-Godeau suggests that those enacting the violence, to borrow from Guy Debord, view the violence as an “instrument of unification.”²¹ Similarly, critical race scholar Sherene Razack believes that photographs have long served as a technology of belonging and that they “not only reflect what was imagined but also actively produce what they declare to exist.”²² In Razack’s example of colonialism, she argues how colonizers have used performances of violence to understand themselves and create their racial hierarchy. She writes that comparably, it is through the torture that the soldiers at Abu Ghraib view themselves as superior subjects. Razack adds that the photographs produced racial subjects and created a hierarchy of who is civilized and who is not. The social relations created here are between capturer and captive and it is

through the performance of violence that those imposing it come to know themselves.

Analysis of the Abu Ghraib Images

Analyzing three Abu Ghraib images as case studies, in addition to reflecting on a corrective of Winter, helps one understand the Abu Ghraib images as performances for those enacting the violence. Figure 1 is of the “hooded man” photograph, arguably the most recognized image from the Abu Ghraib archive.²³ The viewer has a frontal view of the detained man who is standing on a cardboard box. His arms are stretched outright hanging mid-air and his hands are attached to electrical wires. He has a blanket draping his body and a black hood is over his head. What is being depicted here is “sensory deprivation,” a psychological torture technique where one of the senses of the detainee is removed, which results in a reduction in cognitive abilities.²⁴ The viewers can see him but he cannot see the viewers. Joseph Pugliese writes that the unequal visual power created here leads to a reduction to subhuman status for the photographed detainee²⁵ creating “partitioned vision.”²⁶ The removal of sight results in an unequal power between the detained person, the camera, and the viewer.

The following two pictures are examples of images that show the torturers looking directly at the camera. In Figure 2, we see the face of soldier Lynndie England angled at the photographer.²⁷ Her gaze is on the camera shutter and she is half-smiling with a cigarette hanging from her mouth. Her right arm is folded and she is gesturing a thumbs-up symbol. Her left hand is pointed towards the detained person’s genitals. In the cropped part of the image are four detained men with their bodies fully exposed and with hoods on their heads. One man has an electrical wire tied around him. The dehumanization occurring is visible. Lastly, Figure 3 is an image of Sabrina Harman also taking a knee and putting her head close to a dead detainee whose face I have cropped. She is smiling with her teeth and is holding a thumbs-up sign. These last set of images are all demonstrations of what Judith Butler says: in many ways, the torture was *for* the camera.²⁸



Figure 1. “The Hooded Man” taken by Ivan Fredrick II.



Figure 2. Lynndie England smiles in front of a row of naked prisoners.



Figure 3. Sabrina Harman smiles and gives a thumbs up while crouching over a prisoner.

Applying the theories from Winter helps one see how political violence relies on vision. The soldiers consider themselves as playing a part in a theater, one in which they are the civilizer and can capture, colonize, and kill the barbarian. From the glee in their face, one can argue that it is clear the captives do not register as human for the capturers. As the state torturers perform for each other, they draw their strength from the other and consolidate the hierarchy that exists between them and their victims. Their performance relies on vision because seeing each other in this role confirms what they know about themselves and the community they are a part of—that they too, in the green uniform and khaki pants, are among of the ranks of power holders. Vision is what enables this presentation of soldier and detainee to be a normalized, and expected, part of our social landscape.

As soldiers inflicted various types of torture techniques, medical experimentations, and many forms of psychological, physical, and sexual violence, there was the insidious presence of the camera. The Abu Ghraib photos show U.S. imperial power on bodies through what Joseph Pugliese writes is the “organizing principles of white supremacist aesthetics that intertwine violence and sexuality with Orientalist spectacle.”²⁹ These photographs were meant to be seen. The performance was critical for those enacting it because it is how they came to know themselves and draw the distinction between civilized and uncivilized, backward and modern, sexually repressed and sexually liberated, terrorist and patriot. This dividing line is then accentuated by the dividing line of the shutter snap.

Conclusion

Photography has been long intertwined with political violence. By examining the 2004 Abu Ghraib photographs, this paper has demonstrated that the camera is used by the state as an active tool of violence and is then able to gain legitimacy through the capturing of this violence. Viewing images as a set of social relations allows one to draw the connections between state torturers in the Abu Ghraib

photographs and the Iraqi people they were photographing. Viewing political violence from Yves Winter’s articulation of it as performance enables the understanding the torturers were not committing these acts secretly, but with the intention of the spectacle being seen; that is precisely why the camera was present to begin with. It was circulated and reproduced not for the masses but for the torturers, because this is how they built community and understood themselves as superior subjects in relation to their captives.

Furthermore, the circulation of the images lead to a normalization of expanded state powers in moments of crisis. While the reach of state power broadens, the collapse of the photographs onto the human cannot be undone. The photographs become part of the detained people’s experience of torture and the circulation reinflits and reproduces this violence. It is not just the conditions of the prison or the policies of the government, but the photographs themselves that constantly reinforce the performance of violence. Processing these moments of tension in photographs is important because they act as tools of political technology. One then sees how all of political life has been condensed into the image.

Endnotes

- 1 Teju Cole, “When the Camera Was a Weapon of Imperialism. (And When It Still Is.),” *New York Times Magazine*, February 6, 2019.
- 2 Nicholas Mirzoeff, *The Appearance of Black Lives Matter* (Miami, Florida: NAME, 2017), 28.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Mark Reinhardt, “Picturing Violence: Aesthetics and the Anxiety of Critique,” in *Beautiful Suffering*, ed. Holly Edwards, Erina Duganne, Mark Reinhardt. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 13–36.
- 6 Joseph Pugliese, “Abu Ghraib and Its Shadow Archives,” *Law & Literature* 19, no. 2 (2007): 248, <https://doi.org/10.1525/lal.2007.19.2.247>.
- 7 See Susie Linfield (2012), Judith Butler (2009), Susan Sontag (2004).
- 8 Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit, MI: Black & Red, 1984), 5.
- 9 Jacques Ranciere, *The Future of the Image* (London, England: Verso Books, 2019), 4.
- 10 Ibid., 6.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Yves Winter, *Machiavelli and the Orders of Violence* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2018), 2.
- 13 Ibid., 3.
- 14 Ibid., 23.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Winter, 34.
- 17 Ibid., 46.
- 18 Ibid., 63.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Abigail Solomon-Godeau, *Photography after Photography* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 66.
- 21 Debord, 3.
- 22 Sherene Razack, *Casting Out* (Toronto, ON, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 30.

- ²³ Figure 1 “ID of Hooded Abu Ghraib Prisoner Challenged” 2006.
- ²⁴ Leigh Johnson. “Terror, Torture and Democratic Autoimmunity,” *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 38, no. 1 (2012): 116, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0191453711421606>.
- ²⁵ Pugliese, 257.
- ²⁶ Gil Hochberg, *Visual Occupations* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 9.
- ²⁷ Figure 2 Hallett 2012.
- ²⁸ Judith Butler, *Frames of War* (London, England: Verso Books, 2009), 85; emphasis mine.
- ²⁹ Pugliese, 254.

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Rethinking a Damaging Discipline: American Indian Struggles to Strengthen our Tribal Nations, Survive Academia, and Transform Anthropology

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Abstract

American anthropology was built on defining and controlling Native culture and identity. During the 1930s and for many decades after, dozens of anthropologists claimed the authority to determine what our cultures “really” were. They constructed the image of the “authentic” Indian by suppressing, then replacing, many aspects of American Indian identity with fetishized images of what they thought Indians should be: static and homogenous relics forever stuck in the historic past. How do 21st century Native anthropologists come to terms with the history of their discipline and how exactly do they participate in anthropological knowledge production? As a Native woman entering the discipline of anthropology, I have felt frustrated and unsure of where my voice fits and how (and if I even want to) engage with the discipline. How can we reclaim and reshape this space so that it serves Native goals and objectives and so that it becomes a tool of Native empowerment? Such questions speak to my deep-seated belief that, although anthropology has its origins in colonialism, it does indeed carry the promise and potential of serving Native interests and Native purposes.

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American Indians are severely underrepresented in anthropology. Although there are 1.9 million American Indians and Alaska Natives, in 2021 there were only 29 American Indians and Alaska Natives with PhDs in anthropology.¹ As a young Native woman entering the field of anthropology, I've felt frustrated and unsure of where my

voice fits and how (and if I even want) to engage with the discipline. I am using this paper to think through anthropology's legacies and what it means to be a Native woman in Anthropology. In the first half of this paper, I briefly explore the marginalization of Indian anthropologists and the exploitation of Native peoples by non-Indian anthropologists during American anthropology's first century (1870–1970). I then explore how American Indian anthropologists have coped with the history of their discipline as well as the ways they have related to and practiced anthropology during the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Ultimately, through this analysis, I show both the damage that anthropology has caused to American Indians and how we Natives have reshaped the tools of anthropology toward our own goals. I close with some recommendations on proactive measures the field of Anthropology can take to begin to contend with the harm that the field has done to American Indians.

Anthropology and American Indians

White anthropologists often remark that Indians are so underrepresented in anthropology because Vine Deloria, Jr. (Standing Rock Sioux Tribe) chased them away in the 1970s. In *Custer Died for Your Sins*, Deloria berates anthropologists, contending that they have done great harm to Native communities and are a “threat to [Indians'] existence” (1969, 81). Non-Native scholar Risa Applegarth suggests that the dearth of Indian anthropologists is better explained by the history of their marginalization in anthropology. She points out that, during the discipline's early history, many Indians and members of other underrepresented groups found anthropology attractive, perceiving it as a “welcoming science” (2014, 1–2). Then, despite the fact that a growing number of minorities were earning anthropology PhDs, “publish[ing] prolifically,” and winning grants, “their intellectual contributions were [] marginalized from their discipline's mainstream” (3). Despite the interest that American Indians had in the field of anthropology, they found the discipline largely unwilling to accept them.

The first American Indian to earn a PhD in anthropology, William Jones (Sac and Fox Nation) (1871–1909), was marginalized despite graduating from what was then the top anthropology program. Trained at Columbia University by the “father of American anthropology” Franz Boas, Jones earned his doctorate in 1904. Unfortunately, he died unexpectedly within five years of completing his graduate studies, not long after he had confessed to one of his classmates that he felt that he “had been ‘carefully led’ to the door of anthropology, ‘only to find it locked’” (Vigil 2018, 215). Kiara Vigil asserts that Jones's “position in anthropology remained marginal” because he was American Indian (215). He did not receive, among other things, the offers to teach

anthropology in universities that others who were trained by Boas received (215).

Ella Deloria (Standing Rock Sioux) (1889–1971) was also trained under Franz Boas at Columbia University. Despite being heavily recruited by Boas, after Deloria began working with him, he simply used her for decades as an informant and research assistant (Demallie 2005, 2264–2265). This stifled her professional career. She was relegated to the status of a second-class citizen in the anthropology department and never earned a PhD (Bonnie and Krook, 2018). Boas's treatment of the American Indians he mentored is particularly concerning given that Boas built his career on the study of Indigenous people. According to the City University of New York (CUNY) anthropology graduate student, Anne Spice (Kwanlin Dun First Nation), the “so-called founding fathers” of anthropology built their careers by writing about Native peoples, “while their native informants, students, and collaborators struggled to make a living in academia, their voices eclipsed by white anthropologists” (2016). Spice argues that anthropologists sought to relegate Indians to “the studied,” not those who study.

The harmful descriptions written by these white anthropologists, descriptions that dehumanize American Indians, increased Indian ambivalence towards the discipline. In *Ancient Society* (1877), ethnologist Lewis Henry Morgan (1818–1881) developed a social evolutionary theory. He classed my own people, the Choctaws, and my father's people, the Cherokees, as occupying the “Lower Status of Barbarism” during the period prior to European contact (19). His use of literacy as a criterion for who was “civilized” meant that he labeled thousands of Indian tribes as “uncivilized” before contact. Problematically, he asserted that my people and others became civilized only after Europeans taught Natives to read and write. He classed nearly all pre-contact Native Americans as either savages or barbarians (17).

Robert Lowie (1883–1957) emerged as a leader in American anthropology while at the University of California at Berkeley in part because he helped develop “salvage anthropology,” an effort to document cultures deemed to be on the verge of extinction. In *Myths and Traditions of the Crow Indians* (1918), he problematically claimed sole authority to define authentic Crow culture, which he rushed to record before the Crows ceased to exist. More than a century later, the Crow Nation remains a sovereign nation, having refused to fulfill anthropological and other fantasies of them as destined for extinction. Later in *Primitive Religion* (1924), Lowie dehumanized and exoticized entire tribes, labeling them “primitive.” For Lowie, who denied coevalness to Indians, as did many of his colleagues, Indians offered Euro-Americans a window into their own “primitive” pasts

(Fabian). His work is an assertion of white superiority over Native peoples, as well as a claim that Indians were less “fit” in a Darwinian sense and thus destined to die out.

Shortly thereafter, salvage anthropology began fueling the development of discourses of authenticity about Indians. Salvage anthropologists legitimized certain categories of Indians, namely Natives with higher degrees of Native “blood” who were culturally distinct from the larger non-Indian population, while suggesting that Indians who were “mixed bloods,” engaged extensively with non-Indians, and/or were successful were either less authentic or no longer Indian. Indian anthropologists have argued that such discourses have worked their way into Indian communities. In *Colonial Entanglement: Constituting a Twenty-First-Century Osage Nation*, Jean Dennison (Osage Nation) argues that these discourses have been weakening the ability of her Tribe to recover from colonization. Her work attests to what Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Maori) describes as “the reach of imperialism into our [Indigenous] heads” (Smith 1999, 23).

Salvage anthropologists shaped stereotypes about Indians that persist to the present. I confront these stereotypes daily. I have had my identity questioned and invalidated because I do not fit the stereotypic image of what an Indian is “supposed to” look like or because I do not engage in so-called authentic cultural practices like powwows. Given the impact, which is significantly negative, that non-Indian anthropologists have had on Indian tribes, how do Indian anthropologists engage with anthropology? How can we reclaim and reshape this space so that it serves Native goals and objectives and becomes a tool of Native empowerment? Smith writes that, even though “the pursuit of knowledge is deeply embedded in multiple layers of imperial and colonial practices” (1999, 34), she and other Natives should use anthropology to challenge non-Native accounts of them. The “counterstories” of Natives are vital (34). Indeed, I see my work as providing counterstories of my people and of American Indian identity.

The most well-known Indian anthropologist, Princeton professor Alfonso Ortiz (Tewa Pueblo) (1939–1997), protested the ways anthropologists related to American Indians. At a symposium in 1972, he said, “[Anthropologists] operate as if they ha[ve] an inherent and inalienable right to the information they [are] seeking” and they “still approach their tribal and peasant subjects with a neocolonialist attitude” (Ortiz 1972, 88–89). At the same symposium, Vine Deloria excoriated anthropologists for their arrogant attitude toward Indians. Richard Meyers (Oglala Sioux Tribe) explains that “Deloria represented the anthropologist as an . . . academic who descends on Indian country every summer to confirm and reproduce essentially self-confirming, self-referential, and self-reproducing

closed systems of arcane pure knowledge” (Meyers 2008, 10). In 1887, Smithsonian non-Indian anthropologist James Mooney (1861–1921) even moved into the home of my great-great-great-grandfather, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) Chief Nimrod Jarrett Smith (1837–1893). Mooney’s anthropological objective differed from those of my ancestors, who sought solutions to their economic precarity and return of their stolen lands. Mooney sought to collect “sacred formulas,” “myths,” descriptions of now-defunct dances, and other ethnological materials, an objective he fulfilled and from which he profited (Mooney 1982 [1891]).

Deloria complained that anthropologists studied matters that were relatively unimportant to Indians. As Smith (1999) explains, “research [is] a significant site of struggle between the interests and ways of knowing of [white anthropologists] and the interests and ways of resisting of [Indigenous peoples]” (2). Deloria also complained that anthropologists tended to represent “all Indians,” including “who [we] are” and “what [we’re] like,” glossing over our diversity (Deloria 1972). Vigil notes that William Jones asserted that whites who had spent “years among some of our most interesting Indians” often knew “nothing about them” (2018, 217). Anthropology thus forged a problematic early relationship with American Indians. What then does it look like when American Indians practice anthropology?

American Indian Anthropologists

Anthropologist Beatrice Medicine (Standing Rock Sioux) (1923–2005) is perhaps the first Indian anthropologist to express concerns about how the discipline might change her relationship to her people. She decried the “jargon in anthropology [that] makes it inaccessible to those outside the discipline” and asked herself, “Would it be possible to retain dignity as a native while operating in my roles other than informant?” and “Would anthropological training alienate me from my people?” (Medicine 2001, 11, 7). Building upon these concerns, Spice argues that academia often requires a segregation of the researcher from the issues we study in ways that make academia problematic for Indian anthropologists. She explains that anthropologists are supposed to be emotionless, unattached, “objective” observers, but that this is not how most of us Natives want to or feel that we should practice anthropology (Spice 2016). Her critique dovetails with a critique led by white feminist scholar Donna Haraway, who rejects the proposition that anthropology should be an “objective” science (Haraway 1988). With Naomi Williams, in “i was dreaming when i wrote this,” Kristin Simmons (Moapa Band of Southern Paiute) expands upon this critique:

Academic production is too often individuated and stagnant: standalone articles in books published on a schedule designed to maximize institutional ratings and standardize the metrics of success. The collaboration we do here aims to refuse the seduction of the ready-to-hand scripts for individual success and embrace entanglements with complex others. (Simmons and Williams 2018, 149)

Simmons and Williams explore what anthropology can look like when we embrace the critiques of Medicine, Spice, and Haraway. They deliberately write against the academy and against anthropology. They converse with their readers and bare their emotions. They think through music, using poetics, movement, and fluidity, to better understand how their work and experiences are situated in relation to settler colonialism, the university, and technologies of Indigenous and Black erasure.

Simmons and Williams refuse to participate in anthropological practices that, as they see them, suggest that “professionalism” requires both severing (or distancing themselves from) their relationships to other community members and constructing themselves as autonomous scholars. Instead, throughout the piece they affirm and reinforce their ties, together with their commitment to being good relatives and working collaboratively with one another. By doing this, they force their readers to reflect upon acts of disavowing or rejecting these relations as part of the process of becoming scholars in the academy. They also raise questions about the consequences of such acts for Indigenous scholars, including Indian anthropologists. There are no rewards within the academy for Indigenous scholars to nurture these ties. Instead, the time, effort, and resources that Indian scholars may (or may not) choose to put into the activity of being a good relative almost always hurts their academic careers. Being a good relative takes time away from the huge amounts of labor—in research, teaching, and service—required to succeed in academia.

Simmons and Williams productively disarm their audience and, more broadly, anthropology by asserting that “the simple fact of working every day in spaces that were predominantly white and predominantly male, within an academic discipline shaped by settler colonialism and white supremacy: *all threatened to suffocate when we’d come intending to create*” [emphasis mine] (146). Boldly confronting the meanings that earlier generations of scholars mapped onto these spaces, they assert that they “have endeavored to think and write ethnographically while still holding the knowledge that our discipline [anthropology] was born as a military endeavor of Indigenous dispossession and raised on a steady diet of scientific racism” (160). Given their condemnation of the history of anthropology and related disciplines, one

must ask what is the promise of anthropology for them? Why might they see it as useful?

A partial answer can be found in anthropological methods. Simmons and Williams make liberal use of ethnographic vignettes and close analysis. They think intimately about how seemingly mundane everyday experiences shed light on ongoing histories of Indigenous and Black marginalization, environmental toxics, and racial capitalism. Consequently, they lean into the culture of curiosity and exploration that anthropology fosters. In many ways, anthropology asks us to revel in uncertainty.

But where Simmons and Williams's work most diverges from hegemonic practices in the discipline involves issues of transparency. They actively narrate their thoughts and experiences. They're abundantly transparent about their hesitations (even animosity) toward both the university and anthropology. They aren't afraid to be vulnerable and intimate with readers. They speak their minds and bear their souls. Their writing differs sharply from standard anthropological writing, which adopts or leans heavily toward the persona of a fact-telling scientist. Thoughts, feelings, and emotions are undervalued in anthropological writing.

Alfonso Ortiz wrote that he went into anthropology "because it was the one field in which I could read about and deal with Indians all of the time and still make a living. It was that simple" (Ortiz 1972, 86). This was the same reason Medicine and another early Indian anthropologist, Edward Dozier (Santa Clara Pueblo) (1916–1971), became anthropologists.² Indigenous Studies professor Eleanor Bourke (Wergaia and Wamba Wamba Tribes) explains that "When [we] are with fellow Aborigines, [we] feel a certain bond, a certain magic, and part of a great family. It is a wonderful feeling: a feeling of great security, joy, and pride" (1993, 6).

Several other of the earliest Indian anthropologists appear also to have experienced and likewise been awed by this feeling, as at least two of them used anthropological field research to study the source(s) or ingredient(s) of the bond between Indians. After his research, Jones concluded that language lay at the heart of that bond. Ella Deloria asserted that it was kinship.³ She argued that kinship was the web that held her people together (1995). The prescribed behaviors for Dakota kin helped make her people "a most kind, unselfish people, always acutely aware of those about them and innately courteous" (11). Her kin-based representations of Dakotas contrasted sharply with popular views of Sioux as vicious savages with no regard for human life.

Several of the earliest Indian anthropologists wrote about their belief that it is not enough to simply hang out with our people but that Native anthropologists should also work to make the discipline meaningful to Indians by, for

example, using it to improve the quality of life in Native communities.⁴ Building upon Medicine's perspective, Spice writes that a "responsibility to protect the land and water [] emerges from our positioning as community members and relatives" (Spice 2016). Yet this responsibility "is too often subverted by the structures of anthropology departments, the precarity of our academic labor, the devaluation of our activism in relation to our scholarly work (as if those things are neatly separated), and the policing of our academic voices" (Spice 2016). Spice adds that "the political expressions of Indigenous peoples . . . are an integral part of how native scholars think and write and act within and beyond the ivory tower" (2016). While insisting upon her inclusion in academia as a Native woman in all aspects of that identity, she provides a compelling vision for an anthropology of the future. Spice writes,

The discipline has a renewed opportunity to honor the contributions of Indigenous scholars by supporting our embedded analyses of Indigenous resistance. In a moment when Indigenous communities across the continent are threatened by state supported extractive industry, anthropology must not mirror this with extractive scholarship . . . we need you to support our work as Indigenous activist scholars. This means [not only] centering and citing our research and writing, but also acknowledging that our commitments to land-defense movements extend beyond ethnographic description. *We are working to help our nations survive, on the page and on the ground.* [emphasis mine] (Spice 2016)

As a young American Indian woman entering the discipline, I find this call to action compelling. It speaks to my experience and my tribal identity. It provides a focus for me and my work, particularly given that my experience in the classroom is one of encountering numerous non-Indian created reasons for learning about and practicing anthropology. Tentatively, I choose to make anthropology work for me and my people in the way Spice, a fellow Native, suggests. Tentatively, I buy into her idea that it is possible for anthropology to serve the needs and interests of our Native Nations.

Yet the history of the discipline cannot and should not be allowed to simply rest in peace. That is unacceptable. The past continues to haunt. It haunts me, other Natives, and some non-Natives, and it continues to drive Natives away from the discipline. This haunting, now thoroughly a part of the discipline, will continue to exist as long as anthropology fails fully to recognize and come to terms with the harm that it has caused American Indians and other peoples. A reckoning needs to take place if anthropology is to move beyond its current identity as an enterprise that is at best problematic and at worst morally and ethically bankrupt. I owe it to my people to help fuel this reckoning. Non-Native

allies of Native people, though, also need to step up. In fact, they need to play the lead role in bringing about such a reckoning and facilitating a healing. Anthropology needs to commit more fully to doing work that truly confronts the discipline's past and its ongoing legacies.

Conclusion

As part of this reckoning, Anthropology needs to take at least five specific, concrete actions to make things right. Within the university, anthropology departments need to develop courses that educate students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels about the violence that anthropologists and the field of Anthropology have done to Natives and to other marginalized communities. Such courses should be required of all Anthropology graduate and undergraduate students. At the same time, anthropology departments, together with other departments across the university, need to hire more Native faculty members. In addition, universities need to invest in creating welcoming and supportive environments for Native and other marginalized students if they expect and want Natives to pursue careers as professional anthropologists. This includes creating residential affinity houses, hiring multiple full-time Native staff members, and funding Native academic and non-academic resource programs. Fourth, universities need to take actions to demonstrate that they are allies, not enemies, of neighboring Native communities. This includes returning ownership of the land upon which they sit to the Native Nation(s) that last owned it, then beginning to pay rent for occupying that land (Yesno). Finally, anthropologists, Native and non-Native, should lead campaigns to help restore the land base of our Native Nations. By making these changes, anthropology departments and Universities will not only make anthropology and higher education more welcoming and accessible to American Indian students, but also begin to grapple with the extractivist and damaging histories of anthropology. Doing so is crucial to the survival of anthropology departments everywhere.

Endnotes

¹ The Bureau of Indian Affairs reports that 1.9 million people are enrolled members of the 574 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes in the United States. This estimate does not include the members of unrecognized groups, who vary widely in the veracity of their claims, or individuals who simply check the box, American Indian or Alaska Native. If the latter two categories were added to the number of enrolled members of federally recognized tribes, the total Indian population approaches seven million. According to the Association of Indigenous Anthropologists, in 2021 the number of enrolled members of federally recognized tribes who have PhDs in anthropology is twenty-nine.

² In *Edward P. Dozier: The Paradox of the American Indian Anthropologist*, non-Native scholar Marilyn Norcini argues that anthropologist Edward Dozier, who earned his PhD in anthropology from UCLA in 1952, felt the same way (Norcini 2007). See, for example, *Hano: A Tewa Indian Community in Arizona* (Dozier 1966) and *The Pueblo Indians of North America* (Dozier 1970).

³ Ella Deloria did not complete her PhD in Anthropology.

⁴ See, for example, Medicine 1998.

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Yellowstone National Park: Manifest Destiny, Conservation, and Indigenous Resistance

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Daniela Lebron is a senior at Barnard College, majoring in Political Science and American Studies interested in studying the intersections of gentrification and settler colonialism, specifically how the frontier is present in both. Furthermore, she is interested in studying how these relationships have and continue to alter the natural and built environment, especially as the global climate crisis worsens.

Abstract

This paper considers the narrative surrounding the national parks, specifically Yellowstone National Park, as one of the United States' greatest creations, functioning as preserved, untouched wilderness. First, the emergence of the national parks as an act of dominance by the U.S. is contextualized in examining the histories of Manifest Destiny and the early conservation movement. Then, in examining the history of resistance to the establishment of Yellowstone National Park by the Shoshone, Bannock and Nez Perce, I argue that Indigenous people resisted U.S. acts of domination and violence in creation of Yellowstone National Park through diplomatic channels, as well as through combative means, which were ultimately unsuccessful in stopping the establishment and persistence of Yellowstone National Park. Acknowledging the history of Indigenous resistance subverts the popular narrative surrounding Yellowstone and the national parks, calling us to think critically about what more can be done beyond recognition. Moreover, I conclude that this requires further research and study, guided, and led by Indigenous people and scholars.

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Introduction

The national parks in the United States are considered some of the greatest creations in American history—their legacy celebrating the conservationists that made them possible (Burns, et al. 2009). Although the national parks are heralded as some of the most beautiful landscapes in the U.S., their history and formation is far from picturesque. The national parks were formed, and remain, on land stolen from several Indigenous groups, something not discussed

through the myth of an untouched wilderness. Indigenous people had a deep connection to the land, and the United States' attempts to displace and violate Indigenous sovereignty resulted in resistance from Indigenous people. In this essay, I examine the history of Manifest Destiny and the early conservation movement, which facilitated the U.S. presence in the West and justified the creation of the national parks, specifically Yellowstone National Park. Furthermore, through an examination of the histories of the Shoshone, Bannock and Nez Perce in the region now known as Yellowstone National Park, I will argue that Indigenous people resisted U.S. acts of domination and violence in creation of Yellowstone National Park through diplomatic channels, as well as through combative means, which were ultimately unsuccessful in stopping the establishment and persistence of Yellowstone National Park. Furthermore, acknowledging the history of Indigenous resistance in Yellowstone National Park subverts the conceptualization of the legacy of the park as one of the greatest feats in American history.

Through this paper, I look to shift the focus to questions on how Indigenous resistance in the history of the national parks subverts their current understanding as some of the U.S.'s greatest accomplishments and what acknowledging this history means for other more substantive actions, for example land reclamation. While this work draws on scholars who have not only detailed this history themselves, but also made mention of Indigenous resistance in relation to the U.S.'s national parks, current scholarly work concentrates on this under recognized history of Indigenous history through discussion of the impacts conservation and the criminalization of Indigenous practices had in formation of the parks (Jacoby 2014; Spence 1999; West 2010). In focusing more so on Indigenous resistance to what scholars have identified as the impacts of conservation and criminalization of Indigenous practices, I look to contribute to how Indigenous resistance subverts the idyllic picture held of Yellowstone National Park and by extension the national parks more generally.

Emergence of Manifest Destiny

The 1800s marked the emergence of Manifest Destiny, an ideology that served as the justification for the displacement of Indigenous people in the United States. Manifest Destiny is the idea that the United States was destined to expand westward, which relied heavily on Anglo-American Christian nationalism. Strong religious themes are reflected in Manifest Destiny's original use in justification for the annexation of Texas (Wilsey 2017). It described the U.S.'s acquisition of Texas as "an event already [indelibly] inscribed in the book of future fate and necessity," having been "America's God-given destiny to possess North

America” (Wilsey 2017). This made evident that westward expansion is not only the U.S.’s right, but also its fate, justifying domination and subjugation of Indigenous people in the west. Furthermore, religion and American democracy were used by proponents of westward expansion to reinforce this ‘destiny.’ Anglo-Americans viewed themselves as the only people capable of efficiently using western land and bringing ‘civilization’ to the rest of the continent. This ideology facilitated the displacement of Indigenous peoples by Andrew Jackson in the 1830s and ultimately allowed for increased acquisition of territory out west by the 1850s. In arguing that only Americans knew how to make efficient use of the land, Manifest Destiny laid the foundations for the ideology of the 19th century conservation movement.

Conservation and Yellowstone National Park

The main ideology of the early conservation movement held that humanity has a profound impact on the environment, typically for the worst, therefore requiring efficient management. The first conservationists were, in part, technocrats who prioritized efficient land use and preservation, which was only possible through the federal government (The Library of Congress, n.d.). George Perkins Marsh’s *Man and Nature* (1864) is evidence of this conservationist ideology, as he concluded that the federal government, rather than individual states, should be responsible for administration of public lands. In Marsh’s report for the U.S. Commission of Agriculture on the Social and Environmental Consequences of Irrigation, he reinforced this point when speaking about the “newly opened” lands of the American west (Marsh and Trombulak 2001). In mentioning that “human society could progress to greatness, but only if it paid attention to nature” and learned the lessons it taught, Marsh reinforces Manifest Destiny ideology, connecting it to conservation (Marsh and Trombulak 2001). The mention of progression to greatness through attention to nature echoes sentiments of Manifest Destiny, as through attention to nature through efficient management the U.S. could achieve their destined greatness. Marsh’s ideas went on to influence the founding of Yellowstone National Park and other projects, as well as the early 20th century iteration of the conservation movement.

