



The Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Journal 2018

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 2018

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

Preface

We are proud to present to you the 2018 edition of the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Journal.

For more than 30 years, the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship (MMUF) program has endeavored to promote diversity in the faculty of higher education, specifically by supporting thousands of students from underrepresented minority groups in their goal of obtaining PhDs. With the MMUF Journal, we provide an additional opportunity for students to experience academia through exposure to the publishing process. In addition to providing an audience for student work, the journal offers an introduction to the publishing process, including peer review and editor-guided revision of scholarly work. For the majority of students, the MMUF Journal is their first experience in publishing a scholarly article.

The 2018 Journal features writing by 27 authors from 22 colleges and universities that are part of the program's member institutions. The scholarship represented in the journal ranges from research conducted under the MMUF program, introductions to senior theses, and papers written for university courses. The work presented here includes scholarship from a wide range of disciplines, from history to linguistics to political science.

The papers presented here will take the reader on a journey. Readers will travel across the U.S., from Texas to South Carolina to California, and to countries ranging from Brazil and Nicaragua to Germany and South Korea, as they learn about theater, race relations, and the refugee experience. On their journey, readers will also confront many societal and historical challenges, including climate change, homelessness, prison reform, and the 2016 presidential election. Readers will be encouraged to reconsider how we approach gender, race, language, class, mental health, and even the impact of popular culture. Through close reading, historical analysis, empirical study, and ethnographic exploration, the 2018 journal provides an illuminating window into our world.

It has been a privilege and inspiration to work with these young scholars as they prepared their work for publication. I can only hope that they have learned as much in the process as I have working with them. We are so proud to share their work with you.

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Alisa Catalina Sanchez

From Pathology to Prodigy: Parental Discourses on “Late Language Emergence”

Arianna Chinchilla, *Hunter College, The City University of New York*

Arianna Chinchilla received their CUNY Baccalaureate for Unique and Interdisciplinary Studies with a concentration in Linguistics and Discourse Studies at Hunter College. They have written their Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship thesis on parents’ discursive construction of “late language emergence” on online childcare forums. As a Mellon Mays fellow they have also conducted research on the multi-modalities of genderqueer coming out discourse on YouTube. Overall, their scholarly interests include language ideology and discursive identity formation along the intersections of gender, race and ethnicity, education, and neurodiversity. Arianna currently plans to gain experience working with children with special needs pertaining to communication while preparing for linguistics graduate study.

Abstract

“Pathologization” refers to the processes by which people identified as belonging to specific groups are perceived and labeled by a powerful group as “abnormal” (Heydon & Iannacci, 2008, p. 3). Supposed abnormality is perceived to be in need of correction, usually through medical or scientific intervention (Heydon & Iannacci, 2008). Psychosocial and linguistic development in particular has been positioned by researchers and clinicians within a discourse of deficit and labeled as “normal” or as “disordered” and “dysfunctional.” Such discourses have shaped public perception and ways of talking about child language development, which is evident in the dozens of Internet sites where clinicians explain diagnostic “symptoms” and appropriate “interventions.” As a result, parents and caretakers have utilized online spaces such as forums to discuss their experiences along with the implications of these clinical scripts for their children. The latter is the focus of my research—the ways in which parents discursively construct, negotiate, resist, and contest “late language emergence.”

Background

Stages	Typical age	Description
Babbling	6–8 months	Consonant-vowel combinations (Steinberg, 1982)
One-word/ Holophrastic	9–18 months	Single words to represent a sentence (Fromkin, 1983, p. 328)
Two-word	18–24 months	“Mini-sentences” with simple semantic relations (Fromkin, 1983, p. 329)
Telegraphic	24–30 months	Child produces “sentence-like” utterances, does not leave out content words as adult does from telegram (Fromkin, 1983)
Later multiword stage	30+ months	Fastest increase in vocabulary, producing new types of utterances every day (Bolinger, 1975)

Table 1. Examples of First Language Acquisition “Stages”

Over the past two to three decades, research in neurolinguistics and developmental psychology has created, asserted, and reified the view that there are chronological stages in children’s receptive and expressive language acquisition. These stages are often characterized by the number of words or phrase structures a child is expected to know at each chronological “stage” or “milestone” (Table 1). The American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA) developed detailed guidelines for “normal” expressive language behaviors from birth to five years. They also created and promulgated guidelines and strategies for “early language intervention” for children whose speech does not develop according to the stages they identified.

The Association’s work influenced clinicians and researchers to create multiple labels for children’s speech development, for example, “late language emergence” (LLE), “specific language impairment” (SLI), and “expressive type language impairment” (SLI-E) (Rescorla, Roberts, & Dahlsgaard, 1997). In effect, these categories and labels discursively construct child language as “disordered”: “Delayed appearance of early language milestones can be one of the first signs of a developmental disorder” (Rudolph & Leonard, 2016, p. 41). Furthermore, such “delays” are rendered in need of professional help:

The development of language in this group of children who enter the expressive language stream at a later point in development than their peers is of clinical significance, especially to those who provide early identification and intervention services. From a practical standpoint it is necessary to ascertain whether late talkers ultimately “recover” and develop adequate language skills (Roos & Weismer, 2008, p. 119).

The ASHA also warns parents that “Late talkers may be at risk for developing language and/or literacy difficulties as they age” and that “LLE may also be an early or secondary sign of disorders, such as specific language impairment, social communication disorder, and autism spectrum disorder.”

Nevertheless, information about “normal” stages appears in medical journals and in documents that pediatric physicians and clinicians give parents (almost all of which are available online). These warnings are repeated over and over, despite the fact that there are no comprehensive, valid, and reliable measures of child language development. In their overview of “late language emergence,” the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association states that “signs and symptoms among monolingual English-speaking children with LLE are based on *parent-report* measures” (emphases mine). Almost every study to date has relied on parent reporting. Although studies (Hoff et al., 2012;

Pearson, 2013) have indicated that factors such as childhood bilingualism have no bearing on LLE, there is still little discussion of all the situation-specific, socioeconomic, sociocultural, linguistic, and caretaker-specific variables that affect what a child says (and does) in the context of late language emergence.

In much of the literature, LLE is discussed as a “disorder,” a pathological condition that children “have” (Rice, 2010, p. 324) which can result in impairments in their linguistic, social, cognitive, and literary development. Numerous websites use threatening language to position parents who don’t seek diagnosis and intervention as potentially damaging their child because if said child doesn’t receive early intervention, they might not “catch up” with peers, regardless of diagnosis (Lowry, 2012).

Consequently, these assertions and warnings circulate through online parenting communities. The message that parents receive is that they should consult a pediatrician and/or a speech-language pathologist as soon as possible to determine a “diagnosis” and, if need be, recommend a “dosage of early intervention services” (Paul & Roth, 2011, p. 331). In response to these warnings and recommendations, many parents have created and participate in online forums where they can discuss their concerns about their children’s speech development and “disorders,” intervention methods, and their experiences and perceptions.

These discussions however reveal how public discourse surrounding late language emergence has been shifting. Increasing parental and academic concerns about “over-diagnosing” children with conditions such as autism or attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) has given rise to metaphors to describe children who develop speech late but are otherwise neurotypical, or even “gifted” (Camarata, 2014, p. 59). Thus, descriptions and stories often conflict with and contradict one another, with some versions describing children whose language does not meet the “milestones” as prodigies comparable to well-known intellectuals rather than people with pathologies.

This idea of “prodigy versus pathology” was coined by an American economist turned social theorist, political, philosopher, and author Thomas Sowell (2001). His 2001 book, *The Einstein Syndrome: Bright Children Who Talk Late*, was based on his own research and studies conducted by Stephen Camarata. The title alone implies that some “late-talking” (usually male) children of highly educated parents were thought to be exceptionally “bright”—akin to Albert Einstein who was a late talker—and intellectually “gifted” with puzzle solving abilities (Sowell, 2001, p. 3). While this held enormous appeal to many parents, ironically, Sowell undermined his goals of challenging behaviorally based

diagnoses by labeling the category a “syndrome,” thereby connoting a pathological a set of behaviors.

From a discourse analytic perspective, Einstein syndrome can be understood as a form “strategic essentialism” (Spivak, 1990) in that members of an otherwise marginalized group are being lumped into, and “essentialized,” into this category with the intention of challenging pathological frameworks of LLE. Yet such categories can also disregard the nuances of how and why a child might not be meeting “age-appropriate” milestones. In addition, the criteria of Camarata’s description of “Einstein syndrome” often excludes young girls, children of working-class parentage, and children whose families did not receive a college education. Therefore, the syndrome suggests that male children to highly educated parents are more likely to be “gifted” intellectually than other children exhibiting LLE.

Hence, the “Einstein” analogy may not resonate with the experiences of many children and caretakers. In fact, multiple online forums feature a diverse array of parental responses to everything they have read and heard about children who do not seem to be going through expressive language “stages.” However, two prevalent themes that arose during my analyses were that of “pathology” and “prodigy.” My research goal was to study how parents discursively position their children as “having problems” and/or being “gifted.” How do such seemingly oppositional “prodigy” and “pathology” discursive scripts work in tandem in online forums to create and reproduce constructions of “normal” and “abnormal” expressive speech development?

Sample and Methodology

In order to answer these questions, I analyzed the threads in five forums in which parents discuss speech and language delays. Specifically, I conducted lexical analyses for terms used to describe children’s language development, along with thematic analyses for recurring themes and assumptions regarding delayed language development. In this paper, however, I narrow the text analyses to posts from the forums listed in Table 2.

Forum	Description
“What To Expect”	Childcare community forum for parenting advice. Based on <i>What To Expect</i> book series.
“Mothering”	<i>Mothering</i> magazine forum for parents “interested in exploring natural and eco-conscious living.”
“Circle of Moms”	Online community for mothers hosted by global media and technology company POPSUGAR Inc.

Table 2. List of Parenting Forums Included in Study

The websites selected for this study were found via Google search for “late talkers forum.” Public online forums provide free and open access material on niche topics. Forum members create their own usernames so as to remain anonymous, and the forum posts being analyzed do not contain demographic or legal information that can be used to trace their identities. Thus, this study qualifies for an IRB exemption given the participants’ anonymity and their decision to publish their comments on a public domain.

Data Analysis

I began by identifying and analyzing threads in which LLE was framed as a pathology, the most frequent of which connected LLE and autism. In the forum “What to Expect,” the first writer described her experiences with her “late talking” son, including the speech assessments he “was subjected to” and the interventions that were suggested. She describes all the “autistic-like” symptoms or “soft markers” for autism that she learned from clinicians and online sites. These “markers” functioned to elicit her anxieties about her child’s language development, which she says make her “really concerned.” She also articulates a narrative of guilt—she “should have acted sooner” but then she got her son “into private speech pathology right away.” This post exemplifies how the parent’s perception of her child as having “such a serious delay” that needed to be remediated has been shaped by labels used in the medical literature and by speech pathologists and other clinicians. In essence he had a pathology that was cured through the intervention of speech pathologists. She reports that her son’s speech is now “normal” and “right where [it] should be” in terms of “receptive language,” while only “mildly” delayed in expressive language but “catching up quickly.” This demonstrates that she has internalized the language of the professional literature that “characterizes language disorders as bundles of ‘deficits’ that are contained within the individual” (Kavorsky & Walsh, 1998, p. 16).

Another forum I examined, “Circle of Moms,” revealed the discursive construction of late talkers as prodigies. These children were also constructed as “abnormal,” but their LLE was interpreted as a gift. Almost all of the thread respondents referenced Thomas Sowell’s book to communicate the idea that their children may be prodigies. For example, one parent describes her son’s evaluation and her doubts about the child’s diagnosis of being at high risk for autism. She says that her son did not respond to early intervention because he is “extremely strong willed,” which she sees as characteristic of the Einstein syndrome. She downplays the fact that her son is exhibiting “characteristics of high functioning autism” because he does not display “the major ones.” According to her, his behavior deviates from the behavior of autistic children because he “makes eye contact,”

“is able to form bonds with others,” “shows emotion in an appropriate manner,” and is “very loving just like any other little kid.” This language highlights her assumptions about “typical” childhood behavior, interaction, and temperament. She finds relief in this syndrome and describes her “happy tears [at] finally finding something that described [her] son.” Many parents responded with quotes from Sowell’s book (2011, p. xi), particularly his recommendation that parents should let their child “develop in [their] own way” rather than immediately pursue clinical interventions.

This discursive construction of a child with LLE as a “prodigy” also appears in “Mothering.” In one of the threads, a parent is responding to another parent who asked her to “tell me about your late talker.” The writer describes her son’s language development from 21 months up until the age of 4, at which age he had a “language explosion” and since then was “always ahead of the charts.”

However, the posts in another thread of this forum display the extent to which parents simultaneously resist and invest in the “medical model” of late language emergence. In the first post, the parent expresses her “hate” and overall ambivalence about her child being labeled:

I hate to label my child as anything. The only point I feel in labeling is to better understand how to best provide the support (and treatment) necessary to develop into an adult who can function well in the world.

On the other hand, it is particularly telling to consider how the words “support” and “treatment” are deployed in relation to normality: with labeling and interventions, the child will “develop into an adult who can function well in the world,” implying that his not meeting the language “milestones” may lead to their being a dysfunctional or non-functional adult.

The response of the first parent illustrates the degree to which the perception of LLE is positioned within a discourse of medical pathology. The writer presents herself as an expert in that she knows the medical terminology used in research and clinical communities:

First, have you read Dual-diagnosis and Misdiagnosis of the Gifted (something like that). If you haven’t, please give that a read. My daughter fits the author’s description. So I’ve looked into Asperger’s, SPD, ADHD, visual-spatial, apraxia, Einsteins, etc. The school gave her CoGat test that showed that she’s very smart but has strong OE’s (Dabrowski Overexcitabilities). She has a few possible Asperger’s quirks BUT nothing strong enough to show shes on the spectrum. For now, the only label she has is delayed speech.

The parent begins by recommending a book based on the “dual” and “mis”-diagnosis of “gifted” children. Immediately preceding the recommendation is an assertion that her child “fits” the author’s description as “gifted.” She then responds to the first one’s reluctance to label her child by telling her about all the possible medical labels that may be used to categorize and “mis”-diagnose her own child. In her story, she further asserts that an IQ test showed that she’s “very smart” and has a few “quirks,” then emphasizes (“BUT”) the only label she has is “delayed speech.” Her response reveals an ideological framework that constructs any perceived “abnormality” as potentially a physical/psychiatric disorder—but it also reveals her fear of her child’s being labeled as having said disorders.

Discussion and Conclusion

These posts show how “reality” is created, dealt with, and made relevant by participants in and through interaction. They also support Ernest Keen’s (1998) argument that “medical knowledge conceals its constitutive power by appealing to discourses of science and clinical effectiveness, which in turn are constructed as benevolent, objective and neutral, transcending political and historical situatedness” (p. 126).

I am not arguing that health professionals are misdiagnosing late language emergence. Rather, what my research to date indicates is that the discursive construction of “normal” language development based on a “stages” or “milestones” model contributes to the pathologization of children whose receptive and expressive language development is variable, natural, and individual. As the medical labels of “delay,” “disorder,” “impairment,” “dysfunction,” and so forth circulate online, they dominate public discourse because they are assumed to be a reflection of an accumulation of incontrovertible scientific findings and knowledge. However, biomedical discourse dominates not because it offers solely objective truth, but because of its power to construct its particular version of reality. Medical knowledge about diseases and disorders can thus be constructed and developed by claims-makers and interested parties (Wilce, 2009).

As the posts in these online forums reveal, the biomedical discourse of child language development shapes how society responds to speech and cognitive “disorders.” Diagnoses of pathologies are always embedded with cultural meaning: disorders are socially constructed at the experiential level. This is reflected in online discussions in which parents reify and reproduce the notion of late language emergence as a “problem” that requires clinical intervention. Furthermore, the forum discussions demonstrate how parents’ internalized perceptions of children as “normal”

or “abnormal” is based on the degree to which their language development follows “stages” and “milestones” that clinicians have established. Parents whose children do not accomplish these “milestones” may resist a diagnosis of “pathology” by reframing late talkers as “prodigies.” However, the labeling of a child as a “pathology” or a “prodigy” both serve to “other” the child without considering their individual and sociocultural contexts. Medicalized labeling can make a “syndrome” or “disorder” out of traits that are distributed in varying degrees among the general population. If clinicians and researchers reconsidered their use of these labels, parents, caregivers, educators, and professionals can construct new ways of perceiving language development as situational and unique to each child.

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¿Mediador y testigo?: The Role of the Church in Nicaraguan Conflict

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Azani Creeks is a senior at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, where she majors in Law, History, and Culture. Her research focuses primarily on how religious institutions, spaces, and rhetoric affect the lives of underrepresented populations. Influenced by her study abroad experiences in Brazil, Nicaragua, and South Africa, Azani applies a global lens to her studies on religious systems. As an aspiring professor, she plans to pursue a PhD in religious studies.