Early conservationists, under the charge of the federal government, worked diligently to preserve and make efficient use of western landscapes through the displacement of Indigenous people. Manifest destiny and the early conservation movement set the stage for the creation of the nation’s first national park; a feat accomplished through justified acts of domination. Yellowstone National Park, established on the lands of the Shoshone, Bannock, Crow and Blackfeet, was administered by the federal government rather than by each state (Miles 1995). Through this project

the federal government attempted to popularize the idea that Yellowstone was an untouched wilderness that Indigenous people had no real connection to because of their semi-nomadic lifestyles. However, resistance to displacement from the Shoshone, Bannock, and Nez Perce—three Indigenous groups that traversed and made use of the region’s resources negates this narrative.

Indigenous Resistance

Resistance constitutes acts against an oppressive force or power, taking many different forms. Individuals or communities can engage in acts of resistance, actively targeting specific facets of the oppressive force to garner attention and achieve change or resolution (Raby 2005). Furthermore, resistance is about power, as acts of dominance and resistance are fundamentally intertwined (Hollander and Einwohner 2004). Acts of dominance often can only be understood in relation to acts of resistance. In this specific instance, Indigenous people, both individually and collectively, resisted the U.S.’s repeated violations of their sovereignty and attempts to displace them through diplomatic, as well as combative means. Resistance posed by the Shoshone, Bannock, and Nez Perce made evident that Indigenous resistance was in response to the United States’ attempts to strip them of their land and rights, an act of dominance on the part of the U.S. The Shoshone and Bannock were willing to fight Manifest Destiny and settler colonialism in the courts and the Nez Perce avoided laws and treaties in the ‘last Indian War’ of 1877, leaving for Canada—making their acts of resistance different. However, the cases of the Shoshone, Bannock and Nez Perce were similar in that Indigenous people consistently resisted confinement to reservations, continuing to hunt and traverse Yellowstone and its adjacent areas even through conflict, until U.S. forces prevailed. For all three groups, Indigenous resistance was eclipsed by American determination to fulfill Manifest Destiny and settle the continent.

The Shoshone and Bannock

The Shoshone and Bannock are two Indigenous groups that relied on the present-day Yellowstone region, interacting regularly with one another, sharing similar practices such as hunting and construction of temporary shelters. Relations between the groups varied, from peaceful to hostile, especially as they experienced instability as a result of increased competition on the Great Plains to increase their spheres of influence and European trade (Jacoby 2014). Importantly, neither group practiced agriculture, a point used by conservationists as justification for seizure of the land in the U.S.’s argument of ‘inefficient’ land use. However, they hunted and held detailed knowledge of the area. Even after U.S. expansion westward began, the

Shoshone and Bannock continued to hunt in the region in the summers and early fall, at first without major conflict, through terms of the Fort Bridger Treaty of 1868, reflecting the important connection to the land that these groups held (Jacoby 2014; Spence 1999). The Fort Bridger Treaty of 1868 made it so that both groups could go off of reservations to hunt so long as the land was “public” (*Fort Bridger Treaty of 1868*, Shoshone-Bannock Tribes).

U.S. conservationists were determined to make Yellowstone National Park an untouched wilderness to be protected from the supposed threat Indigenous people posed to the area by removing them from the park all together. For federal administrators of the park, the Shoshone and Bannock’s use of fire to facilitate travel, rid shelters and temporary settlements of insects, and aid hunting constituted part of Yellowstone’s “Indian problem.” Conservationists viewed fires set by Indigenous people as a threat to the environment. Furthermore, Indigenous presence, another component of the “Indian problem,” opened the possibility of interaction between tourists and Indigenous people that could end in conflict, preventing tourists’ enjoyment of the land (Spence 1999; Jacoby 2014). In considering Indigenous practices a problem, U.S. conservationists played upon not only the idea that Indigenous peoples inefficiently used the land, but also that their practices were inferior, therefore requiring U.S. administration.

Consequently, park administrators found the solution to their problem in the reservation system. By removing Indigenous people completely from Yellowstone and confining them to reservations, U.S. administrators could effectively manage the land by eliminating the threat of fires started by Indigenous people while allowing for tourism. Simultaneously, this maintained the idea that Yellowstone was a preserved untouched wilderness, a manifestation of God’s “original design for America” (Spence 1999). These efforts can be understood as acts of dominance by the U.S. government, specifically to subjugate Indigenous peoples, as reservations worked to limit Indigenous sovereignty.

Moreover, through military force, the U.S. attempted to restrict the Shoshone and Bannock to the Fort Hall and Wind River Reservations, causing minor conflict between the army and Indigenous people as they resisted displacement. The army was stationed along Yellowstone’s borders as a way of preventing Indigenous entrance to the park (Spence 1999). By restricting the Shoshone and Bannock to reservations, the U.S. thought they would be able to remove Indigenous people from the park, but also ‘civilize’ them—another attempt to subjugate Indigenous peoples—however, it did not have this effect (Jacoby 2014). Prevention of access to the park led to near-starvation on reservations and in 1878 this led to resistance from the Bannock. The Bannock

resisted the U.S. military force and asserted their rights by continuing to hunt off of the reservations and on the fringes of the park (Spence 1999).

The Shoshone and Bannock continued to resist the United States’ attempts to curb hunting in Yellowstone through the Fort Bridger Treaty of 1868. After earlier fights between Indigenous people and the U.S. army, tighter restrictions were put in place—now requiring a pass to leave reservations. This was a direct act of oppression and subjugation on the part of the United States. Some of the Shoshone and Bannock peoples ignored this, leaving reservations for social purposes, but also for hunting on the edges of Yellowstone and in adjacent areas (Jacoby 2014). Up until this point, the Shoshone and Bannock were compliant with their end of terms agreed upon in the treaty; therefore, they assumed that the right to hunt in Yellowstone was legal. However, unrelenting attempts to limit Indigenous hunting, combined with the arrival of white settlers in the 1890s eventually resulted in conflict—culminating in *Ward v. Racehorse*. Racehorse, a Bannock chief, purposefully hunted elk which white settlers had determined to be ‘out of season’ in order to defend the right to hunt as granted through the Treaty of Fort Bridger.

Ward v. Racehorse provided limited success for the Bannock, ultimately resulting in the dissolution of rights originally agreed upon in the Fort Bridger Treaty of 1868. At first, the case was fought in the Circuit Court for the District of Wyoming, which found that the Treaty of Fort Bridger took precedence over the hunting ‘out of season’ law established by the state of Wyoming (Spence 1999). However, Indigenous success was temporary, as the Wyoming Attorney General appealed the decision to the Supreme Court. Ultimately, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of white settlers—arguing that the Fort Bridger Treaty of 1868 must be viewed as a “temporary expedient that government officials expected neither to honor nor to uphold” in light of events that followed the treaty’s signing—the creation of Yellowstone being one of these events (Spence 1999). This ruling set a precedent that justified violence against Indigenous people and led to hesitation and reluctance to hunt off reservations (Jacoby 2014). As a result, Indigenous hunting in Yellowstone decreased, and as tourism picked up, the Indigenous presence eventually vanished. This facilitated the myth of Yellowstone as an ‘untouched wilderness’ and reinforced the power dynamic between Indigenous peoples and the U.S. as non-dominant and dominant entities.

Resistance became fundamentally intertwined with acts of dominance by the U.S. as Indigenous peoples used the U.S. court system to protect their land and assert their sovereignty. Challenging the U.S. through the court system

demonstrates the way in which the Shoshone and Bannock desired to keep a semblance of diplomatic relations, symbolizing that they viewed themselves and the U.S. as sovereign nations. Meanwhile, Americans saw Shoshone and Bannock resistance as obstacles to their destiny and duty to preserve Yellowstone. The existence and persistence of the Shoshone and Bannock in Yellowstone became an act of resistance, one eventually realized and purposefully acted on as seen in the actions of Chief Racehorse.

The Nez Perce

Another Indigenous group that passed through Yellowstone seasonally were the Nez Perce. Unlike the Shoshone and Bannock, they interacted regularly with the wonders that make Yellowstone a tourist attraction—the geysers and hot springs. Like the Shoshone and Bannock, the Nez Perce seasonally travelled through the region and knew it well. Regular use of and interaction with the Yellowstone’s thermal features actively combated the conception held by Americans that Indigenous people lacked understanding, and therefore, were fearful of the park’s thermal features (Jacoby 2014).

The Nez Perce were considered the U.S.’s strongest ally in the west until their relationship deteriorated, resulting in the ‘last Indian War,’ which in actuality was the flight of the Nez Perce from their land in 1877. In the face of violence and theft of their land the Nez Perce were committed to keeping peace with the United States (West 2010). As westward expansion picked up, the Nez Perce entered a series of treaties in the 1840s and 50s that increasingly violated their sovereignty. Particularly egregious was the Treaty of 1863, known as the “Steal Treaty,” which asked the Nez Perce to surrender the majority of their collective land (West 2010). Despite these treaties, the Nez Perce continued life as they knew it and were able to avoid white settlement on their land until the 1870s.

Similar to the Shoshone and Bannock, the United States viewed the Nez Perce’s presence as part of the “Indian problem” and found the solution through the reservation system, which the Nez Perce resisted. Once again, acts of dominance by the United States necessitated resistance in order to protect and assert Indigenous sovereignty. The U.S. used military force in attempts to remove the Nez Perce and push them onto the newly established reservations (West 2010). Antagonized by the U.S.’s act of violence and disregard for their sovereignty, the Nez Perce chose to fight against U.S. military force. The fight against the U.S. became a running pursuit, in which hundreds of Nez Perce fled through Yellowstone in attempts to reach Canada and avoid confinement to reservations. An infamous case from the Nez Perce flight to Canada is an interaction between

tourists in Yellowstone and the Nez Perce in August of 1877. As the Nez Perce made their way through Yellowstone they came upon tourists, taking them as hostage to avoid the possibility that they might give away the Nez Perce’s location to the U.S. military (Jacoby 2014). This encounter was not only part of Nez Perce resistance to the reservations, but also disrupted the idea that Yellowstone was an “untouched wilderness” made for Americans by God. Additionally, this is evidence of the U.S.’s attempts to subjugate Indigenous peoples to assert their place as the dominant sovereign nation in what is now known as the continental United States.

Ultimately, the Nez Perce surrendered in the fall of 1878, arguing for the ability to govern themselves and return to their land—a plea that was not granted to them (West 2010). The Nez Perce were sent to reservations throughout the west and in 1885 some were allowed to return to their homelands in the Pacific Northwest. In 1965 the Nez Perce National Historical Park was created and is administered by the National Park Service, commemorating the ancestral paths the Nez Perce traversed in what was once their land, reaching through several different states (*Nez Perce National Historical Park* 2021).

Refusal to abide by U.S. treaty and law demonstrates how the Nez Perce were unwilling to tolerate repeated violence and theft from the United States. Unable to keep their land, the Nez Perce resisted by refusing to be forced on reservations and in fleeing to Canada they worked to maintain their sovereignty. Refusal to cooperate with U.S. military forces, as well as the instance with tourists in Yellowstone in 1877, led their resistance to be painted as an act of war. This depiction of Indigenous resistance speaks to Manifest Destiny, specifically the way the United States worked to control the people and land of the North American continent—even if these people were of their own sovereign nation. Moreover, resistance shown by the Nez Perce is indicative of the resilience of Indigenous people.

Conclusion

Through discussion of the ideologies that emerged in the 19th century, I established what made the creation of Yellowstone National Park in 1872 possible, as well as its current understanding. The United States set a precedent for violent disrespect and disregard for Indigenous people and sovereignty through attempts to subjugate Indigenous peoples in creation of Yellowstone National Park. Presently, the National Parks service acknowledges that there was at one point in time an Indigenous presence in Yellowstone and works to commemorate this through commemorative sites (*Native American Affairs*, n.d.). However, in this there is no mention of active efforts by Indigenous peoples to resist the U.S. besides the popularly known story of the Nez

Perce's flight in 1877 to avoid the reservations (*Flight of the Nez Perce*, n.d.).

Recognizing the specific acts of resistance in addition to the fight by Indigenous peoples for acknowledgement of violations of treaties, of their sovereignty, and restoration of their land subverts the narrative 19th century conservationists established of an untouched wilderness that is still popularly thought of today in relation to the national parks. Furthermore, it is a call for the U.S. government and its citizens to fully consider the violent, dominant nature of the process of establishing the national parks and relations with Indigenous peoples. Acknowledging Indigenous resistance means recognizing the agency and sovereignty of Indigenous nations.

Moreover, acknowledging subverting the popular narrative surrounding the national parks leads to several questions. How can we combat remaining Manifest Destiny and conservationist ideology in the United States today? Are commemorative sites enough, allowing people to continue to visit and enjoy national parks? What does meaningful acknowledgement and incorporation of the history Indigenous resistance in the history of the national parks look like? Additionally, how can this acknowledgement be more than just an acknowledgement on a website or sign in a park? These are just several question that point to the fact that further consideration and conversation surrounding the future of the land that the national parks are currently on today requires further research and study, guided, and led by Indigenous people and scholars.

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Bears Ears National Monument: A Shifting Narrative of Tribal Sovereignty and Land Management

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Dana Lee is a student at The University of New Mexico, double majoring in Native American Studies and American Studies. She is a member of the Navajo Nation and as a Diné woman and mother, is guided in the service and commitment to her Indigenous communities. Her engagement into service includes participating with a local Indigenous liberation organization with on-the-ground campaigns, assisting in community gardening, and providing food and materials for unsheltered relatives. Her focus for her future is inspired by being a Mellon Mays fellow to continue research towards a PhD and career in higher education. She also has the honor of being a 2021 Udall Scholar to promote her mission in Indigenous studies and research.

Abstract

My paper examines shifting narratives around tribal sovereignty and land management that emerged with efforts to establish Bears Ears National Monument. Once this land designation was established in 2016, it offered a transition for tribes into co-land management with the federal government, thereby changing the terms of tribal land management. More importantly, Bears Ears meant that tribal sovereignty as it relates to land management could exist outside reservation borders. Bears Ears shows that Indigenous people have the capacity to, in a sense, move beyond colonially imposed borders; employing Native American studies and research can approach these challenges. In this paper, I explore changes to the understanding of land ownership, land management, and land use that came with the Bears Ears designation using Indigenous epistemology as an analytical framework. I explore the work of Indigenous grassroots organizations like Diné Bikéyah as well as the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition to investigate how this co-management capacity interrupts the colonial structures of property using traditional knowledge.

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Ahéhee' shikéí doo shidine'é. Thank you to my friends & family, and my People.

"In long, focused, and well-attended deliberations over this proposal, we have concluded that this new monument must be managed under a sensible, entirely workable regime of true Federal-Tribal Collaborative Management. We know that this has never been done before. But most great breakthroughs in public policy have no direct precedent. We want to work with you on this. We have reflected long and hard to come up with the right words to install Collaborative Management in this particular place and circumstance, and believe in

our suggested approach, but we welcome your thoughts on how to improve our formulation. Like you, we want to make the Bears Ears National Monument the shining example of the trust, the government-to-government relationship, and innovative, cutting-edge land management. But whatever the specific words might be, for the Bears Ears National Monument to be all it can be, the Tribes must be full partners with the United States in charting the vision for the monument and implementing that vision."

—Proposal to President Barack Obama
for the Creation of Bears Ears
National Monument (2015)

In 2016, Bears Ears was established as a national monument, transitioning the landscape from public lands into a co-management space for both colonial governments and Indigenous communities. The establishment of Bears Ears was organized as an act of tribal sovereignty and self-determination to protect 1.9 million acres of land. The effort evolved into creating the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition, combining five tribal nations. Bears Ears shows that Indigenous People have the capacity to co-manage space outside of colonially imposed borders, strongly effecting the understanding of land ownership, land management, and land use all within an Indigenous epistemology.

We, as Indigenous People, are sovereign nations that have greater influence beyond current levels of consultation and we are able to scrutinize projects and land developments. Our traditional knowledge is part of our decision-making processes, which serve to bridge settler colonial governments with Tribal Nations to protect and preserve land and sacred sites. The sovereign right of Indigenous People is powerful and thus rightfully impacts the longevity of the nation-to-nation relationship.

Bears Ears contributes to the conversation of tribal sovereignty as an example of creating new spaces under the mechanism of land co-management. In this paper, I argue that imperialism of land is not autonomously determined by colonial capitalistic needs but a political dynamic of tribal sovereignty and federal cooperation. I intend to shift the focus of land tenure and place greater emphasis on Indigenous mechanisms. I also repeatedly emphasize the need to work away from the U.S. settler narrative. Our current understandings of tribal sovereignty are restricted only to reservations. Ultimately, I illustrate how Bears Ears extends beyond the current narrative.

This paper will present two examples of Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty. First, is examining the Diné Bikéyah Book as a document of cultural resistance based upon Indigenous research methodology and advocacy for protecting the land by Diné (Navajo). Second, is

exploring the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition (BEITC) as an innovative commission outside of reservation borders to act through an Indigenous framework for co-management of land with the federal government. Lastly, I will present an analysis of Bears Ears as a transformative space for Indigenous rights in dismantling the colonial paradigm of land.

Diné Bikéyah Book

Bears Ears contains about 100,000 ancient burial and sacred cultural sites for Indigenous people, where medicinal plants are gathered and sacred ceremonies are conducted. The well-established oral history of preserving and protecting this land empowered locals to advocate for themselves. In 2010, a grassroots organization called Utah Diné Bikéyah (Utah Navajo Sacred Land) collected stories, participated in ceremonies, and gathered traditional knowledge of elders, to provide a tool for public education and to plead for land protections (Utah Diné Bikéyah, n.d.). They created the Diné Bikéyah Book to contain these efforts and personal testimony.

Contributors to the Diné Bikéyah included Mary Johnson, an elder who describes her current and historical relationship to the land as follows:

“Diné dóó Anaasázi dabighanéegi éí dahodiyin dóó íiyisíí ílį. T’áa haa’ida hooghan ál’įįhgo t’áa áko éí nahaghá ál’įįh. Haashįį nízáádgóó nihimá nahadzáan bikáá’ kééhwitįį dooleel biniyíé díí jónonaa’éí nídídááh, nídadiyoł dóó tó nídadinahígí át’éego ákót’éego éí Diné ’íłį. Si’ah naaghái bibee haz’aanii bik’ehgo éí díí alk’idą’ dah hooghan yęęgi t’áa íiyisíí éí dahodiyin.” (Navajo)

“Residential sites of the Diné and ancient sites are sacred and important. Whenever we build a hogan on a location, we conduct a ceremony to live in harmony with mother earth as long as the sun shines, the wind blows and the river flows. According to this natural law, all the former residential sites are sacred.” (English translation) (Diné Bikéyah Book, 2016, pg. 27)

Her testimony is short but powerful. Her historical understanding of the land recognizes the ceremonial experience and that people should continually be a good relative to the environment since it is a part of natural law. The Indigenous community as a whole is both the greatest asset and the ones most at risk when discussing who will manage the land and where the management of said land will be centrally held.

Bears Ears Inter Tribal Coalition

The revolutionary plan of creating the BEITC came to fruition uniting the Ute Mountain Ute, Uintah Ouray Ute, Hopi, Zuni, and Navajo into this collaborative management group. Each of these federally recognized tribes have previously only been able to operate their own government within their designated reservations. The coalition was created to cooperatively unify a land management proposal incorporating elements from each unique culture. Each tribe appointed a representative to ensure that their individual tribal experiences, knowledge, and needs would be met within the management group as a whole. This different form of management supports each Tribe’s individual sovereignty and rights to self-determination while deliberately avoiding an oversimplification of cultural values (Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition, n.d.).

In 2016, the Diné Bikéyah Book and the monument proposal were presented to President Barack Obama. The proposal included ancestral knowledge, impacts of colonialism, and reasons for action and land preservation. In response, President Obama designated 1.35 million acres of the 1.9 million acres requested. In part of his proclamation about this land resolution, Obama stated:

The traditional ecological knowledge amassed by the Native Americans whose ancestors inhabited this region, passed down from generation to generation, offers critical insight into the historic and scientific significance of the area. Such knowledge is, itself, a resource to be protected and used in understanding and managing this landscape sustainably for generations to come. (Obama, 2016)

With the U.S. President acknowledging the landscape as significant for Indigenous people and acting upon their proposal, a new form of land management with tribes outside of reservation boundaries was officially created. His statement offers critical insight in establishing the validity of the proposal, containing Indigenous knowledge and land management priority, under the Antiquities Act for proper care and management of U.S. land. This entire process of monument establishment illustrates a massive restructuring of tribal sovereignty and rights of self-determination. We see the tribal group actively working in new spaces, effectively and lawfully proceeding within the Western paradigm of land designation. The innovation of creating the BEITC, comprising different tribal groups to work outside of restrictive reservation borders, exemplifies the fluidity of tribal sovereignty.

Indigenous methodology is decolonial and anti-colonial work and incorporates specific strategies into conceptualizing spaces which fall under that overarching idea. We

can look at coalition building as an effective decolonized strategy for protecting sacred sites (Gilio-Whitaker, 2019) and building a culture of resistance (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). Decolonial work is producing land management methods concentrating on tribal knowledge as the main tool. Thus, Bears Ears is effectively transmitting sovereign tribal rights outside of designated reservations (colonial tools of oppression). As land management is ancestral and is not restricted to colonially imposed borders, through acts such as the establishment of Bears Ears Indigenous communities are expanding and dismantling colonial understandings of U.S. historical assignments of tribal sovereignty.

The quality of life of Indigenous people is what the Bears Ears National Monument is preserving. This monument competes against an urban and colonial spatial praxis of land management. Indigenous living and quality of life are inherently related to land and accessibility. The BEITC now becomes the responsible party to oversee and mitigate any deployments of infrastructure that may disrupt the environment and livelihood of humans and non-humans alike.

Transformative Space for Indigenous Rights

Indigenous people and tribal authority are guided through the principles of the Indigenous ethical framework (Gilio-Whitaker, 2019) to maintain a co-managed infrastructure. Co-management provides the ability to review research and protocols, question modes of sustainability, and environmental adaptations needed (Wildcat, 2009), and to reconnect to our traditional lifeways which fall beyond the formalities of consultation (Keeler ed., 2017). Essentially, co-management disrupts the mode of colonialism but not the larger structure of colonial dependency. There are still many struggles to managing this land. Thus, being “a national monument status with the tribal co-management is not the ideal form of Indigenous sovereignty, but it is a step toward it” (Keeler ed., 2017, pg. 73). We are still operating under settler laws, but reimagination of our own Indigenous mechanisms will continue to be a radical divergence formulated to work with settler states, instead of under them. As wards of the nation-state, we must transition our strategies to ensure that our communities and future generations have as much of their original rights as possible.

As we think about how to recover from colonialism, we need to be reminded that we are not starting from scratch. Indigenous People who live in or near Bears Ears have a place-based knowledge system that is part of the Indigenous community as a result of thousands of years of interaction with the ecosystem, thus creating spatial knowledge (Wildcat, 2009). This is documented through oral tradition as well as in the Diné Bikéyah Book. Indigenous research is based on an inherent respect for

social structures, economies, ceremonies, and historical development. Researching Indigenous communities can support “scholarly standards while also offering stories and ideas to capture the interests of a wider audience,” (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2007) which informs how we can confirm our own methodology for research in both the present and future. Indigenous-led research, as evidenced in the Utah Diné Bikéyah, acknowledges traditional knowledge and land epistemologies encompassing science and land management development, effectively transforming concepts of land use, sustainability, and education.

For Indigenous People, we witness the reductive approach that settler-state occupiers apply to the sensitive identity of what it means to be American. The historical naivety in the concept of “freedom of land” and the privatization of land came to be synonymous when discussing Indigenous People and how they are not inherent to the land. (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). Land has become the measurement of power and influence, including the restrictions of tribal influence on Indian reservations. And with the current systems in place including reservations, allotments, and territories, Indigenous People are minimized historically to specific portions of land. Land tenure involves a socio-economic history of land and who may have ownership over it.

Indigenous historian Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz affirmed that everything in United States history is about land: “who oversaw and cultivated it, fished its waters, maintained its wildlife; who invaded and stole it; how it became a commodity broken into pieces to be bought and sold on the market” (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014, pg. 1). The accumulation of capital is based on land. This colonized historical “land-tenure system was altered and influenced by Spanish customs and colonial institutions,” whereas, in contrast, in the case of Pueblo relatives, “land use is distinguished by communal property” with a use-value production rather than production for market exchange (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014, pg. 7). The capital of land transitions from the market production value of the former example to historic cultural preservation of the original inhabitants and their descendants in the latter (Pueblo) example.

Indigenous land knowledge is passed generationally through oral traditions. Our Original Instructions or First Teachings “refer to the many diverse teachings, lessons, and ethics expressed in the origin stories and oral traditions of Indigenous Peoples. They are the literal and metaphorical instructions, passed on orally from generation to generation, for how to be a good human being living in reciprocal relation with all of our seen and unseen relatives” (Nelson, 2008, pg. 3). As we caretake the land, we are required to recall, interpret, and interact with our surroundings for maximum efficiency. This accumulated wisdom and experience sustains

Indigenous communities when dealing with matters of local dynamics and survival in general (Nelson, 2008). This platform will be used to transform land relationships that had not been allowed under any historical colonial method.

The cultural integrity of the area must be preserved and practiced by the different tribes. Dunbar-Ortiz concluded that part of land tenure is the concept of cultural resistance versus cultural survival (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). Cultural resistance for Bears Ears is the new structure of working within federal land policy to create a national monument to ensure that the cultural survival of independent tribes is alive and active. We are in a unique time where Indigenous resistance is often imbedded within federal cooperation and future policy initiatives. Despite this connection, we are challenging established understandings of land under an Indigenous epistemology and self-determination.

Colonial patterns of the nation-to-nation relationship are structured to achieve political domination over the nationhood of Native collective existence and authority over the historical arc of environmental disruptions forced on natives (Gilio-Whitaker, 2019). The action of monument designation works against this imperial structure that is used as an erasure of Indigenous Peoples. We are working to restore the integrity of our epistemological systems with our traditional methods of land, ecology, and relationships.

Conclusion

The Indigenous response and involvement in the process of establishing the national monument is revolutionary. We see examples of tribal groups acting on behalf of their own self-determination and rights of sovereignty. Bears Ears is the first national monument requested and created by Native American tribes. We see the importance of traditional knowledge with the Diné Bikéyah Book and how it can be used to support our identity. The monument proposal was based off of Indigenous-led research and their epistemology of land relationships. The BEITC strives to continually work within colonial structures of land but leading with Indigenous methodology.

Instead of colonial market-driven land appropriations, we are liberating land and Indigenous living. We see a reform of Indigenous rights. The disruption of capitalism infiltrating land usage can be inspired by these frameworks. Economic mobilization of the colonial state should not be dependent on land tenure schemes, but should rely on the reconfiguring of epistemological systems themselves.

Although those that established Bears Ears are still working with the colonial system, it is of crucial importance to underscore that this whole effort is an example of resistance and is breathtaking. I hope that we do not become

complacent in our abilities as sovereign Indigenous people to fully accept the co-management process. Instead, I hope that we continually push for the restoration and repatriation of our traditional lands. The ability to protect our histories and traditional ways of life through this wonderfully deviant process may just be a new direction we need to work through until we are truly sovereign.

My scholarly work, for one, will continue to offer analyses using an Indigenous framework. I will continue to examine different policy initiatives, land value measurements, key people who lead these conversations, and to explore different ways in which I can restructure land epistemologies in higher education. Bears Ears, I hope, is the beginning of creating a space that is absent of the colonial framework and in its place embraces Indigenous methodology.

Ben Nuvasuma, Hopi tribal member, sums up meaning behind Bears Ears best: “This is historic. It is a chance for us, Tribes or indigenous people, to have a say in what happens to this area. A lot of people might call this is a landmark decision” (BENM Proposal, 2016, pg. 17). Never have tribes had an opportunity to continually develop policy initiatives for the betterment of their own tribal communities. We are validating our history, our stories, and our way of life.

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Redefining Urban Food Sovereignty in BIPOC Communities: A Case Study of the Corbin Hill Food Project

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Storm Lewis recently graduated from Smith College where she was a Posse Scholar and a Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellow. Much of her work centers on environmental science and policy and sustainable food systems. As a Black woman, scholar, and activist, she produces research with practical implications for Black communities and marginalized groups disproportionately impacted by food insecurity and climate change. Beyond Smith, Storm engages in food sovereignty-based initiatives within her community in New York (NY). During the pandemic, she worked with the founder of the Corbin Hill Food Project to co-create the organization's first virtual webinar series featuring pathways to success for Black farmers in NY. Storm is currently a Master of Environmental Science (MESC) candidate at the Yale School of the Environment.

Abstract

In New York City (NYC), 12.9 percent of residents experienced hunger in 2019, which is 12 percent higher than the national average. Furthermore, the impact of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) has left millions of New Yorkers food-insecure (Daniels, 2020). Establishing all aspects of food sovereignty could be the solution to these food-based inequities in NYC. Although the literature encompasses the history of food sovereignty and its presence in the U.S., scholarship on food systems lacks a comprehensive overview of the movements' current implementation in urban environments. To fill this gap, this study used a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach to assess the challenges and successes of a well-established food sovereignty-based farm share program operating in NYC. The data collected indicates that effectively communicating the specific food sovereignty principles achieved and clarifying any connections between partnering organizations can benefit other food hubs by establishing a framework for successful food sovereignty networks.

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Introduction

In New York City (NYC), 12.9 percent of residents experienced hunger in 2019, which is 12 percent higher than the national average (Helms, et al., 2020). The impact of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) has exacerbated food insecurity leaving millions of New Yorkers food-insecure (Daniels, 2020). In response, the city supports hundreds of initiatives making nutritious foods more financially accessible (HFA, 2021). Some of these initiatives include financial assistance programs, soup kitchens, food pantries, farmers markets, and community gardens. However, many activists and scholars highlight the necessity for alternative food hubs that not only increase food access, but also tackle the institutional discrimination causing food insecurity in low-income communities (Taylor, 2018; Galt, 2017). Establishing true food sovereignty could be the solution to food-based inequities in NYC. Although the literature encompasses the history of food sovereignty and its presence in the U.S., scholarship on food systems lacks a comprehensive overview of food sovereignty's current implementation in urban environments. To fill this gap, my research used a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach to examine a well-established food sovereignty-based farm share program operating in NYC. The Corbin Hill Food Project (CHFP) is a food sovereignty values-based organization that addresses systematic barriers to food access. The CHFP uses a "hybrid food value chain" model to deliver fresh, local produce to communities through a direct-to-consumer farm share program (Cohen & Derryck, 2011). It also provides food to institutions and community organizations through its Wholesale program. This study aims to shed light on the CHFP framework, while also examining the challenges and benefits of practicing food sovereignty in urban contexts. By assessing the practices of the CHFP, I hope to inform its operations so it can better meet its food sovereignty mission and serve as an example to other food hubs in the city.

Literature Review

Food sovereignty can be defined as a movement that promotes peoples' right "to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems" (USFSA, 2009; Nyeleni, 2007). Much of the literature attributes this definition and the founding principles of food sovereignty to La Via Campesina (Timmermann & Tittonell, 2017; Méndez, et al., 2016; Hospes, 2013; 2009; Nyeleni, 2007). As an international peasants' movement, La Via Campesina has influenced smallholder farmers across the world for decades (USFSA, 2009; Nyeleni, 2007). Unlike traditional food security and food justice initiatives, food sovereignty emphasizes the right to define food policies, community control over

resources, genuine redistribution of food, and public investment which leads to community empowerment (White 2019; Penniman, 2018). Given the neoliberal food regime present in the U.S., reliance on food security efforts will inevitably lead to systems in which marginalized consumers (economic citizens) lack autonomy (Clendenning, et al., 2015; Alkon & Mares, 2012). This is because the current food system relies on “poverty governance” frameworks in which low-income, Black and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) lack the choices required to self-govern their food systems (Reynolds, 2016). Therefore, food supply chains in the U.S. must incorporate and recontextualize aspects of sovereignty into the current food security efforts. Otherwise, food insecure communities will continue to exist in a food system designed to limit economic mobility for BIPOC producers and consumers.

Research Methods

From 2017 to 2020, I engaged in PAR methodologies, which is an iterative and collaborative process of reflection and action (Macaulay, 2016). Through five preliminary meetings and continued discussion, the CHFP took part in the planning and execution stages of the research. Within these meetings, my research dynamically shifted to incorporate the interests of the CHFP. In the summer of 2020, during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, I conducted sixteen interviews via Zoom and phone calls. The interviewees included the CHFP staff, distribution site coordinators, farm share members (Shareholders), and community partner organizations. I wrote detailed notes during each interview and recorded interviews with the consent of the interviewees. I selected participants based on an open call for Shareholder participation via the CHFP newsletter, staff meetings, and the staff’s recommendations for community partner interviewees. The interview questions centered around participant perceptions of the CHFP’s ability to execute its food sovereignty objectives. In turn, I developed a system of codes based on the common food sovereignty principles researchers associate with the movement. The six food sovereignty principles include food access (1), rights for marginalized farmers (2), locally sourced foods (3), community ownership (4), agricultural sustainability (5), and education (6) (Timmermann & Tittone, 2017; Méndez, et al., 2016; GJN, 2014). The system of codes made it possible to compare participant perceptions about specific principles across the three stakeholder groups. I supplemented the interviews with participant observation notes collected as an intern and volunteer at Manhattan distribution sites over the last three years. The dependent variables consist of interviewees’ perception of whether or not the CHFP is meeting its mission. This includes their praises and critiques about the program along with ideas for improvement. The independent variables include social

identifiers such as race/ethnicity, gender, age, highest level of education, farm share price, current location, and years of residence in NYC.

Findings

Cross-Organizational Disconnect

After reading an excerpt from the CHFP mission statement, interviewees used a Likert scale to indicate whether the CHFP meets the goals described in its mission statement. I then asked interviewees to explain their rationale for each response. Despite the widespread agreement that the CHFP successfully implements the principles of food sovereignty overall, few Shareholders and community partners possessed a deep understanding of the CHFP’s additional partnerships with other food sovereignty-based organizations. The CHFP network extends beyond the individual farm share, Wholesale, and GetFoodNYC Emergency Food Home Programs that increase food access for thousands of food-insecure individuals. There are five additional programs. For instance, “The Black Farmer Fund (BFF) does the financing, the farm school does all of the training and certification (business planning), and Corbin Hill does all the distribution” (CHFPAR14). The execution of food sovereignty principles thus varies by program. The farm share program exemplifies the first food sovereignty principle which promotes the right to affordable nutritious foods for marginalized groups (GJN, 2014).

Much of the structural change (community ownership and rights for marginalized farmers) stems from founder, Dr. Dennis Derryck’s, partnerships with the BFF and the land acquisition initiatives. Such efforts connect Black farmers with the funding and support systems required to maintain a stake in local food systems. The implementation of the second food sovereignty principle is exemplified in the CHFP farm, which is currently operated by the Black Yard Farm Cooperative (BYFC) and consists of BIPOC farmers (CHFP, 2021). However, none of these initiatives were mentioned in detail when Shareholders or community partners described why the CHFP is meeting its mission. Additionally, interviewees expressed some criticisms and/or recommendations for improvement. Staff and Shareholders mentioned that the CHFP can improve by increasing cross-programming communication and partnerships with Black and Latinx farmers. The Shareholders also recommended an increase in opportunities to connect with the broader CHFP network via webinars, farm tours, and interactive maps of the CHFP farm partners.

Environmental Disconnect

Amongst the CHFP’s various initiatives the organization falls short in the implementation of the fifth food sovereignty principle (agricultural sustainability). When

asked “What is the mission of the CHFP?” the data from each interview with Shareholders, community partners, site coordinators, and staff show no responses that indicate a strong awareness of the environmental elements as demonstrated in the food sovereignty movement (GJN, 2014). Shareholders more commonly identify the first, second, third, and fourth food sovereignty principles in association with the CHFP. For instance, Shareholders referenced the quality of produce or nutritional value rather than the farming practices used to steward the land and its impact on the environment. Additionally, no Shareholders mentioned the CHFP’s carbon footprint regarding its day-to-day operations when explaining their perceptions of the CHFP mission. Although the majority of produce purchased for the farm shares are locally sourced, many of the vegetables included in the shares are not organic. Given the financial and administrative costs of complying with regulations to produce organic crops (especially for BIPOC farmers), the CHFP understandably supports farmers using conventional and Integrated Pest Management practices. The absence of responses related to principle five reveals a potential area for the CHFP to improve its environmental sustainability efforts and communication.

Discussion

Two major challenges impede the CHFP from meeting its food sovereignty goals relating to its cross-program communication and environmental impact. Shareholders possess the broad understanding that the CHFP only works with one Black farmer, David Haughton. Yet, Shareholder responses failed to represent the CHFP’s external efforts to increase partnerships with BIPOC farmers such as the Black Yard Farm Cooperative. If these programs are in fact separate entities, then the question remains whether or not an individual program such as the farm share can receive credit for the implementation of the overarching food sovereignty mission. Conversely, if these programs are deemed parts of a whole then how can the CHFP better connect and enhance its Shareholders’ understanding of the organization’s work? The CHFP can begin to address this by clarifying the organizational structure via its website and by clearly defining which food sovereignty principles each program demonstrates using visually engaging infographics. This will have the benefit of enhancing transparency, improving marketing, and potentially even helping the organization under its own internal workings.

Second, urban food sovereignty initiatives may not emphasize the environment as much given the disconnection between producers, natural spaces, and economic citizens in cities. Research shows that in general urban lifestyles and reduced interactions with natural spaces can shape the way in which people perceive and engage with the environment

(Meis Harris & Kashima, 2020; Andersson, et al., 2014). In contrast, small farming communities with more localized supply chains may be more equipped to sustain direct connections to the land (Curtin & Cohn, 2015). In smallholder farming communities abroad, food sovereignty movements often promote environmental sustainability since many of these initiatives are led by farmers themselves (Patel, 2009; Seiler, 2012). Despite the wider disconnections between urban residents and the environment, there is a long history of BIPOC communities in the U.S. cultivating agricultural land and fostering close relationships with the outdoors (White 2019; Penniman, 2018; Taylor, 2018). It is essential that food sovereignty serve as a platform to foster those preexisting connections.

It is clear that the values of food sovereignty are expressed differently in urban contexts. Urban food sovereignty movements in the U.S. operate within much larger food supply chains than smallholder farms. This makes it difficult to cultivate individual or community-ownership over food systems. To further the movement and best assess how organizations might work together moving forward, we must understand where initiatives fall within the spectrum of food sovereignty. The CHFP acknowledges that they cannot achieve food sovereignty alone and recognizes that they have become a part of an ecosystem that speaks to training (Farm School NYC + Soul Fire Farm), land acquisition (Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust), financing (BFF), and policy change (Black Farmers United New York State), with the CHFP playing a role in food distribution (BFF, 2021; BFUNYS, 2021; FSNYC, 2021; NEFOC, 2021; SFF, 2020). This framework builds on the six food sovereignty principles originally introduced by La Via Campesina and reflects its adaptation to urban food systems. While an organization may be able to promote one or more spheres of the food sovereignty movement, it is unlikely that a food hub or farm share program will be able to individually execute every aspect of food sovereignty. This is evident in the interviews that overlook the environmental and sustainability goals of the CHFP.

One of the limitations of this study includes the diversity of Shareholders interviewed. While there may simply be fewer low-income Shareholders in the farm share program overall, low-income or BIPOC may not possess the same capacity to be interviewed due to financial or home-based obligations that disproportionately impact low-income families (Butcher & Schanzenbach, 2018). Future studies can implement strategies to engage a more representative sample of participants and include the Shareholders who receive produce via the community partnerships.

Conclusion

This study investigated a prominent food sovereignty-based farm share program in an effort to understand current manifestations of food sovereignty in urban contexts. While food sovereignty may vary from country-to-country and state-to-state, scholars argue that the movement must maintain “conceptual clarity” so as not to weaken its practical implementation at the government level (Dekeyser, et al., 2018). The information revealed indicates that food sovereignty initiatives in the U.S. exist on a broad spectrum and vary in their engagement with each principle. As demonstrated by the CHFP network of non-profits, cooperatives, farms, and schools, holistic food sovereignty initiatives involve complex systems of organizations rather than individual organizational efforts. Effectively communicating the specific food sovereignty principles achieved and clarifying any connections between partnering organizations can benefit other food hubs by establishing a framework to help develop and replicate food sovereignty networks. The study of food sovereignty in urban settings requires further research to assess other effective models for the movement. Based on the rapport established and the depth of information collected for this study, PAR methods would serve well for those future studies.

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Catching Perfection: A Closer Look at the Offensive Role of Catchers in Perfect Games

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Abstract

Perfect games are rare accomplishments in Major League Baseball that require a high level of defensive skill, conducive climatological conditions for pitching and fielding, and a healthy dose of luck. Normally, these accomplishments are attributed to the starting pitcher and widely considered modicums of his prowess and talent. However, the work of the catcher often goes unrecognized and unappreciated by the general public. Such a significant role played by the catcher in achieving perfect games requires a closer look by researchers and casual fans both to appreciate that role and to better understand if and how the pressure of maintaining those games is reflected in catchers’ offensive performance.

This research will dissect and interpret basic count statistics, such as hits and strikeouts, as well as rate statistics, such as wOBA, of catchers during perfect games in order to determine overall trends that reflect the quality of their offensive performance in each inning of such games.

Acknowledgements

This article is the first of many love letters to baseball. This one is for Robby Hammock. Thank you endlessly to all who have supported me, including my MMUF coordinators at the University of New Mexico, my parents, and friends. Eamus catuli!

In the World Series Era (1903–present) of Major League Baseball, there have been only twenty-one perfect games thrown and twenty catchers to catch them. Naturally, when retroactively discussing perfect games, the prominent focus of academic and sports media discourse is on the pitcher and the external factors that affect his performance, such as climate, ballpark factors, and the opposing team. One of the largest external factors influencing the outcome of the game is the catcher, who plays an essential role in baseball and maintaining perfect games. They call pitches based on the scouting reports of each batter, signal plays to the position players, block balls, allay the emotions of their pitcher, bear the everyday brunt of one of the most physically demanding positions on the diamond, and, after all that, are required to bat in the lineup.¹ The success of any baseball game, especially perfect games, rests on the

awareness of the catcher, and yet academic and sports media discussions on perfect games widely exclude the catcher’s role in achieving such an accomplishment.

Because of the catcher’s focus on every facet of the game, especially pitching, catchers playing in perfect games are not only aware of each batter that comes up to the plate, but of the overall situation, its rarity, and its renowned role in baseball history. Robby Hammock, who caught Randy Johnson’s perfect game in 2004, firmly states that he “knew what was going on the whole time” during the game. He refuted the insistence that “you have no idea what just happened” and “what you just did” by Diamondbacks manager Bob Brenly, announcer Mark Grace and teammate Luis Gonzalez. Hammock reminded them of his reaction immediately after the 27th out: “Didn’t you see me jumping up and down? I knew *exactly* what was going on.”²

In the same way, Ramón Castro, who caught Mark Buerhle’s perfect game in 2009, also had an acute awareness of the significance of the game he was currently catching. He stated that in “the seventh [inning], I was kind of nervous” because of the stress that comes with maintaining a full perfect game. However, he said to his teammates that “we are going to do it” and complete the perfect game.³ Likewise, Jorge Posada’s cognizance of the perfect game was enough of a reason for him to go “the whole day” without talking to his pitcher, David Wells. They “talked before the game” and “after the game” but not during because “you don’t want to jinx anything.”⁴ When prompted to discuss their thoughts during their perfect game, every major league catcher has spoken candidly about how the rarity of their situation was present in their minds throughout those nine innings.

This widely universal experience of awareness shared by the catchers of perfect games piques a number of questions that all fall under one overall speculation: does that awareness impact how the catcher performs during a perfect game? Sportscasters, fans, and academics have often overlooked this question because of the consistent focus on pitchers of perfect games, as opposed to catchers. What little coverage of this topic has been casual and marginally related to the topic of this paper, which focuses on perfect games specifically. The most well-known analysis comparable is Jimmy O’Brien’s (also known as Jomboy) 190-second YouTube video, “Catchers at-bats in late innings of no-hitters.”⁵ Thus, there is a considerable lack of catcher-focused studies regarding defensive accomplishments. By neglecting the need to examine perfect games with an emphasis on catcher performance, researchers lack a complete understanding of the factors that go into perfect games and the general skill required to succeed playing catcher in the Major League.

It is difficult to look at the defensive side of the catcher's performance to understand how a catcher performs during a perfect game. While perfect games are attributed to a pitcher, countless perfect games have been ruined by mishaps in the infield, outfield, and, of course, behind home plate as well.⁶ Thus, catchers have to be just as perfect as their pitchers, which means the only thing their defensive performance could tell us is that they are also perfect. It does not provide a foundation to discover if the awareness of a perfect game has made them imperfect.

This leaves us to examine offense, specifically regarding batting statistics. Because of their byzantine role on defense, "catchers have, on balance, been baseball's weakest-hitting non-pitchers," and so their hitting is more likely to be impacted by extraneous factors, such as the pressure of maintaining a perfect game. That vulnerability in batting can help reveal trends to see if catchers are impacted offensively by the pressure of the perfect game.⁷

This article will examine a few offensive count and rate statistics to determine if there are any positive or negative trends in the batting statistics of catchers during perfect games that suggest impacts on performance due to the awareness and pressure of maintaining perfection.

wOBA

There are limitless offensive rate statistics available to use, which means that great deliberation and care is required to choose which statistic will be the most comprehensive when answering the research question. For this specific project, weighted on-base average (wOBA) proved to be the best all-around offensive rate statistic. The principal asset of wOBA is the "weighted" aspect. In wOBA, linear run estimators, which vary slightly every year, are multiplied by bases-on-balls, singles, doubles, and so on to "put the appropriate weight on the various means of reaching base" based on "how these events impacted run-scoring" within the context of each season, year by year.⁸ That level of specificity is paramount when comparing Ray Schalk, who caught a perfect game in 1922, to John Jaso, who caught the most recent perfect game in 2012, 90 years later.

Figure 1 illustrates the wOBAs of three different groups of games. The first column measures the wOBA of the 10 games a catcher caught immediately before he caught his perfect game. The middle column reports the wOBA of the perfect game itself, while the last column reports the 10 games the catcher caught immediately following the perfect game. The first and third columns make up the control group of games used to juxtapose against the offensive performances in the perfect games.

Catcher	Previous 10 wOBA	Perfect game wOBA	Following 10 wOBA
Ray Schalk (1922)	0.321	0.234	0.34
Yogi Berra (1956)	0.391	0	0.436
Gus Triandos (1964)	0.244	0.547	0.403
Jeff Torborg (1965)	0.23	0	0.238
Jim Pagliaroni (1968)	0.337	0.17	0.339
Ron Hassey (1981)	0.407	0.229	0.23
Bob Boone (1984)	0.181	0	0.212
Jeff Reed (1988)	0.316	0	0.271
Ron Hassey (1991)	0.297	0.303	0.108
Ivan Rodriguez (1994)	0.252	0.676	0.373
Jorge Posada (1998)	0.385	0	0.318
Joe Girardi (1999)	0.278	0.416	0.257
Robby Hammock (2004)	0.182	0.177	0.352
Ramon Castro (2009)	0.262	0.534	0.317
Landon Powell (2010)	0.205	0.541	0.36
Carlos Ruiz (2010)	0.348	0.448	0.255
A.J. Pierzynski (2012)	0.483	0.221	0.256
Buster Posey (2012)	0.287	0.428	0.515
John Jaso (2012)	0.395	0.419	0.284

Figure 1. Catcher wOBA for the previous and following 10 games he played relative to the perfect game he caught.⁹

A couple of patterns present themselves in Figure 1. The most noticeable is the presence of "zero" values in the perfect game column. Five catchers have a wOBA of zero for the perfect game that they caught, which simply means that they never got on base for the duration of the game. For some catchers, like Bob Boone, this does not come as a surprise as he only got on base in 9 games out of the 21 games surveyed for this article. However, for more successful hitters, like Yogi Berra and Jorge Posada, who got on base in 17 and 16 games out of 21 respectively, the failure to establish a wOBA is notable, but not atypical, even with both catchers' high offensive performance. Yogi Berra made contact with the ball at each at bat, flying out twice, and getting out on a line drive. Jorge Posada grounded out, flew out, and struck out in that order. Thus, the poor hitters hit poorly, and it is unrealistic to expect that even good hitters have successful plate appearances in every game. The control games surveyed for this article contained games where catchers never made it on base, even without the pressure of a perfect game. That fact, which exists in all baseball, cannot provide enough of a foundation to offer significant decrease in offensive production during perfect games. Each zero value of wOBA in the perfect games cannot establish the claim that the pressure of a perfect game negatively impacts offense because each zero value can be explained as a regularity in the reality of hitting, not an anomaly.

Another pattern noticeable in Figure 1 is the two factions of catchers defined by the data: catchers whose wOBAs increased in their perfect game compared to their control and catchers whose wOBAs decreased. Ten catchers saw a decrease in their perfect game's wOBA. In comparison, nine catchers had an increase in wOBA. With such a close split between increases and decreases in perfect game wOBA as well as a minority of catchers who never made it on base during their perfect game, it is difficult to identify any trends or correlations that imply a distinction in offensive execution during perfect games. The lack of any uniformity, or severe skewing either to increases or decreases in wOBA signal that there is no collective tendency in catchers of perfect games to significantly improve or worsen in their offensive contribution.

In order to see if any trends do appear that display more divisive correlations invisible in wOBA, it is important to examine a few other perspectives offered by different statistics, including strikeouts and hits and walks.

Strikeouts

When talking about outs as a metric of measuring offensive contribution, strikeouts provide a very pure perspective on the matter. Fly outs and groundouts rely heavily on position players to field them correctly. Even though the batter still is out, fly outs and groundouts reflect his ability to at least make contact with the ball. Strikeouts are a reflection of a pitcher's ability to deceive the batter, and, in turn, the batter's vulnerability to be deceived. If a catcher was so mentally preoccupied by the pressure of maintaining a perfect game that it reflected negatively in his offensive performance, there is no doubt that the amount of strikeouts he accrues during the game would illustrate that poor performance. In that scenario, the strikeouts would increase because of his predominant focus on the defensive half of the game over making contact with the baseball.

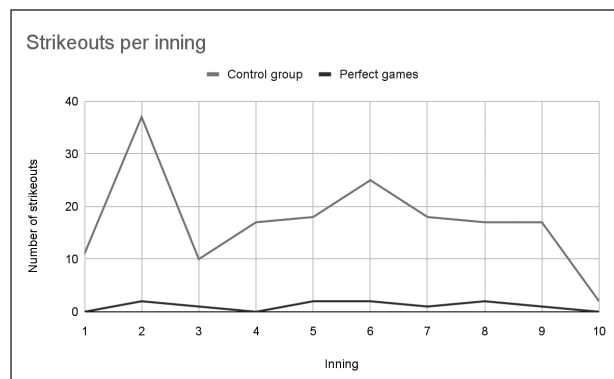


Figure 2. Strikeouts per inning from both the perfect games and control games.

Nine out of 19 catchers struck out at least once during their perfect game, adding up to 11 strikeouts. Figure 2 illustrates the strikeouts from both the perfect games and the control games. While the numbers modulate from one group to the other, due to the volume of innings being compared, the increases and decreases in strikeouts from inning to inning contain an arresting amount of parallelism, save for a few innings in which the counts are incongruent. Because of the closeness in similarity between the two sections, it is safe to infer that a larger number of perfect games to increase the number of strikeouts would fix the few places where the strikeout count in the perfect game section does not perfectly mirror the control group.

Even without a higher number of perfect games to analyze, the resemblance between the two groups is uncanny. The consistency of the perfect game strikeouts reveal how unwavering the offensive contribution of catchers catching perfect games is. The amount of strikeouts from inning to inning in perfect games does not signal a significant change from the corresponding control group. Therefore, it is difficult to make an argument for a significant, tangible increase or decrease in the level of catcher's offensive performances because of the correspondence in strikeouts from the control games to the perfect games.

Hits and Walks

Jacob Peterson presents a compelling analysis of run scoring by inning in his article, "All Innings Are Not Created Equal: How Run-Scoring Varies By Inning."¹⁰ The article discusses batting orders, pitching changes, the designated hitter (or the lack of one), and home field advantages as possible reasons for trends in run scoring. The data gathered for the article is highly extensive, tracking the averages of runs-per-inning for each league, spanning from 2002 to 2011. While the focus of the article is on run-scoring and not just hits and walks, the theories Peterson discusses, and the data the theories exist to explain, help provide another perspective to compare the offensive performances in perfect games to, as hits and walks do not always convert to runs, but are usually needed in order to do so.

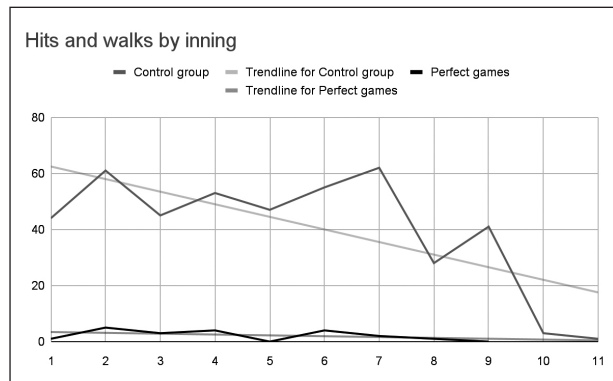


Figure 3. Hits and walks by inning by catchers within perfect games.

Illustrated in Figure 3, the number of both hits and walks by catchers within each perfect game, as well as the control groups, declines overall as the game progresses. The vast majority of catchers getting on base via a hit or walk occurs earlier in the game, from the first inning to the fifth, and sharply drops off from the sixth to the ninth, which corroborates Peterson's findings. He observes that, in both the American and National Leagues, "run-scoring then increases in the middle innings" and drops significantly "in the later innings" after "reaching a peak in the 6th inning."¹¹

Similar to the graph of strikeouts in the previous section, both groups mirror one another with respect to the increases and decreases in hits and walks from inning to inning. In fact, the control group and perfect games correspond completely with respect to increases and decreases up to the sixth inning, after which the perfect games see a gradual, linear decline while the control group games see a slight increase in the ninth inning before continuing to decline. Still, despite the increase, the overall trend proceeds negatively until the end of the game.

"Fresh-armed, often flame-throwing relievers" are one of Peterson's explanations for why scoring deteriorates in later innings, when the starting pitchers are replaced. Likewise, he attributes the extremely low scoring in the ninth inning to the "disproportionate number of [ninth] innings" because "the 9th inning isn't even played about half of the time." He states that "this imbalance lowers the scoring rate quite a bit."¹² It is a tangible and rational explanation for the trends that reveal itself not only in Peterson's data, but in the data collected for this article as well. It also disproves the thought that the steep decline in hits and walks in the later innings is due to the pressure of maintaining a perfect game because number of the hits and walks in perfect games reflect the same trends in Peterson's research of imperfect games.

Conclusion

Does the awareness of a perfect game in progress affect how a catcher performs in that game when he has swapped his facemask for a batting helmet? In a word, no, as far as the data utilized in this article are concerned. After measuring offensive contribution with wOBA, one of the most comprehensive offensive statistics, the data revealed that there are no consistent patterns in batting that suggest a tangible change in the results of his plate appearances. Additionally, the patterns in hits and walks, as well as strikeouts, emulate both the outcomes of the control group, and the findings of other researchers, which further disprove the existence of trends specific to offensive performances in perfect games. Ultimately, the consistent lack of trends and correlations within the data demonstrates the homogeneity within each catcher's plate appearances, regardless of the pressure at hand.

It is common to think of catchers as the athletes that blossomed from the Little League misfortune of being randomly conscripted to backstop. The uneven mainstream focus on the archetype of their subpar hitting and phlegmatic baserunning has a tendency to distract us from the quiet finesse required to be a catcher at the Major League level, let alone to take a critical role in achieving a perfect game.¹³ However, it is crucial to understand the mental, as well as physical, nuance that is mandatory in order to succeed at the highest level as a catcher. This article presents how unflappable catchers are when the demand of protecting a perfect game is appended to the other factors of the game they must be constantly aware of. Catchers even go so far as to remain consistent during their plate appearances. The level of aptitude is so difficult to fathom although we try to wrap our minds around it with each analytical dive into the catcher's world. However, their prowess is so easy to marvel at. Despite our amazement, the consistent mastery, and even perfection, is normalized in a catcher's mind: "All I know it was the easiest game I ever caught," Robby Hammock said, ten years after his perfect game.¹⁴

Endnotes

- ¹ Bob Klapisch, "'It's Like an Explosion': The Pain of a Foul Tip to the Catcher's Mask," *New York Times*, last modified July 26 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/26/sports/baseball/catchers-foul-tips-concussions.html>.
- ² Bob McManaman, "Robby Hammock recalls Randy Johnson's perfect game," last modified May 15 2014, <https://www.azcentral.com/story/sports/mlb/diamondbacks/2014/05/15/robby-hammock-recalls-randy-johnsons-perfect-game/9157427/>.
- ³ Brett Ballantini, [South Side Hit Pen], *Ramon Castro on Mark Buehrle's Perfect Game—2010-06-23*, YouTube, last modified March 6 2020, <https://youtu.be/IDsOKebSPGs>.
- ⁴ David Adler, "98 Yanks reminisce about Wells' perfect game," last modified May 17 2018, <https://www.mlb.com/news/1998-yankees-recall-david-wells-perfect-game-c277200168>.

- ⁵ Jimmy O'Brien, [JM Baseball], *Catchers at-bats in late innings of no-bitters*, YouTube, last modified May 27 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FpML0wleeR4>.
 - ⁶ Manny Randhawa, "Perfect games broken up in 9th or later," last modified April 14 2021, <https://www.mlb.com/news/perfect-games-broken-up-in-ninth-inning-c293924598>.
 - ⁷ Ben Lindbergh, "Two Truths and a Lie: The Hidden Forces That Affect How Catchers Perform at the Plate," last modified March 26 2018, <https://www.theringer.com/mlb/2018/3/26/17162840/three-theories-on-catcher-plate-performance>.
 - ⁸ Anthony Castrovine, *A Fan's Guide to Baseball Analytics: Why WAR, WHIP, wOBA, and other advanced sabermetrics are essential to understanding modern baseball* (New York: Sport Publishing, 2020).
 - ⁹ The primary data source for all charts and graphs is the play-by-play data found on Baseball Reference. Due to the heavy reliance on play-by-play accounts, the perfect games caught by Lou Criger and Nig Clarke in 1904 and 1908 respectively have been omitted from the data collection for this article, as the play-by-play accounts for those years are not available due to age.
 - ¹⁰ James Peterson, "All Innings Are Not Created Equal: How Run-Scoring Varies By Inning," July 3, 2011, <https://www.beyondtheboxscore.com/2011/7/3/2255959/all-innings-are-not-created-equal-how-run-scoring-varies-by-inning>.
 - ¹¹ Peterson, 2011.
 - ¹² Ibid.
 - ¹³ Mike Petriello, "MLB's fastest baserunners by position," last modified June 26 2017, <https://www.mlb.com/news/sprint-speed-shows-fastest-at-each-position-c238290228/>.
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New Directions in Texan Spanish: From the Spanish in Texas to the Spanish of Texas

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Abstract

Spanish speakers have resided in what is now known as Texas since the early 1700s when European Spanish settlers first established themselves near current day San Antonio. From that time to the present day, the Spanish language has continued to be spoken, despite nearly two centuries of Anglo-American governance. While many Hispanist scholars and linguists of the last two decades have investigated the Spanish spoken in Texas, all have used tools of synchrony, mainly sociolinguistic approaches. In order to advance our understanding of Texan Spanish, researchers must use tools of historical linguistics in coordination with sociolinguistics in order to truly further a dialectological understanding.

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Introduction

Spanish speakers have resided in what is now known as Texas since the early 1700s when European Spanish settlers first established themselves near current day San Antonio. From that time to the present day, the Spanish language has continued to be spoken, despite nearly two centuries of Anglo-American governance. The same situation, with some variation in date of settlement and annexation by the U.S, is true of other states that were once under the control of the Spanish crown: California, Arizona, and New Mexico (Silva-Corvalán 2004).

The study of the Spanish in Texas has drawn the attention of many linguists and Hispanist scholars in the last 20 years, the fruits of which can be seen with corpora such as the Spanish in Texas Corpus (Bullock & Toribio 2013) and the Corpus Bilingüe del Valle (Christoffersen & Bessett 2019). These corpora and a growing body of literature reflect a current state of the art and approach

to Texan Spanish, documenting and analyzing the Spanish spoken in Texas.¹ Particular focus tends to be paid towards the sociolinguistic aspects of Texan Spanish, such as language shift and language identity, though much work is to be done on the regional lexicon and morphophonology. What Southwestern Spanish studies have thus far lacked is investigation into the Spanish of Texas, rather than simply Spanish in Texas. Furthermore, this work must be done with a sense of urgency, as many traditional dialects of Texas are undergoing or have undergone a process of dialect death. By taking a socio-historical approach to Spanish, in which insights from historical linguistics interface with explanations of variation in sociolinguistics, we can better examine the differences in Texan Spanishes while acknowledging their overarching similarities in features and origins. I argue that sociolinguistics alone, with a focus on variation unoccupied with the history that explains it, will not serve to further an understanding Texan Spanishes.

While the study of the Spanish spoken in Texas is of benefit to the study of Southwestern Spanish more generally, the current state-of-the-art research should make use of tools of diachrony, such as an approach that embraces the history of Tejano and Chicano communities in Texas, in order to contextualize the archaic lexicon and phonology. What does the use of the word *cócono* rather than *guajolote* for “turkey” tell us about the regional origins of Texan Spanish? What about the variable use of *así*, *asina*, and *asín* for “like that”?

Appreciating Tejano history, in coordination with current sociolinguistic tools, will truly further a dialectological understanding, such that we understand what makes the Spanish of Texas and why it is so. In pursuit of such an endeavor, work must be integrated from history, sociolinguistics, dialect documentation, and historical linguistics to fully contextualize Spanish in Texas and Spanish of Texas.

A History of Southwestern Spanish Studies

The previous scholarship on Southwestern Spanish merits mention as we can compare and contrast said work with research done on Texan Spanish. This previous scholarship ranges from studies of the north and south of New Mexico, the south of California, and various parts of Arizona. A recent volume of collected works, *Spanish of the US Southwest: A Language In Transition* (Rivera-Mills & Villa 2010), presents the results of current research while also taking a retrospective stance on the history of Southwestern Spanish studies. In a chapter on descriptive studies of Southwestern Spanish contained therein, Lipski recognizes a previous work, *El lenguaje de los Chicanos* (Hernández-Chávez, et al. 1971), as the earliest anthology of works on Spanish in the Southwest. Going further, it could be argued

that Southwestern Spanish scholarship began with Aurelio Espinosa Sr.'s *Studies in New-Mexican Spanish* (1909), meaning that New Mexican Spanish has had over a century under the microscope of linguistic and anthropological study.