Abstract

This article examines the role of the Church in Nicaragua, focusing specifically on its development and function during the 2018 movement to remove Daniel Ortega from office. Using in-depth interviews from a more extensive project completed during a semester abroad, the analysis reveals a deep mistrust of the government's Christian message, though not of the Church itself. The Church, long aligned with and controlled by the government, broke with tradition by choosing to denounce the Ortega administration and defend the rights of the people.

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The Catholic Church of Nicaragua is a longstanding institution that has often been revered by the people as a source of moral direction. Though the Church was fragmented by the Sandinista insurrection and revolution against the Somoza family dictatorship in the 1970s, it reemerged in 2018 as the newest enemy of the government under President Daniel Ortega who is currently in his fourth term [in office 1985–1990, 2006–present]. After a popular movement to remove Ortega from office sprang forth in April 2018, both the government and protestors turned to the Church in hopes that it could mediate a national dialogue. Using interviews conducted with movement leaders, academics, and other professionals in Nicaragua and Costa Rica right before and during the 2018 conflict, this essay illuminates the development of the Church from a government-controlled institution to defender of the people even as it faces state repression.

Church-State Relations Prior to April 2018

In 1893, Jose Santos Zelaya became the first Nicaraguan president to declare a separation of church and state, diminishing the Church's power in civil affairs. Decades later, the Church rejoiced when Anastasio Somoza

Garcia restored religious influence in the 1930s. In the years of the Somoza family regime (1936–1979), the government enjoyed the support of the Catholic Church through public blessings, special masses and funeral honors in return for benefits like new church buildings and cars.

In 1968, the Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM) met in Medellin, Colombia, where the leaders of the Church vowed to side with the poor and marginalized. Members of the council referenced and supported Gustavo Gutierrez's message of liberation theology, which emphasizes the importance and agency of the lay population. This placed the Latin American leaders at odds with the global Catholic Church, which was focused on a fight against communism. Therefore, the Vatican condemned Nicaraguan religious leaders like priest Ernesto Cardenal, who said, "the four Gospels are all equally communist" (Novak). Influenced by Latin American liberation theology, and despite opposition from the global Catholic Church, many religious (and often revolutionary) communities came together to form a popular church in Nicaragua in the late '60s and '70s.

The Catholic hierarchy of Nicaragua did not publicly and explicitly condemn the Somoza family dictatorship until 1973. Conversely, leaders of the popular church had been criticizing the regime since the late 1960s. These leaders openly announced their full support of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), an opposition group named after an anti-imperialist revolutionary who was assassinated by Somoza Garcia's national guard in the 1930s. With mounting pressure from the masses and international governments, the Church hierarchy eventually denounced the dictatorship, but refused to support the FSLN due to its socialist leaning. For some, this indicated that the hierarchy only spoke out against the government because it interfered with their own political and economic interests. The hierarchy continued to oppose the Sandinistas until just weeks before the triumph, publishing a letter that reluctantly signaled their support for the revolution led by the FSLN (Dodson 38–40). The Sandinista insurrection essentially created two Churches: the institutional, more conservative Church, and the popular, more progressive Church.

After finally taking control of the government in 1979, the Sandinistas set out to implement a variety of changes. In 1980, the FSLN published a communiqué, guaranteeing religious freedom and declaring the separation of church and state (Ramírez Soriano 29). The 1987 constitution (approved by Ortega's Sandinista government) declares: "the state has no official religion." However, Ortega's current reign, which began when he won the 2006 presidential election, explicitly incorporates religion into its branding under the slogan "cristiana, socialista, solidaria" [Christian,

socialist, and in solidarity]. Coined for campaign materials and speeches made by Ortega during the 2001 election cycle, the phrase has fallen flat among the Nicaraguan population though the government continues to use it. Many like Ruben Reyes Jirón, a psychologist who specializes in gender and masculinities, are not convinced by any part of the tag. The state unconstitutionally declares itself Christian, even as it “has discriminated, excluded, humiliated, mistreated, and assassinated its people” (Reyes Jirón, personal interview 2018; all translations mine). Though for many Nicaraguans, being socialist “means to share the goods and for everyone to have the same opportunities,” both domestic and international parties agree that Nicaragua now belongs to the wave of neoliberal capitalism that has swept through Latin America. Conversations with the country’s poor and marginalized reveal that the “government has prioritized its alliance with the business sector” instead of standing in solidarity with those who need it most. Beyond using religious messaging like the tag in official materials, the government “has given [religious leaders] a huge series of economic benefits: exonerations, positions in the government, personal attention when their leaders come to visit, etc.” (Delgado, personal interview 2018). Through these benefits, the Ortega administration maintained a generally positive relationship with the Church prior to the 2018 conflict.

The Church as a Mediator in 2018

On April 17, 2018, *La Gaceta* (the government’s official publication) announced reforms to the National Social Security Institute (INSS). Only days after small protests denouncing the poor management of a fire at Indio Maiz, the most valuable nature reserve in the country, larger protests against changes to INSS formed in the streets. The INSS reforms would increase social security contributions by workers and their employers, while also reducing pensions for health by 5 percent. The protests, mainly comprised of students,¹ were met with violence by the police, military, and paramilitary groups.

During the protests, religious groups (both evangelical and Catholic) responded with strong support for the students being repressed by government forces. Even more striking, the Catholic hierarchy as well as the popular church almost immediately supported the students, marking a departure from the slow response of the hierarchy during the Somoza era. Throughout the nation, cathedrals functioned as bases for the wounded and others who needed help. Knowing this, police and paramilitaries focused attacks on these sacred spaces. On April 20, the leaders of the more traditional Episcopal Conference of Nicaragua (CEN) released a communiqué affirming the right to protest and rejecting “the repressive actions exercised by members close to the government” (CEN). Supporting the message of

the communiqué, Pope Francis (inducted 2013) addressed the situation in Nicaragua in messages from the Vatican on April 22 and June 3; the head of the Catholic Church expressed that he “joined the bishops in the petition to end the violence” (“Preocupacion maxima”). As days passed, the need for a solution became imminent. Ortega suggested a national dialogue between the government and representatives of civil society, mediated by the Catholic Church. On April 26, the Church accepted the invitation.

Mediation can only work if both parties accept the terms of mediation and respect the mediator, meaning that this third party would need to be trusted by both the government and the people. Evidently, as the suggestion came from Ortega himself, the government believed that the Church had the best chance of appeasing the people, even with the Church’s recent support of the protests. Conversely, one may assume that the Nicaraguan people would not trust the Church as a neutral mediator due to government use of religious messages and alliances. However, the Church has been embraced and applauded in past months by Christians and non-Christians alike. Gabriel Perez Setright, a youth organizer whose father fought for the FSLN during the insurrection and revolution in the 20th century, says that young people “were nervous at first because [they] thought the Church was going to screw [them over]. None of the organizers trusted them, but [they] didn’t really have another choice.” He was pleasantly surprised to find that “it seems like the Church is really on the side of the people” (personal interview 2018).

Perez Setright’s comment that the organizers had no choice in trusting the Church as a mediator reflects the deep religious roots of Nicaraguan history and culture. Due to hundreds of years of religious influence, “the general consciousness of the people is not secular” (López Vigil 2018). This religious consciousness bears an inclination toward a leadership with Christian tendencies. Zoilamérica Ortega Murillo, the estranged daughter of vice president Rosario Murillo and stepdaughter of Ortega, says that Nicaragua “needed gods, saviors, people of power. This is how we were formed. We needed a type of leader that would always open the path for us, and for it to be a positive path, he has to be a chosen one” (personal interview 2018).

Because “religious vision and the Bible dominate as a frame of reference in the belief system of the people,” one can find tremendous religious influence in nearly every aspect of Nicaraguan life, which contributes to the government’s desire to appear close to the Church (Reyes Jirón, personal interview 2018). Zoilamérica believes that “the government always has the mindset—the necessity—of avoiding the Church turning into an enemy” (personal interview 2018). Theologian María López Vigil agrees,

saying, “with the church, [the government] maintains a relationship not of support, but of control through perks” (personal interview 2018). The distinction between control and support is an important one to make. For many years, the Ortega administration found great success in creating controlling relationships with Catholic and evangelical leaders through economic benefits, granting positions within the government, and even blackmail:

They have made these alliances with sectors of the evangelical and Catholic Church with Cardinal Obando y Bravo, Cardinal Brenes, some bishops, priests, and pastors. They have done this as a way to keep them captured. So more than support, [the government is] paying for patron saint festivals, church repairs, trips for government officials to churches. It is also a way of knowing their private lives. They know their private lives—they know that this bishop has a mistress, and this mistress has children (López Vigil, personal interview 2018).

Through building these connections, the government uses all of this information to quiet any opposition. This strategy, however, has only worked with more conservative religious leaders. Before the 2018 movement began, there was a clear division of clergy, with “a group led by Obando y Bravo that is connected to the government, and another group—[Monsignor Silvio] Baez and [Bishop Rolando] Álvarez from Matagalpa are more critical” (Delgado, personal interview 2018). The schism persisted from the times of the Sandinista revolution, in which conservative leaders were at odds with proponents of liberation theology.

López Vigil notes a unique and recent development in Nicaraguan church-state relations: the government must appeal to Catholic and protestant groups alike. The protestant population in Nicaragua grew from 3 to 20 percent between 1965 and 1990, and some estimate that the number is now closer to 50 percent (Chavarría, personal interview 2018). Beyond dealing with a divided Catholic Church, the government made attempts to reconcile the divisions within Christianity itself. This, perhaps, is why Ortega’s slogan uses “Christian” instead of “Catholic”—to be more inclusive to the rapidly growing evangelical (specifically, Pentecostal) population. Some have noticed an increase in evangelical leaders in positions of political power, signaling that the government may “have a closer relationship to the Pentecostal leaders than the Catholic clergy” (Delgado, personal interview 2018). Though this may be true, the Ortega administration still called on the Catholic Church for mediation, likely because there is an organized body that represents the Church (CEN), and because the country is historically Catholic.

Unfortunately for the government, control over Church leaders did not directly translate to support from their congregations. Instead of focusing on efforts to build a network of support from religious communities, the Ortega government used their power to make sure that no religious leaders could speak out against them. By April of 2018, it became clear that the administration had lost control—not just of religious leaders, but also of their image as a government that was “Christian, socialist, and in solidarity” with the people. Furthermore, it was clear that Nicaraguan society, religious or not, did not support the government. The first few months of protests signaled an important shift in church-state relations as the clergy needed to pick a side to support and stand unified in their decision. Ultimately, the Catholic Church leaders who comprised the mediation team sided with the people, refusing to continue mediation while the government sanctioned brutal, and often fatal, attacks on protestors.

In July of 2018, paramilitaries physically attacked Monsignor Baez, Archbishop Brenes, and other Church leaders with their bodies and homemade weapons (Fulkerson). As mentioned by López Vigil, Brenes used to be closely associated with the Ortega government, while Baez took a more critical approach. With recent attacks on all clergy, regardless of past affiliation, the government appears to no longer be interested in maintaining a positive relationship between the church and state. Now, the entire Church, despite its previous fragmentation, moves through Nicaragua as the latest enemy of the Ortega administration, with its leaders suffering desecration of their churches, mocking by the president himself, and most recently, acid attacks (Fulkerson).

Despite the failure of the official national dialogue and the persistence of the violent repression against them, some Church leaders continue to announce that they are willing to attempt mediation again, but only if the repression stops. As of the end of 2018, many have given up on the possibility of dialogue in the future as the government refuses to accept responsibility for the human rights violations of which it has been accused. For the Ortega administration, the Church presented itself as the only viable mediator because they believed they exercised enough control over its leaders to swing results in the government’s favor. No longer acting as mediator, the Church is now the defender of the people, living up to Zoilamérica’s vision for the Church:

I think the most important role of the church is not in a space of power. I mean the church as an institution. I think the most important role of the church is to accompany the people—all kinds of people. For me, the church must nurture Christians in the public service. It must strengthen the practice of faith in values (personal interview 2018).

When presented with a repressive government that calls itself Christian, the people of Nicaragua have never through religion out with the state. Instead, they reject the notion that a true Christian government would hurt its people, protecting their religious affiliations while still denouncing state failure. In both insurrections, the Nicaraguan population found religious leaders they could trust: those of the popular church in the 1970s and '80s, and the more liberal clergy in 2018. Though the Church did not mediate in the 1970s, opposition from the popular church was crucial to the fall of the Somoza regime. This, paired with its respected role as mediator-turned-defender in conflict some 40 years later, reflects the centrality that the Church has and will continue to occupy in Nicaraguan affairs, even as it may fall from government favor.

Endnote

- 1 For this reason, the movement is often referred to as *El Movimiento Estudiantil 19 de Abril* (April 19th Student Movement).

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Deconstructing Controlling Images: The Strong Black Woman and Delusions of Strength in *The Salt Eaters*

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Kelsey Desir graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 2018, where she majored in English, minored in Africana Studies, and received a certificate in French. Her research centers the representation of the Strong Black Woman (SBW) trope in expressive culture. She primarily analyzes late 20th century African-American literature to examine Black women's approaches to reclaiming their ideological bodies after centuries of deliberate misrepresentation. She is currently an English PhD student at Duke University.

Abstract

The 1970s and early '80s are an appropriate moment to look at works published by Black women authors, most notably those that explore and center their struggle against racism and sexism. Black women's systematic power is quite limited in the United States. Therefore, analyzing expressive culture is particularly important because it allows them to exercise significant agency. During these decades, Black women used literature as a medium to portray themselves on their own terms and divorce their identity from externally defined controlling images. This paper builds on the work of Patricia Hill Collins and considers controlling images to be negative and harmful representations that are continuously perpetuated by hegemonic culture and projected onto Black women. In particular, the Strong Black Woman (SBW) trope is one of the main distorted images of Black womanhood that texts published in this period grapple with. This paper analyzes Toni Cade Bambara's examination of the SBW trope in her novel, *The Salt Eaters* (1981). This paper ultimately argues that Bambara's text illustrates the importance of materializing Black female pain and labor.

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Bill O'Reilly, a former Fox News commentator, insulted Congresswoman Maxine Waters in the spring of 2017. In particular, *Fox and Friends* played a video of the congresswoman proclaiming that criticizing President Trump is an act of patriotism, and when asked to provide commentary on her statements, O'Reilly stated: "I didn't hear a word she said. I was looking at the James Brown wig" (Wang). In response to O'Reilly's attempt to demean her, Congresswoman Waters firmly asserted the following on MSNBC's *All In with Chris Hayes*: "I'm a strong black woman, and I cannot be intimidated, I cannot be undermined, I cannot be thought to be [afraid] of Bill O'Reilly or anybody" (MSNBC). Her cadence places emphasis on the word "strong" to denote the extent to which she believes her words to be true and the pride she feels donning the Strong Black Woman (SBW) label. The act of declaring oneself a Strong Black Woman is empowering for the Congresswoman. Many Black women take pride in both their individual and collective reputations of being strong—being known as women who exhibit "resilience, fortitude, and perseverance" in the face of adversity (Woods-Giscombé 669).

Although Waters declaring herself a Strong Black Woman is a personal act of self-affirmation, the idea of the SBW unfortunately cannot be divorced from hundreds of years of racism and sexism. A Black woman saying, "I am a strong Black woman," is an *appropriation* of an externally constructed paradigm of Black womanhood. That is, the Strong Black Woman is what Patricia Hill Collins calls a "controlling image"—a harmful stereotype or negative representation constructed by white hegemonic culture that "make[s] racism, sexism, poverty, and other forms of social injustice appear to be natural, normal, and inevitable parts of everyday life" (69). Therefore, Black women casually calling themselves "Strong Black Women," or embracing the label as Maxine Waters did, is representative of the insidious and quotidian functioning of the trope. Although on the surface evoking the SBW trope promotes perseverance in a society that will continue to try to deter Black women from living their lives on their own terms, its usage is quite loaded. Behind the conceptualization of the Strong Black Woman is the idea that Black women are physically and emotionally invulnerable. The controlling image of the Strong Black Woman is not only ingrained in the grammar that members of outside groups use to interpret Black women and their lived experiences, it is also present in the way Black women view themselves. The pressure to live up to the Strong Black Woman myth is the central conflict that Toni Cade Bambara explores in her novel *The Salt Eaters* (1980). Toni Cade Bambara evinces the danger of Black women and the Black community's commitment to the SBW trope by illustrating the harmful effects unrealistic notions of strength can have on Black women's wellness.

Hegemonic culture's investment in the perpetuation of the trope lies within the desire to continue reinforcing oppressive power structures that heavily rely on the fiction of Black female invulnerability. For instance, the myth of Black women's extreme fortitude was used to justify overworking Black women as field hands and domestic servants during chattel slavery. Moreover, it is still used today to defend the continued exploitation of Black women's labor in low-paying (yet demanding) service industry jobs (Collins 46). Conversely, Black women's affinity to the trope stems from the urge to "correct" the Black woman's image, challenge other controlling images like Mammy, Jezebel, and Sapphire with the SBW who seemingly has better traits (Collins 70–96; Nelson 552).