An early investigation into Arizonan Spanish, *Southern Arizona Spanish Phonology* (1934), as undertaken by Anita C. Post, has given Arizonan Spanish scholars a unique perspective as well. Post documented and analyzed select aspects of the phonology of the Spanish in south Arizona, drawing motivation from the aforementioned Aurelio Espinosa Sr. This work, however, seems to be a unique and solitary piece of early scholarship, with similar work remaining to be iterated until recently. More current interest in Arizonan Spanish has been spurred on by the collection of a corpus, the *Corpus de Español en el Sur de Arizona* (Carvalho 2012).

Texan Spanish, however, has not enjoyed the same amount of documentary and descriptive work as New Mexican Spanish, though there are some studies from the 20th century that shed a rare historical light on Texan Spanish. In the realm of lexicography, a ready example is Cerda, et al.'s *Vocabulario español de Texas* (1953), a collection of “tejanismos” compiled via study of Spanish speakers in eight counties in south Texas, all with a majority Spanish-speaking population at the time of publication. This particular geographic selection raises another historical and demographic fact: south Texas and San Antonio have had the longest history of Hispanic settlement within the borders of modern Texas. This history carries over to modern day, as the 2019 U.S. Census reports San Antonio as being 64.2% Hispanic and Brownsville as 93.8% Hispanic (U.S. Census Bureau).

Connecting Texas with (New) Mexico, Connecting Texas with Texas

In order to properly report on Texan Spanish, researchers must recognize the history of Texan Spanish, following in the footsteps of New Mexican Spanish scholarship (see, for instance, Ornstein 1951, and Moyna 2010 for a historical approach to Californian Spanish). Spanish in Texas did not begin with early 1900s immigration from Mexico; rather, it began centuries ago and has been augmented by a porous geopolitical border since then. A recent culmination of the aforementioned century of study into the Spanishes of New Mexico (Bills & Vigil 2008) makes a particular point to reference the profound effects of the prolonged isolation of the Traditional New Mexican Dialect. The authors note that this has in turn affected even the “border” variety of Spanish found in south New Mexico via contact.

Texan Spanish has no such known isolated varieties that researchers can make use of to differentiate waves of Spanish speakers, nor should research into Texan Spanish be predicated on some single lost “traditional” dialect. Instead, researchers should acknowledge the unique diachronic situation of Texas; simply put, approaching the Spanish of Texas as a result of history, with all the benefits and challenges that come with said history. There are some older and longer established communities, such as San Antonio and Laredo, which would have had longer lineages of isolated, rural Spanish speakers. To complement these communities from the 1700s, there were also newer communities being established by Mexican immigrants in west Texas in the early to mid-1800s. These two communities did in fact interact, as ranching and agriculture attracted many Tejanos from south Texas and this migration was only augmented by the oil economy in the early 1900s. The interactions of these communities were even further complexified with the World Wars and The Great Depression, when west Texas presented prime opportunities for Mexicans of Mexico proper and even more Tejanos of south Texas (De León 2015). What the Spanish of all of these distinct and intermixing groups was like will be difficult or even impossible to elucidate, as written records are scarce. Despite this challenge, researchers must still attempt to tease apart the influences of each of these waves of Spanish speakers to understand what made the Spanish of Texas. One method to achieve this would be the use of said scarce written records, such as the early 1900s archives of *La Prensa* (a long-running Spanish language newspaper based in San Antonio) to inform an understanding of the writers’ language origins, such as region of origin within Mexico or Texas, and subsequently synthesize these analyses with regional sociolinguistic work. Another promising avenue is the analysis of personal and official correspondences by letter, as used in Simonsen (2021) for syntactic change in Texan Spanish, or Moyna (2010) for Spanish variation in post-annexation California.

A mixed socio-historical approach, whereby historical sources are used in conjunction with modern sociolinguist work on living speakers, such as that described here, leads not only to more questions, but more foundational questions that have yet to find their way into modern scholarship. These questions, at their most basic, have to do with better integrating Texas into its environment, both geographical and historical. This not only entails dialectological work in Texas, but also connecting Tejano history to Spanish, Mexican, and Southwestern history.

A Direction for Future Research, from Spanish in Texas to Spanish of Texas

While the literature on Texan Spanish has reasonably been fixated on south Texas and high population

centers such as El Paso, San Antonio, and Houston (Cerde, et al. 1953, Gilbert 2013, Gubitosi 2019) (a similar situation is seen in the study of Tejano history), researchers of Southwestern Spanish should look towards rural areas with a history of Tejano populations. Many counties in west Texas fit this description—from the small border town of Presidio up towards the regional metropolis of Odessa-Midland—and many questions remain unanswered. Does Presidio fall under the same Chihuahuan dialect region as El Paso does? Do we see influences of Traditional or Southern New Mexican Spanish on Spanish near the Texas-New Mexico border? Regarding the latter question, the regions bordering New Mexico in west Texas and the Panhandle should be approached with more interest from researchers. The Trans-Pecos region in particular was a magnet for Tejanos from south Texas due to the economic booms that came from the oil economy (De León 2015). Could this reach have extended further into the west? North New Mexican shepherds, *pastores*, also frequented some counties in the Texas panhandle (De León 2015:46). Could they have left a unique substrate of influence?

The sort of work proposed to be done on Texan Spanish here is not easy; it requires hours of fieldwork and many more hours of cultural, historical, and linguistic analysis. But if research is to embrace the historicity of Tejano communities, it must be done. This is not a purely local or microcosmic endeavor either. It supplies perspectives on colonial history, cultural anthropology, Mexican-American studies, and many other fields. This venture should be taken up very soon, as many Tejano communities are losing their traditional dialects; one need only to look as far as the Sabine River in east Texas to see this (Pratt-Panford 2000). Only time will tell how other communities fare and researchers will only be worse off with each passing community.

Endnote

- ¹ For recent readings see: Bayley, et al. (2012) regarding dialect contact, Trovato (2017) and Mazzaro & de Anda (2020) regarding sociophonetics, and Salvador Sanchís (2017) and Rangel, et al. (2015) regarding code-switching.

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Transportation, Technoscience, and Progressive Historiography in Two Colson Whitehead Novels

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Abstract

This essay adds to the existing body of scholarship which considers Colson Whitehead's fiction in postmodern terms. This essay argues that Whitehead's representation of transportation critiques progressive narratives of black American history. By using Linda Hutcheon's concept of historiographic metafiction, this essay shows how the elevator in *The Intuitionist* and the subterranean train system in *The Underground Railroad* illuminate the faults of historiographies which render black American history into a progressive timeline. While both train and elevator serve as symbols for social opportunity through their reference to the historic migration of black Americans, this essay shows how both modes of transportation simultaneously subvert notions of racial progress through their structural characteristics, which embody the ideological assumptions of progressive historiographies, as well as through their evocation of enlightenment thought, upon which those progressive historiographies are founded. This essay focuses on one of Whitehead's many postmodern devices in order to further articulate the author's relationship to race and postmodern thought.

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Technology and science, more specifically modes of transportation, play a crucial role in the plot and thematic development of two Colson Whitehead novels. *The Intuitionist* (1999) follows Lila Mae, the first black female elevator inspector in a major metropolis, who is framed for the collapse of an elevator located in a politically significant public building. *The Underground Railroad* (2016) literalizes its titular phrase, telling the story of Cora, a runaway slave

who escapes by using a subterranean network of trains. Both novels are set during crucial moments of strife for black Americans. While *The Intuitionist* never specifies a temporal or geographic setting, cultural cues place the novel in a northern American city during the Jim Crow era of the 1950s and '60s. *The Underground Railroad*, on the other hand, explicitly places itself in the American South during the period of slavery. Both novels refer to specific epochs in black American history, but the veracity of their references are called into question by their blatantly fictitious representations of technology. The characters in *The Intuitionist* place an absurdly unrealistic importance on the scientific development and technological maintenance of elevators; similarly, *The Underground Railroad* deviates from historical reference through its anachronistic depiction of trains in antebellum America. Both works of fiction use transportation as a symbol for historical narratives of progression and both works' dissonance between their historic and blatantly fictive elements challenges the ability of progressive narratives to accurately represent black American history.

Progressive theories of history rose as a humanist response to the rapid intellectual developments of the scientific revolution. These theories contend that "the human condition has improved over the course of history and will continue to improve" (Meek Lange). Modern historiographies of progress stem from eighteenth-century Enlightenment thought; inspired by the intellectual developments of the scientific revolution, philosophers like Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot and Marquis de Condorcet theorized that those developments were emblematic of a fundamentally progressive nature inherent to human civilization. This was an entirely new theory of history at the time. Thinkers in antiquity held a cyclical theory of history and even the Christian scholarship that preceded the Enlightenment only theorized about progress insofar as Man could progress into Heaven. Secular historiographies of progress developed as a philosophical response to the technological and scientific developments of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and this notion of inevitable progress had a major influence on the Western historical narratives that developed after it, including those of the black American.

In "Black Time: Slavery, Metaphysics, and the Logic of Wellness," Calvin Warren notes how progressive historiographies fail to accurately describe the lived experience of the enslaved:

Slavery has become an object of historiography, and we can understand historiography as the violent metaphysical enterprise that objectifies time and space and reduces event-horizons into object-events. Historiography reproduces metaphysical notions of linearity, cause-effect, *progress*, and schematization; we often refer to it as a *science*. It is one

of the premiere metaphysical enterprises with the sole purpose of colonizing and objectifying time itself. (Warren 58, emphasis added)

Warren's claim that modern historical understandings of slavery constitute a "violent metaphysical enterprise" can be extended to apply to the entire history of black Americans, as they progress from African to slave to separate but equal to (finally?) equal. While one cannot deny that the social status of black Americans has improved throughout history—they were emancipated from slavery in the 1860s, and gained (supposed) legal equality from the Civil Rights Act a century later—a consideration of their history exclusively through narratives of progress fails to explain the strong prevalence of antiblack racism today. Furthermore, these narratives render racism as an object of the past and this notion is solidified with an aura of scientific authority due to their roots in Enlightenment thought. In this way, progressive historical narratives of black Americans "coloniz[e] and objectify[] time itself." Warren's note that progressive histories legitimize their claims by purporting a scientific understanding of the past echoes the origin of progressive historiographies in Enlightenment thought, inviting a consideration of Whitehead's representation of technoscience as a symbol for supposed historical progress.

Linda Hutcheon's concept of historiographic metafiction provides a useful framework for understanding how Colson Whitehead's representation of technoscience in his fiction challenges these violent historical narratives of progress. In her essay "Historiographic Metafiction: Parody and the Intertextuality of History," Hutcheon seeks to add "an equally self-conscious dimension of history" to the previously ahistorical study of contemporary postmodern literature (Hutcheon 3). She coins the term "historiographic metafiction" to describe works that refer to a historic past while simultaneously making visible their own fictive nature, calling into question the ability of the work to accurately represent the past at all. Hutcheon argues that the dissonance between historical reference and fictive nature in works of historiographic metafiction is indicative of how every historical narrative is constructed, challenging the validity of any narrative that claims to accurately and totally represent the past. Following Hutcheon's understanding of postmodern literature, if progressive historiographies are the predominant narratives through which black American history is understood, then Colson Whitehead's use of transportation as a symbol for historical progress highlights the fallacies of those narratives in the manner of historiographic metafiction.

In both works, modes of transportation imitate the social function of progressive historiographies by promising inevitable social advancement to the protagonists. The

elevator in *The Intuitionist* and the train in *The Underground Railroad* purport to offer opportunity and social mobility and both symbols also refer to historic opportunities granted to black Americans through northward migration. In *The Intuitionist*, Lila Mae moves to an unnamed metropolis in order to be an elevator technician; she says, "I moved up here because here is where the elevators are. The real elevators" (*The Intuitionist* 168). Lila Mae equates access to "the real elevators" with increased social opportunity. Her migration from the American south to the north evokes the migrants of the Great Migration during the early twentieth century, who, like Lila Mae, also migrated northward in search of social opportunity. Just as access to elevators gives characters in the novel access to social opportunities, characters who do not have access to elevators are restricted in their social mobility; Lila Mae's apartment, for example, is in an undesirable neighborhood, and there is notably "no elevator in Lila Mae's building" (*The Intuitionist* 30).

Like the elevator, the train in *The Underground Railroad* promises the protagonist, Cora, access to social opportunity, as she escapes a south riddled with American slavery. While understanding the train in *The Underground Railroad* as a symbol of opportunity seems too obvious to dwell on—Cora literally rides the train to freedom—one should note the similar northward migration that both protagonists share in their respective novels. Just as Lila Mae's journey northward evokes the migrants of the Great Migration, Cora's northward movement similarly evokes the journey of runaway slaves centuries earlier. In both works, the American north represents a concrete end towards which the protagonists progress, and in both works, the protagonists' migration has a historic referent to the real migration of black Americans in the past. These historic references in *The Intuitionist* and *The Underground Railroad* place these novels within Hutcheon's category of historiographic metafiction.

But besides merely serving as symbols of opportunity, these technologies further resemble narratives of racial progress through their structural characteristics as modes of transportation. Both the train and the elevator move along predetermined, linear paths: the train bound to its tracks, the elevator bound to its shaft. These images of a vessel progressing along a preset, unidirectional course embody the ideological assumptions of progressive narratives of history, which portray human civilization as moving towards some tangible, utopian end. In *The Intuitionist*, the elusive elevator theorist James Fulton describes the elevator as "a train," going on to say that "[t]he perfect train terminates at Heaven" (*The Intuitionist* 87). The phrase "terminates at Heaven" evokes progress in the traditional Christian sense and this is compounded by the vertical nature of the elevator as it transports humans from the earthly ground to the heavenly sky. *The Intuitionist's* metaphor of the elevator

as a “train” invites a comparison to the literal train in *The Underground Railroad*, which is also depicted in linear terms. In *The Underground Railroad*, the train tracks “[run] south and north presumably, springing from some inconceivable source and shooting toward a miraculous terminus” (*The Underground Railroad* 68). Both descriptions use cognates of the Latin word “terminus,” meaning “end,” in order to describe the inevitable finality inherent to their respective modes of transport.

While these modes of transportation both represent narratives of progress, their eventual failure to carry the protagonists through teleological and successively improving stages of history suggests that the narratives which they represent do not accurately correspond to the true historic past. In “Museumizing Slavery: Living History in Colson Whitehead’s *The Underground Railroad*,” Madhu Dubey notes that the discontinuous nature of Cora’s northward journey challenges traditional progressive narratives of fugitive slaves. Dubey writes that both the historic Underground Railroad and Whitehead’s network of trains were “made up of zig-zag lines, incomplete or abandoned segments, unpredictable connection points, and numerous detours and dead ends” (Dubey 122). Cora’s scattered, roundabout journey northward (and eventually westward) rejects the progressive narratives through which the Underground Railroad is typically understood. This is reflected in Cora’s winding, achronological journey through black American history at each stop on the railroad: in South Carolina she encounters the Tuskegee experiments of the 1930s, while in North Carolina she hides from a post-slavery white supremacist mob in the south, and so on. Progressive narratives are further challenged in their accuracy through Cora’s uncertain fate at the end of the novel, as she is left traveling down a strange tunnel with no foreseeable end in sight: “[t]here was only the darkness of the tunnel, and somewhere ahead, an exit. Or a dead end, if that’s what fate decreed—nothing but a blank, pitiless wall” (*The Underground Railroad* 310). By leaving Cora’s final destination unstated, *The Underground Railroad* rejects the ideological assumption of an inevitable utopian end inherent to progressive narratives. Neither Cora nor the fugitive slaves traveled to freedom along easy, linear, predetermined paths; both journeys were winding, torturous, and indefinite, just like the journey of the black American throughout American history. Thus, while the train is running towards a “miraculous terminus,” it is also “laid in the direction of the bizarre” (*The Underground Railroad* 92).

The two modes of transportation are further linked to notions of progress through imagery of light and darkness. Both elevator and train move through dark enclosed spaces towards their respective ends. *The Intuitionist* describes the elevator shaft as “dark” throughout the novel and Lila Mae comes to associate “tiny particles of darkness . . . with

the elevator well” (*The Intuitionist* 12). The train in *The Underground Railroad* moves through darkness as well: when Cora first boards the train in Georgia, the conductor tells her to “[l]ook outside as you speed through, and you’ll find the true face of America.” However, when Cora looks out the window, “[t]here was only darkness, mile after mile” (*The Underground Railroad* 71). Imagery of light and darkness has always been linked to respective notions of knowledge and ignorance and while this connection predates the scientific development of lightbulb technology, Derek Maus notes in *Understanding Colson Whitehead* how one particular image in *The Intuitionist* connects light/dark imagery with enlightenment knowledge:

Late one night, Lila Mae is inflicted with insomnia as a result of a headache brought on by trying to read under the “single naked [light] bulb” in her converted maintenance closet of a room. . . . This detail symbolically suggests the obstacles placed in the path of Lila Mae’s ‘enlightenment’ by the intentionally inferior conditions she faces on campus as a black student. (Maus 22)

Here, Whitehead’s diction connects the image of the lightbulb to its invention during the American enlightenment, one of the many advances in technoscience that spurred the subsequent developments of progressive historiographies. While imagery of light has always been associated with knowledge, Whitehead’s use of the word “enlightenment” suggests that this symbol specifically refers to the scientific knowledge developed during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Both *The Intuitionist* and *The Underground Railroad* use light as a metaphor for progressive knowledge and Lila Mae’s struggle to educate herself in her small dark dorm room parallels the depictions of the elevator and the train as they progress through ignorance and darkness. By representing technoscience through modes of transportation, Whitehead uses postmodern devices to critique progressive narratives of Black American history. This is a significant departure from other works usually considered postmodern, which are typically aracial by nature. *The Underground Railroad* and *The Intuitionist* demonstrate how challenging these narratives can benefit those marginalized groups that postmodernist thought too often ignores.

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Minority Rule: Partition Politics and the Rise and Fall of Dalit-Muslim Solidarity

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Abstract

This paper excavates Dalit-Muslim solidarities in anticipation of Partition, the catastrophic division of British India into India and Pakistan, a strand of revolutionary praxis that has been all but erased from the archives of history. By weaving an intellectual history of two fundamental anti-caste figures, Jogendranath Mandal and Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, I seek to address how Dalits and Muslims used their minority status to theorize political subjectivities and organize against the hegemonic caste Hindu supremacy of the mainstream Indian nationalist movement. Mandal and Ambedkar both used the Muslim as a mirror through which to understand the political futurities of the Dalit, a strategy which ultimately grew untenable in both India and Pakistan. I conclude by suggesting that in order to narrate a Dalit history of Partition, it is necessary to contend with the inherent incommensurability between elite or dominant South Asian nationalism and Dalit liberation.

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On July 15, 1946, six Dalit¹ activists entered the Council Hall compound in Poona to protest the Cabinet Mission's proposal for India, which robbed Dalits of the political representation that they had been promised by the British. Carrying black flags, they chanted slogans of "Down with British Imperialism" and "Down with Congress." Simultaneously, hundreds of Dalits began a march to Council Hall from nearby Babajan Chowk, where they were apprehended by more than one hundred armed police officers.² However, these activists, organized under the Scheduled Castes Federation (SCF), a political party dedicated to building Dalit power, were not alone in their agitation on the eve of Indian independence. They were joined

by members of the Muslim League, the representative party of Indian Muslims, who also participated in SCF meetings, joined in other Dalit-led protests, and ultimately played a central role in supporting SCF candidates during India's 1946 Constituent Assembly elections. Unsurprisingly, this alliance between the SCF and the Muslim League elicited an immediately hostile response from Hindu organizations including the liberal-reformist Arya Samaj and the conservative-reactionary Hindu, Mahasabha, whose responses ranged from distributing anti-Muslim League propaganda to violently disrupting SCF meetings.³ These responses suggest that the very prospect of Dalit-Muslim solidarity posed an existential threat to Hindu hegemony within the nationalist movement.

This example of Dalit-Muslim solidarity has been all but erased from the archives of history. The conventional story of Indian independence emphasizes the role of prolonged popular struggle; the diverse political and ideological visions of its leadership and a uniquely revolutionary atmosphere of freedom and debate.⁴ This triumphalist account foregrounds anti-colonial nationalism as a guiding principle, first to unify the social, economic, and political demands of a vastly heterogeneous population and later to create a sovereign and secular nation state that embodies the will of the people. Within this dominant historiographical narrative, the figures of M.K. Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Muhammad Ali Jinnah loom large, often to the exclusion of Dalit intellectuals and statesmen like Mandal and Ambedkar,⁵ whose radical demands for caste equality were seen as divisive, polemical, and counterproductive. While a number of scholars have critiqued this account of the independence struggle,⁶ the Dalit-Muslim nexus—and the threat it posed to the idealized image of nationalist struggle—remain sidelined. Some scholars, like Dwaipayan Sen and Asif Ghazal, have taken a historical approach, tracing the relationship between Dalits and Muslims during Partition;⁷ however, they do not analyze the shared Dalit-Muslim disillusionment with the mainstream nationalist movement. In addition, these accounts remain regional and fragmented in scope and do not engage with broader theoretical concepts of nationalism, self-determination, and minority politics.

While understudied, the questions raised by Dalit-Muslim solidarity are central to understanding the fundamentally undertheorized intersections of minority politics, caste, Partition, and the Indian freedom struggle. How did Dalits and Muslims use the category of minority to theorize their political subjectivities and organize against the hegemonic caste Hindu supremacy of the mainstream Indian nationalist movement? How might their commitments to solidarity, however tenuous, offer a new mode of conceptualizing the political potentialities of the minority? As

Dalits and Muslims once again find common ground in their struggle against Hindutva fascism within the contemporary political moment, their entanglements during the founding moment of Indian history remain a fruitful object of study.

To begin to address these questions, I turn to the political and theoretical interventions of two major anti-caste statesmen and intellectuals: Jogendranath Mandal and B.R. Ambedkar. By weaving an intellectual history of these two figures, I argue that within their political philosophy, the status of the Muslim was crucial to defining the political subjectivity of the Dalit. Although they held opposing views on the execution of Partition itself—Mandal opposed it at first while Ambedkar cautiously welcomed it—both insisted on making sense of Dalit political possibility with reference to Muslims. I conclude by theorizing a Dalit retelling of Partition through the narrative framework of tragedy, thus bringing to light the inherent incommensurability between elite or dominant South Asian nationalism and Dalit liberation.

Mandal, Ambedkar, and Dalit-Muslim Entanglements

Though not a Muslim himself, throughout his political career, Jogendranath Mandal remained committed to collaborating with Muslims, both on the level of national political institutions like the Muslim League and regional popular social movements. On August 16, 1946, the Muslim League announced a general strike, urging Muslims across the nation to partake in a Direct Action Day to protest the Cabinet Mission on the grounds that the plan, which attempted to accommodate the Muslim League's demand for autonomous and sovereign states in the northwest and east of India by balancing provincial and central governmental powers, would ensure Hindu domination in the central government.⁸ The SCF joined the Direct Action Day in solidarity on the grounds that the Cabinet Mission deprived them of political agency by denying them a role in the negotiations.⁹ Bengali Dalits from Calcutta to Noakhali withdrew their labor and joined demonstrations.¹⁰ On behalf of the SCF, Mandal remarked, "I feel that the injustice done to the Scheduled Castes by the British Cabinet Mission and the Congress has been undone by this act of the Muslim League."¹¹ Mandal's relationship to the Muslim League would only crystallize further as Indian independence became an inevitability; he was appointed one of the League's five representatives to the Interim Government of India in October 1946.¹²

Mandal's relationship with Bengal's Muslims ultimately translated into support for the creation of Pakistan based on an idealistic belief in the power of collective action on the basis of shared oppression. Dalits and Muslims were subject to the same structures of socioeconomic and political

exploitation at the hands of caste Hindus in Bengal; both were denied access to land, education, and the stability of government employment, all of which were dominated by upper-caste Hindus.¹³ These common conditions prompted Mandal to conclude that in Pakistan, Dalits would receive the full range of their rights as citizens apart from the domination of caste Hindus. Indeed, at the first meeting of Pakistan's Constituent Assembly on August 10, 1947, Mandal's address emphasized these similarities, suggesting that his very election as inaugural chairman "augur[ed] very well with the creation of Pakistan, because Pakistan today is the result of persistent and legitimate demand of the minority community, namely the Muslims of India."¹⁴ His world-making project argued that Dalits were bound to fare better as minority subjects in Pakistan than under caste Hindu supremacy in India because Pakistan was a nation founded on minority politics. Mandal's conviction in the interchangeability of Dalit and Muslim minority politics, grounded in his belief in their shared struggle, was at the heart of this idealism.

Like Mandal, Ambedkar sought to constitute the Dalit as a liberal constitutional subject, a project which centrally animated his intellectual and political efforts by the 1940s.¹⁵ Unlike Mandal, however, Ambedkar did not view Partition as an opportunity to build solidarity between Dalits and Muslims on the basis of their shared oppression. According to Ambedkar, minority politics was not an interchangeable discourse. In fact, in his major work on Partition, *Pakistan or Partition of India*, he emphasized a number of significant differences between Muslims and Dalits. Unlike Dalits, Ambedkar suggests, Muslims shared a historical, religiously inflected antagonism with Hindus, one which later birthed a political rift between them. He demonstrates this long-standing tension through a disturbingly revisionist history of Muslim invasion whose only goal was to destroy the Hindu faith through the "destruction of temples and forced conversions . . . slaughter, enslavement and abasement of men, women, and children."¹⁶ Muslims were a constituency united by the primordial ties of community rather than a shared set of social and economic disabilities. These community ties made a Muslim territory like Pakistan "merely another manifestation of a cultural unit demanding freedom for the growth of its own distinctive culture."¹⁷ These problematic rhetorical flourishes in *Pakistan or Partition of India* gesture at the most critical difference between Dalits and Muslims: the essential difference marking Muslims as 'Other' was central to their recognition as political subjects by Hindus, a recognition that Dalits did not receive. Ambedkar's writings reflect the vast differences in regional caste politics. Unlike in Bengal, where the structures of caste, class, and religion converged in the construction of the caste Hindu as the chief oppressor of both Dalits and Muslims, within Ambedkar's political milieu centered

in western India, Dalits and Muslims occupied separate socioeconomic and political realms; caste Hindus could represent “the material interests of the Mohammedans and vice versa.”¹⁸ The materiality of caste was yet another distinction between Dalits and Muslims. Mandal’s ambitious and idealistic world-making project could not be replicated under Ambedkar’s analysis.

However, Muslims still played a key role in defining Dalit political subjectivity according to Ambedkar, who advocated for the creation of Pakistan. Importantly, his support for Partition was not driven by a universal belief in the self-determination of marginalized communities or an abstract notion of solidarity among Dalits and Muslims; rather, it was motivated by a pragmatic interest in preserving a strong, centralized state. A staunch modernist to the core, his belief in a strong center was driven by a profound fear that casteism would flourish on the local and provincial levels. In addition to protecting Dalit rights, Ambedkar claimed “it is only the centre which can work for a common end and for the general interests of the country as a whole.”¹⁹ From his attempts to create a national political party committed to building Dalit power through the SCF to his eventual, though hesitant, involvement with the Congress, his belief in a strong center stayed firm no matter the different tactics he deployed to achieve it. A robust Muslim minority within India would detract from this center, thus compromising Dalit political futurities. The elimination of a substantial Muslim politics would give him the opportunity to insert Dalits into the space it would vacate. As such, Partition was one method to lay the foundations towards Dalit sovereign power. Ambedkar made this argument in no uncertain terms, essentially asserting that the Muslim minority should be excised unceremoniously from the Indian nation. In *Pakistan or Partition of India*, he claims that the “severance of an area like Pakistan, which, to repeat, is *politically detachable from*, socially hostile and spiritually alien to, the rest of India” would not be an objectionable outcome.²⁰ Ambedkar’s insistence on a strong centralized government was central to his support for Partition.

To synthesize the argument thus far, the Muslim played a central role in defining Dalit political subjectivity and autonomy within the theoretical frameworks of both Jogendranath Mandal and B.R. Ambedkar. The Muslim remained a mirror through which Dalit political possibilities were refracted for both thinkers. The trajectory of Muslims in India, and later Pakistan, offered a lens through which to understand Dalit political subjectivity, whether through a model of shared oppression or one of political pragmatism.

Anti-Colonial Nationalism and Dalit Liberation

Ultimately, the theoretical and practical merits of using Muslims as a lens to make sense of Dalit political subjectivity fell flat for both Mandal and Ambedkar. The tenuous Dalit-Muslim alliance that had once convinced Mandal to take part in Pakistan’s nation-building project quickly grew untenable. Although Mandal hoped to pursue the cause of Dalit liberation from Pakistan, any hopes for caste emancipation in Pakistan were absorbed into concerns about Hindus as a religious minority.²¹ Religion became the distinctive discursive fault line in politics while caste structures were considered settled facts. The conflation of Dalit and Hindu bore catastrophic consequences for Dalit victims of caste-based violence: “police atrocities perpetrated on the Scheduled Caste People of East Bengal,” as well as the forced conversions and political disenfranchisement of Dalits were elided into communal concerns between Hindus and Muslims, obfuscating the specific anti-caste protections that Dalits direly needed.²² National identity and communalism subsumed any romantic notion of shared struggle or mutual empowerment of Dalits and Muslims that once animated Mandal’s political consciousness. This profound disillusionment led to Mandal’s resignation from the Pakistani government in October of 1950.²³

Similarly, Ambedkar voiced considerable frustration at Jinnah, the Muslim League, and Pakistan more generally in the aftermath of Partition. By 1947, he recognized that the Muslim League was more interested in reaching an arrangement with the Congress’ upper-caste leadership than advancing the cause of any other party or political minority. Despite his efforts, the triangulation of Dalits as a legitimate separate political entity was never fully realized within the Indian political context.

A Dalit retelling of Partition, then, might best be understood through a narrative arc of tragedy. In *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment*, anthropologist David Scott urges us to read colonialism and revolution through the lens of tragedy, in which history is conceptualized as a “broken series of paradoxes and reversals in which human action is ever open to unaccountable contingencies—and luck.”²⁴ Scott’s definition of tragedy offers a way to make sense of the tempestuous and contradictory twists and turns in Dalit political leadership in the lead-up to Partition. Caught between the utopia of their desires and the finitude of their concrete circumstances, Mandal and Ambedkar were repeatedly forced to reverse their tactical positions, make use of institutions they once organized against, and navigate a shifting and tenuous set of political solidarities. The inherent instability of the tragic framework is particularly useful in understanding the rise and fall of Dalit-Muslim solidarity. Rather than weaving a seamlessly

triumphant narrative of shared struggle against caste Hindu oppression, the Dalit-Muslim alliance disintegrated. Despite their monumental efforts to construct a meaningful and subversive minority politics, Mandal, Ambedkar, and other Dalit activists ultimately failed to claim political power in both India and Pakistan, their distinct demands for rights and protections rejected in both nations. The disillusion of Dalit-Muslim solidarity points to the incommensurability of an ideal form of anti-colonial nationalism and Dalit liberation. As the dominant discourse of the independence struggle was reduced to problems of communal tension and religious divide between Hindus and Muslims, Mandal and Ambedkar's writings and political trajectories suggest that Dalits were rejected from the nation-building projects of both India and Pakistan, despite their attempts to craft alliances with Muslims.