The images of Mammy, Jezebel, and Sapphire decontextualize Black women's realities and make them feel ashamed because of their negative connotations. Mammy is the obedient house servant who prioritizes the caretaking of her white employer's (and in the past, owner's) family over her own. Her self-sacrificing devotion to serving the white nuclear family structure makes her "the ideal Black female relationship to elite White male power" (Collins 72). Like Mammy, the image of Jezebel, the hypersexualized Black woman, originates from slavery. The idea that Black women are sexually deviant is used to diminish the seriousness of rape committed against them. For instance, during slavery well into the Jim Crow era, the myth of wanton Black female sexuality excused rampant sexual assault by white men and casted lusty Black women as threats to white marriages (Harris-Perry 67). Elements of Sapphire, the Angry Black Woman stereotype, can be found in all controlling images (Harris-Perry 88). The idea that Black women are innately angry, curt, and aggressive is widely accepted (and contested less than other controlling images) (Harris-Perry 88). It is therefore used to dismiss Black women when they present any form of assertiveness when advocating for their rights or express displeasure over inequities (Harris-Perry 96). Many Black women note the gulf that exists between whom they see themselves as and these popular shame-inducing constructions that are supposed to represent them. Instinctively, Black women work to combat these harmful stereotypes through what they deem to be recuperative images, the Strong Black Woman being the most popular one. To many Black women, the image of the unwaveringly resilient SBW is more attractive, dignified, and morally sound in comparison to that of the others. She is not passive like Mammy, indecent like Jezebel, or disruptive like Sapphire. She is instead determined, the backbone of her community, and unphased by systematic oppression. Regardless of the fond feelings some Black women may have toward the SBW, she is still just as harmful as other controlling images in that she works to cement Black women as beasts of labor in the American imaginary.

Although Black women are constrained by controlling images in many respects, they are not without some forms of agency to push against this marginalization. For instance, the realm of expressive culture gives Black women a significant amount of autonomy to confront harmful images and negotiate their relationship with tropes like the Strong Black Woman caricature. The 1970s–1980s were particular decades in which Black women were having conversations about their identities through literature—poetry, novels, short stories. Within these texts, Black women authors were having critical discussions in attempts to restore context to Black women's lived experiences.

For example, Toni Morrison's *Sula* (1973), Maya Angelou's "Still I Rise" (1978), Mari Evan's "Black Queen Blues" (1981), and several other texts in this period engage with the SBW trope. While some texts like "Still I Rise" valorize Black women's strength at the risk of holding little space for Black female vulnerability, others explore the cracks in the SBW trope. For instance, Morrison's *Sula* features the character of Eva Peace, the overbearing matriarch whose hyper performance of strength cannot save herself nor her family from devastation. Similarly, "Black Queen Blues" centers how systematic oppression can leave Black women feeling stagnant in their lives. However, Toni Cade Bambara's novel *The Salt Eaters* is a particularly notable text that works toward making a case for the dangers of the caricature. The novel elucidates the importance of expressing both the physical and emotional ramifications that come with Black women performing strength in order to situate them as fully realized subjects.

Toni Cade Bambara's treatment of the SBW trope in *The Salt Eaters* materializes Black female pain and labor, recognizes Black women's perspectives, and provides insight into the complications of their lives. Moreover, this text contextualizes and problematizes the grammar of the Strong Black Woman. Although several of the Black women characters possess notable characteristics of the trope such as introspection, isolation, pride, and even sass, Bambara pushes beyond the shell of humanity that is the SBW and attempts to flesh her out by illuminating the ramifications and circumstances of the ways her Black women characters navigate the world (Harris 11).

One of the novel's main characters is Velma Henry, a community activist in the 1970s who attempts to commit suicide to escape the innumerable pressures in her life. The invention of a Black woman character who tries to take her own life is notable because of the popular belief "that very few Blacks commit suicide" (Kimmel 6). More specifically, when *The Salt Eaters* was published, Black women—people raised to endure—were not considered to be suicide risks (Kimmel 6). This novel provides a literary case study of the

dangers in controlling images being absorbed and perpetuated in a Black community. Velma constitutes Bambara's portrait of a Black woman who is driven to the breaking point by the expectation to embody the SBW, a Black woman who tries to be superwoman only to find out that she is not.

Bambara crafts an image of a Black woman who is weighed down by the society she lives in. Velma is particularly unwell in her town Claybourne, a community that determines Black women's value by their performance of labor and their ability to endure. Therefore, while performing a healing on Velma after her suicide attempt, Minnie Ransom—the spiritual community healer—tells her, “The source of health is never outside, sweetheart” (Bambara 220). That is to say, Velma determining her value based on outside conceptualizations of what constitutes a good Black woman can have detrimental consequences. The activist community that Velma takes part in is not unlike the larger capitalist structure of the nation in that it uses Black female labor without giving them significant recognition. Like many Black women participants in the Civil Rights movement throughout the '50s and '60s, Velma does not receive any tangible remuneration in the forms of recognized leadership or seniority in her political circles. Women are marginalized to only contributing “input” to Black men's political plans (Bambara 30). In this society that upholds the idea of use-value, in which members are appraised by the amount of labor they perform, Velma and other women in her activist circle struggle to reconcile their desires for acknowledgement and the expectation for them to perform without complaint (Felluga).

This uneven dynamic between Black men and women in the political sphere is clearly illustrated in the scene that depicts the gathering of a community ad hoc committee. Jay Patterson, a political hopeful, essentially delivers two speeches simultaneously when discussing his upcoming campaign. There is the surface level address regarding his impending run for office and the *unspoken* subtext that dictates tasks to the Black women members. When Jay Patterson expresses the importance of formalizing the committee for his campaign, the significant amount of “bylaws and charters and incorporation papers” that Black women must file is overlooked (Bambara 28). Once Patterson mentions that “somebody . . . ought to get cracking on a rough draft of the bylaws,” it is clear to all the women in the room that they are the “somebody” to whom he is referring (Bambara 28). Bambara illustrates how the care work of Black women is left out of the rhetoric of Black machismo. The need for Black women—“somebodies”—to work is implied but not stated directly and never politely requested; Black men in this space unabashedly request labor and Black women are left to listen and calculate the “money to be raised, mailing lists to be culled, halls to be booked” (Bambara 27). All

these actions result in hours being taken away “from school, home, work, [and] sleep” (Bambara 27). These Black women have to accept the fact that Patterson never “[speaks] of these things,” never acknowledges the work and sacrifice behind the glorified activism of Black men (Bambara 27).

However, during this meeting there is a significant moment of resistance to this exploitation. Velma accuses Patterson of being “insensitive” to the Black women organizers in the way that “he makes up lists . . . of all the things he wants done and posts [them] on the refrigerator door just like there were little kitchen fairies and yard elves and other magic creatures to get all these things done” (Bambara 31). It is salient that Velma calls attention to how he treats Black women like “magic creatures” and carries on as if their labor consists of immaterial supernatural acts. It speaks to the dangerous nature of conceptualizing Black female labor as an infinite commodity that is detached from a fleshy body that feels pain, fatigue, and frustration. Therefore, it is quite fitting that Velma calls Patterson an “abstractionist,” someone who feels no need to fill the gap, acknowledge the efforts that lie between “want”—his desires—and “done”—the achievement of the wants (Bambara 31). This abstractionist thinking results in neglecting both the Black female body and mind which may lead to severe un-wellness and unhappiness as seen in the case of Velma.

Although Bambara demonstrates how Velma's interiority goes unseen by those around her, she provides a clear image of her pain to the readers. For instance, while Velma's husband, Obie Henry, is well aware of the fact that “It took him, Jan, Marcus . . . Daisy Moultrie and her mother . . . the treasurer of the board, and two student interns to replace Velma at the Academy,” which he runs in their town of Claybourne, he fails to grasp why Velma cannot push aside her emotional troubles and “dump all of it” to please him (Bambara 25, 93). In contrast to Obie's inability to see Velma as a fully formed human with intrinsic necessities, Velma's need for an emotional release is made quite legible to the reader. In particular, there is a moment in which Velma is walking to a hotel having marched all day in support of a political gathering while on her menstrual cycle: “She'd been reeking of wasted blood and rage. She was hanging on to the counter with both hands, nails splitting, hands swollen. She could barely stand up” (Bambara 34–38). Bambara specifically locates the physical effects labor has on the body of a Black woman. After spending the day being “shot at, spit on, nearly run down by a cement mixer,” Velma is wounded and barely standing (Bambara 34). Moreover, she is filled with “rage” (Bambara 36). Using her body to advocate on behalf of her community and reaping no rewards not only harms her physically but takes a toll on her emotional well-being. After constantly being exploited by those around her, Velma reaches a point where even her own home “was

no longer a comfortable place for her” and she “would slap her hand over her mouth and press her whole face shut as if to stifle a scream” (Bambara 95). Her emotional struggles are depicted, the vulnerability of her body is defined, the labor involved in her work is made visible. A part of situating Black women as fully realized subjects involves acknowledging that the stamina and energy Black women use to support their families and communities is *finite*. This highlights how different actual Black women are from the grandiose projection of the SBW trope. Ultimately, Bambara demonstrates how ideas of invulnerability are weaponized against Black women.

The Strong Black Woman trope is particularly dangerous because many Black women fail to recognize it as a controlling image, a harmful stereotype that strips them of their subjectivity. Although there are benefits to Black women providing themselves with the self-confidence needed to navigate a patriarchal-white-supremacist world, the perpetuation of the SBW runs the risk of dehumanizing Black womanhood. If one analyzes the SBW closely they will find that it is eerily similar to the controlling images it is supposed to combat (Harris-Perry 187). The Strong Black Woman puts needs of others before her own similarly to Mammy. Like Jezebel, assaults on her body are not taken seriously. Additionally, she is angry like Sapphire except she is expected to internalize these emotions. Therefore, the construction of the Strong Black Woman is a trap. The trope downplays the impact external factors such as systematic oppression and interpersonal conflicts have on Black women’s wellbeing and encourages them to suffer in silence. In other words, the myth promotes a false sense of Black women’s agency that exonerates both systems and Black communities from providing them with needed support and resources. It sets an unrealistic standard in which Black women feel as though it is their sole responsibility to ameliorate the conditions of their lives and that of those around them. When they fall short, as all humans do, Black women who suffer from this superwoman complex consider it a personal failing (Harris-Perry 189). Velma’s mental breakdown and suicide attempt are examples of the detrimental effects of attempting to live up to the SBW.

Bambara’s *The Salt Eaters* demonstrates that deconstructing and truly reckoning with the SBW trope involves unpacking the dynamics Black women have with their surrounding community and society. Through Velma, Bambara highlights how Black women develop unhealthy habits in an effort to live up to the SBW trope such as taking on tasks that should be done by multiple people. Deconstructing the SBW trope and centering the realities of Black women’s lived experiences requires internal, interpersonal, and societal interrogation. That is, the acceptance of the SBW trope is a multi-layered problem. Although “the source of health”

may lie within individual Black women, their communities and larger societies are essential to this journey towards sustaining generational wellness. Bambara elucidates how Black women’s performance of the SBW is encouraged by those around them. Both Velma’s husband and the other men of her activist circles approve of her straining herself when it serves their interests. Those who claim to love and appreciate Black women need to recognize the dangerous effects of demanding Black women to over-extend themselves on their behalf. Thus, dismantling the dangerous notion of Black female invulnerability demands a cultural shift. Black women need sustainable schemas of self-definition, ones that prioritize self-care and realistic self-expectations lest to experience the hardships of Velma Henry.

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The Anti-Black Pendulum: The Racial Limitations of Foucault's Panopticism and Penal Reform in Brazil

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Abstract

In order to advance to what the Brazilian state perceived as a modern democracy in the early 19th century, they looked to mirror the correctional prison model found in Western Europe. Opened in the early 1850s, Rio de Janeiro's Correction House was the initial thrust towards rehabilitating incarcerated peoples through consistent observation and supervised hard labor. These elements are reminiscent of the Panopticon and Michel Foucault's corresponding theory of panopticism. This theoretical framework of control dominated surveillance literature for the majority of the 20th century. While it was eventually supplanted for a network-based framework, known as an "assemblage," the Panopticon served as an example of how surveillance literature assumes that white experiences of power are generalizable to those of non-white populations. By incorporating the pervasive legacy of African enslavement, one finds that race and surveillance neatly dovetail within colonized spaces. The continuity of enslavement during the Correction House's operation would ultimately dispel hopes for a viable correctional prison as state violence continued to proliferate. The failure of the facility did not come from the Brazilian penal system's inability to replicate panoptic control. Instead, the failure of panoptic corrections in Brazil manifested due to the model itself being incapable of rehabilitating non-white populations given it ignored a legacy of anti-black violence and coercion.

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Introduction

During the early 19th century, the Brazilian state sought to enter the global market and earn the title of a modern democracy. Inspired by the success of Western Europe, correctional prisons were a crucial indicator of the shift to modern civilization. In addition to improving their global image, such facilities would help to control the violent criminality that seemingly threatened Brazilian national stability and the growth of the private sector (Salvatore and Aguirre 1996). Such goals demanded overhauls in penal reform that favored rehabilitating incarcerated Brazilians (Chazkel 2011). However, the correctional project eventually returned to violent measures, specifically capital punishment and forced segregation of enslaved Afro-Brazilian and indigenous populations. While such a development may not come off as novel, one must consider the ways in which the duality of enslavement is masked by its vehement brutality. In that vein, there is little attention on the systematic collection of data, or surveillance, of non-white bodies.

Speaking to the surveillance component, there was a coordinated effort to track the movement, location, and bodies of enslaved Africans within colonized spaces. In other words, slavery was just as much about surveillance as it was about violence. For this reason, race and surveillance are intertwined and cannot be divorced even in the era following abolition. This piece seeks to emphasize the importance of said connection and highlight a pervasive issue in the field of surveillance studies—the centralization of white subjectivity. First, I provide an overview of Foucault's theory of panopticism. Like other competing frameworks within surveillance literature, Foucault's theory relies on white populations' experiences with power that become increasingly apparent as blackness comes into focus (Browne 2015). Second, I highlight on the operation of the Correction House in Rio de Janeiro to exemplify the shortcomings of the Panoptic model in its application to non-white populations. The latter point is to demonstrate that the inclusion of non-white subjects undermines theories on white-washed systems of power.

Surveillance Theory and Race

After 1757, state control gradually receded into prisons in France following an increasing stigmatization of public punishment. Behind the correctional prison walls, punishment became a private matter of the state (Foucault 1979). Transitioning from sovereign, violent, power to disciplinary power, the new punishment placed political subjects under constant observation and a regimented schedule to cultivate an internal self-regulation; they were "taught" power. This structural cultivation of the subject is the foundation of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon (Figure 1) and the

process Michel Foucault claimed it gave birth to: panopticism. The prison became a symbol of the state's growing monopolization of violence as public displays of coercion were no longer necessary to regulate the social world (Foucault 1979). Instead, close observation and documentation of movement was both more economical and efficient as power could now be cultivated *within* the subject under observation without any additional force. This evolution of power proved to be an insidious omen as control was now more difficult to locate within day-to-day happenings.

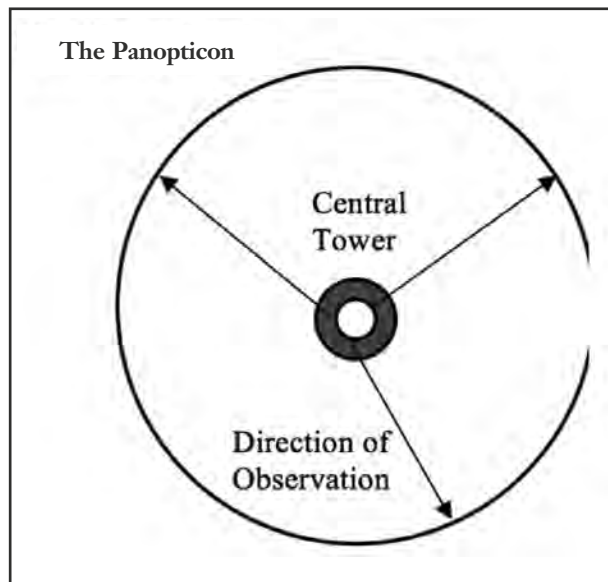


Figure 1. Imagined as a circular prison built around a central observation tower, every housed individual would be subjected to a rigid, daily routine for the purposes of conditioning and reintroduction into society. The tower itself could see into every cell, giving the illusion that subjects were under constant supervision.

As Foucault's discourse of power joined the conversation on surveillance theory, scholars praised panopticism for its ability to explain collective methods of social control that wedded nicely to the growing interest in observational technology and data collection. However, the structure itself, and its respective framework, had also developed an odious supremacy and centered itself as *the* theory for understanding mechanisms of social control vis-à-vis surveillance (Haggerty 2006). Adding to the concern over the theoretical centralization of the Panopticon, Foucault omitted observational surveillance technology (e.g., Closed Circuit Television Cameras or CCTV) despite writing during a time where the technology existed. Even with this limitation, Foucault still made a teleological claim on the trajectory of power. As more "opticons" entered the fray to account for limitations in the original theory (e.g., banopticism), questions about its validity multiplied. Today, Foucault's critics argue that the incorporation of surveillance technology extends social control beyond the carceral imagination (Haggerty 2006). This means that in breaking down

the Panopticon, institutions no longer mirror prisons as Foucault (1979) initially claimed. Instead, they are their own unique manifestations of social control that are linked across a surveillant assemblage.

Broadly speaking, the surveillant assemblage is a theoretical web that emphasizes the movement between static points for a more dynamic approach (Haggerty and Ericson 2000). For example, instead of focusing on a welfare office or a hospital, we focus on the social connections *between* these spaces to uncover the richness found at each end. We can see this as an alternative sociological imagination where instead of connecting history and biography, we analyze the bridges between nodes of social reality that may even exist at a fixed point in time (Wade 2017). The momentum needed to analyze these nodes does not go solely in one direction as new connections manifest and decay. With our growing reliance on the internet and technology, surveillance has become a "rhizomatic assemblage" where connections spread like roots with no predetermined end goal (Haggerty and Ericson 2000). The relationships between institutions of control have become unpredictable insofar as we cannot determine where they will intersect next. Taking unpredictability into account, surveillance theory has deviated further from the Panoptic model.

While the Panopticon has been decentered, passing over its white notions of power pose a greater threat to surveillance literature today. As already stated, the Panopticon has lost its favor with theorists in the age of the rhizomatic surveillant assemblage. But the current understanding of how surveillance operates is still rooted in a sentiment ignorant of color—everyone supposedly endures this process equally (Browne 2015). In Foucault's case, the development of the modern French prison served as the reference point for how we understood bureaucratic power today. However, the theoretical framework centered white experiences which promotes a false narrative that said experiences are generalizable to those of non-white populations (Alves 2018). Browne (2015) points out this issue by noting that Jeremy Bentham, the designer of the Panopticon itself, began theorizing the prison model on a boat carrying enslaved African women below deck. In essence, the panoptic model was unfit for regulating populations otherwise treated as property. The disparity is not only limited to race but also gender, class, body-type, and a whole host of different socio-economic and phenotypical features. In many colonized spaces, white, straight, able-bodied, middle-class, male citizens are the prime beneficiaries of being structurally invisible. In addition to said invisibility they also establish the benchmarks that determine which bodies are placed under observation (Shepard 2016). Indeed, surveillance is less about total supervision and more about monitoring deviation from hegemonic normality.

But in the case of African peoples, there was no decrease in racial subordination over time vis-à-vis surveillance. If anything, the process has become more efficient when it comes to both observation and tracking. Beginning this conversation, John Fiske (1998) succinctly states that “today’s seeing eye is white, and its object is colored” (pg. 69). While this statement does hold merit, Fiske’s take on the development of race-based observation assumes that the relationship was not always present between white and non-white populations. Furthermore, to assert that the contemporary is the extent to which a system of power has operated dismisses more pervasive historical contexts. The underlying motives of modern surveillance have only become more apparent since African enslavement.

Taking the dehumanizing process of slavery into account, Browne (2015) asserts that “racism and antiblackness undergird and sustain the intersecting surveillances of our present order” (pg. 8). Browne’s argument both problematizes “colorless” theorization of surveillance and challenges Fiske’s argument by extending beyond the contemporary period and into the past. In doing so, surveillance becomes a phenomenon rooted in enslavement and the need to keep African populations documented and visible. Slave passes and lantern laws are examples of mandatory documentation and mandatory visibility in the United States, respectively (Browne 2015; Parenti 2003). Slave passes were documents enslaved Africans had to carry when moving between plantations, accessing commercial spaces, etc. Their master’s signature usually granted the necessary permission to move between sites. While enslaved Africans were in transit, these documents could be checked by any white individual regardless of authority status (Browne 2015). For example, merchants and plantation overseers were equally emboldened to verify documentation. As for lantern laws, non-white peoples, namely African and indigenous, had to carry a lantern if they traveled at night without their white master or employer. If found without the necessary illumination, severe punishment would follow (Browne 2015). In both cases, non-white bodies were kept under strict, mandatory documentation and visibility that controlled their movement and access to spaces. Contrary to Fiske’s statement, the seeing eye has *always* been white in our transition to contemporary systems of racialized power.

Ultimately, enslavement co-evolved alongside an efficient bureaucracy that had the intent of controlling the movement and location of black bodies. We must racialize the surveillant assemblage to account for marked, historical disparities in observation and control rather than assuming a collective, wholesale experience as noted by Browne (2015). Furthermore, the marked disparities in surveillance measures between groups imbricates the co-evolution of

enslavement and bureaucracy in such a way that the surveillant assemblage is actually an *anti-black assemblage* in colonized spaces.

The Brazilian Correction House

The Western European prison model appealed to Brazilian elites as they sought to enter the global economy. To begin this transition, Brazil attempted to mimic the correctional prison model of Western Europe with the Correction House in the city of Rio de Janeiro (Salvatore and Aguirre 1996). Opened in the early 1850s, the original purpose of the Correction House was to reform prisoners through disciplinary means similar to those of the Panopticon. The attempt to push towards a correctional prison demonstrated an odd cognitive dissonance given that the abolition of slavery was not fully realized in Brazil until 1888, nearly four decades after the Correction House opened. Facility supporters believed that hard work would reform those incarcerated and had their labor rented to neighboring plantations (Chazkel 2011; Jean 2017). Moving along with the earlier disconnect between enslavement and corrections, plantation owners were key figures in penal reform and statutory discipline and heavily favored private methods localized to their estates (Chazkel 2011). Originally built to house about 800 people, the prison population exceeded capacity, detaining men, women, and children with little distinction between living arrangements (Bretas 1996). Excess incarceration was due in part to the facility’s retention of every admitted individual even in the absence of incriminating evidence. Logs for each prisoner’s biometric information (i.e., height, skin color, etc.) show that a majority of retained people were Afro-Brazilian and indigenous (Chazkel 2011).

Eventually, the echoes of enslavement and racism depleted reformers’ hopes of assimilating Afro-Brazilian and indigenous populations. To the politicians, officers, and plantation owners that collaborated towards the success of the Correction House, occupants were eventually considered “unreformable.” A major contender for this train of thought came from the belief that Afro-Brazilian culture was so damaged from centuries of enslavement that the enslaved were destined for poverty and menial labor (Salvatore and Aguirre 1996). What proves interesting about this line of thought is that even though prevailing theories on Afro-Brazilian and indigenous marginality were outwardly steeped in racial difference, race itself supposedly did not exist. Such a curious development stems from the lack of direct, structural discrimination against non-white Brazilians as miscegenation, not hypodescent like in the United States, was central to the nation-building project following its independence in 1822 (Telles 2004; Vargas

2004; Wade 2017). However, the Brazilian elite pushed for a reintroduction of violent capital punishment and advocated for entirely different Brazilian societies that were segregationist in every way except by name. For example, academic Raimundo Nina Rodrigues proposed penal code reforms that offered few legal protections to black and indigenous populations and punished them more severely for similar criminalized acts when compared to white Brazilians (Telles 2004). The leniency of his proposal towards those deemed “mixed-race” is a reflection of how the Brazilian state valued national assimilation through miscegenation.

Without the guarantee of Afro-Brazilians contributing to society in the eyes of white Brazilians, they returned to coercion as a mechanism of control. In fact, coercion returned during the last decade of the 19th century as newly freed Afro-Brazilian and indigenous peoples began demanding full constitutional rights, such as land, and freedom from discrimination (Chazkel 2011). The transition between sovereign and disciplinary power acted more as a pendulum with non-white bodies as the tipping point from white perceptions of progress and order (e.g., correction without violence) to outright violent suppression. The violent development furthers the earlier concern with prevailing surveillance theory and the Eurocentric understanding of modern power that can be found within the crumbling walls of the Panopticon. The Brazilian state’s attempt to recreate panopticism through the Correction House did not fail because the Brazilian elite could not grasp the regulatory necessities of panopticism. Instead, the attempt at panoptic control failed because the system of power was made with a white population in mind and therefore could not account for the correction of non-white bodies even in a social context where race supposedly did not exist.

The failings of this attempt at social control are far reaching, namely the disposability of black bodies and the privatization of security. The Brazilian state has since reduced black populations to the extent of their culpability vis-à-vis criminalized acts. Combined with draconically violent policing measures, the rationale of the Brazilian state abides by an anti-black logic that negates Afro-Brazilian populations’ claims to security and even citizenship (Alves 2014). Fear over insecurity further exacerbates this macabre symbiosis as white populations retreat behind fortified enclaves and the mass privatization of security absolves guards from remaining beholden to the law (Caldeira 2000; Huggins 2000). Pessimistically, one could argue that the law is still being followed as blackness remains diametrically opposed to the state.

Conclusion

The Brazilian elite, and by extension the state, attempted to earn the title of a modern democracy by following the correctional prison model likened to that of the Panopticon. The correctional model itself, based on Foucault’s theoretical framework of panopticism, dominated surveillance theory leading up to the 21st century. Rife with theoretical shortcomings, the framework was eventually replaced by the network-oriented rhizomatic surveillant assemblage, where the internet and rapid technological advancement catalyze new intersections within social reality. But even with this transition, dominating narratives within surveillance literature dismiss racial disparities that are brought to light once enslavement is taken into account. Including slavery reveals that modern surveillance practices are predicated on an anti-black process of subjugation that has only become more efficient over time.

The Correction House was a panoptic failure not out of Brazil’s inability to replicate a correctional prison. Instead, the failure came out of the Panopticon itself as it used a white frame of reference to determine the effects of power and its overall generalizability. These shortcomings become apparent when race enters the frame, especially during a period where enslavement would not dissipate for another few decades. Instead of fully transitioning to a correctional model, Brazilian penal reform returned to violence that dovetailed with the bureaucratic documentation of enslavement. This combination of violence and documentation points to the continuity of an anti-black assemblage across colonized spaces, one where inherent criminalization justifies state violence against black populations. Such an assemblage maintains a critical interrogation into how surveillance theorists should understand the underlying purposes of observation, documentation, and greater social control.

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The Future is in Our Blackness: Racial Self-Empowerment in *Black Panther*

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Abstract

This paper examines the potential of the 2018 *Black Panther* film in challenging colonial and essentialist narratives about African civilization. The goal of this work is to demonstrate the power of the arts—via Afrofuturism—in creating a positively affirmed sense of ethno-racial identity in people of African descent. The paper first sheds light on Africa's victimhood and anti-Black stereotypes that have historically pervaded Eurocentric thought. In order to tie *Black Panther*'s fiction to reality, this paper addresses the film's allusions to artistic contributions, military prowess, and female empowerment in pre-colonial African communities that wholly dismantle the myth of Africa being a cultural tabula rasa. This film suggests that Afrofuturism can cause a paradigm shift and blueprint for the future uplift of the Black race in the Old and New World. Finally, the paper pursues deeper study into how Afrofuturism could rewrite the narrative of African modernity in ways that empower Black people on the African continent and of the diaspora.

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One might not have expected a race-conscious film about an African king by day, mystical panther-themed superhero by night to become the third highest-grossing film in North America and ninth highest-grossing in film history, but the 2018 film *Black Panther* achieved this feat within several weeks. *Black Panther* is a story about T'Challa, who rules a fictional African nation (Wakanda) that is secretly the most technologically advanced in the world, but must protect his people against the threat of Wakandan exiles thirsty for revenge, African smugglers who wish to exploit Wakandan resources, and White neo-colonialism that will succeed if Wakanda's secret is ever revealed. The 2018 film *Black Panther* proved to be a more complex film than a superhero movie, as it engaged audiences with discourse about African or African American communities in ways that managed to

cut across the color line. This Marvel film addressed a myriad of heavy topics for Black diasporic communities, including intra-racial tension, colonization, and expropriation of African art. The film's director Ryan Coogler and co-writer Joe Robert Cole also found space to import humor, which softens the blow of striking truths that they presented in the film. Through the lens of Afrofuturism, *Black Panther* functions as a revolutionary pan-Black film that repositions Africans as a civilized race with a rich culture. In this paper, I will demonstrate how the film has inspired Black pride through various representations of African culture and built a platform for future Black empowerment.

In 1994, Mark Dery coined the term "Afro-futurism" to describe fiction that "addresses African-American concerns in the context of 20th-century technoculture," but draws heavily from a pre-colonial African tradition (Dery 180, 1994). *Black Panther*'s Wakanda, for example, is a utopic nation of Afrofuturist imagination, had there been an African country that discovered a magical mineral resource (Vibranium) and evaded colonialism. While Wakanda presents a redemptive vision of African modernity, its inception draws heavily from the preexisting culture of African societies in pre-colonial history.

The point of redeeming African civilization derives from longstanding racialized myths, suggesting that Africa had no history before European contact. European philosopher David Hume crystallized what many White supremacists believed at the time:

I am apt to suspect the Negroes to be naturally inferior to the Whites. There scarcely ever was a civilized nation of that complexion, nor even any individual, eminent either in action or in speculation. No ingenious manufacture among them, no arts, no sciences (as cited in Immerwahr 1992, 481).

Across the Old and New World, Western civilizations have indoctrinated anti-Black ideologies into the minds of White people and Black people, alike. By watching *Black Panther*, one can realize that an optimistic vision of Africa, rather than a paternalistic attitude, can prevent anti-Black biases in society. Afrofuturism presents a beacon of hope that can challenge racist folklore and increase the self-esteem of African-descended people across the globe. The second offer of Afrofuturism in *Black Panther* is pan-Black solidarity. Pan-Black solidarity bears similarities to diasporic consciousness, a theory championed by political scientist Candis Watts Smith in her book *Black Mosaic: The Politics of Black Pan-Ethnic Diversity*. She posits that Black diasporic communities must find common ground around their Black identity in spite of the convergences and divergences that such a pan-racial identity can engender (Watts Smith 2014).

Such an idea Bridging internal differences among the Black community is a viable pathway to the uplift of the Black race.

Through the art of comedic relief, Ryan Coogler challenges racist theories and historical narratives about African culture to bring attention to Africa's victimization. In *Black Panther*, Wakanda's new king T'Challa has a younger sister, Shuri, a teenaged genius behind Wakanda's Vibranium technology who heals CIA Agent Ross from a typically fatal gunshot wound. Agent Ross is a CIA agent who learned of T'Challa's identity as the mystical superhero Black Panther, but respectfully keeps T'Challa's secret from the rest of the world as an ally. When Agent Ross awakes from an induced coma in Shuri's laboratory and demands that she tell him where he is, Shuri exclaims, "Don't scare me like that, colonizer!" Since European powers were responsible for colonizing the African continent and other nations in Asia and South and Latin America, Shuri brands Agent Ross with the same guilt as White colonizers deserved. Without stooping as low as Whites who coined racial slurs like "nigga," Shuri uses the sins of White imperialists as inspiration to shame—or "roast"—Ross, thus offering both comic relief and consideration of African victimhood.

Coogler produced *Black Panther* as an Afrocentric film and emphasized this theme by ensuring that White characters do not have "white savior" roles. Despite Wakanda's escape from the threat of colonization, Shuri invokes African colonial history as a Wakandan sign of solidarity with other African countries. Her words force viewers to acknowledge the culpability not only of European colonizers, but also of the CIA in Africa's plight. The CIA has often interfered in African affairs, including its support of South Africa's apartheid regime and its backing of coups against various African leaders throughout the late 20th century (BBC 2016). According to declassified documents, the CIA had a secret agenda to mitigate the strength of Pan-Africanist leader of the Democratic Republic of Congo Patrice Lumumba, "including plans to replace Lumumba with a more pro-Western leader" (Parramore 2018). Given the CIA's shady history, calling the member of such an agency a conspirator in neo-colonialism is not undeserved; it is a matter of historical fact. In *Black Panther* canon, Marvel's first Black comic writer Christopher Priest had designed Ross to be a racially insensitive, "dull and colorless character who always got his butt kicked or overshadowed" by other heroes which, in the *Black Panther* film, would offset the white savior narrative that often arises in films with Black protagonists (Smith 2018). Meanwhile, Ulysess Klaue—who plays a significant role as a supervillain in the original comics—is reduced to an Afrikaner arms smuggler who makes cringe-worthy references to urban Black culture for self-affirmation. Having stolen Vibranium from Wakanda's mounds and appropriated Black American

culture, Klaue embraces Black contributions to the world that past European observers claimed were nonexistent. Fittingly, *Black Panther* also bolsters arguments for the restitution of African art that Europeans had stolen while carving up the African continent.