Dalit-Muslim Solidarity: A Contemporary Perspective

The Dalit-Muslim solidarity at the fore of Partition, in conclusion, was conflicted, contradictory, and difficult to define. In this paper, I have endeavored to show the importance of considering the political potentialities offered by joint Dalit-Muslim resistance in opposition to a mainstream historiographical enterprise that has systematically erased marginalized voices, and particularly Dalit voices, from the narration of Partition. By examining the work—intellectual, political, and otherwise—of Jogendranath Mandal and B.R. Ambedkar, I have traced the role of the Muslim as a subject against which Dalit political subjectivity was defined and constituted. For Mandal, the minority politics of Dalits and Muslims in Bengal were essentially interchangeable because of their shared circumstances; for Ambedkar, the political trajectory of Muslims provided a template for articulating Dalit demands. Ultimately, however, these efforts to combine or compound the minority politics of Dalits and Muslims were unsuccessful and Dalits remained outside the dichotomous framework of Indian and Pakistani politics.

As the Modi administration continues to rely on the ideology of Hindutva to consolidate power, the stakes of this inquiry are particularly striking. Just as South Asian politics revolved around the binary religious division between Hindus and Muslims during Partition and decolonization, so do contemporary Indian politics. From the 2002 Gujarat riots to the national uprisings in the aftermath of the 2019–2020 Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), communal tensions between Hindus and Muslims have occupied the center stage in the contemporary Indian political discourse. As a result, Dalit voices have continued to be marginalized despite the reality that, for example, Dalits and Adivasis stood to lose the most were the CAA to be implemented.²⁵ This centrality of Hindu-Muslim tension—in the media, in academia, and in the popular discourse—makes the reality of

caste oppression invisible. By highlighting the contributions and complexities of Dalit political thought in the lead-up to Partition, I critique this deeply problematic homogenizing tendency. More optimistically, perhaps, Dalits and Muslims in India once again find themselves living under a set of shared political and economic circumstances; a path to their collective liberation may still be possible yet.

Endnotes

- ¹ The term Dalit originates from the Marathi word for oppressed or broken, and is commonly used to refer to caste communities formerly known as “Untouchables.” While the term only gained political popularity in the 1970s, it was first introduced by noted 19th century anti-caste reformer Jyotiba Phule, and was also used throughout the writings of B.R. Ambedkar and other anti-caste revolutionaries during the mid-20th century. I choose to use the term here rather than more historically appropriate descriptors (e.g., Scheduled Castes or Depressed Classes, which were more constitutionally oriented) to respect the self-fashioned identities of Dalit communities.
- ² Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, “All-India Scheduled Castes Federation Memorandum Submitted by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar to the Cabinet Mission on 5th April 1946,” in *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, ed. Vasant Moon (New Delhi: Dr. Ambedkar Foundation, 2014), 17: 506.
- ³ Ramnarayan S. Rawat, “Partition Politics and Achhut Identity: A Study of the Scheduled Castes Federation and Dalit Politics in UP, 1946–48,” in *The Partitions of Memory: The Afterlife of the Division of India*, ed. Suvir Kaul (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001), 124.
- ⁴ Bipin Chandra, *India's Struggle for Independence, 1857–1947* (New Delhi, India: Viking, 1998), 14.
- ⁵ A number of scholars have remarked on the erasure of Ambedkar from the history of Indian independence. As far as Mandal is concerned, to date, there exists only one book-length monograph on his life and just a few articles that have begun to uncover his contributions.
- ⁶ See Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993). Chatterjee's seminal work has been integral to more contemporary critiques of Indian nationalist historiography.
- ⁷ See Dwaipayan Sen, *The Decline of the Caste Question: Jogendranath Mandal and the Defeat of Dalit Politics in Bengal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018) and Asif Ghazal, “Jogendranath Mandal and the Politics of Dalit Recognition in Pakistan,” *South Asia* 43, no. 1 (2020): 119–135.
- ⁸ Anwesha Roy, *Making Peace, Making Riots: Communalism and Communal Violence, Bengal 1940–1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 83. To contextualize further, as Partition and the independence of India and Pakistan became an inevitability, India's minority communities struggled to secure political rights within the new government. The Cabinet Mission Plan, while maintaining a federalist approach to the creation of post-colonial South Asia, was critiqued by the Muslim League as well as the SCE.
- ⁹ Dwaipayan Sen, *The Decline of the Caste Question: Jogendranath Mandal and the Defeat of Dalit Politics in Bengal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 139.
- ¹⁰ Sekhar Banyopadhyay, “Partition in Bengal: Re-visiting the Caste Question,” *Studies in History (Sabibabad)* 33, no. 2 (2017), 241.
- ¹¹ “Scheduled Castes Expect League Cooperation: Mr. Mandal Thanks Mr. Jinnah for ‘Undoing an Injustice,’” *Times of India*, October 18, 1946, 10.
- ¹² Asif Ghazal, “Jogendranath Mandal and the Politics of Dalit Recognition in Pakistan,” *South Asia* 43, no. 1 (2020) 121.
- ¹³ Bengal Legislative Assembly, *Proceedings*, August 5, 1937 (Alipore: Bengal Government Press, 1937), 209.
- ¹⁴ Constituent Assembly of Pakistan Debates, *Official Report* (Karachi: Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, 1947), 1: 2.

- 15 While his vast intellectual corpus ranged from economic texts like *The Problem of the Rupee: Its Origin and Its Solution* to theoretical treatises on caste like *Annihilation of Caste*, beginning in the 1940s, Ambedkar began to focus his efforts more firmly into the political problems of its present, and in particular questions surrounding the role of Dalits in post-colonial state-formation.
- 16 Ambedkar, *Pakistan or Partition of India* (Bombay: Thacker and Company Unlimited, 1946), http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00ambedkar/ambedkar_partition/index.html#contents. Strikingly, this language mirrors contemporary rhetoric used by Hindu nationalists to characterize Muslim rule as savage and barbaric.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Ambedkar, "Evidence of Dr. Ambedkar before the Indian Statutory Commission on 23rd October, 1928," in *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, 2, 465.
- 19 Constituent Assembly of India Debates, Official Report (New Delhi: Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, 1949), 4: 156.
- 20 Ambedkar, *Pakistan or Partition of India*, emphasis added.
- 21 Ghazal, "Jogendranath Mandal and the Politics of Dalit Recognition in Pakistan," 134.
- 22 Jogendranath Mandal, "Letter of Resignation," October 8, 1950, in *My People Uprooted: A Saga of the Hindus of East Bengal*, ed. Tathagata Roy (Calcutta: Ratna Prakashan, 2001), Appendix 1.
- 23 Mandal, "Letter of Resignation."
- 24 David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 13.
- 25 "Newly Convened Alliance Underscores Potential Impact of CAA-NRC on Dalits, Adivasis," *The Wire*, Published January 16, 2020, <https://thewire.in/rights/caa-nrc-dalits-adivasis-obcs>.

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Dispossessed Self: The Question of the Self and the Other in June Jordan's "Poem about My Rights"

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Abstract

Member of the artistic, literary, and social movement of the 1950s and 1960s, aptly named the Black Arts Movement, June Jordan is a poetic powerhouse. Jordan's work spans from poems to prose about Black life, politics, and love. In one of Jordan's seminal poems, "Poem about My Rights," she writes about her position as a woman and a being. Jacques Lacan describes the Self as a contained, "conscious" being and the Other as an entity or being that is completely distinct from the Self. As such, this paper takes Jordan's work in "Poem about My Rights" and puts in conversation with Lacan's theorization of the Self and the Other. Throughout the poem, Jordan states that her Self is completely "wrong" and it is that very wrongness that leaves the Self open to the worst types of violence. The poem heavily mentions rape, and using it as a metaphor to speak about the violent intrusion of the Other into the Self, this paper uses rhetorical analysis methodologies in order to argue that under the violence hegemony of the Other, the Self becomes dispossessed.

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Introduction and Theoretical Framework

The Black Arts Movement of the mid 1960s-1970s was an exploration of what it meant to be a Black being in the wake of an oversaturation of narratives governed by whiteness. Musicians, writers, and poets took up the considerable question of the Black being head on. Despite the movement's significance in probing the question of Blackness, the movement excluded many of the narratives within the community; specifically, those of queer people and female-presenting bodies. Amiri Baraka is a prime exemplar for the poetic prowess that characterized the Black Arts Movement and simultaneously the problematic underbelly of the movement. Fellow poet June Jordan escapes only some of the problematized aspects of the movement. Her work, "Poem about My Rights," published after her death in 2005, underscores

the unique position of the Black woman as an identity that is often read as "wrong," and, as Hortense Spillers notes, a site of confounded identities (Spillers, 1987). Written without any punctuation marks that signal a firm conclusion to a statement (or the poem itself), Jordan's stream of consciousness provides a commentary about selfhood and sexual violence. The poem, totaling 157 lines, fully encapsulates the effect that violence has on the Self. As will be shown, the anti-Black violence that stems from society positions the being in relation to the Self in such a way that it is *stripped* and *deprived*—dispossessed of the Self.

Jacques Lacan's theorization of society becomes a useful framework to investigate how the Self becomes dispossessed by the violence of the Other. Lacan calls our systems of laws, culture and cultural products (art, literature, film, etc.), and society at large the Symbolic order. From Lacan's point of view, the speaking being, or the subject, comes into existence in the Symbolic through the Mirror stage, a moment in infancy where the subject comes to see itself as the Other. For the purposes of this work, I will focus on the distinction between the Self—a contained being, and the Other—a system or being that is completely separated from the Self. As a part of Lacan's concept of the Symbolic, the Other can be seen as language, the law, and institutions.¹

Through a close reading of the work, I assert that the "wrongness" of Jordan's selfhood leaves it open for violence, specifically rape. Rape—the perverse violation of the Self—then, becomes a metaphor to speak about the dispossession of the Self under the hegemony of the Other. In what follows, I will explicate the "wrongness" that Jordan feels, the concept of rape, and how it serves as metaphor.

Title and Narrative Structure

The title and narrative structure of "Poem about My Rights" provides a robust reading of the question of the Self for the Black being. The title is devoid of determiners, such as "A" or "The," that precede the noun "Poem." As a way to communicate what the noun refers to, the absence of a determiner takes away reference from the title, thus allowing the "Poem" to be generalizable and open to being read as a verb, to *make* poetry about "My Rights," or as a noun, to *be* a poem about "My Rights." As both a noun and a verb, the title demonstrates how a poem about "My Rights" exceeds prose; "My Rights" are something that is outside the normative structure of paragraphs and full sentences, thus existing at the borders of language. Additionally, to speak about them through poetry is to use language in a more free and experimental way, further illustrating the position of "My Rights" at the borders of language. The position of "My Rights" in language affects how the Self is read and how to speak about it. Next, the title is ironic; rights are positive,

they are fundamental and possessive. This is in conflict with the with what the poem communicates; the poem is about the dispossessed Self and the negative effects of living under the rule of the Other. Simultaneously, the irony of the title signals that the poem will be about what selfhood possesses, profoundly and fundamentally. Finally, as a stream of consciousness, the poem is free to express the full thoughts and sentiments surrounding “My Rights.” The narrative pace is fast and continuous, altering the experience of encountering Jordan’s poem. Through its speed and continuity, the text theorizes about Jordan’s selfhood as a continuous narrative. The title in conversation with the narrative structure of the text allows questions about the Self to arise.

The Question of the Self

Moving to the beginning lines of the text, the Self becomes mutable from its outward appearance, thus propelling the Self towards endless dispossession. The text states:

Even tonight and I need to take a walk and clear
my head about this poem about why I can’t
go out without changing my clothes my shoes
my body posture my gender identity my age
my status as a woman . . .

The poem begins by grounding the text in a temporal structure. “Even tonight,” places the text in the present moment, thus communicating that this is the current state of selfhood. “Even tonight” makes this temporal schema different from others. To be in the night is to uncover or wade through what is not immediately seen or spoken, or in the sunlight. Next, the self-referential nature of this poem, outlined by “this poem” provides the text the ability to investigate the Self as an object of study. “This poem” alludes to the significance of the title as a way to speak about “My Rights” in poetic language. The phrase, “why I can’t” is dangling at the end of the line, representing a meditation of the compulsory mutability of the Self within the text. Joined together, the phrase “why I can’t/go out without changing,” fully demonstrates the interchangeable nature of the Self. By stating “go out without changing,” the text provides a commentary about how the Self is read through and by the Other, thus speaking to the alterable nature of the Self. The repetition of “out” demonstrates the external Self. The poem presents the Other as a force that thwarts the creation of a comprehensible image to the Self *and* dispossesses the Self from the subject. This is apparent by the long list of attributes of the Self, “. . . my clothes my shoes/ my body posture my gender identity my age/my status as a woman.” The fact that these characteristics are listed without commas that separate the phrases represents the full Self—one that is continuous and not segmented. What is notable about the attributes is that they begin with the most changeable

aspects of the Self: “my clothes my shoes,” and end with the least changeable aspect of the Self, “my status as a woman.” It is through the mutability of the Self that the Other thwarts the possession of the Self for the text. How, then, does this change happen? Why must the Self be mutable?

To solve for the questions above, I look to the following lines:

the point being that I can’t do what I want
to do with my own body because I am the wrong
sex the wrong age the wrong skin . . .

By underscoring the central point of the poem, the text provides emphasis to the succeeding words. The inability to “do what I want” is caused by the dispossessed Self, represented in the text as being wrong. The text removes autonomy and agency from the body, thus opening it up to the violence of the Other. To be the “wrong” Self is to establish a power dynamic, one that positions the “wrong” one—the Self that is read as woman—as subordinate and the “right” one as in power. The Other occupies the position of the “right,” demonstrated by the lack of bodily autonomy and the changeable nature of the Self. In the third line of the section above, “I am the wrong/” stands alone, it sits on the ledge of the line. This presents the entire Self as “wrong”; the Self as presented by the text nothing but wrong. Because the Other stands as the model, the wrongness of selfhood is what allows for its mutability.

The Question of the Other and Its Violence

As a result of the hegemony of the Other, the Self becomes changeable and unincorporated. The Self is sprawled out over lines of the text. The poem presents a theorization of rape that elicits the mechanics of how the Others alters the Self. After an intrusion of another voice, “who in the hell set this up/like this,” the text creates a metaphorical structure between the concept of rape and the colonization of African countries. The poem specifically looks to Namibia, Angola, and Zimbabwe as the Self and France, South Africa, and other states, institutions, and companies (Exxon Mobil, the C.I.A., to name a few) as the impending Other. Additionally, it looks to the C.I.A., the F.B.I., and “teachers and preachers” as the Other. The text continues:

and in France they say if the guy penetrates
but does not ejaculate then he did not rape me
and if after stabbing him if after screams if
after begging the bastard and if even after
smashing
a hammer to his head if even after that if he
and his buddies fuck me after that
then I consented . . .

Rape is the perverse, violent intrusion of the Other into the Self. The violence of the Other is thus gendered; men occupy the position of the Other for the text. The language of this section is laden with violence, on the part of the Other and on the part of the defensive Self. Penetration is a “normative” intrusion of the Other into the Self, but with the absence of the height of pleasure—ejaculation—penetration does not become rape. In this conceptualization of rape, the text mingles violence and pleasure. The repetition of “if after” sets up a temporal structure in that the defense from the Other comes *after* its initial violence and makes the actions of the Self in defense continuous: that there are multiple, ultimately futile, avenues to defend the Self. The futility of defense is articulated in the final lines of this section, where consent is granted *after the fact*. The third line of this section ends with a lone “if,” leaving the possibilities of defense open. This is a recognition the hope of combating the violence of the Other. The alliteration of “begging the bastard” further underscores said hope and links it to “the guy.” The text’s conceptualization of rape understands the act as inescapable for the gendered Self. Rape dispossesses the Self—it is no longer in control over the components of itself: their bodies and their characteristics. Rape becomes a way to speak about the dispossession of the Self under the hegemony of the Other by making it analogous to colonial violence. In:

... finally you understand finally
they fucked me over because I was wrong I was
wrong again to be me being me where I was/
wrong
to be who I am

The cause of rape, the text proclaims, is due to the wrongness of the Self. The very essence of the subject of the poem is wrong. What is notable about this section is that there is a “you,” the text is speaking outward to the reader. Additionally, the only punctuation that the text utilizes are slashes and colons. This is notable, for it presents an oppositional, yet simultaneously continuous structure between the connected phrases. For “I was” to be in opposition to wrong is to assert the wrongness of a *past* Self, whereas the “I was” is in conjunction *with* wrong. Slashes also communicate a new line of a poem. This speaks to the self-referential nature of the work as well as stating that the entire Self is “wrong.” This will become important later in the text’s solution to the violence of the Other.

Delving even deeper into the violence of the Other, the text presents a robbing of the Self from a primal level. Although this violence escapes the gendered connotations of rape, the dynamic of violence still persists. The section that discusses the primal violence of the Other is signaled by a short line, “before that.” This sets up another temporal

structure of primal violence, it existed before the harmful acts of the C.I.A. and the F.B.I. The fact that it is primal indicates that the violence, the hegemony of the Other is absolutely fundamental and originary. The is complicated in the fact that the subject’s father also experiences “wrongness,” but signaled by another “before that,” the father begins as a perpetrator of the violence of the Other. The text states:

it was my father saying I was wrong saying that
I should have been a boy because he wanted one/a
boy and that I should have been lighter skinned
and . . .
just be one/a boy

Looking specifically to the language of the father, he tells the subject of the poem that they are wrong: he wishes that the subject would have had “straighter hair” and not have been “so boy crazy” and been a boy. “A Boy” is also preceded by a slash, further underscoring the significance of the slash. The long list of attributes of the Self indicates that the subject of the text is fundamentally wrong, according to every Other that they encounter. The “wrong” Self becomes racialized by the phrase “I should have been lighter skin.” The inscription of race onto the Self only adds to the “wrongness” of the Self; that to be Black is to be fundamentally incorrect or problematic. The primal sense of wrongness is further underscored by the phrase “I would have been.” “I would have been,” is another dimension is the hope of the Other. The mother perpetuates an even more primordial “wrongness” to the Self, where the text states:

it was my mother pleading plastic surgery for
my nose and braces for my teeth . . .

As with the father, the mother figure for the subject’s Self annihilates any semblance of an integrated Self. The Other destroys the whole Self, it dispossesses the Self from the subject.

Next, the crux of the poem outlines that “. . . the problems of white/America . . .,” the C.I.A., South Africa as a colonial state, and the other Others that enact violence onto the Self, the problems are the Self—itself. Looking again to Spillers, the Self for the poem becomes a site of confounded identities and problems. The text proclaims:

I am the history of rape
I am the history of the rejection of who I am
I am the history of the terrorized incarceration of
myself
I am the history of battery assault and limitless
armies against whatever I want to do with my
mind
and my body and my soul . . .

The repetition of “I am the history” presents the confounding of identities and problems. It breeds conviction; the reader is to pay attention to what the text says. Overall, the Self, in its historical nature, is of violence. For the Self to be a “history” is to be the site of knowledge and pain. With the inscription of time and a temporal structure earlier in the text, this concept, the Self as a “history,” propels the Self into a space of atemporality. The Self is always past, is the present, and will be the future. In its wrongness and under the text’s conceptualization of rape, selfhood becomes the mode of communication, a device to speak about the violence from the Other. As the “rejection of who I am,” selfhood as history is dissolved into fragmented segments. The “history of terrorized incarceration” is the privatization of the Self by the Other. In its incarceration, the Self is *only* for the Other, it is alienated for itself. “Myself” stands alone, this loneliness, which is a common theme throughout the text, demonstrates that the “wrongness” of the Self is isolating. The efforts to limit the Self from full autonomy and agency, “whatever I want to do with my mind/and my body and soul . . .,” from the Other, obviously leads to the dispossession of the Self. The crux of the poem communicates the overall dispossession of the Self from the violence of the Other. As history, in its “wrongness,” selfhood becomes the site of confounded issues and identities.

Conclusion

In June Jordan’s “Poem about My Rights,” we witness the damaging effects of the hegemony of the Other onto the Self. As demonstrated by close reading, this paper argues that the “wrongness” of Jordan’s Self leaves it open for violence from the Other. The metaphor of rape, that is the perverse intrusion of the Other into the Self, represents the mechanisms through which the Other carries out its hegemonic rule. In the concluding lines of the poem, the text provides a method for escaping the violence of the Other. In, “. . . from now on my resistance/my simple and daily and nightly self-determination/may very well cost you your life,” death is the liberation from the violence of the Other. The overall impression of the poem puts the “wrong” Self in conversation with death and violence. June Jordan’s “Poem about My Rights” serves to demonstrate how the Self, as gendered and racialized, becomes history: it becomes the site of violence, pain, and confounded identities.

If the Self becomes dispossessed, what are the effects on subjectivity? This project begins to chip away at that almost impossible question. To be a subject is to reflect the Self outward into the Symbolic. Because individuals come to be subjects through the Other, as posited by the Lacan’s Mirror stage, the Black being’s relation to subjectivity is laden with violence. As a result, Black life becomes

inundated with subjection, abjection, and rejection from and by the Symbolic order.

Endnote

- ¹ Bruce Fink. *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance*, Princeton University Press, 1995. pp. 25–37.

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A Trance-formative Ideological Revolution: Transcorporeality in Vodou as a Pathway to Liberation from Heteropatriarchy

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Abstract

This article discusses how Vodou in Haiti has become a religious and spiritual system that has provided the means of liberation for its practitioners. In the time period of the Haitian Revolution, Vodou enabled its practitioners to overthrow the colonial regime that had implemented race-based chattel slavery and oppressed them through this institution. Currently, Vodou enables its practitioners to defy heteropatriarchy and become free from the oppression that this similarly colonial institution brings. This is due to the transcorporeal understanding of self in which Haitian Vodou operates—an understanding where the immaterial self is removable, external, and multiple as it relates to the body. Through examining this history as well as select ethnographies, literature, and artworks, this article dissects how Vodou has become a liberatory practice from heteropatriarchy by providing the ontological means to deconstruct the colonial construct of the gender binary.

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Introduction

Heteropatriarchy assumes specific concepts of gender; that one can only exist assigned as a man or a woman and consequently they must orient their conduct and behavior tendencies as such.¹ This effectively confines one's sense of self to their physical body, an understanding which is now understood as contradictory when we look at the self-perception and lived experiences of queer, genderfluid, and non-binary individuals. Judith Butler articulated in *Gender Trouble* (1990) that gender is “real only to the extent that it is performed.”² This enables a broader understanding of

gender that is greater than the binary of man and woman. Butler's concept of gender performativity³ and the dynamics of power and patriarchy present in Haitian literature, such as works from René Depestre,⁴ indicate the need for the queer community, and particularly the queer community in Haiti who endure the social consequences of dehumanization from Roman Catholicism's colonial influence, to be liberated from heteropatriarchy. Haitian Vodou provides an avenue of this liberation for its practitioners through the concept of transcorporeality by affirming the self to a fuller extent than heteropatriarchy would provide for them. Thus, this paper seeks to highlight practitioners of the Afro-Diasporic religious tradition of Vodou in Haiti, stemming from multiple West African indigenous traditions who use transcorporeality, to affirm the immaterial self to be multiple, removable, and external as it relates to the body. Further, I explore how these practitioners live out this affirmation in rebellion against the Western tendency of restricting gender to a binary inseparable from the body.

Through an examination of the historical context that formed Vodou in Haiti and its concepts of personhood and looking at ethnographies, literature, and art, this paper explores this affirmation of the self, defined as transcorporeality, and how it enables particularly Afro-descended individuals of Haiti with a broader gender fluidity to operate on a mental framework liberated from the colonial institution of heteropatriarchy. This uniquely Afro-descended concept, translated in religious traditions of indigenous African peoples such as that of the Aka and Adja for example, has a potential application beyond Vodou, one that multiple religious traditions, especially ones grounded in mysticism, could implement in their systems of thought to better affirm queer identity.

Introduction to Haitian Vodou and Its Concepts of Personhood

Haitian Vodou is a polycultural tradition which derives from regions of West Africa, primarily from Dahomey (currently Benin), and grew alongside the development of slavery in Haiti between the 16th–18th centuries as a means for enslaved Africans to preserve their indigenous practices after displacement. Claudine Michel notes in the development of Vodou in Haiti that it fueled Haiti to have “survived oppression, found modes of expressions, and recreated a modified African society and ethos.”⁵ Due to the passage of Code Noir in 1685 which made it illegal for enslaved Africans to practice their religion and became an additional tool to prevent the consolidation of their community, Vodou was forced to utilize Catholic symbols to continue its preservation and longevity counter to colonial law.⁶

People that practice Vodou consider themselves simply “*sevi kwa yo*” (or serving the spirits). The *kwas*, or the

deities, each become manifested from Bondye, the sole sustaining force behind the entire universe. These *lwás* are conceptualized as the personae of this vital force. This thought also permeates into the lives of the Vodou practitioners, or Vodousaints. As Bellegarde-Smith and Davis note, every material being is considered sacred and that the sacred and the secular are intertwined.⁷ This interconnection is fundamental for transcorporeality by presenting the self as a more valuable component of the person than one that is singularly contained within the body for eternity. It forms a divine aspect of the self that becomes increasingly unpacked through Haitian Vodou's concept of personhood.

The Haitian Vodou concept of personhood, according to Roberto Strongman, is summarized best as being composed of multiple components, namely the *tibonanj* and the *gwobonanj*.⁸ The *tibonanj* has been described as the source of objectivity and what controls the bodily functions and vital signs of life, while the *gwobonanj* has been conceptualized as the ego soul, consciousness, and the bridge between the *tibonanj* and the *mèt tet*. The *mèt tet* is the guiding or guardian spirit for a person, the entity who overtakes them in trance. The moments of trance happen primarily in rituals such as mystical marriages and *dessounin*. *Dessounin* is the afterlife ritual performed to free the *gwobonanj* from someone to later either become a *mèt tet* for a subsequent *gwobonanj* or reside in Ginen, which is conceptualized as a homeland where the ancestral spirits reside. When someone goes into trance, according to Métraux, a *lwa* drives out their *gwobonanj* and occupies the body left behind. The *tibonanj* permits this phenomenon through continuing to function the body, while also having the body convulse during this possession.⁹ Therefore, this cosmological understanding of Haitian Vodou provides us the context to see how resistance against heteropatriarchy through a transcorporeal understanding of the self is lived out by its practitioners. This unique understanding of self is also frequently seen in Haitian ethnographies, literature, and art.

Examples in Ethnographies, Literary Works, and Art

The rituals of Haitian Vodou provide an entryway into seeing how one can break free from heteronormativity in the metaphorical sense. For instance, in the ethnographies of Maya Deren and Zora Neale Hurston, both based in Haiti, entitled *Divine Horsemen* (1954) and *Tell My Horse* (1938) respectively, the horse and rider metaphor is used to describe trance possession in Vodou that the authors had personally experienced; the *lwa* is considered the rider and the person possessed is considered the horse. Strongman thus links the imagery of the saddle's concavity, the resemblance of a horse as a vessel, and the chemistry between a horse and a rider to show a "distinctly female receptacularity"¹⁰ meaning that this form of trance possession is

described as a uniquely sapphic bond. This indicates that this system presenting a multiple personhood, as transcorporeality provides, offers these ethnographers a model to explore beyond the confines of heteronormative identity linked with the concept of a singular self. This provides the affirmation of a self that is not presented nor permitted for someone of queer identity in heteropatriarchy. This consequently echoes the intention of the system of Haitian Vodou to explore beyond what has been accepted as reality from colonialism. Michel notes, for example, how each encounter, especially with the *lwa*, is significantly intended for continual education.¹¹ Thus, Deren and Hurston were both able to experience from Vodou a fuller version of themselves that did not conform to heteropatriarchal norms.

Another example of a narrative describing the utilization of Vodou's cosmology to break free from conformative gender identity is evident in *Fado* by Kettly Mars written in 2008. Paul Humphrey examines the nature of the twin *lwa*, *Ezili Dantò* and *Ezili Freda*, through the main character Anaïse who takes on a second persona, Frida.¹² *Ezili Dantò* is considered the *lwa* of motherhood while *Ezili Frida* is considered the *lwa* of love and sensuality. Dunham similarly notes that anyone can marry *Ezili* (or transcribed as *Erzulie*), including women who transgress the bounds of reproductive heteropatriarchy.¹³ We see this situation play out in *Fado* when Anaïse takes on the persona of Frida and abandons her domestic life to become a sex worker. Here she both imposes this heteropatriarchy on herself by creating for herself an illusion of power within the phallogocentric framework¹⁴ and also subverts this very construct by increasing her agency through the seduction of the brothel's owner. This shows how *Fado* expresses a deconstructed compartmentalization of women which then functions as a form of liberation for women in a multiplicity of self. Anaïse/Frida's body is the setting of her transcending the dichotomies placed upon her in the trauma of her lived experience as a woman and utilizing the sensibilities of Vodou to channel that transcendence.

One prominent case where a marriage with a *lwa* can be used as a form of liberation from the limitations of gender heteronormativities is in the work of Vodou practitioner Hector Hyppolite. In Hyppolite's work *Woman with a Ribbon* (Figure 1), *Erzulie* is painted as a feminized, androgynous form of himself and the birds symbolizing the *lwa* that serves as his *mèt tet* contained in the painting are conveying a union of the divine and human that is noticeably queer. Thus, the mystic marriage—or entanglement since he's already married to the *lwa Lasirèn*—represented here shows how Hyppolite became able to show himself in an idealized androgyny where he can present more feminine as a part of himself rather than having that element be completely separate or non-existent. In essence, this artwork and his legacy shows that Hyppolite viewed himself as more of a multiple self than

to solely represent himself as masculine; the transcorporeality through which he lived as a Vodou practitioner fueled that self-perception. Hyppolite's queer identity becomes even more evident through biographers referencing his frequent evening visits to a cabaret, implying that he participated in same-sex behavior and explored the "ambiguous nature of female spirits."¹⁵ We can see in both his artwork and his life, the mystic marriages in Hyppolite's life allowed him to transgress heteronormative gender constructs.



Figure 1. Hector Hyppolite, Woman with a Ribbon (*Femme aux fleurs et aux oiseaux*), 1948.

Conclusion: Transcorporeality's Potential Beyond Vodou

This essay portrayed the capabilities of Haitian Vodou to be a liberative religious practice from the oppressive force of heteropatriarchy in both the social and cultural domains. It deconstructs the colonially imposed concept of self and gender as being attached to the body and slotted into the binary with a concept of transcorporeality that considers the self to be more multiple and all-encompassing. Transcorporeality can also be reflected in a multitude of traditions or subjectivities, including those outside of the institutionally religious context, such as individuals and

communities of queer identity. It empowers one's sense of being and self against the gaze of colonialism and the heteropatriarchy and could be utilized in a community intentionally working to dismantle, through religious means, forms of societal oppression fueled by heteropatriarchy. The potential of this aspect of Vodou speaks to us today as a viable method for decolonizing world systems of religion and politics influenced from religion that continue to tragically create anti-queer oppression. Transcorporeality can lead to religious leaders across the globe to recognize identity that transcends the gender binary. Further, it can provide a means of resisting the colonial gaze that attempts to focalize Black queer experience as one that is fetishized and examined rather than amplified and affirmed. Transcorporeality can even modify an oppressive construct such as language. The power it can hold in decoloniality cannot be understated and must be explored further.

Endnotes

- ¹ Heteropatriarchy is a construct which limits gender to the identities of cisgender male and female. It establishes power and dominance of cis male identity over cis female identity and utilizes this as a model in which to implement colonialism and white supremacy over the world due to the understanding of the world to be subservient and feminine.
- ² Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*. Ed. Sue-Ellen Case. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1990: 278.
- ³ *Ibid.*, 272.
- ⁴ See Couti, Jacqueline, and Jason C Grant. "Man up! Masculinity and (Homo)sexuality in René Depestre's Transatlantic World." *Humanities* (Basel) 8, no. 3 (2019) and also Strongman, Roberto. "Transcorporeality in Vodou." *Journal of Haitian Studies* 14, no. 2 (October 1, 2008): 15–19.
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- ⁸ Strongman, Roberto. "Transcorporeality in Vodou": 10–12. 9.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.
- ¹⁰ Strongman, Roberto. *Queering Black Atlantic Religions: Transcorporeality in Candomblé, Santería, and Vodou*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019: 45.
- ¹¹ Michel, Claudine. "Vodou in Haiti: Way of Life and Mode of Survival." *Journal of Haitian Studies* 8, no. 1 (2002): 98–109.
- ¹² Humphrey, Paul. "Of Sound, Mind and Body: Female Sexuality and Vodou in Kettly Mars' Fado." *International Journal of Francophone Studies* 17, no. 2 (June 1, 2014): 137–57.
- ¹³ Strongman, Roberto. *Queering Black Atlantic Religions: Transcorporeality in Candomblé, Santería, and Vodou*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019: 43.
- ¹⁴ Phallogocentrism entails masculine privilege among feminine spaces as a consequence of heteropatriarchy such that it creates the Madonna-whore dichotomy that Anaïse wrestles with in this novel.
- ¹⁵ Strongman, Roberto. *Queering Black Atlantic Religions: Transcorporeality in Candomblé, Santería, and Vodou*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019: 83.

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A Masculinized System: Sexual and Reproductive Health for Incarcerated Women in Puerto Rico

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Abstract

This research analyses sexual and reproductive health and rights for incarcerated women in Puerto Rico. In this paper, I explore how these women navigate the fulfillment of their sexual and reproductive rights and how well the penitentiary system provides equitable healthcare for women in comparison to men. Previous research indicates that incarcerated women in Latin America and the United States receive inadequate healthcare services. How does it play out in Puerto Rico? Through a document review of regulations and reports by the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and Physicians Correctional in conjunction with a qualitative multiple-case study consisting of semi-structured interviews with a recently indicted woman in Puerto Rico and two civil rights attorneys, this paper leads to three concluding statements. First, because incarcerated women are only 3 percent of the incarcerated population, they are not the main priority. Second, upon the arrival of Physicians Correctional, health services for the incarcerated population in Puerto Rico decreased in quality and quantity and they do not provide the necessary products or resources for a proper feminine care. Third, proper healthcare for incarcerated women depends on the guards' willingness to provide or facilitate it.

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Introduction

Women in prison are one of the most marginalized and precarious sectors in contemporary society. Recognizing the overrepresentation of black women, latinx women, poor women, mothers, and indigenous women in penitentiary systems, scholars argue that women endure a double participation in criminal activity: as victims and as criminals (Almeda, 2017). Men assume a role of leadership and control in criminal activity, often as key participants of the promotion and development of such activity, and consequently pull women into these endeavors (Almeda, 2017; Lagarde 1990). Gender dynamics also play key roles in incarcerated women's sentences and punishments. These results include incarcerated women's sentences being longer for the same crimes as men, the patriarchal conception of fragile and docile women making reinsertion more difficult, and incarcerated mothers often having their kids taken away after being deemed "unmotherly" by the legal system (Almeda, 2017).

In this paper, I study the effects of pathriarcal structures on the sexual and reproductive health in incarcerated women in Puerto Rico. The analysis of incarcerated women's fulfillment of their sexual and reproductive health offers new insight into gendered health and gender division within the penitentiary system. In Puerto Rico, there has been research on incarcerated population's services including health, but there is gap in knowledge regarding specialized healthcare for women such as gynecological services.

Incarcerated Women's Health

Gender dynamics also influence incarcerated women's access to healthcare. As stated by the document *Principios y Buenas Prácticas sobre la Protección de las Personas Privadas de Libertad en las Américas* by the Interamerican Commission of Human Rights, people deprived from their liberty have a fundamental right "to have their dignity, their life and their physical, psychological and moral integrity respected and guaranteed" (Escobar, 2018, p. 4). Consequently, girls and women have a right to specialized medical attention that responds to their physical and biological characteristics and to their medical reproductive health (Escobar, 2018).

The current fiscal crisis in Puerto Rico directly affects prisons in the island because of their public nature. Colón (2018) argues that these budget cuts ultimately shut down the Escuela Industrial de Mujeres en Vega Alta¹ resulting in a massive transfer of incarcerated women to the correctional facility in Bayamón. This change was thought of with an economic and administrative perspective, without taking into consideration the implication for incarcerated women, demonstrating the penitentiary system's structure as a profit-based and not service-based entity (Colón, 2018).

Context

Puerto Rico currently faces one of the most severe economic crisis in its history due to its trillion dollar debt with the United States. In 2016, the U.S. Congress approved the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management and Economic Stability Act, better known as PROMESA.² With this law, the U.S. Congress has implemented a Fiscal Control Board to observe and determine every fiscal aspect of Puerto Rico, prioritizing the payment of the public debt over spending on public services. The plan includes a series of austerity measures affecting services such as public education, retirement funds, public health, and the penitentiary system. This has resulted in lack of proper healthcare in Puerto Rico, particularly for economically disadvantaged and marginalized sectors.

Following court case *Morales Feliciano*,³ the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation of Puerto Rico (DCR) established the following categories of services for the incarcerated population: Admissions, Interinstitutional Ambulatory, Extramural Ambulatory, Emergency (ER), Interinstitutional Hospitalization, Extended Care, Health Education, Pharmacy, Infectious Diseases Care, Diet and Nutrition, and Radiology and Labs. In 2017 the DCR partnered with a private corporation named Physicians Correction to provide healthcare services to incarcerated populations. Primarily under the category of Interinstitutional Ambulatory care, incarcerated women's healthcare includes access to gynecological and obstetric services to assure reproductive health.

Methodology

This project focuses on imprisoned women's sexual and reproductive health. I use the definition offered by the Lancet Commission, which has defined and segmented sexual and reproductive rights into four elements, with each category containing its own characteristics and definitions: sexual health, sexual rights, reproductive health, and reproductive rights (Starrs, et al, 2018). In particular, reproductive health implies that everyone is entitled to receive accurate information of reproductive care, management of menstruation hygienically with dignity and privacy, safe and effective methods of contraception, appropriate healthcare services for pregnancy and childbirth, prevention and treatment of infertility, and services towards managing partner violence. Sexual health implies counseling and care related to sexuality, sexual relationships and sexual identities, and proper care and prevention for HIV and sexually transmitted diseases. Both sexual and reproductive rights are integral forms of human rights (Starrs, et al, 2018).⁴

The purpose of this paper was to understand how incarcerated women in Puerto Rico navigate the fulfillment of their sexual and reproductive rights and how well the penitentiary system in Puerto Rico provides equitable healthcare for women in comparison to men. For this study I used a mixed-methods approach which consisted of, 1) a document review of several regulations and reports on health services within the penitentiary system, and 2) a qualitative multiple-case study consisting in semi-structured interviews with a recently indicted woman in Puerto Rico and two civil rights attorneys who have worked with incarcerated population's rights and services.

The document review began with class action suit *Morales Feliciano v. Romero Barceló* (1980) and the court's subsequent decision. I also analyzed information related to the current healthcare provided for incarcerated women in Puerto Rico dating from 2017 to the present as provided by Physicians Correctional or the DCR. I particularly focused on Interinstitutional Ambulatory and Infectious Diseases care. I also analyzed the health regulations and guidelines for proper healthcare in the penitentiary system in the Americas as stated by the United Nations, the reports from Physicians Correctional from January 2020 to December 2020, and the government's documents on the incarcerated population's profile and the incarcerated women's profile. These resources allowed me to collect data on health policies and practices in the correctional system in Puerto Rico and to gather statistics on health-related factors.

The data collected through the document review was then contrasted and compared to the three interviews. The first interview was with a woman who was incarcerated for eight years at the Women's Correctional Facility in Bayamón, Puerto Rico and who was released at the beginning of 2021. Her participation was voluntary and was chosen through a criterion of inclusion and exclusion based on time spent at the correctional facility. The other two participants were civil rights lawyers and former collaborators with the University of Puerto Rico who have worked with incarcerated women for over five years. I conducted semi-structured interviews with these three participants. These interviews were recorded for transcription through the virtual platform of Google Meets due to the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Findings

The document review was conducted through a comparison of the health services provided and solicited by/for the Women's Correctional Facility in Bayamón and the male Correctional Facility in Bayamón. This analysis led to two main findings. First, the Women's Correctional Facility has

a proportionally higher percent rate of health services solicited compared to the male facility. Women represent rates of 7 percent, 8 percent, even 15 percent of the health services solicited and represent 3 percent of the health services provided.⁵ This means that more than half of the women's health needs are not satisfied. Second, the data suggests that only 3–4 percent of the activities related to health education are reaching or are directed towards women. In the following section, I elaborate further two areas: health services and personal/feminine hygiene.

Health Services

Incarcerated women in Puerto Rico are supposed to receive an annual Pap smear, regularly scheduled mammographs, contraceptives if needed, and medication prescribed for their particular conditions. In contrast, two of the interviewees, including the recently released incarcerated woman, affirmed that there are many complaints and many experiences of women who did not receive adequate medication. They narrate how the medication was not enough for every woman in the facility as well as how the dosages and types of medication available were inconsistent.

Two out of the three interviewees⁶ stated that there was a strong recognition of lesbian couples by the DCR and Physicians Correctional and because of that recognition they provide accessible STD testing if solicited, as well as an STD test when entering the institution and in scheduled general testing. Even though the DCR and Physicians Correctional have established the ability to provide basic gynecological and sexual health through Pap smears, mammograms, sonograms, and STD testing, civil rights attorneys argue that incarcerated women are not the priority within the prison system when providing healthcare, particularly with issues related to personal hygiene.

Personal/Feminine Hygiene

When speaking of personal/feminine hygiene, I refer to, but am not restricted to, sanitary napkins, quantity and consistency in receiving products for personal hygiene such as bars of soap or toilet paper, and the accessibility of showers and bathrooms. There is a consensus between the three interviewees that the DCR does not provide the necessary quantity of products for proper personal/feminine hygiene. According to the Bangkok Rules⁷ and court case *Morales Feliciano*, incarcerated women in Puerto Rico should receive three (3) packages of 10 sanitary napkins, six (6) rolls of toilet paper, three every two weeks, and one bar of soap each month. However, both lawyers, in their respective Commission and Clinic on civil rights, received many and constant complaints on how the DCR manages products and resources of personal hygiene.

Many times, requesting more products or more time in a shower or in a bathroom can be a long, tedious process that results in not being able to acquire the necessary accommodations for proper personal care. The bureaucratic process behind acquiring these accommodations include having to obtain a medical permit when often there are no medical professionals or guards available to transport these women to medical facilities or medical personnel. “*Requesting more is a tedious long process, and sometimes we have to ask for a medical permit to be able to receive more products*,” explained the interviewee. In addition, they consider that the consistency in providing proper healthcare is determined by the guards’ intentions to work towards that goal. “It depends on their mood,” explained the interviewee. Both civil rights attorneys have received an impressive number of complaints on how the DCR manages incarcerated women’s personal hygiene. Both attorneys assert that differences between women and men are not taken into consideration within the DCR when regarding personal care and hygiene.

Both civil rights attorneys and the ex-incarcerated woman assured that when Physicians Correctional took over the healthcare provisions in the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation in Puerto Rico the quality and quantity of care decreased. The civil rights lawyers believe a big part of the problem is that the *Morales Feliciano* mandates the DCR only to provide “the minimum.”

Conclusions

This research has led to three main conclusions: 1) incarcerated women are only three percent of the incarcerated Puerto Rican population and because of that they are not prioritized, 2) the DCR does not provide the necessary resources to assure proper healthcare for incarcerated women and it has gotten worse with the leadership of Physicians Correctional and, 3) proper healthcare for incarcerated women depends on the guards’ willingness to provide or facilitate it.

Because incarcerated women are only three percent of the incarcerated population, they are not the main priority. Male and female are provided the same amount of soap and toilet paper, with the same regularity, as well as the same amount of shower time a day, without taking into consideration necessities attached to the female body. In 2016 the Women’s Prison in Vega Alta closed down, moving every incarcerated woman in Puerto Rico to the Correctional Facility in Bayamón, where they are the last priority. When women are included in the penitentiary system, they are accounted for as numbers adding to the incarcerated population, not as diverse bodies within the prison system. Most of the services and products available to incarcerated women are leftovers

from the male's correctional institutions. Women represent only three percent of the health services provided while accounting for seven, eight, and even fifteen percent of the services solicited.

With the arrival of Physicians Correctional, health services for the incarcerated population in Puerto Rico decreased in quality and quantity and they do not provide the necessary products or resources for a proper feminine care. Since the arrival of Physicians Correctional there are fewer services available and the ones offered are of a worse quality. There is a lack of medication available and many women receive wrong medications. Every aspect that needs the participation of Physicians Correctional in the institutions is delayed because of the bureaucratic process behind having an external corporation running internal matters of correctional health.

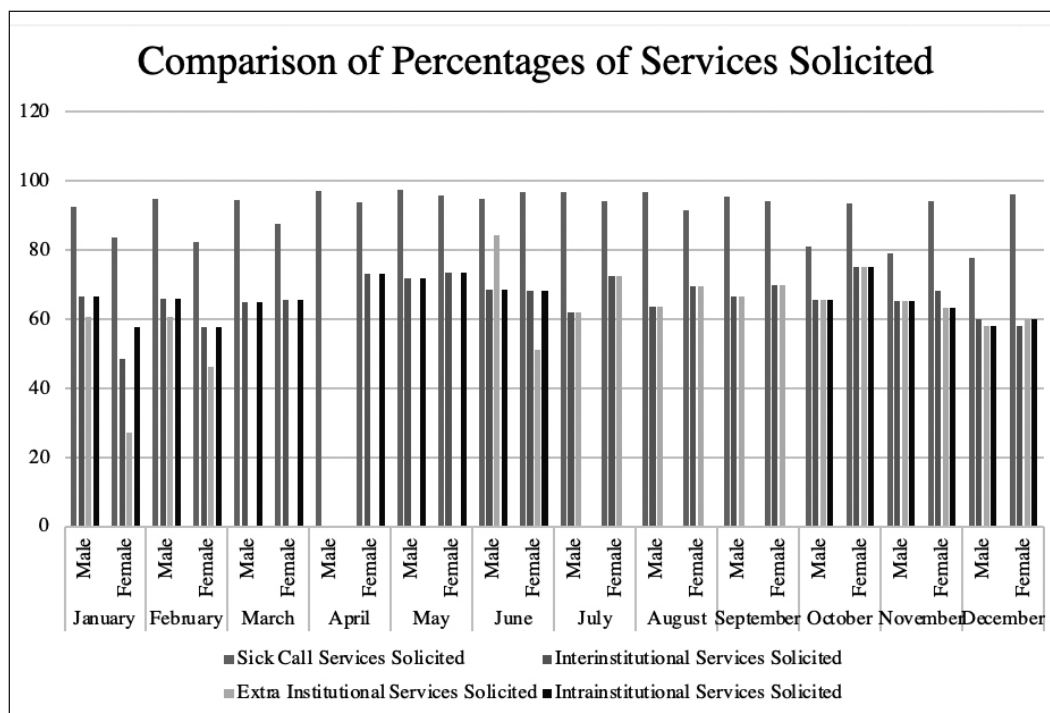
Incarcerated women receive the same amount of personal hygiene products as incarcerated men. Hiding behind "equality" treatment to the whole incarcerated population, the institution does not take into consideration the differences in necessities and realities between men and women. The resources provided are not enough for most women's menstrual periods' length or consistency, nor the rolls of toilet paper provided are enough in comparison to a male population that does not generally menstruate. Physicians Correctional and the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation have a responsibility to provide the necessary elements to assure the fulfillment of the sexual and reproductive rights of the population of incarcerated women and as of December 2020, they do not.

Proper healthcare for incarcerated women depends on the guards' willingness to provide or facilitate it. The three interviewees confirmed that acquiring health services or additional resources depended on the guards' and administrators' willingness to provide it. For a woman to solicit medical attention, even emergency medical attention, to acquire more resources such as toilet paper or sanitary napkins, to be taken to an appointment or to make a claim, they must go through a guard, to the administration, and to the superintendent. Guards often refuse to take these women seriously or handle the process with the attention required. The experiences of incarcerated women are diverse with some guards and some administrators being more open to helping the incarcerated female population, and others not. This conduct might have three explanations: (1) there is no human touch allowed in these institutions and thus these women are often treated as animals, (2) the guards' treatment of and punishments towards the women is arbitrary, and (3) administrators can either help or block these processes, depending on the superintendent.

Women in Puerto Rican prisons are not receiving proper healthcare because the system does not recognize their needs, resulting in inequitable health conditions and gender discrimination. Incarcerated women are human and as such they deserve a dignified life and basic human rights.

Sexual Health	Reproductive Health
<p>“A state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity. Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. For sexual health to be attained and maintained, the sexual rights of all persons must be respected, protected and fulfilled.”</p> <p>Implies: counseling and care related to sexuality, sexual relationships and sexual identities, proper care and prevention for HIV and sexually transmitted diseases.</p>	<p>“Reproductive health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in all matters relating to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes.”</p> <p>Implies that everyone is able to: receive accurate information of reproductive care, management of menstruation hygienically with dignity and privacy, safe and effective methods of contraception, appropriate healthcare services for pregnancy and childbirth, access so services of management, prevention and treatment of infertility and services towards managing partner violence.</p>
Sexual Rights	Reproductive Rights
<p>“Sexual rights are human rights and include the right of all persons, free of discrimination, coercion, and violence, to:</p> <p>achieve the highest attainable standard of sexual health; seek, receive, and impart information related to sexuality; receive comprehensive, evidence-based, sexual education; have their bodily integrity respected; choose their sexual partner; decide whether to be sexually active or not; engage in consensual sexual relations; choose whether, when, and whom to marry; enter into marriage with free and full consent and with equality between spouses in and at the dissolution of marriage; and pursue a satisfying, safe, and pleasurable sexual life, free from stigma and discrimination.”</p>	<p>“Reproductive rights rest on the recognition of the human rights of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing, and timing of their children, to have the information and means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of reproductive health.</p> <p>They also include:</p> <p>the right to make decisions concerning reproduction free of discrimination, coercion, and violence; the right to privacy, confidentiality, respect, and informed consent; and the right to mutually respectful and equitable gender relations.”</p>

Appendix 1. This table is acquired from *Accelerate progress—sexual and reproductive health and rights for all: report of the Guttmacher–Lancet Commission*.



Appendix 2. Comparison of Men and Women’s Percentages of Services Solicited within the Penitentiary System.

The following table represent a comparison analysis between the three interviews conducted during the investigation. The information in **bold** is information that was repeated in the three interviews; the information in *italics* is information repeated in two out of the three respondents.

Aspect discussed	Esther García Torres (pseudonym)	Nora Vargas Acosta	Hilda Sciera Márquez
Health Services	<p>Describes health care services receives as “stable”</p> <p>Received annual Pap smear, received her medication, such as contraceptives, and mammographs, when solicited</p> <p>Says her experience was not the norm</p> <p><i>Knows experiences of other women who did not receive they adequate medication and changing it took a long time</i></p> <p><i>Recognition of lesbian couples and because of it there is consistent and accessible STD testing</i></p> <p>Rate of 5 out of 10</p>	<p>“The prison system discriminates against women, I have no doubt about that,” is one of her main concerns</p> <p>Incarcerated women are last in line when receiving healthcare services or resources</p> <p>The women she met assured they received annual Pap smear, received her medication, such as contraceptives, and mammographs, when solicited</p> <p><i>Recognition of lesbian couples and because of it there is consistent and accessible STD testing</i></p> <p>No emergency room or urgent care in the institution so they have to be transferred to the men’s institution</p> <p><i>Assures that “women are last priority in providing solicited specialized healthcare”</i></p>	<p><i>“Never are incarcerated women established as a priority”, she assures</i></p> <p><i>Some the main complaints she has identified is that there there’s not enough medication available or provided</i></p> <p>Appointments always take a long time</p> <p>The gynecological health services provide regularly scheduled sonograms and Pap smears</p> <p>Believe there is a big problem with healthcare services within the prison system</p> <p>Women receive the same services and products as men</p> <p>Believes the services are provided but the DCR never informs the of the importance of getting sonograms and mammographs</p>
Personal/Feminine Hygiene	<p>Believes the personal/feminine products provided by the DCR are not enough</p> <p><i>Requesting more is a tedious long process, and sometimes they have to ask for a medical permit to be able to receive more products</i></p> <p><i>Differences between women and men are not taken into consideration</i></p>	<p>Believes the personal/feminine products provided by the DCR are not enough</p> <p>Products provided to women are what is left over of the men’s institutions</p> <p><i>The articles available at the commissary “don’t respond to the necessities they have,” as well as being limited</i></p>	<p><i>Always receive a lot of complaints on how Corrections manage their personal hygiene</i></p> <p><i>“They can take one shower a day, but there is no consideration is a woman wants or needs to take one than one shower a day some days of the month,” she argues.</i></p> <p>Products provided by the DCR are of very poor quality, they are not enough for most women’s period length or intensity</p> <p><i>Requesting more is a tedious long process, and sometimes they have to ask for a medical permit to be able to receive a few more products</i></p>
Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation/Guards	<p>Believes when Physicians Correctional began the healthcare got worse</p> <p><i>Believes that the DCR provides the minimum healthcare and services, as dictated by the Court</i></p> <p><i>The regulations are based on the idea of a male incarcerated population</i></p> <p>Believes that many times, it depended on the guards and their mood if they received additional of anything. Believes there is no human touch and are treated as animals</p>	<p><i>Believes the problem is that the DCR provides the minimum healthcare and services, as dictated by the Court</i></p> <p>Is certain the DCR is responsible for the lack of health services provided, and that they have gotten worse</p> <p>Believes the guards treatment and punishments towards the women is arbitrary</p> <p><i>Believes the problem is that the people identifying these women’s problems are men, which results in superficial services and changes</i></p> <p><i>Believes “there has to be a sense of urgency, and there isn’t.”</i></p>	<p>Believes the quality of health services has decreased considerably after the change in administration to Physicians Correctional</p> <p>DCR limits the women’s access to information</p> <p>The administrators can either help or block their processes, depending on who which superintendent it is</p> <p>Women are not taken into consideration, mainly because they are only 3% of the incarcerated population</p> <p>Stereotype that the women are harder to deal with and more intense, which results in receiving less services</p>

Appendix 3. Distribution of findings in the three interviews.

Endnotes

- ¹ Female correctional facility in Vega Alta, Puerto Rico that shut down in 2016, leaving the Bayamón's Women's Correctional Facility as the only entity accommodating the female incarcerated population in Puerto Rico.
- ² The relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States can best be described as a colony, under the premise of a Commonwealth. This means that all federal laws and regulations apply to Puerto Rico and supersede Puerto Rican laws, regulations and the Constitution.
- ³ In 1980 a group of incarcerated people in Puerto Rico presented a class action suit demanding better conditions within the Penitentiary System. Court case *Morales Feliciano v. Romero Barceló*, 672 F.Supp. 59, established the obligation to "to provide a safe and healthy atmosphere" for incarcerated populations.
- ⁴ Please see the table in Appendix 1. This table is acquired from *Accelerate progress—sexual and reproductive health and rights for all: report of the Guttmacher–Lancet Commission*.
- ⁵ Appendix 2: Graph titled "Comparison of Men and Women's Percentages of Services Solicited within the Penitentiary System."
- ⁶ See Appendix 3 for the distribution of the findings of the three interviews.
- ⁷ The United Nations Rules for the treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial measures for Women Offenders, also known as the Bangkok Rules, were adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 2010 and fill a long-standing lack of standards providing for the specific characteristics and needs of women offenders and prisoners.

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Reimagining Resistance for Collective Liberation: Lessons to Be Learned from the Zapatistas and Indigenous Feminists in Latin America

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Abstract

Oftentimes western feminism has not been inclusive to the varying identities that it aims to aid and defend. Despite this downfall there is still hope that feminists can learn from Indigenous feminist organizing in Latin America such as the Association of Indigenous Councils of Northern Cauca (ACIN) and the Zapatistas. Not enough recognition is given to communities that have already implemented liberating practices. Indigenous and transnational feminists have been successful in their efforts towards organizing for the liberation of their communities in that they are committed to tackling various systems of oppression as well as advocating that Indigenous voices be put at the center in fighting for self-determination. Although western feminism likes to believe that they need to create new strategies in their ways of organizing, the reality is that the answers for collective liberation are already right in front of us and are being practiced in recovering nations.

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Introduction

Feminism writ large has had some victories but it continues to also have some downfalls in regards to its praxis. Oftentimes western feminism has not been inclusive to the various identities that feminists aim to aid and defend (Thompson 2017, 55). A main issue is that western feminism has not acknowledged and validated the practices from Indigenous feminists and communities. This prevents admirable practices from being learned and for feminism to unite as a collective to defend all marginalized identities. Despite this downfall there is still hope that western feminists can learn how to acknowledge multiple systems of oppression and to center lived experience in their organizing from Indigenous feminist organizing in Latin America such as the Association of Indigenous Councils of Northern Cauca (ACIN) and the Zapatistas. Western feminism¹ has a habit of believing they are the pioneers of the movement. This is because western feminists often assume that they are the primary reference point for theory and practice and that they must lend a hand to women in marginalized communities (Mohanty 2017, 403). What they do not realize, however, is that Indigenous women have a successful record of organizing and having desirable results on their own accord. Indigenous and transnational feminists have been successful in their efforts towards organizing for the liberation of their communities in that they are committed to tackling various systems of oppression as well as advocating that Indigenous voices be put at the center in fighting for self-determination (Patil 2017, 209). Although western feminism likes to believe that they need to create new strategies in their ways of organizing, the reality is that the answers for collective liberation are already right in front of us and are being practiced in recovering nations.

Pre-Existing and Meaningful Practices in Indigenous Organizing

The Zapatistas, also known as the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), are a socialist political group that fights against many intersecting oppressive systems such as globalization, imperialism, colonialism, and capitalism. They also manage to do all this while centering Indigenous voices. The Zapatistas captured the world's attention in 1994 with their uprising in Chiapas, Mexico. This uprising came as a response to the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) but is also considered to have been a result of growing tensions over the years in Mexico. The communities that make up the Zapatistas were upset with the neoliberalism that was taking place in Mexico and how it has disregarded their historical memory despite the nation being built upon the backs of Indigenous people (Zugman 2005, 135). Over the years, Zapatismo has continued to be admired by many organizers around the

world. Zapatismo is admirable in the way that it focuses on the Indigenous voice and moves away from diplomatic declarations and instead focuses on praxis, which is committed to collective liberation for all from these dominating forces while not relying on the state (Natividad 2014, 233). In this way Zapatismo reimagines a new way for us all to live as a collective.

In his writing from 2014, Nicholas Natividad highlights these admirable traits of Indigenous communities organizing in Latin America by discussing the actions of The Association of Indigenous Councils of Northern Cauca (ACIN). This group of Indigenous communities and *campesinos* in Colombia organize in an effort to form autonomous communities. One of the actions that Natividad emphasizes is the letter that they sent to President Barack Obama addressing the harm done to Indigenous communities by multi-corporations and “laws of dispossession” (ACIN, 2008, n.p.). Natividad argues that this letter emphasizes the power and legitimacy of ACIN. He goes on to say, “What they are writing is not merely a diplomatic decree or declaration—they are praxis, and as a united front the ACIN moves forward without national or international governmental approval” (Natividad 2014, 233). This differs itself from traditional methods of organizing in American or western feminism. Oftentimes western feminism limits itself in the way that it refuses to seek change outside of traditional political representation (Natividad 2014, 234). One lesson that should be taken from these Indigenous leaders is that they see themselves as an autonomous community capable of change without the aid of the state.

Centering Lived Experience

Third World feminism and Indigenous resistance are two practices that work hand in hand. Western feminism should learn from these tools that are centered around their own lived experience. In his analysis Natividad explains this by citing the words of Indigenous scholar Kathy Irwin, sharing that “we don’t need anyone else developing the tools which will help us come to terms with who we are. We can and will do this work. Real power lies with those who design the tools—it always has. This power is ours” (Natividad 2014, 235). Other feminist scholars have also noted that there is a disconnect between those leading feminist endeavors and other community members who are experiencing oppression. Their lived experience is excluded from the mainstream movement. Viviane Namaste highlights this disconnect in the issue of how feminist theorize about gender and the trans experience without centering the experience of trans people themselves (Namaste 2017, 608). More specifically, the violence that trans people experience. She also discusses the utility of Indigenous methods. Her points echoes the intrusion of western feminism in invading

spaces of Indigenous organizing. Namaste responds challenging the poor practices of western feminist by citing a trans activist herself in her analysis and providing guiding principles for critical feminist social theory by discussing the importance of community partnership/ownership and the community-centered Indigenous methodologies.

A Case Study in Organizing Methods: Chiapas vs. Oaxaca

We can see in vivo the importance of centering community and working in partnership in a comparison between Indigenous women organizing in the regions Chiapas and Oaxaca. In 2017, Anahi Morales Hudon interviewed Indigenous women organizers in the regions of Chiapas and Oaxaca which are predominantly Indigenous regions. Utilizing these interviews and the experiences of these women, Hudon seeks to portray the importance of redefining power relationships and alliances in organizing to center the voices of those affected (Hudon 2017, 463). The organizing scene in Chiapas can be described as a struggle of power between *mestiza* (non-Indigenous Mexican women) feminists and Indigenous women. In this case Indigenous women are the underdogs and limited in the representation of their interests in the feminist movement more generally. This has resulted in minimal progress regarding the development of independent organizing spaces (Hudon 2017, 469). Originally, *mestiza* feminists were very helpful in the organizing efforts of Indigenous women. One example of this is how they advocated “for the integration of women’s rights and promoted the Zapatista Women’s Revolutionary Law” (Hudon 2017, 469). However, the *mestiza* women tended to dominate leadership positions in the feminist movements, which often led to Indigenous women’s position being secondary within the movement. Hudon illustrates a clear example of Indigenous women’s secondary role while discussing what occurred at the Women’s State Convention in 1994. She points out that despite being a key moment of the Zapatistas mobilizations, Indigenous women were not visible (Hudon 2017, 470). The lack of leadership positions allowed to Indigenous women is concerning and should be improved upon in the Chiapas organizing space because it limits “the consolidation of a regional Indigenous women’s movement” and “prevents them from collective participation in decisional spaces at the state level” (Hudon 2017, 471).

In comparison, other Indigenous women organizing efforts have been more successful, such as those in Oaxaca. The women of Oaxaca have created “an autonomous state-level organization that coordinates Indigenous women from different regions” and Indigenous women have “positioned themselves as actors with specific agendas, goals and a representational structure that is recognized by both local Indigenous women’s groups, different social organizations

and the state of Oaxaca” (Hudon 2017, 471). In other words, Indigenous women were granted leadership positions in their movements towards self-determination and this made a huge difference as they were able to mobilize with other Indigenous communities. As a result, they were able to form the Indigenous Women’s Assembly of Oaxaca (AMIO) by speaking on their own behalf and elaborating on their own terminology and theory for their communities (Hudon 2017, 472–473).