Coogler allows for his art to imitate life when scripting the scene in which the British museum echoes the attitude of the Museum of Great Britain in its refusal to return African artifacts to their rightful places in Africa. Erik Killmonger, the vengeful son of Wakandan royalty and archenemy of T'Challa, enters a British museum and pretends to inquire about the African art gallery. When he expresses plans of taking the art that he claims belonged to Wakanda, informs him that the art is not for sale, to which Killmonger brilliantly rebuts: "How do you think your ancestors got these? Do you think they paid a fair price? Or did they take it . . . like they took everything else?" Killmonger's interrogation holds the British accountable for stolen property in real-life, since the Museum of Great Britain has failed to return many art pieces to their respective African communities (Cascone 2018). For instance, Nigeria's National Commission for Museums and Monuments has made restitution claims for the Benin Bronzes that the British had looted from the Benin Empire in 1897, but most of them still reside in the British museum (Cascone 2018). Instead, the museum has offered to have a "rotating exhibition" of "loaned objects in Nigeria" (Cascone 2018). As long as European Museums continue to hold African art that was stolen—not "discovered" or "gifted"—they are effectively upholders of colonialism. As Killmonger demonstrated by correcting the British curator about the origin of an art piece, the British do not have the right nor the qualifications to shape the narrative around African art. Additionally, the optics of a European curator educating an African about stolen African art in a European museum are in poor taste. This museum scene also proves that African societies made significant cultural contributions to human history—contrary to the views of many Western thinkers as late as the 20th century.

Black Panther also alludes to the diversity of martial art forms in the African diaspora. Chadwick Boseman (T'Challa) was not limited to Asian martial art forms when developing a fighting style for his Black Panther role; there are African techniques as well. Actor and student of martial arts Marrese Crump trained Boseman for scene fights and said, "One of the techniques we used to create Black Panther's style was Capoeira" (Thorp 2018). Rodanthi Tzanelli notes that Capoeira was not only an Afro-Brazilian dance, but also a distinct form of martial arts with ties to an African artistic tradition (2014). Explaining the need for T'Challa to have various African fighting styles, Chadwick Boseman told journalists of Brazil's UOL:

He needed to be able to fight from near and far, standing and sitting, flying and hanging. And he needed an African influence. So, we focused on dambe (traditional Nigerian boxing), Zulu battles, Senegalese wrestling, capoeira from Angola and regional... [Black Women of Brazil 2018]

The discourse on Pan-Africanism often privileges Africans and African Americans, but the inclusion of Capoeira pulls Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Latinx groups into the narrative of diasporic unity. Capoeira is arguably the best known diasporic martial art and an empowering emblem of Afro-Brazilian culture.

The presence of Wakanda's all-female regiment Dora Milaje captures the nuances of the narrative about African resistance to gun-carrying European invaders during the African Partition. In a high-speed-car chase scene, Dora Milaje's General Okoye scoffs at guns being "so primitive" before destroying a car with a Vibranium-powered spear, a weapon often associated with savagery. In the spirit of Afrofuturism, *Black Panther* flips the dominant colonial narrative and instead imbues a traditional African weapon (spear) with the power of advanced Vibranium technology. The deeper message of this scene lies in the idea that the power of a weapon should not derive from the degree of its firepower, but rather the strength of its wielder.

There is a historical basis for Okoye's scene when she obliterates a car with her Vibranium-powered spear: the Dahomey Amazons who earned European respect for their physical prowess. The Mino—dubbed *Dahomey Amazons* by Western onlookers—were an all-female military squad of the Fon ethnic group in Dahomey (present day Republic of Benin) that served as a major security force to the Dahomean king (Law 1993). It is likely that *Black Panther*'s all-female Dora Milaje, the personal bodyguards to the Wakandan king, was roughly based on the Dahomey Amazons. Although the Dahomey Amazons suffered defeat by French invaders with muskets and other firearms, many French accounts note how impressive the female regiment was in physical combat (Johnson 2018). In this way, *Black Panther* suggests that the source of Wakandan military prowess and womanpower draw from Africa's extensive past.

Afrofuturism in the film relies not only on the African past, but also considers original strategies for the future uplift of the Black race on an international scale. There is a long tradition of pan-Black mobilization, from pan-Africanism to the Black Panther Movement, but such campaigns often devolved into Black imperialistic and patriarchal factions that fell short of their true potential. W.E.B. Du Bois's Talented Tenth, Marcus Garvey's Black separatist movement, and other Black movements had moments of flagrant sexism and misogyny. Some leaders of the Black Panther

Party even believed that fighting against sexism derailed progress in the movement's main efforts for racial justice (Lumsden 2009, 86). In his 1968 memoir *Soul on Ice*, former Party leader Eldridge Cleaver admitted to raping Black women "to practice" before raping several White women as an anti-White "insurrectionary act." Pan-Africanism and other Black political ideologies have remained male dominant movements since their inception.

Black Panther symbolically addresses the shortcomings of the Black Panther Party through specific characters in the film. Killmonger wishes to arm Black communities across the globe with Vibranium-powered technology to essentially wage a race war against their oppressors and create Black global hegemony. In this way, he draws parallels to the patriarchal radicals of the Black Panther Party. Even *The Atlantic* writer Adam Serwer noted the similarities between Killmonger's plan for violent Black domination and the Black Panther Party in its final years, "as radicalized chapters sought a direct armed struggle to overthrow the U.S. government" (Serwer 2018). Killmonger's plans to arm Black communities for violent resistance echo the ideology of Frantz Fanon in his political manifestos for the decolonization of Africa through violence (Fanon 1967). Killmonger's program is compelling in theory yet poor in execution because it entails imperialistic motives—Black supremacist world domination. He becomes so radicalized that he considers the tools of his White oppressors as a means to eradicate anti-Black racism.

While the silencing of women was a fundamental problem in the legacies of Black liberation movements, *Black Panther* corrects this flaw by making women central to the storyline. In its darkest hours, Wakanda's fate ultimately rests in the women's hands: T'Challa's Queen mother, his sister Shuri, General Okoye, the Dora Milaje, and international spy Nakia. When Killmonger dethrones T'Challa and becomes king, Okoye vows to serve her country while Nakia intends to *save* her country even if it means plotting a coup against Killmonger. The overthrow of Killmonger by T'Challa and Wakanda's women does not signify acceptance of violent revolution, but rather a refusal of imperialism as a method to achieve Black liberation. As a character introduced as the international spy who is deterring terrorism and child trafficking in Africa, Nakia advocates pan-African solidarity, akin to Smith's theory of diasporic consciousness in the American context (Watts Smith 2014). Nakia encourages T'Challa to welcome refugees and share Wakanda's resources with African countries that fell into poverty and turmoil in the wake of decolonization. Essentially, the women of Wakanda demonstrate how Black liberation movements of the future can encourage and acknowledge female involvement.

Ryan Coogler's creative direction in *Black Panther* dismantles racialized myths like the White Man's Burden, or African cannibalism (which Coogler brilliantly ridicules when Jabari tribe leader M'Baku threatens to feed Agent Ross to his children before laughing hysterically because Ross falls prey to the joke that invokes the racist trope). Coogler craftily establishes a balance between comedic relief and correcting racist folklore that compels viewers to interrogate their own subconscious biases about Black people. While Afro-pessimism often looms over as the prevalent position to express the abundance of past and ongoing traumas of Black subjugation, Afrofuturism beams in the dark to combat any attempts of promoting a Eurocentric narrative of Black Africa. *Black Panther* provides the blueprint for challenging the academics and other intellectuals who tried to dismiss any contributions African art, politics, or military accomplishment in world history. Without fail, Coogler uses his platform as a director to draw attention to the racial preconceptions that plague the world and to reduce anti-Black stereotypes to utter absurdity. *Black Panther's* scathing rejection of the "whitewashed" history of Africa becomes clear from start to finish. Ultimately, Afrofuturistic thought may be the perfect disinfectant to the parasitic existence of anti-Black racism.

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Dialect and Language Contact among Hispanics in Houston, Texas: A Lexical Leveling

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Inspired by his migration and interpersonal experiences, Jesús has developed a keen interest in language and dialect variation and the sociology of language. He applies empirical and computational methods to study contact-induced processes in Spanish varieties spoken in the United States. He is a junior studying Linguistics, Spanish, and Data Science at The University of Texas at Austin. Jesús plans to pursue a PhD in Linguistics to further his research in the novel field of Computational Sociolinguistics.

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the outcomes of dialect and language contact in the Spanish that is spoken in the city of Houston, Texas. In the Near Northside community, of interest here, individuals of Mexican, Salvadoran, Honduran, and Guatemalan descent interact regularly in Spanish, in various quotidian activities. Although they all share a common language, specific characteristics uniquely identify the speech of each group. These features might be altered as a result of the leveling or accommodation that originates from the contact of speakers of different dialects and English. Spanish dialects may converge in pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary. The present study draws on and extends work on lexical leveling in the context of the Near Northside neighborhood in Houston. This work also considers Communication Accommodation Theory as a framework to explain the effect of dialect attitudes and knowledge of the socially dominant language, English, in the process of lexical change. Forty-eight Spanish speakers from the Near Northside community were studied. Patterns of lexical accommodation are found to be prominent in items used in the community whereas patterns of lexical maintenance are found to be prominent in items used at home.

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During the 1990s, Hispanics surpassed the African American population to become the largest ethnic group in Houston, Texas, in a social shift that Kreneck (2012) refers to as the “Latinizing of the metropolis” (p. 127). United States Census data estimates that in 2010, Hispanics made up 40% of the city’s population; the vast majority is Mexican (75%), followed by Salvadorans (7.3%), Hondurans (2.9%), and Guatemalans (1.9%). Not surprisingly, the use of Spanish in Houston is very common, irrespective of the fact that English is the dominant language. In the Near Northside community of Houston, the neighborhood to be studied here, individuals of Mexican, Salvadoran, Honduran, and Guatemalan descent interact regularly in Spanish in the workplace, religious services, school-related activities, community celebrations, and other everyday activities. Although these individuals share a common language, there are specific linguistic characteristics that uniquely identify each Hispanic-origin group. Nonetheless, interaction among speakers of different dialects may transform their specific dialects and their linguistic practices. Whose dialect takes precedence in interactions? Does the prestige of a specific dialect or the standing of a speaker influence word choices? Is English affecting the meaning and use of Spanish words, i.e., do speakers refer to the woven floor covering with the false cognate *carpeta* rather than choosing between *alfombra* and *tapete*? This study explores how different degrees of lexical leveling, or word standardization, correlate with contact among speakers of Guatemalan, Honduran, Salvadoran and Mexican varieties of Spanish.

Theoretical Frameworks and Previous Work

The theoretical foundation for this study is Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), put forth by Howard Giles and colleagues (see Sachdev & Giles 2008 for a review). Although CAT primarily surveys accommodation in bilingual or multilingual settings, its core concepts—accommodation, convergence, divergence, and maintenance—can be employed to effectively describe communicative behaviors across dialects. *Accommodation* is the phenomenon in which individuals adjust their speech behaviors in response to an interlocutor, in terms of a vast range of linguistic, paralinguistic, and nonverbal features. *Convergence* is the accentuation of language similarities, whereas *divergence* is the accentuation of language differences. *Maintenance* is the act of neither converging nor actively diverging from another but, instead, sustaining one’s own native language. Sachdev & Giles (2008) further distinguish convergence and divergence as “upward” or “downward” phenomena:

Upward convergence would be illustrated by a French Canadian worker's adoption of the prestige language patterns of an English-speaking (albeit bilingual) manager (see Barkhuizen and de Klerk, 2000; Bourhis, 1991). Upward divergence would be indicated by the latter commencing that interaction in French and then suddenly shifting to English. Downward divergence would be illustrated by one of us shifting to Gujarati in a London store where the English-speaking shop assistant evinced indications of anti-Asian prejudice (p. 356; see also Nair-Venugopal 2001).

The central notions of CAT can be transferred to the study of dialect contact. Hernández (2002) observes accommodative tendencies in the use of *vos* and *tú* for the second person singular pronoun in interactions between Salvadoran interlocutors, who employ *voseo*, and Mexican interlocutors, who employ *tuteo*, in Houston and in El Salvador. In Houston, the eight Salvadoran participants decreased their normative use of *voseo* and converged to *tuteo* when interacting with the Mexican interviewer, whereas in El Salvador, the two speakers sampled maintained their dialect when interacting with the same Mexican speaker. Sorenson (2013) argues that the accommodation that Salvadorans demonstrated in Houston might be linked to the linguistic pressure exerted by Mexican *tuteantes* in the U.S., a pressure towards upwards convergence that is absent in El Salvador. Rivera-Mills (2011) also examines *tuteo* in 85 participants representing three generations of Hondurans and Salvadorans in the western states of Washington, Oregon, California, and Arizona. Results from the study show that third-generation speakers converge to *tuteo* due to the exposure to Mexican *tuteantes*, who make up the predominant Spanish variety in the western United States.

More recently, Raymond (2012) studied a family of Salvadoran descent in Los Angeles. This work supports the existence of the Los Angeles Vernacular Spanish (or LAVS), first introduced by Parodi (2003). LAVS, along with most of central and northern Mexican dialects, is considered a *tierras altas* “highlands” variety; whereas southern Mexican and Central American dialects are considered *tierras bajas* “lowlands” varieties. Raymond observed that the Salvadoran parents in Los Angeles maintained most of the *tierras bajas* features, including word-final aspiration of /s/ ([lah.'tɾeh], *las tres*, the three), velarization of coda[n] ([ʔkan.tan], “cantan,” they sing), intervocalic /y/ weakening ([e.a], “ella,” she), and [y] insertion between [i] and [a] ([ma.'ri.ya], *maría*). In contrast, their children's speech resembled the LAVS variety, i.e., despite exposure to their parents' Salvadoran dialect, the children accommodated to the local LAVS.

Villarreal (2014) also focuses on accommodation tendencies in a study of dialect contact in children,

specifically Central American (n=57) and Mexican (n=103) children raised in Los Angeles. The linguistic focus of study included the realization of syllable- and word-final /s/ and /n/ and the selection of lexical items. The anticipated realization of /s/ as [h] was found to be an irregular process due to the presence of non-aspirating Central American varieties (i.e., Guatemala) as well as the presence of aspirating varieties of Mexican Spanish (i.e., Chiapas), and the expected production of /n/ as velar [ŋ] was detected only in children who attended at least one year of school in El Salvador before being brought to the U.S. Thus, there was no clear evidence of convergence towards the local Mexican norm presented by the majority population. Nevertheless, Villarreal found that children from Central America presented upward convergence towards Mexican Spanish at the lexical level. When they interacted with an interlocutor whose dialect was unknown, the children used Mexican Spanish regardless of their own national origin. With the exception of the word for “baby bottle,” for which Central Americans chose *pacha* and Mexicans chose *biberón* or *mamila*, most children accommodated to the lexical repertoire of Mexican Spanish speakers, e.g., using *pastel* rather than *queike*.

In a seminal study of lexical leveling, Zentella (1990) examined the lexical preferences of 195 adults of speakers of the four main varieties of Spanish spoken in New York City: Dominican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Colombian. At the time of the study, the predominant population was Caribbean, with Dominicans making up the largest group. In a picture-naming task, speakers of Caribbean varieties (Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Dominicans) preferred *acera* for “sidewalk,” *guagua* for “bus,” and *muebles* for “furniture,” whereas Colombians opted for *andén*, *bus*, and *sofá*, respectively, although participants recognized the terms used by speakers of other varieties. In further analysis, Zentella demonstrated that word frequency and semantic weight influence word stability. Words of higher frequency showed more stability, and thus most speakers opted to use them. For example, *collar*, *cadena*, and *cartera* for “necklace,” “chain necklace,” and “pocketbook,” respectively, were determined to be part of the New York lexicon due to their high frequency among the participants. Nevertheless, semantic weight was shown to alter this trend. Even when items pertain to everyday activities, their reference becomes less stable when the items go out of style and/or are considered marginalized within a group (i.e., gender or generation groups). For instance, there were approximately a dozen different terms for “clothesline” and “bobby pin,” with gender as the social variable influencing this instability.

The present study draws on and extends the work of Zentella (1990) to the context of the Near Northside neighborhood in Houston, where the intermingling of Mexicans, Salvadorans, Hondurans, and Guatemalans presents a site

of potential dialectal leveling in the lexicon. This work also considers Communication Accommodation Theory as a framework to explain the effect of dialect attitudes and knowledge of the socially dominant language, English, in the process of lexical change.

Method

Participants

Participants from the Near Northside were recruited through personal relationships and snowball sampling. A total of 48 participants were recruited: 31 identified their ancestry as Mexican, eight as Salvadoran, six as Honduran, and three as Guatemalan; 13 self-identified as male and 35 as female. Level of education varied across participants: three completed elementary, 10 completed middle school, four completed some high school, 13 completed high school, five completed community college, 11 completed some college, and two completed a bachelor's degree. The majority (n=46) were native Spanish speakers and two were native English speakers. Only one was an indigenous language speaker (not specified). All participants were proficient and literate in Spanish, i.e., they reported speaking, understanding, writing and reading Spanish. Most participants (n=38) can understand English, 35 can speak English, 34 can read English, and 33 can write English. Three participants can understand and speak and only one can read an indigenous language.

Instrument and Procedure

Participants received a link to a survey along with a short description of the study via e-mail, telephone, or text. The survey was completed through a mobile device with access to internet connection. The survey contained 5 sections: (i) a self-assessment of proficiency and literacy for English, Spanish, and Indigenous languages, (ii) a lexical assessment, (iii) a demographic profile, (iv) a questionnaire on dialect attitudes and usage, (v) and a questionnaire on social networks.

Results

Lexical Assessment

Participants were asked to name 28 different items presented as images. Multiple responses were permitted. Items were classified into two main categories: domain-dependent items and context-dependent items. Subcategories for domain-dependent items include: accessories (A), clothing (C), home items (H), office and school items (O), food (F), and miscellaneous (M). Subcategories for context-dependent items include: items related to a home setting (H) and items related to a community setting (C). Participants' aggregate responses range from 1 word to up to 11 words per item. Answers to the lexical assessment by number of referents, item, domain-dependent category, context-dependent category, and participant responses are provided in Figure 1.

Item	DD	CD	Referents
Birthday cake	f	c	pastel 48
Computer	s	c	computadora 48
Lollipop	f	h	paleta 48
Pencil	s	c	lápiz 48
Pepper	f	h	chile 48
Cellphone	m	c	celular 35, teléfono 13
Glasses	a	h	lentes 2, anteojos 3
Ice cream	f	c	nieve 30, helado 18
Laptop	s	c	laptop 37, computadora 11
Wallet	a	h	cartera 37, billetera 11
Car	m	c	carro 45, coche 2, automóvil 1
Carpet	h	h	alfombra 31, carpeta 9, tapete 8
Earrings	a	h	aretes 39, aritos 8, hulitos 1
Banana	f	h	phitano 34, banana 6, banano 5, guineo 3
Bathtub	h	h	bafiera 20, tina 23, tina de baño 5, bathtub 1
Bus	m	c	autobus 29, bus 12, camión 5, pulman 2
Couch	h	h	sofa 26, sillón 18, mueble 3, colchón 1
T-shirt	c	h	camisa 21, playera 14, camiseta 10, blusa 3
Soda	f	h	refresco 25, soda 17, gaseosa 5, coca 1
Bucket	h	h	cubeta 28, balde 11, tina 5, cubo 3, bucket 1
Pen	s	c	lapicero 26, pluma 15, lapicera 5, bolígrafo 1, tinta 1
Pig	m	h	puerco 21, cerdo 16, chanco 4, cochino 4, marrano 3
Belt	a	h	cinturón 13, cinto 17, cincho 6, fajo 5, correa 1, faja 2
Jeans	c	h	pantalón 22, pantalones 15, pantalones de mezclilla 3, jeans 3, blue jeans 3, pantalon de lona 2
Baby bottle	m	h	mamila 15, biberón 11, tetera 6, pacha 11, teta 2, bibi 1, pepe 1
Sweatpants	c	h	pan(t)s 26, pantalón 6, buso 4, pantalon deportivo 4, pantalon deportivo 4, sweatpants 2, pantalones 2, joggers 1, pantaloncillo 1, pijama 1
Pencil case	s	c	bolsa 18, lapicera 10, cartuchera 8, cartera 3, bolsa de lápices 2, bolsa de colores 2, bolsa de útiles 1, maletín 1, lapicero 1, plumero, maletín 1

Figure 1.

Lexical Uniformity

The average number of words per item is 1.1423 for Guatemala, 1.607 for Honduras, 1.714 for El Salvador, and 2.964 for Mexico. The average number of words per item is 3.964. The Dialect Index (DII), which is the average number of words all dialects have per item, is 1.857. The Lexical Uniformity Index (LUI), which is the relation between the DII and the actual total number of words per item, is 0.592. An LUI closer to 1 represents higher lexical uniformity, in other words, Spanish dialects tend to have fewer words per item.

Domain-Specific Items and Lexical Uniformity

For the subcategory *food*, the average number of words per item is 2.167, the Dialect Index is 1.25, and the Lexical Uniformity Index is 0.740. For the subcategory *accessories*, the average number of words per item is 4.2, the Dialect Index is 1.9, and the Lexical Uniformity Index is 0.537. For the subcategory *clothing*, the average number of words per item is 6.667, the Dialect Index is 2.583, and the Lexical Uniformity Index is 0.407. For the subcategory *home*, the average number of words per item is 4, the Dialect Index is 2.188, and the Lexical Uniformity Index is 0.563. For the subcategory *Office and School*, the average number of words per item is 4, the Dialect Index is 1.75, and the Lexical Uniformity Index is 0.689. For the subcategory *miscellaneous*, the average number of words per item is 4.2, the Dialect Index is 1.95, and the Lexical Uniformity index is 0.505. In general, *food* had smaller word counts, a lower dialect index and a higher Lexical Uniformity Index, and *home* and *clothing* had larger word counts, a higher dialect index and a lower Lexical Uniformity index. Complete results by nationality are provided in Table 1, Table 2, and Table 3.

Item	Variety					
	Guatemala	Honduras	El Salvador	Mexico	DII	LUI
Accessories						
Belt	2	2	3	3	2.5	0.417
Earrings	1	2	3	1	1.75	0.583
Glasses	1	1	2	1	1.25	0.625
Hairband	1	1	2	6	2.5	0.312
Wallet	1	2	1	2	1.5	0.75
V-index	1.2	1.6	2.2	2.6	1.9	0.5374
Clothing						
Jeans	2	2	2	5	2.75	0.458
T-shirt	1	1	1	4	1.75	0.437
Sweatshirt	1	2	3	7	3.25	0.325
Avg.	1.333	1.667	2	5.333	2.583	0.407

Table 1. Accessories and Clothing Scores

Item	Variety					
	Guatemala	Honduras	El Salvador	Mexico	DII	LUI
Home						
Bathtub	1	2	1	4	2	0.5
Bucket	1	2	3	4	2.5	0.5
Carpet	2	1	3	3	2.25	0.75
Couch	1	3	1	3	2	0.5
V-index	1.25	2	2	3.5	2.187	0.5625
Office & School						
Computer	1	1	1	1	1	1
Laptop	1	1	2	2	1.5	0.75
Pen	1	2	1	4	2	0.4
Pencil	1	1	1	1	1	1
Pencil case	1	2	3	7	3.25	0.295
Avg.	1	1.4	1.6	3	1.75	0.689

Table 2. Home and Office & School Scores

Item	Variety					
	Guatemala	Honduras	El Salvador	Mexico	DII	LUI
Food						
Banana	1	2	2	1	1.5	0.375
Birthday cake	1	1	1	1	1	1
Ice cream	1	1	1	2	1.25	0.625
Lollipop	1	1	1	1	1	1
Pepper	1	1	1	1	1	1
Soda	1	2	1	3	1.75	0.438
Avg.	1	1.333	1.167	1.5	1.25	0.740
Miscellaneous						
Baby bottle	1	3	2	4	2.5	0.357
Bus	2	1	2	3	2	0.5
Car	1	1	1	2	1.25	0.417
Cellphone	1	2	1	2	1.5	0.75
Pig	1	2	2	5	2.5	0.5
Avg.	1.2	1.8	1.6	3.2	1.95	0.505

Table 3. Food and Miscellaneous Scores

Context-Specific Items and Lexical Uniformity

For the subcategory *home*, the average number of words per item is 1.09 for Guatemala, 1.364 for Honduras, 1.364 for El Salvador, and 2.545 for Mexico; the average number of words per item is 3.272, the Dialect Index is 1.95, and the Lexical Uniformity Index is 0.505. For the subcategory *community*, the average number of words per item is 1.176 for Guatemala, 1.764 for Honduras, 1.941 for El Salvador, and 3.235 for Mexico; the average number of words per item is 4.412, the Dialect Index is 2.029, and the Lexical Uniformity Index is 0.552. In general, items in the subcategory *home* had larger word counts, a higher Dialect Index and a lower Lexical Uniformity Index. While items in the subcategory *community* show more irregularities, in general, they had smaller word counts, a lower Dialect Index, and a higher Lexical Uniformity Index.

Dialect Attitudes and Usage Questionnaire

Participants were asked whether their accent has been a source of ridicule, what dialect is spoken at home (personal dialect or standard dialect), and what dialect is spoken in different social settings including restaurants, school, stores, work, and religious activities. Responses to the Dialect Attitudes section show that all Guatemalans, Hondurans, Salvadorans, and one Mexican reported their accent has been a source of ridicule. Furthermore, all participants identified Mexican Spanish as the local standard Spanish variety. Responses to the Dialect Usage Questionnaire are provided in Table 4. As shown, at restaurants, three Guatemalans, five Hondurans, seven Salvadorans and 31 Mexican reported using the standard dialect, and three Hondurans, one Salvadoran reported using their dialect. At school activities, stores, and work all three Guatemalans, six Hondurans, eight Salvadorans, and 31 Mexican reported using the standard dialect. At religious activities, three Guatemalans, two Hondurans, two Salvadorans, and 31 Mexican reported using the standard dialect and four Hondurans and six Salvadorans reported using their dialect. In general, participants use their own dialect at home and the standard dialect in community settings with the exception of religious activities.

Setting	Guatemala		Honduras		El Salvador		Mexico	
	S. D	G	S. D	H	S. D	S	S. D	D
Home	1	2	0	6	0	8	31	31
Avg.	0.334	0.667	0	1	0	1	1	1
Restaurants	3	0	5	3	7	1	31	31
School activities	3	0	6	0	8	0	31	31
Stores	3	0	6	0	8	0	31	31
Work	3	0	6	0	8	0	31	31
Religious activities	3	0	2	4	2	6	31	31
Avg.	1	0	0.781	0.233	0.825	0.175	1	1

Table 4. Standard Dialect vs. Personal Dialect Usage Questionnaire Scores

Social Networks Questionnaire

Participants were asked to approximate the number of Guatemalans, Hondurans, Salvadorans, and Mexicans at home and in their community. Responses to the Social Networks Questionnaire are provided in Table 5 and Table 6. In general, each national group reported their home was comprised of people of the same national origin. Whereas in the community, participants reported Mexican as the largest group, followed by Salvadorans, Hondurans, and Guatemalans.

Rating	Guatemala				Honduras				El Salvador				Mexico			
	G	H	S	M	G	H	S	M	G	H	S	M	G	H	S	M
None	1	3	3	2	6	0	4	4	7	8	0	7	31	31	30	0
Just a few	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0
Some	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Most of them	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
All of them	2	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	30

Table 5. Social Networks at Home

Rating	Guatemala				Honduras				El Salvador				Mexico			
	G	H	S	M	G	H	S	M	G	H	S	M	G	H	S	M
None	0	1	0	0	4	2	4	0	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Just a few	1	2	2	0	2	3	1	0	4	4	0	0	29	28	7	0
Some	2	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	5	4	2	3	24	0
Most of them	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	6	0	0	3	4	0	0	0	31
All of them	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 6. Social Networks in the Community

Discussion

LUI and DUI scores can explain different degrees of lexical leveling in terms of Communication Accommodation Theory. Items that are more likely to undergo lexical accommodation have smaller word counts, lower DII scores, and higher LUI scores. Conversely, items that are likely to undergo lexical maintenance have larger word counts, higher DII scores, and lower LUI scores. In the context-dependent category, items with the subcategory *community* tend to have larger word counts, a higher Dialect Index and a lower Lexical Uniformity Index, whereas items with the category *home* tend to have larger word counts, higher Dialect Index scores, and lower Lexical Uniformity scores. With the exception of *food*, sub-categories under the domain-specific category did not show a smooth lexical leveling effect.

Lexical Accommodation.

Results from the dialect usage and dialect attitudes questionnaire indicate that Mexican Spanish is considered the standard dialect and is the dialect used in different social settings, corroborating with the findings of Hernandez

(2002) and Sorenson (2013). Lexical leveling scores in items under the sub-category community in context-dependent items that are not common to all varieties portray a lexical accommodation effect. If the varieties do not have a common term for an item, speakers converge upwards to the standard variety, coinciding with the findings of Villarreal (2014). For example, referents for items such as “computer,” “pencil,” and “pepper” are all common for all varieties, but, referents for items such as “birthday cake” and “lollipop” converge upwards towards Mexican Spanish. Scores for “carpet” also portrayed a lexical accommodation effect for individuals who have resided longer in the United States indicating that English is influencing word choice with the incorporation of the false cognate *carpeta* into the lexicon.

Lexical Maintenance

Similar to the findings of Zentella (1990), referents for items that go out of style or are less common tend to show less stability than those that are more likely to be used on the daily. For example, “pencil bag” was one of the words with higher variation, unlike “computer” or “laptop,” items that portrayed more uniformity. Further, referents for seasonal and home items tend to be maintained as they are used in contact situations with individuals of the same national origin. For example, higher variance in “sweatpants” may be due to Houston’s hot weather throughout the year; nonetheless, when the weather is cold, sweatpants are items that are more likely to be talked about at home. Higher variance in “baby bottle” may be due to the usage of the word in more intimate contexts given that it is most relevant in a household with a baby.

As the questions first proposed are addressed, new questions regarding lexical change across dialects arise. To what degree are domain-specific categories to undergo different types of leveling in different contexts? For example, how do speakers of different dialects refer to kitchen items at a home context and in a restaurant context? It would also be interesting to see whether dialect attitudes towards a certain dialect are reflected in the community and whether this has an effect on speakers of other non-standard varieties. For example, are the labels for fruits and vegetables reflecting the standard dialect referents? Is this affecting the words speakers use for intelligibility purposes? Though the number of participants is representative of the population in Houston, a larger number of participants of Guatemalan, Honduran and Salvadoran origin will be crucial for better understanding whether lexical leveling is a context-dependent linguistic phenomenon driven mainly by dialect ideologies.

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Superwomen in *Wao*: Formulating Feminists Tactics for Social Navigation

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Abstract

This article, as a truncated form of an extended analysis, argues that the literary depictions of women in Junot Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* allow readers to formulate feminist tactics in order to navigate patriarchal societies and combat gendered violence. Critics of Díaz's work that apply feminist lenses generally fall into one of two categories: reading the author as decolonial practitioner or agent of patriarchy. This article strays away from reading the moral character and politics of Díaz, focusing instead on what can be learned from the narrative experiences of his characters. These experiences reveal the ways in which women in *Wao* negotiate their subject positions in social contexts and situations that are simultaneously hostile to and empowering for them. The first character analysis reveals how Belicia Cabral navigates the simultaneous racialization and sexualization of her body in a culture dominated by white romanticism and violent capitalism. The analysis then shifts to La Inca, Belicia's aunt, reading her as a community-oriented matriarch and guardian in the tradition of Afro-Caribbean *cofradías*, who negotiates within and fights against nation-state labyrinths for the well-being of her family. Finally, the analysis ends with Belicia's daughter Lola, tracing the development of her conscious awareness of race and gender relations while highlighting her ability to strategically transform her identity. In sum, these three women deploy a complex and extraordinary set of navigational tactics given unjust circumstances; studying them enables readers to see a differently textured novel than that often described by Díaz's critics.

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Introduction

Junot Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007) has garnered considerable attention from literary critics because of its hybridized genre, linguistic politics, social activism, and depictions of the title character Oscar DeLeon. Some critics and scholars have moved to cast Díaz's work aside after reading his work as a reflection of his moral character, and, more recently, after reading the accounts of sexual misconduct levied against him. Others have denounced the racist and stereotypical media treatments of Díaz as an "aggressive sexual predator" with "an animalistic sexual 'nature'" as damaging to people of color and the #MeToo movement.¹ While it is tempting to steer clear of this morass, Díaz's text and public persona offer critics and educators an opportunity to start conversations that can directly impact prevailing attitudes towards women and people of color while highlighting issues of systemic violence. In this vein, *Oscar Wao*'s unsung heroines have gained little sustained critical attention. This article argues that representations of heroic women in Díaz's novel have a lot to teach readers about how patriarchal societies work, and how to combat a wide spectrum of violent acts perpetuated against women of color. Therefore, literary depictions of their struggles should not be shunned because of the belief that studying an artist's work is tantamount to reaffirming their actions. This assumption upholds the notion that readers simply and readily identify with the content they consume without an ideological filter, and that there is nothing to be gained from studying the works of people that may have committed heinous acts that women are trying to combat. In fact, *Oscar Wao*, as a cultural product situated within a patriarchal, racist society, highlights the historical roots of contemporary issues that continue to plague women and people of color by indexing the context of its construction. The novel reveals how these groups continue to survive and adapt, regardless of the author's intentions.

With this stance in mind, this article will walk in the footsteps of Belicia Cabral, Myotis Toribio-Cabral, and Lola DeLeon, in order to formulate a set of theories for inverting, combating, and evading sexual and gender-based violence while achieving socioeconomic advancement. This article builds from the work of women of color feminists in a way that privileges the subjectivity and agency of the heroines in *Oscar Wao*, while relating their positionalities to larger systems of power and control from the Dominican

colonial era to the present U.S. context. The methodology deployed here is also influenced by an understanding of “Americanity,” a term developed by José David Saldívar to describe the simultaneous development of ethnic hierarchies and nation-states in and beyond the Americas as a matrix of control within the global world system.² I argue that in order to equitably read the portrayals of Belicia, Myotis, and Lola in the novel, readers must understand how the navigational tactics these women deploy are related to the contexts surrounding them in this world system.