The Importance of Utilizing Multiracial Feminism

The various struggles for organizing autonomy of Indigenous women relates to points that feminist scholars have called for in the past where they insist that those marginalized be the leaders of the revolution. In 2002, feminist scholar Becky Thompson discussed the utility of multiracial feminism and we can see a real-life application of this in the Indigenous organizing space of Oaxaca and Chiapas. Multiracial feminism can be understood as a liberation movement led by women of color in the U.S. which takes into account an international perspective, paying particular attention to interlocking oppressions and coalition politics (Thompson 2017, 51). In her argument Thompson pays particular attention to the three-pronged approach to include women of color. She discusses the misconception that women of color became involved in feminist organizing as a reaction to white feminism. Rather women of color have always been present whether this be through organizing with white feminists, in mixed-gender organizing spaces or by creating their own autonomous feminist organizations (Thompson 2017, 52).

Thompson’s words ring true in that we can see this reality reflected with Zapatista women. Many women were originally involved with the Zapatistas who were not all female; others organized with *mestiza* women but ultimately the end goal was to have an autonomous organization for and by Indigenous women. We must “listen to women of color’s anger. It is informed by centuries of struggle, erasure and experience” (Thompson 2017, 58). The most successful organizations were those that had this autonomy such as in Oaxaca, compared to those where Indigenous voices were not centered like in Chiapas.

Overall, across Latin America we are able to see that collaboration is a key facet in organizing spaces. The challenge is the power dynamics between various groups in which oftentimes the Indigenous members are the ones who have the least amount of power. This serves as an obstacle for Indigenous women and is what often hinders them from having the capacity to transform power relations (Hudon 2017, 474). As we move forward we must be aware of the ability of the marginalized to have self-determination and

advocate for themselves without the need of a white or *mestiza* voice (despite whatever the good intentions may be). Similarly, we must remain conscientious to the impact of power relations even under shared frameworks such as women’s rights.

Transnational Feminism

Another key tenet of Indigenous feminist organizing such as the Zapatistas is their ability to tackle the issues that are oppressing their communities not as a singular individual problem but as macro issues. Zapatistas are “attentive to the micropolitics of context, subjectivity, and struggle, as well as to the macro politics of global economic and political systems and processes” (Mohanty 2017, 402). This, once again, ties to other key ideas of Indigenous feminist organizing such as the observation of the interlocking nature of oppressions and need for coalition politics. We see this type of approach in the declaration that the Zapatistas released in 1993. In their first declaration from the Lacandon Jungle, the Zapatistas share:

We have been denied the most elemental preparation so they can use us as cannon fodder and pillage the wealth of our country. They don’t care that we have nothing, absolutely nothing, not even a roof over our heads, no land, no work, no health care, no food nor education . . . nor is there independence from foreigners, nor is there peace nor justice for ourselves and our children. (General Commands of the EZLN 1993)

They connect not only their struggles to the decisions made by the Mexican government that has led so many to starve and for the land to be depleted, but also to the impact of U.S. and French imperialism in their horrid condition, connecting micro politics to macro systems. This is an important practice to employ because “it suggests the thorough embeddedness of the local and particular with the global and universal, and it suggests the need to conceptualize questions of justice and equity in transborder terms. In other words, this mode of reading envisions a feminism without borders” (Mohanty 2017, 408). Mohanty also points out that it is the social positions/location of Indigenous women in general that allows them to have such an inclusive focus on justice. Additionally, Indigenous women have always had a focus on anticolonial organizing. Overall, anti-globalization and feminist agendas are intertwined and together they can be used to employ transnational feminism—a feminism that builds solidarity across divisions.

It is important to note that Indigenous people have been practicing the transnational feminist approach prior to western feminism’s discussion and consideration of their practices. Some Indigenous groups have been able to

overcome some of the challenges that have been recognized by transnational feminists. Patil believes that transnational feminists need to think more critically and practice analysis that goes beyond the need of the state. We need to “encourage an examination of how categories of race, ethnicity, sexuality, culture, nation and gender not only intersect but are mutually constituted, formed and transformed within transnational power laden processes such as European imperialism and colonialism, neoliberal globalization and so on” (Patil 2017, 205). Natividad also makes a similar observation in his discussion of how Indigenous identity is prescribed by states such as Mexico to control Indigenous communities. This is understood as the “tools of the state” (Natividad 2014, 235) and one way to do this is by insisting Indigenous resistance did not exist before the formation of western nation states. The reality is that Indigenous communities are forming their own tools to reimagine and develop their own consciousness against the dominant institutions of power. In fact, many Indigenous communities see their existence as independent of the state completely, because the state is an “imagined community” (Natividad 2014, 244). The state’s existence is to falsely dictate legitimate and illegitimate communities so that revolution and change can be hindered and controlled.

Conclusion

All things considered, western feminists are not wrong in recognizing that new practices and modes of thought are necessary to lead towards a better state of liberation, but they fail to recognize that the methods of care needed to bring about this liberation are already in praxis in Indigenous organizations in Latin America. The Zapatistas and the ACIN are a perfect case study for feminists as a global community to turn to as we begin to work on new futures utilizing decolonial imagination. Future feminist initiatives need to commit themselves like these organizations to take on the tasks of centering the Indigenous voice at all times, even if that means changing leadership positions. Although it is important for allies to take on the task of defeating various systems of oppression, they should never co-opt the movement or overshadow Indigenous knowledge and experience. It is also crucial for feminist organizing to take on an anti-globalist approach in their fight towards liberation. The acknowledgement and understanding that multiple systems of dominations affect oppression at the macro and micro levels allows for transborder organizing to liberate various communities and to form coalitions. Indigenous communities have made it clear that it is necessary to not limit themselves to identifying their struggles and organizing at the nation-state level. When we limit our organizing and understanding of our identities as communities to the nation-state level, we are succumbing ourselves to the state’s control. A decolonized reality will only be possible once we

move past this limitation and accept that all our struggles are interconnected regardless of the borders outlined for us. This will also allow us to imagine and practice new forms of resistance. Overall, as we move forward it is necessary to recognize the work already done by Indigenous communities and to institute these practices in our own organizing while always centering the most marginalized.

Endnote

- ¹ Eurocentric-based (or “western”) feminism views itself as universal and often acts in its own interests. It often refers to itself as western to “other” differing feminist groups and label them as nonwestern, suggesting they are less developed (Chandra Mohanty, “‘Under Western Eyes’ Revisited: Feminist Solidarity Through Anticapitalist Struggles.” *Feminist Theory Reader*, edited by Carole McCann and Kim Seung-Kyung, Routledge, 2017, pp. 501).

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Asociality as Care: Queering the Asocial Asian in American Theatre

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Evan Sakuma is proud to be a queer Chinese-Japanese Asian/American hailing from the Asian ethnic enclave of Monterey Park, CA. The inherent deviancy of queerness has always led Evan to question their supposed positioning as a model minority. Furthered by their love of theatre, Evan began conducting research at Pasadena City College, and later the University of California, Los Angeles, to explore the performativity of queer bodies of color within contemporary Asian/American plays. Now a rising senior at UCLA, Evan is unimaginably grateful to their family, friends, and mentors for always being the barbers of love and wisdom. They are excited to apply for graduate programs and continue pursuing questions at the intersection of gender, sexuality, and ethnicity.

Abstract

This article is a section of Evan's ongoing undergraduate thesis on queer Asian-American performativity within theatre. By provocatively engaging with the discourse of queer-of-color critique and using performance to call into question the limits of theory in a sexist, racist, racialized world, this paper seeks to reframe the ways harmful Asian-American stereotypes are read (i.e., timidity, self-solitude, isolation, silence) so that a performance of "nothingness" may be reimagined as an act of resistance.

Acknowledgement

In loving memory of Auntie May: a class act in service and care.

"In the beginning of our relationship, we learned each other's language / Mouthing unintelligible gaggles and sounds / Unable to articulate / Clumsily tripping on words / Falling into abject frustration / But once we found the common language / Each action and deed, every word and sentence was . . . A radiant discovery." (216 Chay Yew, *A Language of Their Own*)

Introduction

Asociality is a state of refusing social interaction; it hints at an individual's desire to stay meek, silent, agreeable. As the epitomized model minority, Asian-American bodies are made out to be the ideal practitioners of asociality within the discourse perpetuated in United States media (Petersen, 1966). Supposedly, it is this silence and agreeableness that enables Asians to overcome racial discrimination and achieve financial mobility. This essay challenges this notion by offering a new mode of legibility for Asian Americans that I am coining "asociality as care." Although the very concept of asociality seemingly resists care by constricting expression

and feeling, when focusing on queer Asian-American bodies in theatre, I find that their commitment to queer expression while also existing within the asocial reframes their acts of reservation as acts of self-care and resistance.

While many scholars in performance studies and queer theory have developed frameworks that offer agency to marginalized subjects, in this essay, I employ asociality as care as an original analytic lens to offer a different interpretation of queer Asian Americans through theatrical texts. By analyzing gendered and racialized performances as refusals rather than acts of passivity, I expand the limits to the ways Asian-Americanness is analyzed in American theatre. In this way, my research makes headway into an untapped way of reimagining Asian asociality as an active choice rather than a state of abjection.

My research looks specifically at Nathan Ramos's *As We Babble On* (2018)—a modern Asian-American play which relies on the performance of literature to liberate racialized bodies from homogenized cultural and sexual identities. Ramos's work follows a 29-year-old Korean-American man named Benji in present-day New York. His inability to ground his queer identity within his cultural identity leads to heightened performance anxiety in the play which prevents him from pursuing his career as a cartoonist and accepting love from his non-Asian lover, Joel. As the play progresses, Benji actively seeks to invalidate his own sexual identity as an East Asian queer through self-deprecation and assumed fetishization. Through the deployment of asociality, however, Benji is able to begin taking the steps towards crafting a health relationship with Joel and launching his successful cartoonist career.

By centering my work on the performances by queer bodies of color, I complicate the complacency of the model minority. Through theatre, acts of solitude become performances in themselves which can help explain conceptual and pragmatic questions arising at the intersection of culture and performance. Ultimately, I argue that the actor, as a laboring body, creates a new legible landscape through their performance that is as much diplomatic as it is selfish.

Asociality on the Stage

To analyze queer Asian asociality on the stage, I depart from the use of Euro-American queer theory and instead use queer-of-color critique. Unlike Euro-American queer theory, this framework stems from women-of-color feminists like Audre Lorde and combats the inherent limitations in nationalist and identity-based forms of political collectivity. The normalization and proliferation of White queer culture causes violence within colonized bodies that do not abide by their racial or sexual norms. Thus, queer

people of color turn to performativity, namely theatre, as a tool for enacting political and intrapersonal change (Muñoz, 1999).

The queer-of-color critique framework reveals and validates intersectional issues facing the Asian queer. It provides reason behind the dissonance that occurs when needing to perform queerness alongside Asian asociality. The following excerpt from Ramos' *As We Babble On* spoken by the queer Korean cartoonist Benji during an interlude, or aside, from the main narrative. On the stage, the actor presents as an isolated and unfeeling queer Asian who has turned from his sleeping lover, Joel, towards the audience; yet the spoken dialogue reveals a dynamic Benji who comes equipped with a fear, a hope, a longing.

“Does he want me for my clarity of mind,
my words that weave like wind on willows
or my quiet mischief at midnight?
or is it my silken smooth skin, an export of the east
the almond of my eyes, a metaphorical bind of the
feet
a hand over the polite, slight, trite giggles that
escape my half moon mouth
as I rack my brain, whirl my synapse to search for
the logic that links my hand with his
he mutters my name in his sleep” (66)

Benji's poetic soliloquy intimately reveals to the audience his fear of fetishization while simultaneously admitting a hunger to sustain whatever desire Joel has for him. In doing this, however, Benji resorts to tactics of self-destruction as he actively tries to search for other explanations outside of his own performance as a gay Asian to be the reason why Joel is showing him affection. In the stillness of the soliloquy, Benji considers the inherent expectation for Asians, regardless of gender and sexual identification, to align themselves with femininity and submissiveness. In opposition to conventionally attractive western masculine features, Benji reduces himself to his Asian features like his hairless skin and his almond-shaped eyes. He supposes that, unlike a typical gay White male (GWM), queer Asians are unable to be sexually desired unless as an object of fetish (Fung, 1991). In this way, Benji's intersectional identity as both a gay man and an Asian American contributed to his anxiety as a lover to such a degree that he needed to rely on a soliloquy as a means to work through his nerves asocially.

Earlier in the play, Benji also displays concerns over the intimacy he is receiving from Joel. As Benji attempts the “walk of shame” after their first night together, Joel catches Benji and questions why he was trying to sneak out. To Joel's surprise, Benji tells him that he “wanted to leave before I

could see the regret” (41). Because Benji was unwilling to find himself, a gay Asian man, capable of receiving love outside of fetish, he continues to degrade himself for a second and then third time before finally asking if Joel was a rice queen, or a GWM who exclusively dates Asian males (Bao, 2012). In spite of Joel's constant reassurance debunking Benji's endless excuses, it is clear, based on the soliloquy performed later, that this social interaction between Benji and Joel was a fruitless engagement that failed to instill any confidence in Benji. To internalize that changed mindset, Benji needed to utilize asocial devices.

In addition to the chosen diction and the soliloquy, another deployment of asociality as care is present in the stage directions for the scene. As Benji is lamenting his intersectional woes, panels from his attempted comic books are projected on the scrim behind the actor. With the spotlight remaining on Benji, he continues his cathartic release towards the audience refusing to look upstage towards his unsuccessful comic strips. When analyzing the musical *Care Divas*, Allan Punzalan Issac reads into the nuances of staging aesthetics. He insists that the lighting complimenting the final three scenes are telling a story within themselves which reflect the stages of grief the main characters in the musical feel over the death of a lover. Similarly, I hold that the use of the blocking and the scrim projections are intentional choices by the author to reveal a change this Benji is undergoing (Issac, 2016). Through asociality, Benji is permitted to refuse the active process of producing his comic panels. Instead, he is allowed to work through his thoughts about his relationship with Joel without being weighed down by the labor he does for a living. Although this act of asociality provides Benji the space to find clarity within his love life, interestingly the comic strips panels are depicting him and Joel with Benji's image in deep contemplation. Therefore, the panel is projected to underscore how in vanquishing his own insecurities, Benji will be able to imagine past this stage of self-doubt both in his relationship life and his professional one.

Performing Amateur Asian-ness

The performance of asociality by queer Asian Americans extends far beyond the realm of classical theatre. This experimental section attempts to bridge the application of asociality as care within theatre to the deployment of it in the real world. Performance theorist Lucy Burns expands our understanding of performance in her book, *Puro Arte: Filipinos on the Stage of Empire* (2013). She frames the amateur arts as a form of political resistance and holds that the mere act of dancing in Taxi halls was in fact doubling as an unstructured retaliation by Pilipinos against their American colonizers. This performance, then, becomes a refusal of care which transformed dancing into an equalizer

that allowed Pilipinos to cultivate notions of their own self-worth.

Outside the stage, asociality as care is most prominently seen in the labor of queer sex workers. In addition to sex work being seen as a tasteless profession, there is also the label as queer which makes the process of dehumanization all the easier for patrons. Martin Manalansan discusses this phenomenon affecting queer Pilipino men and transgender women who must create weapons of care in order to survive (Manalansan, 2008).

The Pilipino transgender people found at the intersection of cultural and sexual persecution is provided wings when accepted as a queer performer. Rather than play into their supposed othering, one should validate their positionality by viewing sex work as a type of performance. It is here, when these bodies seemingly are stripped down to mere tools for biological desires that asociality as care is able to exercise a resistance that would otherwise be impossible. Through the simple act of refusing to smile after providing their services, these queer performers are able to shift the power dynamic back in their favor as they not only are financially sustained, but also are empowered to maintain part of themselves that would have otherwise been lost in the repeated self-subjugation to lewd labor for unforgiving patrons.

Conclusion

This essay engages the discourse of queer-of-color critique, using queer Asian performance (or lack thereof) to put forth an original analytic lens: asociality as care. Through the analysis of Ramos' play, *As We Babble On*, asociality was shown to be a tactic that was deployed in several ways in theatre from the dialogue to the staging. The play emphasized the queer desires held by gay Asians, like Benji; yet these desires are incompatible with the self-doubt sustained by the unrest at the intersection of one's racial and sexual being. Asociality provided Benji with the space to honor his intersectionality. Upon doing this act of self-care within the play, Benji overcame his fears of fetishization and allowed himself to be the recipient of queer love.

From classic theatre to the amateur stage, I also experimented with expanding my lens to theorize on asocial acts deployed by real-world queer Asian laborers as if they were perpetual performers. Their movements, their silence, their refusals all became modes of legibility for understanding how they might also be practitioners of asociality as care in their daily lives. I have found, highlighted within the reservations of queer Asian sex workers, that it is in the exact moment when these queer bodies become inscrutable to the patron, when there is a disconnect in their performance

resulting in an assumed incomprehensibility, that their performances become most consequential.

I plan to continue to utilize this theory in my approach to other queer Asian-American theatre pieces. Currently, I am working towards using asociality as care to analyze Chay Yew's *A Language of Their Own* (1997). In continuing to use asociality as care, I recognize a similar thread of arguments within the play for racializing one's own body and emasculating oneself through others' queer eyes. I want to understand why these forms of self-sabotage are so universal and how asociality as care may remedy the prolonged performance anxiety of queer Asian laborers.

I want to note that at the time of the writing of this essay, I not yet fully cross-analyzed my theorizing with the recent work of Xine Yao, *Disaffected: The Cultural Politics of Unfeeling in Nineteenth-Century America* (2021). Yao theorizes on the idea of unfeeling as means of survival and refusal for Asian Americans during the nineteenth-century. While I see the similarities between asociality, an act of refusal of feelings and social interaction, and unfeeling, I posit that my work retains its novelty because of my specific deployment of theatre. Furthermore, I find that the more writers continuing to put forth such theoretical concepts help to contribute towards a healthier academic milieu for Asian Americans and scholars everywhere.

My research does not seek to romanticize the toxic queer dynamics that have become part of the queer Asian-American experience such as fetishization and self-emasculatation. Many of these dynamics are problematic and subject the Asian queer body to unnecessary, strenuous labor. Instead, understand that it is through the lens of asociality as care that a queer imagination can be birthed. This allows for the reimagination of siloed bodies as intentional and necessary for the nurturing of the self. Even in the silence of theatre, may there be disruption and transformation.

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The Power in the Gap: Reimagining Blackness Within the Superhero Genre Through the Comics Form

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Alma Sterling is in the Class of 2021 at Bryn Mawr College, majoring in Literatures in English and minoring in Africana Studies. Alma is an artist and scholar of comics and graphic narratives. In the future, Alma hopes to continue their studies in a doctoral program in English.

Abstract

The comics form, a constant collaboration and negotiation between image, text, space, and time, offers many opportunities for expanding narratives about Blackness beyond spaces of marginalization. Though comics' superhero genre is shaped by structures of hegemonic power seeking to exclude Blackness, new expressions within the medium have the potential to break out of this mold. This paper focuses on critiquing constructions and manifestations of "(super)power,"—acknowledging how Black superheroes are not invulnerable to the sociocultural positions that they inhabit—in Marvel's *Ironheart* and DC's *Far Sector* through closely analyzing the comics' formal elements of spatiotemporal and linguistic arrangement in the creation of narrative. These formal elements beget a special kind of readerly engagement across the medium's gaps and fragments, presenting avenues towards reimagining how Black characters can exist within superhero narratives.

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Introduction

The field for literary criticism of the graphic narrative has only relatively recently begun to grow; as such, a number of avenues considering the relationship between image and space, text, narrative, and societal critique remain broadly unexplored. Comics studies are largely populated by a breadth of work surrounding the graphic narrative's most exemplary works, with analyses ranging from the study of structure to elaborating on sociohistorical contexts and relevance. Black comics studies contain a smaller catalog of work but engage with questions and narratives about race—and its intersections with race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, and (dis)ability—which are largely missing from the broader field, which is composed primarily of nonblack scholars and creators.¹ While criticism focused on genre—particularly that of the superhero genre unique to comics—is primarily

concerned with content and theme rather than structure, examining how the comics' form enhances narrative and critique surrounding race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, and (dis)ability provides a valuable opening to reimagine the iconic superhero figure.² Given literature and visual culture's antiblack histories, Blackness problematizes not only the figure of the superhero, but the themes, contexts, and narrative structure which shape the act of imagining such an icon. Building upon the visual presence, an imaginative graphic narrative is necessary to expand visions of Blackness beyond caricature in comics.

Marvel's *Ironheart* (2018) by Eve Ewing and Luciano Vecchio and DC Young Animal's *Far Sector* (2019) by N.K. Jemisin and Jamal Campbell can be considered emblematic of each comics company's continued push to introduce diversity within their lineup, albeit at heavily regulated levels. Though Black superheroes have existed since Black Panther's debut in 1966, many have been subject to tokenism, poorly aged storylines, and further underlying antiblackness since (Stromberg, 129). While Marvel and DC's current push for a diversified line of heroes within their universes may present a push to undo "America's romantic self-image embodied in the hypermasculine Anglo-Saxon superhero" (Brown, 6), they primarily assimilate their marginalized characters into the symbolic fold of the superhero embodying American national values. Some series, though more recent and not consistently as common, are able to present narratives critiquing access to and wielding of socio-cultural power within the context of super or enhanced humanity, destabilizing the legibility of the iconic superhero.

Though antiblackness has been historically entrenched in image and narrative, Black creators' utilization of the multivalent comics form showcases a resistance to conventional forms of narrative. Despite the hold of the iconic white, hypermasculine, able-bodied, and cis-heterosexual Captain America-type hero as emblematic of the medium, comics and their history have lent themselves towards revision and deconstruction. Most notably, the revisionist period in the 1980s brought about comics such as *Watchmen* (Moore and Gibbons) and *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* (Miller) which sought to disrupt the superhero's ideological power; the limit of these works lies in their continued centering of hyperviolent white men and their depictions of marginalization as spectacle.³ Despite attempts at questioning the genesis of the genre and the tropes and beliefs that sustain it, these ideals remain entrenched within its history; as such, the simple addition of Black characters into a superhero mythos as a form of visual diversity will not solve the problem of undoing the antiblackness entrenched within superhero narratives. While the grammar of comics holds disruptive potential in its dissolution of narrative with use of its gaps and fragments, fully fleshed out Black

superheroes have been difficult to excavate from the constructed truths and symbolic nature of the superhero genre and its mythic figure. It has been recognized that even after the creation of Black Panther, “throughout the representational history of black superheroes, these comics struggle with overcoming the traditional tropes of the genre in order to shake free of long-held stereotypical associations” (Berlatsky and Dagbovie-Mullins, 39).⁴ An understanding of Black superheroes, then, requires a departure from the reductive belief that simply placing Black characters within the figurative framework of the superhero is a progressive act.

Both *Ironheart* and *Far Sector* seek not only to portray fantastical visual narratives following their protagonists’ super-heroic feats but also to question how race, class, gender, and national identity inform their superheroism and access to power. The complexity and dissonance between Blackness and the superhero as figure and genre stems from the fact that “the superhero genre is very much a white-male-dominated power fantasy that is itself very much based in ideas around physical performance and power in relation to the negotiation of identity” (Gateward & Jennings, 4–5). Given that a Black superhero’s relationship to super-humanity is already informed by various visual, narrative, and cultural beliefs, an analysis of the Black superhero is incomplete without considering the relationship between their access to literalized superpower and to forms of sociocultural power as shaped by different forms of identity and social positions. For this reason, examining (super)power as a complex including these categories of power is necessary to understand the social implications of Black superheroes reaching limits beyond that of the strictly human. Ultimately, the conflict between a history of anti-blackness in visual and literary narratives and the symbolic weight of a cultural figure such as the superhero makes the force behind comics like *Ironheart* and *Far Sector* a constant negotiation of (super)power across borders: across the interior self and its exterior social world, across nations and planets, across the borders delineated by the comic book’s form. This negotiation illustrates the continuous attempt to deal with the “incommensurableness of blackness with the superhero” (Wanzo, 126). How, then, does the comics form provide an avenue to navigate this conflict, and further, not simply resolve it but rather allow for the expansion of Black narratives such that the very foundations of the figures we know become unsettled?

What Does It Take to Be a Hero?

Far Sector particularly contends with the conflict between power and justice in relation to its protagonist’s own subjectivity as a Black woman. *Far Sector* tells the story of Sojourner “Jo” Mullein, an ex-military and ex-NYPD officer who was discharged for reporting her partner for

police violence. Following her discharge, she is approached by a Guardian of the Universe, who bestows upon her a Green Lantern’s power ring and tasks her with mediating the increasingly tense political situation on a faraway, Afrofuturistic planet known as the City Enduring where three alien races live in perceived peace due to the mechanism of the Emotion Exploit. The Emotion Exploit is an invention inserted into the genetic code of every citizen of the City Enduring which functions to eliminate emotions, which were deemed to be the basis of conflict and strife. Meanwhile, Jo remains the only being on the planet exempt from the Emotion Exploit, as her ring’s power relies not only on the manifestation of her will but also on her relationship with fear. This particular worldbuilding provides ample ground to consider how Blackness manifests in shaping narrative, and in turn, orienting the reading process throughout the comics form’s various interstices. André Carington theorizes desiring Blackness rather than defining it when reading comics, as “the rhetoric of desiring, rather than defining, what blackness is or what it means emphasizes what blackness *does* and what we, as readers, do in relation to it” (225). Race and difference permeate *Far Sector*’s story not only through Jo’s role as protagonist but through the complexity of the City Enduring and its three alien ethnic groups. As such, rather than depicting a narrative favoring a monolithic or singularly defined perspective, *Far Sector*’s inclination moves the reader towards considering the complexity in the relation between Black subjectivity and (super) power.

In the series’ fourth issue, a segment of the City’s police force, known as the Peace Division, is firing on protestors until Jo intervenes. At the expression of her anger, the Peace Division officer retorts: “And I must ask, Lantern: doesn’t it seem like *you’re* threatening the peace right now?” The panel depicting his questioning gaze is followed by one with a close-up on Jo’s power-ringed fist, establishing a visual contrast between peace and violence (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Jo confronts the Peace Division.

While this contrast may position Jo as aggressive, a harmful vision of a Black woman character, the relationship between image and text must also be considered. Fleetwood presents the idea of non-iconicity as “an aesthetic that resists singularity and completeness in narrative; one that exposes the limitations of its framing and the temporality and specificity of the moment documented” (64). Though the comics utilize still drawings, movement is created by constructing sequence with the medium’s other formal elements, such as manipulation of panel size and shape, placement of dialogue, and of course, separation alongside connection through the gutter. Jo’s pictured actions are given greater context through her speech in contrast to the officer’s depicted idea of peace in practice. The center panel of the page focuses on Jo’s angry expression, allowing for an evocative turn which does not limit Jo as a character and in turn signals towards the source of her (super)power: her emotions. Further, the figure’s fragmentation throughout the scene encourages the reader to take the time in piecing it together, undoing temporality and resisting the singular figure. From extreme close-up, the image shifts to one visualizing Jo at a bird’s eye view, practically outnumbered by the Peace Division’s

troops. This shift guides the reader in such a way that contextualizes the scene, and through the reader’s own participation, places them closer to Jo’s battle against uneven odds and an unjust system. Though the continuing sequence depicts a powerful, decisive moment, it does not exist as one of singularity. Rather, its narrative pacing necessitates the careful and multidirectional attention of the reader in order to make the moment cohere. Moreover, the very understanding of Jo’s (super)power and its source requires that readers comprehend the multiple realities of her subjectivity and the presence of her emotion.

The present scene also makes broader points in terms of beliefs about peace, justice, and the function of state power, linking back to the Nina Simone quote which frames the issue: “I ain’t bout to be nonviolent, honey.” This reference creates an echo of resistance and generates a link between fiction and reality across time in order to further navigate wider contexts of (super)power, further influencing the reader’s active participation and relationship to how Blackness operates in the text through including extratextual links. Darieck Scott and Ramzi Fawaz liken the reader’s participation to an act of fabulation, after Saidiya Hartman’s practice of critical fabulation, through which the actions that should exist within absences in the graphic narrative can be imagined (202). In the case of reading *Far Sector*, readers are called to restructure their affective modes of recognition as well as reimagine notions of justice, morality, and power throughout this ongoing process of comics fabulation. The work of imagination called for through the act of fabulation is enabled by making an imagined future out of the existing present, destabilizing the presence of static caricatures of Blackness in the image-text relationship. That Jemisin would begin each issue with a quote from a different Black public figure positions the series within Black history, which is often not present within the superhero canon; moreover, Jemisin introduces Black liberation philosophies in contrast to the symbolism of the dominantly recognizable white superhero. Thus, Jemisin and Campbell’s creation requires a mode of recognition and intertextual engagement with Blackness which reframes notions of justice and peace in relationship to violence. While this is one example of comics’ multidirectional elements and structural gaps being used to generate cultural critique, these features also destabilize the relationship between narrative and time, creating depths of meaning for narratives about Blackness.

The Force of Memory

The function of memory is a significant narrative aspect throughout *Ironheart*. There are several instances throughout the text in which the narrative shifts into an entirely different timescape than that of the present action and these moments typically depict Riri’s relationship to

loss. *Ironheart* follows 15-year-old Riri Williams, a super genius from Chicago, who, similarly to the well-known hero Iron Man, creates a power suit featuring an operating Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) construct which she uses in order to perform as a superhero. In Riri's case, her A.I. is named N.A.T.A.L.I.E and is actually a composite of Riri's memories of her friend whom she lost, along with her stepfather, to gun violence. Though this character concept opens up a wealth of potential for genre subversion in the differences Riri and her referential counterpart, Tony Stark, hold, it simultaneously begins to limit Riri within a trauma narrative. What Ewing and Vecchio do, however, in acknowledging and working through the function of (super) power throughout her story expands how readers can interpret her character and backstory instead of rendering her as a caricature or stereotype of Black trauma.

In a scene early in the series' second issue Riri is facing armed criminals. The gunfire aimed at her protected by the bulk of her power suit thrusts into a traumatic memory, visually overtaking her while in the midst of her practicing her "super heroism," and effectively stopping the action of the scene to lay focus on her interior narrative (Figure 2). Following Chute's argument that comics are able to spatialize memory, the function of presence and absence is essential to meaning-making in the reading process: "the form is built on the ongoing counterpoint of presence—in frames or in panels—and absence, the white space between frame where the reader projects causality and that is called the gutter" (108). This scene exemplifies the collapse of time within the comics form such that both present and past inhabit the page; although the gutter is not signified through a white border, readers face a gap in leaping from one time period to another through Riri's perspective. The visual overlapping of past and present illustrated onto the body makes it so that Riri's lived experience as a Black girl from Chicago, who has to contend with being surrounded by violence, cannot be divorced from her identity as superhero, bringing all facets of this self to the forefront of the narrative; what is important to note, too, is how this memory gets flipped around to actually become a facet of Riri's power. The spatiotemporal overlap depicted reflects the suggestion that, "For the self to be fundamentally collaged—overlapping and dialogic—is to break free from diminishing concepts of identity" (Alexander, 696). Riri, then, is allowed to hold a multiplicity of identities and it does not harm the superhero narrative but in fact morphs it into something stronger for her character, especially as the narrative is then pulled forward by Natalie/N.A.T.A.L.I.E's voice.



Figure 2. Riri remembers the loss of her friend in the midst of action.



Figure 3. Riri returns from her memory.