Oscar Wao chronicles the experiences of the Cabral family during the dictatorship of Rafael Leonidas Trujillo in the Dominican Republic (1930–1961). As a tale of diaspora, it follows Belicia Cabral’s violence-driven exodus to Paterson, NJ. The title character, Oscar DeLeon, is a science fiction nerd who is the walking antithesis to stereotypes of inborn Latin machismo. The novel is meta-narrated retrospectively by Oscar’s friend Yunior, who narrates from the perspective of multiple characters in order to reconstruct a history that was erased and misconstrued during the Trujillo dictatorship.³ Along with his narrative reconfiguration of history comes his refusal to forget Trujillo’s violent tyranny that contributed to the “normalization of gender violence across temporal and spatial planes.”⁴ The ways in which women navigate through said planes can teach readers about the unequal nature of societal formations, the utilitarianism of hybrid subjectivities, and the truth of experience found in disparate lived realities. *Oscar Wao* as a work of literature is neither decolonial nor patriarchal as it does not proscribe a reality, but rather reflects one or many realities. It is a powerful work of literary representation that allows the reader to effectively map the trajectories of the novel’s heroines as they strategically negotiate their subject positions within violent, capitalistic, and patriarchal worlds.

Díaz’s writings can play a pivotal pedagogical role in analyzing the experiences of violence that women of color of face, as well as the tactics they develop to overcome those situations. The language Díaz uses in *Oscar Wao* implicates not only himself and his narrator of choice, Yunior, but many individuals within patriarchal and classist societies as participants in gender-based violence: “Ten million Trujillos is all we are.”⁵ His writings narrate a transnational war with the “ouroboros”: the snake of patriarchy that consumes itself in an infinite, self-reinforcing loop, leaving fragmented memories and psyches in its wake.⁶ In “The Silence: The Legacy of Childhood Trauma,” Díaz uses the ouroboros metaphor to break the silence on socially salient demons that are inherent to masculinist cultures. His public life has simultaneously ignited intense but necessary dialogue and debate between women and men alike on the issues of sexual and gender-based violence, a discourse that can now address the content of his literature in the context of

the #MeToo movement. Therefore, with each character analysis, this article presupposes that the perspectives of women in *Oscar Wao* must be carefully centered in order to learn from them. Additionally, the form and content of the text must be properly contextualized and approached from multiple angles as Díaz’s narrative depictions of women are intricately tied to the social context of the novel’s construction. The novel deploys a complex notion of fictionality that erodes the binary distinction between literary realism and fantasy, and by extension, social reality and simulation. The world of *Oscar Wao*, as a reflection of the world Díaz aims to depict, allows readers to trace the character development of women and learn from the ways in which they navigate violent social realms.

Belicia

Hypatía Belicia Cabral is “the tough-love Dominican mother who suffered catastrophic sexual abuse throughout her life.”⁷ At two-months-old, her family was murdered by the Trujillo regime for refusing to give into his demands, and she was sold to strangers by distant relatives as a *criada*, a child-slave.⁸ She is later rescued and adopted by her aunt Myotis. The men that Belicia comes to fantasize about in her adolescence are unmistakably of a wealthier, whiter aesthetic; the first boy she has a crush on is Jack Pujols, “the school’s handsomest (read: whitest) boy . . . of pure European stock . . .”⁹ Belicia’s fantasies here can be read through the *sucia* analytic offered by Deborah R. Vargas drawing on José Esteban Muñoz. *Las sucias* are women who employ “nonnormative and delinquent modes of intimacy” in navigating capitalistic systems, with an awareness of the violent mechanisms that mark their bodies as queer.¹⁰ “*Sucias* must contemplate what is yet to come so that they do not get too left behind,” meaning that they consciously and constantly consider their current subject position in relation to economic futurities in order to advance themselves.¹¹ They strategically value resources, comfort and gratification over Western notions of love or respectability that are in line with the American dream.¹² Belicia desires Pujols for the potentiality that his attributes represent as a whiter Dominican. This is the first navigational tactic drawn from the novel, the recognition and utilization of *economic aesthetics*: the visual markers that translate to or index facets of capital. This is an adaptive sense of aesthetics exemplified in ‘dressing the part,’ recognizing signs of wealth on others as reflective of social power, and all-around ‘hustling.’

In conjunction with economic aesthetics, Belicia’s relationships with men reveal a second tactic by which women navigate the world of the novel. It is the *desiring mind’s-eye*, a coming into consciousness of one’s own sexuality and desirability, and the recognition of how said desirability may be deployed strategically for socioeconomic

advancement or the acquisition of power. This theorization is partially inspired by Gloria Anzaldúa's double-knowing and "soul's eye" in *This Bridge We Call Home* (2002).¹³ It might be considered an addition to *las sucias* analytic overall, and in relation to Belicia applies as such: "By the undeniable concreteness of her desirability which, was in its own way, Power. . . . Our girl ran into the future that her new body represented and never looked back."¹⁴ Belicia's experiences prove that puberty does not only entail physical transformations, as changes in the body necessitate a shift in one's mind frame and consciousness.

The fruits of the desiring mind's-eye are exemplified in Belicia's relationship with the Gangster, who she later finds out is Trujillo's brother-in-law.¹⁵ Otherwise known as Dionisio, he meets Belicia at El Hollywood nightclub, where he grabs her by the arm after she refuses his drink offer.¹⁶ The Gangster wore obvious signs of wealth: "everybody in the club was paying tribute to him, and he rocked enough gold to have ransomed Atahualpa"; scholar John Hemming claims that Atahualpa, the last Incan Emperor, attempted to provide ransom in gold to his captors, the invading Spanish colonizers, in exchange for his life.¹⁷ Belicia, like Atahualpa with the Spanish, is held captive—or is captivated—by the Gangster. In both cases, gold serves as a symbol of power and vitality. Despite these initial confrontations and unequal power relations, Belicia uses the Gangster to climb to the top of the social pyramid in a relatively short time period.

Later, when Belicia is literally kidnapped by the Secret Police and driven to a cane field, she receives "the sort of beating that breaks people," a beating so devastating that it "was the end of language, the end of hope."¹⁸ Since Belicia has gotten too close to those in power—those that are socioeconomically above her within the hierarchy of race and class of Americanness—and has come to learn how to navigate the societal systems designed by a totalitarian regime, agents of power assemble and attempt to eliminate her. The "last reservoir of strength" she has is the will to live.¹⁹ In other words, when forces of power push one to the brink of destruction, the only desire left is life, a desire that furthers the need for transformation and becoming something or someone new.

La Inca

Belicia's aunt Myotis Toribio-Cabral, informally known as "La Inca," represents the archetype of the spiritual mother or ancestral matriarch in *Oscar Wao*, but her active role in the novel cannot be reduced to 'guardian of the hearth.' La Inca's character-space of the neighborhood of Baní during the 1950s-60s can be paralleled to the historical positionalities and political statuses of women in Dominican *cofradías* (brotherhoods).²⁰ Significantly, as scholar Lorgia

García-Peña explains, these organizations appointed literate women as leaders "because it was believed that women had the ability to guard history for posterity."²¹ One such leader was Dominga Alcántara of the Cofradía del Espíritu Santo.²² In 1992 she wrote a letter to General Harry Lee after U.S. Marine forces invaded her home and took possession of her *cofradía's* sacred drums.²³ In this letter, she establishes her authority as a traditional community leader operating under a different set of sociocultural codes than those laid out by the U.S.-Dominican regime. She states that "the government has not tested us," a challenge stemming from her "faith-based conviction and her political power" in the community.²⁴

Similarly, when agents of the Dominican Secret Police—the Servicio de Inteligencia Militar (SIM)—under Trujillo come to La Inca's home in search of Belicia, La Inca emerges with a machete in hand in a similar act of defiance.²⁵ She manages to thwart these agents of the state and demarcate the boundaries of her territory. In comparing these instances of women voicing their authority, the pen and the sword are rendered equivalently effective in challenging regimes of power. Herein lies the third in a series of navigational tactics that the novel offers: *reterritorialization* of the home against external forces of power. La Inca clearly defines what is hers and defends her family within a militant, dictatorial environment, and by extension maintains the legitimacy of her [feminine] authority.

After Belicia is abducted and Trujillo is assassinated, La Inca strategically develops a plan for Belicia to escape the fallout and flee to the United States.²⁶ This is a fourth navigational tactic in *Oscar Wao: informed flight*. La Inca, like Galadriel from *Lord of the Rings* (1937), inhabits a realm that operates by a different set of codes than those of the oppressive national forces.²⁷ She is able to actively use her power to keep out invaders, i.e., the SIM officers, while simultaneously helping her family members learn to navigate and flee from the reaches of the system. La Inca maintains a strong, localized sense of authority which grants her political power, combined with the knowledge of how one may navigate amongst a multiplicity of overlapping transnational systems for socioeconomic advancement.

As a spiritual, communal leader and keeper of knowledge in the oppressive arena of the Dominican Republic during the Trujillo dictatorship, La Inca is highly conscious of how she is positioned in relation to the nation-state along the lines of race, gender, and class. She takes various measures to ensure the legitimacy and authenticity of her authority, allowing her to take firm public stances against oppressive forces. This is exemplified by *reterritorialization*—the solidification and maintenance of the borders of one's territory against an enemy, in this case, that of the

Trujillo regime. La Inca also recognizes when the island is no longer safe for her daughter to live in; her *informed flight* response allows her to ensure the safety and wellbeing of her kin. Effectively, La Inca is a fight-or-flight, mystical heroine in touch with the forces of the natural world and the force of her nation's history.

Lola

Lola DeLeon is Oscar's older sister, Belicia's daughter, and La Inca's grand-niece. As with many of the novel's characters, Lola often finds herself escaping through fantasy and desiring: "I wanted the life that I used to see when I watched *Big Blue Marble*. . . . The life that existed beyond Paterson, beyond my family, beyond Spanish."²⁸ Whenever Lola perceives that her dreams and desires will be stunted by forces of power, Lola transforms in order to differentially navigate past arrestments in spatial-temporal relations. This fifth tactic exhibited by Lola is *transformation*. This understanding of transformation and the *arrebato*s that may incite them is drawn from Gloria Anzaldúa's concept of *nepantla*. *Nepantla* is a "site of transformation," in that the individual is split and pulled between two realities; it is a site located at the overlapping spaces between different categories of being.²⁹ *Arrebato*s are powerful events—metaphorical earthquakes—which fracture one's previously held reality; they are both "an ending" and "a beginning."³⁰ These analytics are useful for locating Lola's sites of transformation in response to external forces, and the power she utilizes in predicting such shifts and acting on her desires.

Lola desires a life "beyond Paterson," a city where "the puertorican kids . . . called me Blacula, and the morenos . . . they just called me devil-bitch," in response to her punk transformation.³¹ After her mother is diagnosed with breast cancer, the first *arrebato*, Lola turns to punk aesthetics as they are distinctly anti-authoritarian and emotionally expressive.³² Punk aesthetics are unwomanly and queer in Belicia's eyes, as she repeatedly calls her daughter "fea."³³ Functionally, Lola takes otherization to the extreme by transforming her appearance into an externalized reflection of her conflicted inner self. She moves her subjectivity into a space that defies essentialization, thus alleviating herself of narrow categorizations. She adopts a new identity that makes it hard to contain her within any singular category as an aesthetically queer feminist, as an Afro-Latina of Dominican descent raised in the United States, and more. Additionally, Lola desires a space "beyond" her highly territorialized home, referring to Belicia as "an absentee parent" who would "hit us anywhere," alluding to her mother's intense physical and verbal expressions of control, despite constantly being away at work.³⁴

Lola's transformation, however, is not only aesthetic nor restricted to the household; it is a function of spatial-temporal movement and Lola's own *sucia* consciousness of society-at-large. As tensions between Lola and her mother rise, Lola decides to run away to her boyfriend Aldo's home in the Jersey Shore where he lives with his aging father. Lola pretends to enjoy losing her virginity to Aldo, who she "thought . . . [she] loved," because she desires what a relationship with him represents: advancement and freedom. In reality, she ends up sleeping in his "kitty-litter-infested room" and having to work part-time selling French fries.³⁵ This is a crucial *arrebato*, as it reveals Lola's understanding of the flawed patriarchal context surrounding her: "I started to think that maybe it was like in the books; as soon as I lost my virginity I lost my power."³⁶ She experiences the portrayals of romance in the books that she reads coming to fruition in her material reality. But, being a *sucia*, she realizes that the romanticized notions of love that she has been sold are flawed. This keen perception, her own utilization of the *desiring-mind's eye*, is her power: she is able to sense when *arrebato*'s driven by patriarchy and coloniality are approaching, and when transformation for the purpose of securing her desires is necessary: "And that's when it hit with the force of a hurricane. The *feeling* . . . She was about to say something and I was waiting for whatever she was going to tell me. I was waiting to begin."³⁷ This surreal sense that falls over Lola whenever trouble is looming allows her to astutely perceive when she must move, evade, transform, and become. Lola is a navigational shapeshifter with keen predictive abilities.

New Heroes

This article has explored the inner workings of patriarchal, classist, and racist social structures by tracing the tactics and strategies deployed by the women in *Wao* who navigate them. Their identities and abilities are configured in response to institutional forces of patriarchal power and racial desire, which often elicit economic calculations on their part. Women in *Oscar Wao* are heroes, but such a claim depends on the way that critics read and discuss them as characters. Critics are perceivers: they decide what to do with the text and re-render its characters accordingly. This article has argued that in order to critically analyze the ways in women are socially navigating the world of the novel, readers must suspend their own presuppositions and listen to the characters themselves. Only then may they accurately describe their subjectivities and synthesize a set of compatible theories and analytics to reveal critical insights. This article has revealed information about the contexts in which feminine characters in *Oscar Wao* face adversity. It has formulated some of the key feminist tactics by which they choose to navigate their world, namely: *economic aesthetics*, the *desiring-mind's eye*, *reterritorialization*, *informed flight*, and

transformation. The medium of Díaz's novel allows readers to critically explore and characterize realistic identities, question the legitimacy of forces of power, and identify the tactics that allow these women to act in pursuit of what they desire most, despite an unjust society.

Endnotes

- 1 See "Open Letter Against Media Treatment of Junot Díaz."
- 2 See J. D. Saldívar xi.
- 3 See Hanna, "Reassembling the Fragments" 499, 501.
- 4 See Y.C. Figueroa, "Faithfull Witnessing as Practice" 649.
- 5 See Díaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* 324.
- 6 See Díaz, "The Silence."
- 7 See Díaz 77.
- 8 Ibid., 251, 253.
- 9 Ibid., 89.
- 10 See Vargas 352.
- 11 Ibid., 361.
- 12 Ibid., 356.
- 13 See Anzaldúa and Keating 54.
- 14 See Díaz 94.
- 15 Ibid., 141.
- 16 "Dioniso" is Spanish for Dionysus, the Greek God of fertility and ecstasy.
- 17 Díaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* 115; see Hemming 53.
- 18 See Díaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* 154.
- 19 Ibid., 148.
- 20 See García-Peña 29.
- 21 Ibid., 62.
- 22 Ibid., 58.
- 23 Ibid., 61.
- 24 Ibid., 62.
- 25 See Díaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* 159.
- 26 Ibid., 154. FN 19.
- 27 See Díaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* 161; Lanzendörfer 132.
- 28 See Díaz 55.
- 29 See Anzaldúa and Keating 548.
- 30 Ibid., 546.
- 31 See Díaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* 54.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Ibid., 64–65.
- 36 Ibid., 65.
- 37 Ibid., 74.

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Korean Shakespeare: Shamanism and Yang Jung-Ung's Remaking of *Hamlet*

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Abstract

A selection from a larger thesis project, this article explores the nature of South Korean adaptations of Shakespeare's plays through an analysis of Yang Jung-Ung's 2009 adaptation of *Hamlet*. Through his "Koreanization" of *Hamlet*, Yang seeks to reclaim what he deems are the "essential" Korean values and ideals that have been forgotten in today's Korean society, hence using Shakespeare as a tool through which Korean audience can rediscover Korean identity. This paper examines how Yang incorporates shamanism, a traditionally Korean cultural practice, in his remaking of *Hamlet*, and how he presents shamanism as a non-Western, indigenous force that gives agency to Hamlet, a young individual in conflict, to bring back the core Korean values and restore the dissonant Korean society.

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Introduction

In today's era of globalization, Shakespeare has become a transnational figure where his drama no longer has exclusively British, or even Western, identity but has come to be celebrated by an international group of scholars, theatre professionals, and audience. In the words of Craig Dionne and Parmita Kapadia, Shakespeare's plays performed around the globe function as "sites of contest reflecting a manifold of cultures."¹ By using a global icon, and by revising the plays and developing them for their own audiences, regional directors acquire an opportunity both to display and reflect on their national identities, distinguishing them from the ones imposed on them by the Western world. In South Korea, where Shakespeare's plays were first introduced approximately one hundred years ago during the Japanese Colonial Period (1910–1945), under the influence of democratization and globalization, Shakespeare became increasingly popular since the 1990s, and is now the most

prominent playwright in Korean theatre. There have been a total of 433 productions of Shakespeare plays staged in South Korea between 1990 and 2011, with 20 percent of them in what would be deemed "Korean" style.²

In this article, I will explore the nature of "Koreanized" adaptations of Shakespeare by analyzing an adaptation of *Hamlet* produced by a South Korean director named Yang Jung-Ung in 2009, a production that showcases how Korean directors use Shakespeare to reclaim Korean traditional practices and ideals that have been forsaken in today's Korean society. More specifically, I will examine how Yang incorporates shamanism, a traditionally Korean cultural practice, into his play, and how shamanism serves as an instrumental force in Yang's rediscovering of Korean identity.