Natalie's active role as the one who saves Riri in this moment and further pulls the story forward undoes normative temporality and actually locates an element of (super)power in memory. The stylistic design of the comic aligns her memory and the voice of Riri's A.I. located in the space of her power suit, which becomes an extension of the body, through purple-colored text. Natalie's manifestation as a memory and as A.I. becomes a fantastical literalization of a "presence, this someone, is the girlfriend, the other who is so much the self that the boundaries between the two become fluid and sometimes collapse" (Quashie, 192). Such a relationship exists between Riri and Natalie as two Black girls, wherein Riri creates a new subjectivity in her identification with Natalie's A.I.—the memory of her friend becomes part of her suit and that through which her superhero identity is mediated. Within the action of the scene, it becomes visible that although shot at, the suit protects Riri,

allowing her to perform super heroic feats (Figure 3). By this function, Natalie protects Riri as well, also signaling that together they make up the Ironheart identity with her usage of “we.” Though Natalie’s presence as A.I. can be read as a scarring come to life, she is also part of that which shields Riri from danger—thus the palimpsestic self, the memory, is essential to her identity formation and access to (super) power. Natalie continues to be present through voice and memory space even if she is absent physically, and her interventions into the narrative frequently save Riri from immediate danger—all the while, this narrative choice is figurative of Riri saving herself throughout the series. As such, both *Far Sector* and *Ironheart* critique the structural power that shapes Jo and Riri’s lives and contest the normative superheroic figure which defends systems of marginalization; these become efforts to break free of the primary dilemma faced in the superhero genre, that of maintaining the status quo.

Conclusion

Ironheart and *Far Sector* add to growing diversity in the genre particularly as Black superheroes become increasingly recognizable alongside well-established heroes such as Captain America, Spider-Man, Superman, and Batman. More than simply being emblematic of Marvel and DC’s attempts at making their offerings more inclusive, however, the two series present their protagonists in a way willfully dealing with how their social positionalities as a Black girl and a Black woman can never be separated from their access to (super)power. Though the superhero genre may appear more static than progressive, works such as *Ironheart* and *Far Sector* reflect the potential for creating narratives beyond generic constraints; they are reminiscent of ventures into other categories and genres of comics which utilize the form’s sense of visual and narrative rupture to explore identity. Further, embracing the relationship between the visual and the cognitive gap in comics as a way to expand the space for Blackness within narrative can extend to include a multitude of intersecting marginalized identities—queerness, transness, class status, (dis)ability status, and more. Ultimately, these forms of identification and experience are able to be opened up beyond the spaces of marginality and be actively created and reimagined in graphic narrative.

Endnotes

¹ For further reading, see Howard & Jackson, ed., *Black Comics: Politics of Race and Representation* (2013) and Gateward & Jennings, ed., *The Blacker the Ink: Constructions of Black Identity in Comics and Sequential Art* (2015), compiling Black comics criticism focused on a wide range of genres, from 20th century African American newspaper strips to sci-fi comics. Each collection focuses on criticism surrounding the political and cultural history and relevance of graphic narratives and sequential forms of art.

² With a critical focus on superhero comics, Nama’s *Super Black: American Pop Culture and Black Superheroes* (2011) and Brown’s *Panthers, Hulks, and Ironhearts: Marvel, Diversity and the 21st Century Superhero* (2021) cover the developing landscape of Black superhero comics. Akin to the aforementioned works, they focus on the historical, political, and cultural contexts surrounding and impact of Black superheroes, as well as heroes of other marginalized identities. With respect to form, however, Whitted’s article “‘And the Negro thinks in hieroglyphics’: comics, visual metonymy, and the spectacle of blackness,” (2014) puts forth an argument based around examining how the particular structural, visual, and linguistic elements of comics are used to signal historical and cultural critique through narrative.

³ See Singer in *Comics Studies: A Guidebook*, 219.

⁴ Berlatsky and Dagbovie-Mullins go on to elaborate on how comics narratives featuring Black superheroes such as Black Panther, Black Lightning, and Moon Girl continue to fall into tropes of criminality and primitivism in comparison to white superheroes such as the Fantastic Four and Superman.

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Navigating Exclusion Across Space and Time: Chinese Seafarers in the United States, Norway, and Britain Before, During, and Beyond World War II

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Jiajia's current research engages the history of Chinese maritime labor in the United States, Britain, and Norway and, therein, the transnational formations and implications of America's "Chinese Exclusion Era." More broadly, she is interested in the lived experiences of transnational migrants and the dual forces of military and economy as conduits of organizational migration and manufacturers of violent consensual (contractual) relationships. Jiajia's methodology synthesizes multi-lingual, multi-sited archival and oral history research with existing scholarship by European, American, and Chinese historians. She is currently writing two undergraduate honors theses: a studio art thesis and an Asian American studies thesis entitled "Serving as Allies, Sailing as Aliens: Chinese Exclusion in the Allied Merchant Marines as a Transatlantic Movement."

When she is not conducting research, Jiajia works as a freelance artist and art instructor: her narrative paintings on immigrant histories have exhibited in a number of locations and two reside permanently in the Mead Art Museum and the Project Citizenship headquarters. After Amherst, Jiajia intends to study History or American studies in graduate school, where she hopes to develop her thesis into a dissertation and train to become an educator and scholar-activist.

Abstract

U.S. historians often cast the Chinese Exclusion Era as a domestic or North American phenomenon that began in 1882 with the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Acts and ended in 1943 with their repeal. But this narrative packages the actors behind the act into time-space boundaries to which they did not always conform. This paper reassesses the end of Chinese Exclusion by examining the histories of Chinese merchant mariners aboard American, British, and Norwegian ships before, during, and beyond World War II. Their border-crossing activities and tenuous identities as citizen/soldier present us a unique opportunity to look beyond traditional space-time boundaries. Synthesizing archival records and existing research in the fields of Asian American, European, and Chinese history, this paper unpacks moments of temporospatial intersection within two historical episodes: the emergence of an anti-Chinese movement in America's seafaring communities under the

leadership of Norwegian immigrants before World War II; and the collaborative policing of Chinese merchant mariners by the British, American, and Norwegian governments during and after the war. These moments reveal continuities across space time and time which demonstrate that the Chinese Exclusion Era extended beyond the space of the Americas and the time of World War II.

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A Note on Language

In this paper, I use "Chinese" and "ethnically Chinese" interchangeably to refer to individuals of Chinese descent, irrespective of citizenship/nationality or immigration status. "Chinese American," "Chinese Norwegian," or "Chinese British," therefore, may refer both to a Chinese immigrant (documented or undocumented) or an ethnically Chinese citizen in the corresponding country.

Although academics in different countries refer to the ethnically Chinese using a variety of different demonyms (e.g., "Chinese American" in the U.S., "British Chinese" in Britain, or "Overseas Chinese in Norway" in Norway), I will call them all "Chinese ____" to maintain consistency and avoid confusion in this paper.

Since this is a history paper, terms like “Asian Americanists,” “Asianists,” and “Europeanists,” will refer only to historians from those disciplines. The generalizations I make about these fields do not necessarily apply to, for instance, Asian Americanists in the English and sociology disciplines.

Introduction

The United States, Britain, and Norway often inhabit distinct temporospatial niches within American historiography.¹ When it comes to Chinese migrant labor, however, the three nation-states appear to have surprisingly similar and heavily intertwined backdrops. Not only did their governments and corporations recruit Chinese labor *en masse* for war and commerce in the 19th and 20th centuries, their management of the Chinese was often marked by direct cooperation and mutually circulating ideas. These intersections are perhaps most obvious in World War II when Britain and Norway became two of the three largest national employers of Chinese seafarers and the United States became a popular protest and desertion ground for Chinese seafarers in general.

In this paper and the body of research it represents, I utilize archival records and existing research in American, British, Norwegian, and Chinese history to illustrate how transnationally coalescent individuals, governments, and ideas produced and reproduced the lived markers of Chinese exclusion—namely, employment discrimination, extrajudicial policing and deportation, and dehumanization and commodification of laboring bodies. As such, I endeavor to understand Chinese exclusion using a methodology of *inclusion*. This inclusive methodology unites Asian Americanists’ attention to race, China scholars’ attention to economic and political macro-histories, and European scholars’ attention to the sea as a locale. What results is an investigation of the U.S., Britain, and Norway’s collaborative policing of Chinese mariners before, during, and beyond World War II. These historical moments illuminate temporal and spatial continuities within the United States’ Chinese Exclusion era. Such continuities challenge U.S. historians’ traditional configuration of the phenomenon, which frames Chinese Exclusion as a domestic or North American occurrence that began in 1882 with the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Acts and ended in 1943 with their repeal.² Despite the fact that Britain and Norway never enacted their own Chinese Exclusion Acts, incorporating their transnational and maritime histories privileges us to understand that Chinese exclusion extended beyond the temporal confines of World War II and the spatial confines of North America.

Spatial Continuities: Exclusion Beyond the Americas

Chinese exclusion as a domestic or North American phenomenon is well-represented in historical scholarship. While some scholars, like Helen Zia or Ronald Takaki, focus chiefly on exclusion’s domestic facets, others such as Evelyn Hu-DeHart, Kornel Chang, and Erika Lee, have incorporated Canada and Latin America into the analysis.³ More recently, transnational historians such as Madeline Hsu have discussed continuities between the United States and Asia within the Chinese immigrant experience.⁴ Yet, few writings on the subject connect the United States to European nations. However, when it came to managing Chinese bodies and orientalist ideas Norway, Britain, and the United States converged frequently across geographic boundaries. Before the war, anti-Chinese attitudes in Britain and Norway contributed to a unique brand of sinophobia in the United States maritime industry. In turn, during the war, the United States’ sophisticated immigration regime—by then refined through half a century of legalized Chinese exclusion—aided itself and its allies in enforcing Chinese exclusion upon Chinese mariners.

Transnational Policing and Protest

Tensions between Chinese mariners and officials in Britain, Norway, and the U.S. came to the fore during the war. Britain, Norway, and the United States entered World War II as allies in 1939, 1940, and 1941, respectively. All three nations operated under the principle of “flexible capacity,” whereby tankers and cargo vessels—in which ethnically Chinese predominantly worked—were incorporated into the war effort as merchant mariners. Throughout the war, Chinese seafarers comprised 5 percent of the allied merchant marine and were tasked with ferrying tonnage between Allied nations. In Britain, they were primarily hired for the war and comprised one of Britain’s largest immigrant workforces.⁵ On Norwegian ships, Chinese comprised the largest immigrant workforce: they were drawn into the war when the Norwegian government-in-exile converted its “free fleet” (vessels which had evaded Nazi control) into a merchant marine known as Nortraship, headquartered in London and New York.⁶

At the start of the war, both Chinese Norwegian and Chinese British seafarers received a fraction of their white counterparts’ salaries and were denied, to varying extents, amenities such as food, overtime pay, and war risk bonus. Though Chinese sailors frequently protested these inequalities, their demands often went unanswered before they were imprisoned, beaten, and sometimes killed.⁷

Though Chinese Americans enlisted at much higher rates than the general American population, they remained largely absent from the U.S. Navy due to various

exclusionary policies enacted after decades of lobbying by white mariners.⁸ The United States, however, became a popular desertion ground for Chinese sailors on other allied ships. For example, up to a third of Chinese British mariners at a time would vanish into New York's Chinatown, never returning to reship.⁹ American, British, and Norwegian actors responded with both punitive and remedial decisions after much communication among themselves. For example, British and American officials co-created (and Norwegian officials signed) the Alien Seamen Program, which stretched the limitations of the U.S.'s Chinese Exclusion Acts to arrest and deport thousands of Chinese deserters with help from the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Services.¹⁰ In some instances, Allied government officials made small concessions to Chinese protesters. These, too, were reinforced by transnational considerations: for example, "normally it was only after the British granted better conditions to the Chinese that the Norwegians followed suit."¹¹ Meanwhile, the British wondered how much they could afford to concede to Chinese laborers before the laborers became too expensive to keep British shipping competitive against American shipping in the postwar world.¹²

Governmental actors were not the only ones who crossed nation-state boundaries. The Chinese deserters themselves relied on transnational networks between Chinese immigrants around the world that one U.S. immigration official referred to as "an underground railway for Chinese."¹³ These networks provided postal services, safe-houses, and job opportunities for undocumented Chinese workers. They had developed despite, and because of, xenophobic ideologies that had closed off legal immigration pathways for Chinese in many parts of the world.¹⁴

Transnational Ideologies Toward Exclusion

The same ideologies undergirded Allied treatment of Chinese seafarers, whom Norwegian sailors met with "degrading attitudes," Norwegian captains deemed categorically untrustworthy, and one British memorandum called "stinking yellow treachery" and "yellow swine" of "slippery character."¹⁵ Neither Norway nor Britain enforced anything equivalent to the United States' Chinese Exclusion Acts. However, an analysis of spatial continuities in the decades preceding the war reveals that anti-Chinese attitudes not only existed in Britain and Norway but helped shape a unique brand of sinophobia in the United States.

For instance, British historian Charles H. Pearson's *National Life and Character: A Forecast* (1893), praised by President Theodore Roosevelt and citizen lobbyists alike, was instrumental in cementing *Yellow Peril* in the United States.¹⁶ In it, Pearson warned of the increasing dominance of "the black and yellow races" and in particular problematized the "Chinamen" for their threatening sense of

"industry."¹⁷ Also at the turn of the century, the anti-Chinese movement mushroomed in the U.S. maritime industry, with two Norwegian immigrants at its helm: Olaf Tveitmoen and Andrew Furuseth, co-founders of the Asiatic Exclusion League, the latter a founder of the International Seamen's Union. The ISU's members were primarily Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish, and German immigrants and their two decades of advocacy, in effect, banned most Chinese from working on American ships.¹⁸ In his transcultural biography of Tveitmoen and Furuseth, Americanist Christopher M. Sterba observes that Furuseth and Tveitmoen's adherence to Norwegian politics made them simultaneously anti-war, anti-imperialist, and pro-labor. However, they also promoted in their labor publications emerging ideas about Nordic supremacy. In fact, beyond the labor arena, "the idea that a 'master nordic race' originated in what became Norway was prevalent in the nineteenth century and was being propagated by a handful of Norwegian and other European and American scholars."¹⁹ But at the same time, notes Historian and Americanist Tarje Hasle Joranger in his study on Norwegian Americans' attitudes toward racial minorities, Norwegian Americans were usually (and disproportionately, amongst white Americans) anti-slavery and abolitionist, even in the antebellum South. Perhaps it is fitting then, that Furuseth continues to be celebrated in both Norway and the United States as the "Abraham Lincoln of the Sea." Curiously, Charles Pearson's image of the slavishly industrious Chinese worker helped Norwegian American sailors like Furuseth reconcile their anti-Chinese and abolitionist stances. In his anti-Chinese testimonies before Congress, Furuseth propagated a moral racism that incriminated the Chinese not for embodying an antiquated Anglo-American stereotype like unsanitary or crime-driven—therein revealing lack of progressiveness on Furuseth's part—but for being categorically unprogressive and therefore immoral. According to Furuseth, Chinese mariners aboard American ships impeded the fight for worker protection and anti-slavery: "they . . . as a rule . . . do not criticize among themselves any orders given . . . They yield that ready obedience, and apparent respect for, superiors" and therefore could only "compete" with or "drive out" white workers by inducing slavish employment conditions.²⁰ In sum, a mélange of transnational ideologies crafted a puzzling brand of Chinese exclusion in the American maritime world that was ironically pro-labor and anti-imperialist, while also making room for white immigrants and white feminists.

Temporal Continuities: Exclusion Beyond 1943

Though the U.S. government nominally ended the Chinese Exclusion era in 1943 with the passage of the Magnuson Act, Chinese exclusionists and their exclusionary ideas cannot be so neatly packaged into a historical epoch. Indeed, recent works in Asian American history have begun

to acknowledge the performative nature of the act itself. In his contributing chapter to *Asian American Studies Now*, Robert G. Lee quite aptly argues that the act “had greater symbolic value than immediate demographic effect.”²¹ But even works like these, largely focused on domestic and civilian experience, presume that the especially violent hallmarks of exclusion had died by World War II. Historians note the sinophobic hate crimes and unlawful deportations stemming from racial profiling in postwar decades, but nary to the scale of the exclusion era: absent are the visceral and gruesome scenes of large groups of Chinese rounded up, marched out of town, and loaded onto boats; fathers and sons underpaid down to the tenfold and assigned jobs where fatality rivaled survival.²² But when we consider Chinese mariners on Allied ships, these images of violence do not fade so easily.

In her landmark work on re-periodizing Chinese Exclusion, *The Chinese Must Go*, Asian Americanist Beth Lew-Williams uses historical records of lived experience to demonstrate that the Chinese Exclusion era in fact began later than 1882.²³ In doing so, Lew-Williams upholds an argument advanced by her fellow Asian Americanist, Gordon Chang: that Chinese Exclusion/Inclusion has been shaped by American assumptions about the role China would play in the United States’ future.²⁴ Many of these assumptions hinged on the belief that mastering the China trade was crucial to fulfilling America’s manifest destiny and, in turn, allowing the nation to outpace economic competitors around the world. China Scholars such as Andrew Liu, Roy Bin Wong, and Jean-Laurent Rosenthal have underscored this preoccupation with trade and competition not only in the United States but in the entire Western world.²⁵

Extending Lew-Williams’ periodization methodology and Chang and above Asianists’ theories, I suggest that Chinese Exclusion, in practice, prevailed beyond 1943. Exclusionists were convinced that China figured prominently into their future stability—during the war, as an ally that would ensure political stability and after the war, as a market that would ensure economic stability. In this world of imaginings, Chinese bodies became parcels of productivity whose labor, if cost-efficient, could help the United States, Britain, and Norway secure these stabilities. At the heart of Chinese exclusion, therefore, was a dehumanization and demotion of the Chinese—from individuals into productivity—that ensured even “inclusion” would be exclusionary.

Deportation Under the Magnuson Act

When inclusionary concessions were granted towards the Chinese in World War II, they were justified not by the Chinese’ humanity but by a belief that the Chinese would help ensure political stability.

While Norwegian shipping authorities agreed to increase Chinese seafarers’ wages in 1942 after repeated desertions, strikes, and work stoppages, equality was all but won. Rather than earning about 10 percent of their Norwegian counterpart’s salary, the Chinese now earned about 60 percent.²⁶ Aboard British ships, wage inequalities were made much more visible when the Chinese government and even Americans citizens (who had been made increasingly aware of the frequent Chinese desertions and INS roundups in New York) joined in on the criticism.²⁷ In 1942, Chinese British sailors were granted nearly-equal wages for the duration of the war.²⁸ In the United States, where the Chinese Exclusion Acts still loomed large, progress functioned more in name than practice. In 1942, the United States abolished extraterritoriality in China and, a year later, overturned the Chinese Exclusion Acts with the passage of the Magnuson Act. Confronting an enlistment shortage, the U.S. Navy opened up 500 spots for “Chinese boys.”²⁹ In reality, Japanese occupation in China had already rendered American extraterritoriality meaningless and the Magnuson Act (1943) capped Chinese immigrants at 105 per year. While allowing only 105 Chinese Americans to naturalize, the Magnuson Act rendered them second-class citizens by maintaining the ban on Chinese property ownership.³⁰ In each case, total equality was never achieved because “the goal . . . was always to keep ships sailing.”³¹ These “largely symbolic victories became a way to promote morale and undermine Japanese propaganda” that critiqued the lack of actual freedom and equality in the Allied nations.³² By eliminating some inequalities, authorities could avoid frequent protests and consequential shipping delays. They could also preserve their alliance with the Chinese government. In sum: symbolic, partial, and temporary concessions to the Chinese would ensure the United States, Norway, and Britain’s political stability for the duration of the war.

“Recruitment Followed by Repudiation”

The maritime world tied together politics and commerce in unusual ways: the doctrine of flexible capacity meant that a portion of naval ships during the war would return to commercial pursuits after the war. In the case of Chinese seafarers in World War II, we are afforded a unique opportunity to observe how exclusionary/inclusionary policies changed when the governmental priority shifted from political security to economic security.

According to Rosendahl, Norwegian authorities viewed the Chinese “primarily as hired labour, making judgement based on how the work essential to the war could be done at a price that would not be bad for business [after the war].”³³ While Norwegian authorities strategized with Britain in their wage disputes with Chinese seafarers during the war, they refused to engage in bilateral negotiations with China. They feared that the “Chinese consul . . .

would have called for ‘Norwegian wages’ and no difference between Chinese and ‘white crews’.” Such precedents could “prove costly” later on to Norway’s shipping industry—which benefited from low-cost high-productivity Chinese labor.³⁴ Ultimately, these wage increases and Chinese seafarers’ activism did “prove costly” when the political priority of winning the war shifted to the economic priority of sustaining trade profits. In a postwar economic context, Chinese Norwegian seafarers came to be “expensive and associated with trouble and unrest.” They were quickly discharged in favor of other immigrant crews. Formerly Norway’s largest immigrant workforce, Chinese seafarers dwindled at 200–300 after the war.³⁵ Because Chinese Norwegians were typically hired in large groups on *felleskontrakt* (collective contract)—further testament to their dehumanization from individuals into productivity—immigration and welfare privileges that applied to most immigrant workers did not apply to them.³⁶ Unlike its counterparts, therefore, Norway did not have to contend with a “Chinese question.” In Britain, however, government and civilians alike looked upon thousands of “excess” Chinese seamen, many of whom had settled or even established transracial families. British authorities concluded that their expulsion would help sustain the nation’s postwar maritime economy, and white laborers, by way of anti-Chinese mob violence, concurred: “not only were they likely to face real competition [from the United States], their cheap Chinese crews were no longer cheap.”³⁷ In the year following the war’s end, Britain discreetly reverted Chinese wages to pre-war conditions and deported an estimated 5,000 Chinese naval veterans—300 of them forcibly separated from their children.³⁸ In the United States, as previously mentioned, little changed for Chinese Americans after the passage of the Magnuson Act. The same year that Chinese Exclusion was overturned in favor of an immigration quota of 105, the INS detained 5,500 Chinese individuals, many of them Chinese Americans, in an attempt to find 74 Chinese British deserters.³⁹

Because the decision to include or exclude Chinese seafarers rested not upon their humanity but their productivity towards an envisioned national future, inclusion quickly turned to exclusion when Chinese seafarers threatened to populate the postwar world as fairly paid (and therefore more expensive) laborers and citizens. In the postwar context of prioritizing economic stability, the cost of Chinese presence seemed to outweigh the benefits. Allied treatment of the Chinese came to follow a pattern of—in the words of British historian Gregor Benton—“recruitment followed by repudiation.”⁴⁰ Exclusion had ended in name, but it prevailed in lived experience; it bled across national borders into localities that—despite never having enacted the likeness of the United States’ “Chinese Exclusion Acts”—were not immune to its influence.

Conclusion

Though my research incorporates Norway and Britain, it is, above all, an intervention in the discipline of American history. I seek to reimagine ways in which Britain and Norway may be incorporated into American history in general and Asian American history in particular. Temporospatial segmentation in American historiography—namely, nation-state frameworks and the tendency to divide history into “eras”—can discourage academics from making connections across space and time. By placing in conversation the United States, Britain, and Norway—both as methodological breeding grounds and epistemic objects—we gain a fuller understanding of the Chinese seafarer experience in World War II and, consequently, what this experience suggests about the geographic and temporal reaches of the United States’ “Chinese Exclusion Era.” Despite the domestic application of the Chinese Exclusion Acts and the seeming finality of what many U.S. historians call “The Chinese Exclusion Era,” history reveals that Chinese exclusionists and their exclusionary ideas transcended space-time boundaries.

Endnotes

¹ Britain, Norway, and the United States inhabit distinct times and spaces in American historiography. Britain often appears an antiquated colonizer whose exploits set in motion various immigration waves to the Americas. In Asian American history, this encroachment takes the shape of The Opium Wars and other colonial engagements in Asia. The Nordic Countries in general feature frequently in American history and discourse as examples of progressivism or the future. In essence Britain and British Imperialism function heavily in discussions about the past; Norway and the Nordic countries, in discussions about the future (or progressive alternatives to American pasts, such as the narrative of Vikings discovering but not colonizing the Americas); and the United States, somewhere in between. Further exacerbating the three nations’ parcelization across time is Western academia’s tendency to view history through the lens of the nation-state: this further parcelizes the United States, Britain, and Norway across geographic space. On Nordic countries, see Oana Godeanu-Kenworthy, “Imagining Nordicity in the American Political Discourse,” *nordics.info*, Aarhus University, 2020. For observations about Britain and additional observations about Nordic countries, see common core curriculums, College Board curriculums, popular U.S. History and World History K-12 textbooks, and popular documentaries on the same subject.

² This temporospatial framing is well-represented in historical scholarship, whether it be focused on Chinese Americans in particular or Asian Americans in general. See, for instance, two landmark works in the two aforementioned categories: Jean Pfaelzer, *Driven Out* (New York: Random House Publishing Group, 2007). See also, Helen Zia, *Asian American Dreams: the Emergence of an American People* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2000).

- ³ For an example of Zia's writing on this topic, see *Asian American Dreams* (ibid). For Takaki's, see Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1998). For an example of Hu-DeHart's work, see Evelyn Hu-DeHart, "From Yellow Peril to Model Minority: The Columbus Legacy and Asians in America," *The New World. A Smithsonian Quincentenary Publication*, Spring/Summer 1992 and "Chinese Coolie Labor in Cuba and Peru in the Nineteenth Century: Free Labor or Neoslavery?" *Journal of Overseas Chinese Studies*, 2 no. 2 (1992), 149–182. For an example of Chang's work, see Kornel Chang, "Enforcing Transnational White Solidarity: Asian Migration and the Formation of the U.S.-Canadian Boundary," *American Quarterly* 60, no. 3 (2008). For Lee, see Erika Lee, *The Making of Asian America: A History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015).
- ⁴ Asianists and Asian Americanists alike have written transnational works that connect Asia and the United States. See, for instance: Madeline Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home: Transnationalism and Migration Between the United States and South China, 1882–1943*, (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2000) and Erika Lee, 2015 (see previous note).
- ⁵ Meredith Oyen, "Fighting for Equality: Chinese Seamen in the Battle of the Atlantic, 1939–1945," *Diplomatic History* 38, no. 3 (2014), 526.
- ⁶ For historical context on Nortraship in World War II, see Bjørn Tore Rosendahl, "How to secure the participation of a foreign civilian workforce in times of war: Norwegian authorities and the use of foreign seafarers during the Second World War," in *Allied Seafarers in the Second World War*, ed. Bjørn Tore Rosendahl (Oslo: Cappelen Damm, 2018), 76. For statistics on Chinese service aboard Norwegian ships in WWII, see "Not in the same boat? Chinese seamen in the Norwegian Merchant fleet during the Second World War," *National Maritime Research: Business Shipping and Culture: Danish-Norwegian Shipping in China for 300 years*, (2017), 129 (dissertation pagination). This article first appeared with different pagination in Rosendahl's PhD dissertation at the University of Agder, "Seafarers or War Sailors?," housed in the Norwegian National Archives. Because I cannot access the *National Maritime Research* journal in the United States, pagination for this particular article corresponds with Rosendahl's dissertation instead.
- ⁷ For treatment of Chinese sailors aboard British ships, see Yvonne Foley and Charles Foley, "Chinese in the British Merchant Fleet" in *Allied Seafarers in the Second World War*, ed. Bjørn Tore Rosendahl (Oslo: Cappelen Damm, 2018). Aboard allied ships in general, see Oyen 2014 and Heather Lee, "Hunting for Sailors: Restaurant Raids and Conscription of Laborers during World War II" in *A Nation of Immigrants Reconsidered*, ed. Madeline Hsu et. al (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2019). Aboard Norwegian ships, see Rosendahl, 2018.
- ⁸ Justin Jackson, "'The Right Kind of Men': Flexible Capacity, Chinese Exclusion, and the Imperial Origins of Maritime Labor Reform in the United States, 1898–1905," *Labor* 10, no. 4 (2013).
- ⁹ Oyen 2014, 526.
- ¹⁰ Heather Lee 2019, 114–119.
- ¹¹ Rosendahl 2017, 139.
- ¹² Foley and Foley 2018, 154–155.
- ¹³ Special Report by Samuel Auerbach, April 23, 1942. Quoted in Heather Lee 2019, 113.
- ¹⁴ Heather Lee 2019, 112–113.
- ¹⁵ S.S. "Corona" til Nortraship, June 11, 1941; for British quote, see Oyen 2014, 539.
- ¹⁶ Erika Lee, *The Making of Asian America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015), 130. For more details on how Pearson influenced Chinese Exclusion in and beyond the United States, see Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Color Line: White Men's Countries and the Question of Racial Equality* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2008).
- ¹⁷ Charles Pearson, *National Life and Character: A Forecast* (MacMillan and Company, 1893), 84–85, 125–129.
- ¹⁸ Jackson 2013, 43–44.
- ¹⁹ Christopher Sterba, "Transcultural San Francisco: Andrew Furuseth, Olaf Tveitmoe, and the Forgotten Scandinavian American Experience," *Pacific Historical Review* 85, no. 1 (2016), 101.
- ²⁰ Employment of the Chinese on Vessels Flying the American American Flag, etc, 57 Cong. 14 (1902) (testimony of Andrew Furuseth). Norwegian American Historical Association Archives.
- ²¹ Robert G. Lee, "The Cold War Origins of the Model Minority Myth" in Jean Yu-wen Shen Wu and Thomas C. Chen (ed.), *Asian American Studies Now* (New Brunswick: Rutgers, the State University, 2010), 260.
- ²² For additional books that discuss the limitations of the Magnuson Act but not the large-scale and extreme violence of the exclusion era in the postwar years, see for instance Daryl Joji Maeda, "Asian American Activism and Participation" in Franklin Odo (ed.), *Finding a Path Forward: Asian American Pacific Islander Historic Landmarks Theme Study* (National Historic Landmarks Program, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 2017). See also Erika Lee 2015.
- ²³ Beth Lew-Williams, *The Chinese Must Go: Violence, Exclusion, and the Making of the Alien in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018).
- ²⁴ Gordon Chang, *Fateful Ties* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015).
- ²⁵ Andrew B. Liu, *Tea War: A History of Capitalism in China and India* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020) and Jean-Laurent Rosenthal and Roy Bin Wong. *Before and Beyond Divergence* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011).
- ²⁶ Rosendahl 2017, 138.
- ²⁷ Meredith Oyen, *The Diplomacy of Migration: Transnational Lives and the Making of U.S.-Chinese Relations in the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016), 32–37.
- ²⁸ Foley and Foley 2018, 149–150.
- ²⁹ Kevin Scott Wong, *Americans First: Chinese Americans and the Second World War* (Cambridge: Harvard university Press, 2005), 60.
- ³⁰ Oyen 2016, 30–32. "On property ownership, see Magnuson Act (Chinese Exclusion Repeal Act)" (1943), Sei Fujii v. State of California (1952), and Japanese American Citizens League, "An Unnoticed Struggle: A Concise History of Asian American Civil Rights Issues," *JACL*, 2008, 5–7.
- ³¹ Oyen 2014, 548.
- ³² Oyen 2016, 15.
- ³³ Rosendahl 2017, 148.
- ³⁴ Ibid., 138.
- ³⁵ Ibid., 146.
- ³⁶ Kjarten Rørslet, "Handelsflåten var avhengig av utlendinger under krigen," *nrk.no*, September 24, 2021.
- ³⁷ Foley and Foley 2018, 154.
- ³⁸ Jody-Lan Castle, "Looking for My Shanghai Father," *bbc.com*, Aug. 15, 2015. For more information on British deportation of Chinese mariners, see Benton and Gomez, *The Chinese in Britain, 1800–Present: Economy, Transnationalism, Identity* (London: Pacgrave Macmillan, 2007), 29–31.
- ³⁹ Heather Lee 2019, 118–119.
- ⁴⁰ Benton and Gomez, 30.

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