Background

The ideology that Korean directors often encounter in their adaptation of the Shakespeare plays is Confucianism, which was first brought to Korean society during the second century B.C., and came to be deeply embedded in Korean culture by the end of the 14th century.³ In a Confucian society, the power of those in positions of authority, in both public and familial domains, is deemed to be absolute, and within the confines of ranked authority structure, it is extremely difficult for one to transcend his or her restrictions. Moreover, in a Confucian culture, one's adherence to "filial piety"—the practice of respect for one's parents—is the primary virtue. Filial piety emphasizes the debt children owe to their parents and demands "strict obedience, respect of authority, and careful care of parents and ancestors by offspring."⁴ A grown child becomes responsible for supporting his or her parents with basic material needs, as well as providing them with "comfort and ease of mind."⁵

The theme of a young individual opposed to the domineering older generation found in Shakespeare's plays is relevant to today's Korean society where there is a divide between the Confucianized older generation and the younger generation, who, having grown up in a modernized world, have come to cultivate values different from their elders. Further, through Shakespeare, a western figure, the directors import and investigate set of "new" values associated with contemporary Western culture, such as emphasis on independence for children or more agency for women. With these values, Korean directors criticize the outdated, now problematic attitudes of traditional cultures, like those found in early modern and Confucian societies.

This, however, is not to say that they simply valorize Western ideas over Korean ones and argue for replacement of Korean traditions with new, modern, thus "better,"

Western values. Their goal is not to create a Korean facsimile of famous Shakespeare productions staged in the West but to localize his text to produce uniquely Korean plays that Korean audiences can connect with. While emphasizing Western values to criticize flawed aspects of Korean culture, the directors at the same time seek to reclaim indigenous Korean traditions predating foreign (or, to be more precise, Confucian and Western) influences, thus calling back what is originally and essentially Korean. The result is a balanced interplay of Western and Korean values in a play staged between two different worlds.

A tradition that is indigenous to Korean culture and predates or postdates the import of Confucianism that Korean directors almost always incorporate in their adaptations of Shakespeare's plays is shamanism, a religion that, despite incessant attacks and persecutions of shamans throughout many centuries, continues to have a deep influence on Korean culture and its people. Korean shamanism dates back to at least to the Three Kingdoms Period (57 BC–AD 668).⁶ Historical evidence suggests that there may have been shamanic kings during this period of time, which indicates how shamanism had been the national religion of ancient Korea before the advent of Buddhism, which was introduced from China in the fourth century.⁷

Unlike other religions that were imported to Korea and have been usually affiliated with people who are wealthier and educated, shamanism has been a religion for and by the marginalized (e.g., women and the poor), and despite many attempts to abolish the practice, shamanism to this date has survived. Korean directors, considering shamanism to be uniquely Korean in nature, in searching for a new meaning of “Koreanness” that is not Confucian nor Westernized, incorporate shamanic beliefs and rituals in making their adaptations of Shakespeare's plays “Korean.” Further, in the adaptations of Shakespeare's plays where young individuals seek to resuscitate a corrupt world that the adults have left behind, shamanism functions as a non-Western, indigenous force that gives agency to the marginalized individuals oppressed by Confucian traditions and restores the crippled, dissonant world by resolving the conflict between the older and younger generations.

Yang Jung-Ung's *Hamlet*

An adaptation that captures the essence of such attempt brilliantly is Yang Jung-Ung's 2009 production of *Hamlet*, where Yang shows a young prince who embraces rather than rejects filial piety by taking on the duty of revenge for his dead father. Through his adaptation, Yang transforms the play into a one big shamanistic ritual, and the play in its entirety functions as a healing process for the souls of the living and the dead, with shamans performing

rituals throughout. In his reworking of the play, Yang radically reorganizes the structure of the first three acts and removes scenes that particularly deal with Fortinbras or the state of Denmark, deemphasizing the political themes present in Shakespeare's original play in order to “focus on Hamlet's drama.”⁸ The play begins and ends with two major shamanic rituals called Jinogigut (진오귀굿) and Sanjinogigut (산진오귀굿), which collectively work to unveil corruptions in the discordant society and create a new, unpolluted world.

The play takes place on a stage walled by portraits of shamanic gods, which reminds one of the inside of a shaman's temple. Even the instruments used to make live sound effects are those that are used in actual shamanic rituals, which make the rituals feel more realistic. The white rice that surrounds the stage symbolizes life, for rice has long been a staple in Korean diet. Instead of wearing “nighted color” (I.ii.70), Hamlet appears on stage in white clothes, while all other major characters appear with black western business suits. While black has come to be accepted as the color of mourning as Korea underwent modernization and westernization, the traditional color of mourning for Koreans used to be white. Hence, by clothing Hamlet in white, Yang, from the very beginning, portrays Hamlet as a character who exhibits more traditional “Koreanness” than any other characters in the play—even more so than his elders.

In his adaptation of *Hamlet*, Yang Jung-Ung depicts Hamlet essentially as an individual stricken with *han* caused by his father's unjust death and his mother's unnatural marriage to his uncle. A kind of sentiment that is considered to be uniquely Korean in nature, *han* (恨, 한), which means “something that is deeply ingrained in the mind,” is composed of two Chinese characters that signify “the mind” (心) and “to be deeply ingrained” (艮).⁹ Experienced most frequently by those at the bottom of the class hierarchy and especially by women who are oppressed by the patriarchal system, *han* is a feeling of deep regret, sadness, despair, resentment, rage, and hatred caused by an unjust and dehumanizing event. With the tumultuous set of events that have occurred throughout Korean history, including Japanese colonization and the Korean war, *han* is considered to be a collective feeling of unresolved sorrow shared by all Koreans. In the director's note, Yang Jung-Ung writes, “It was only natural for me to interpret Hamlet as a person who has *han* smoldered and embedded in his heart. Sadness, loneliness, affliction, and wound. . . . I feel that today, we all desperately need our own *gut* [shamanistic rituals]. Going beyond its religious aspect, we all need the catharsis and cure that result from these rituals. . . . We all share the feeling of compassion for humanity and life, and wanting to console ourselves together as a community.”¹⁰

The play begins with *Jinogigut* (진오귀굿), a ritual that is particularly important in that without it, the deceased cannot be sent to the underworld.¹¹ Moreover, only after a successful completion of this ritual can a person be elevated from a status of a ghost to a position of a “god” who will take care of his or her family from above. In Korean culture, ancestors are especially held sacred due to the belief that ancestors who are in heaven take care of their descendants, protecting them from all the evils. The shamans, who are all women, clothed in colorful dresses with stripes of yellow, green, red, and blue, sing and dance in order to invoke the spirit of the deceased king. The singing and dancing come to a halt when suddenly, a shaman, holding a fan on her right hand and bells on her left hand, leaps, and having been possessed by the spirit of the Ghost, starts to mouth his words:

FIRST SHAMAN. I'm here, I'm here, my son,
more precious than gold. I crossed millions of
miles through hell to see you and borrow the lips
of this Shaman today.

SHAMANS. I hear nothing but lamentations and
see nothing but tears.

SECOND SHAMAN. I left you without a word
like a butterfly in a fire.

FIRST SHAMAN. Where would I unload all my
han?

THIRD SHAMAN. Your tears

SECOND SHAMAN. overflow the rivers and the
sea

FIRST SHAMAN. and they grab at my ankles.¹²

SECOND SHAMAN. Aren't life and death the
same?

FIRST SHAMAN. (Laughing) I have enough
money to get me to the other side of life.¹³

THIRD SHAMAN. My son

SECOND SHAMAN. will unload all my *han*
today.

FIRST SHAMAN. I am leaving.

THIRD SHAMAN. I am leaving.

SHAMANS. I am on my way to Nirvana.
(Parting the hemp cloth.)
Buddha, be merciful.
Grant us longevity.

Unlike Shakespeare's original text where Hamlet himself encounters the Ghost and hears the words directly from him, in Yang's production, the old king's words are delivered by shamans. Here, shamanism offers a way for the child to communicate with his deceased parent. In this set of lines, the old king reveals that he can go on to the next world only with Hamlet's help, and importunes his son to avenge his death. By calling Hamlet a “successor of my bloodline,”

the father puts emphasis on the fact that they are connected to one another by blood: Hamlet should avenge his father's death not only because of the love and grief he feels for the old king, but also out of his sense of duty as the king's offspring. By reminding his son of the shared blood between them, the old king emphasizes the fact that their relationship as father and son continues to be intact even after his death, and that Hamlet's duty as the only son who shares his blood remains obligatory. While situated in a world that was made corrupt by the adults, where the basic natural laws of humanity no longer are in effect and people simply go along with the flawed state of the world, Hamlet nevertheless has to uphold the traditional duties of a filial child.

Subsequently, the shamans perform an act called *Bae Garugi* (배 가르기), a crucial component of *Jinogigut* where a shaman parts a sheet of long, white cotton cloth symbolizing the bridge between the present world and the other world into two strips by pushing her body from one end to another, thus separating the boundary between the two worlds and sending the deceased off to the underworld.¹⁴ However, the ritual is interrupted when the shaman stops halfway through the sheet, with her body shuddering, and raising her hands high up on the air, cries, “Kill that bastard! Kill that bastard!” The shaman then falls to the ground, and using the voices of other shamans, the Ghost tells Hamlet of the bloody truth behind his mysterious death:

THIRD SHAMAN. How could you? My crown
on his head! Avenge me. I shed the tears of blood.
I cannot take one step towards the other life while
he's alive.

SHAMANS. My son. Successor of my bloodline.
Avenge my death. Avenge my death!

Having told Hamlet, the only “successor of [his] bloodline,” to avenge his death and never to forget him, the Ghost leaves the shamans' bodies, and after wrapping Hamlet around with the parted white clothing used for *Bae Garugi*, they exit from the stage. Hence, Hamlet has to fulfill the duty of avenging his father's death, which has now become especially essential since the old king's ritual has been interrupted in the middle and the purpose of the ritual—which is to send the soul of the dead to the underworld—unachieved; the old king will remain a lost, wandering spirit until Hamlet avenges his death.¹⁵ Hamlet, entangled in the white piece of clothing from his father's ritual, both physically and metaphorically becomes fettered with the filial duty of relieving his father of his *han*.

At the same time, Yang's incorporation of the Korean idea of *han* puts Hamlet's duty of revenge and unloading his father's *han* in conflict. Because *han* is a wound that is deeply embedded in someone's mind, simply taking revenge on the one who had injured him would not relieve him of

it. Donggyu Kim, in his study on *ban*, points out how the immediate release of one's fury—such as taking revenge—cannot fully resolve one's *ban*.¹⁶ In fact, instead of completely removing the feeling of resentment, it would only bring on a vicious cycle of hatred. Rather, one must go through a process called *Sak-im* (작임), which can be translated as “fermentation.” By restraining sadness and letting it “ripen” in one's mind for a period of time, *ban*, initially a feeling of intense resentment, undergoes a change and comes to take on a different form: with time, *Won-ban* (원한, hate) turns into *Jung-ban* (정한, love-hate).¹⁷ While there is still sadness, it would no longer be in the form of unbearable rage. Moreover, Kim explains, such change would take place only when the individual learns to accept help given by the people around him or her; the process of healing becomes a communal, collaborative work rather than an individual task.

The last shamanic ritual, called *Sanjinogigut* (산진오귀굿), takes place at the very end of the play, after all characters except Horacio have fallen to the ground.¹⁸ By the end of the play, the fury that Hamlet initially had developed has noticeably become assuaged, and on the brink of death, Hamlet cries, “My poor mother! Mother, farewell.” The feeling of hatred that he had experienced at the beginning of the play has, with the passage of time, transformed into a more tender emotion: to use Donggyu Kim's terminology, *Won-ban* has turned into *Jung-ban*. At the end of his life, the prince comes to feel a pity for his mother who, like Ophelia, has been a victim of the power struggles within a patriarchal court. Looking at the audience, he continues,

You that look pale and tremble at this.

Are you but mute audience to this act?

If I had time, I would tell you the whole story, but
I won't. I am dead. You live.

Tell the story of me and my cause.

Having accomplished his task and feeling at ease with coming death, he leaves the rest to Horacio and the audience. Yang changes Hamlet's last line from “The rest is silence” to “I want to rest in silence,” which becomes a cue for *Sanjinogigut* to commence.

With the entrance of shamans who place a green cone hat on Hamlet's head, the ritual begins, and Hamlet remains alive throughout the whole performance, watching his own ritual until his death. Circling around Hamlet, the shamans start to perform *Bae Garugi*, which was interrupted during the old king's ritual. Then, the play closes with all the deceased characters coming around the prince and holding on to the long white cloth, making the ritual a communal work to heal Hamlet's *ban*. Through this striking image of everyone coming back together in the last scene as a

community performing a communal ritual, Yang indicates that Hamlet is not alone. For Yang, the nascent “new world” that has emerged after much chaos is not the one newly established by Fortinbras, an outsider, like in the original play. Instead, he reimagines it to be the one that has been cleansed and restored through a set of rituals, where everyone works together to reestablish a community and a new world order.

Conclusion

In Yang's *Hamlet*, shamanism is represented as a force that at once helps precipitate and resolve Hamlet's *ban*; while it holds Hamlet accountable to his filial duty (since it is through a shamanic ritual that takes place at the beginning of the play that the old king tells Hamlet to avenge his death), it also relieves him of all his despair and sorrow before his death, for what ultimately resolves Hamlet's *ban* is not the act of vengeance per se, but rather the final, concluding ritual that allows him to forgive, and reconnect to his community. Both Hamlet and his father can rest in peace only when, for the first and last time, a shamanic ritual is successfully carried out at the end of the play. Together, the shamanic rituals that take place throughout the play work to resolve different causes of bitterness experienced by individuals, and ultimately to restore the community. In this play, shamanism, then, is what resolves generational conflict at the end, bringing together old and young people to resolve their *ban*. It gives Hamlet, a young individual continuously associated with indigenous Korean cultural practices throughout the play, the power to restore the crippled world and “make it right.” In the end, shamanism gives him agency to bring back core Korean values and remake the world in a way it should be: a world where the young and old work together to better one another's lives—where there is love for one another, not hate.

Endnotes

- 1 Craig Dionne and Parmita Kapadia, introduction to *Native Shakespeares: Indigenous Appropriations on a Global Stage*, eds. Craig Dionne and Parmita Kapadia (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 6.
- 2 Hyon-u Lee, *Korean Shakespeare Renaissance* (Seoul: Dongin, 2016), 39. This work has strongly influenced my thinking about Korean Shakespeare productions.
- 3 JaHyun Kim Haboush, “The Confucianization of Korean Society,” in *The East Asian Region: Confucian Heritage and Its Modern Adaptation*, ed. Gilbert Rozman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 84, 86.
- 4 Nancy Abelman, “Traditional Culture and Society,” in *An Introduction to Korean Culture*, eds. John H. Koo and Andrew C. Nahm (Elizabeth, NJ: Hollym, 1997), 265.
- 5 Kwang Kyu Lee, “Confucian Tradition in the Contemporary Korean Family,” in *Confucianism and the Family*, eds. Walter H. Slote and George A. DeVos (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998), 251.
- 6 Hyun-key Kim Hogarth, *Korean Shamanism and Cultural Nationalism* (Seoul: Jimoondang, 1999), 280.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 283.

- 8 Jung-Ung Yang, *A Midsummer Night's Dream: Yang Jung-Ung's Play Script Collection II* (Seoul: Purun Books, 2014), 263.
 - 9 Young-eui Rhee, "The Structure of Han as a Typical Type of Korean Emotion," *The Journal of Honam Area Studies* 49 (2011): 152.
 - 10 Yang, *Play Script Collection II*, 254. Translated from Korean to English by myself.
 - 11 Lee, *Korean Shakespeare Renaissance*, 146–7.
 - 12 Korean idiom used when something burdensome prevents one from carrying out an action.
 - 13 In the past, when a deceased person's coffin was being carried out, people nearby would stick in some money to the bier in the hope that the deceased would have an easy journey to the underworld.
 - 14 Halla Pai Huhm, *Kut: Korean Shamanist Rituals* (New Jersey: Hollym, 1980), 98.
 - 15 Lee, *Korean Shakespeare Renaissance*, 147.
 - 16 Donggyu Kim, "Comparative Study of the Han (恨) and Melancholy Discourse," *Comparative Korean Studies* 24, no. 3 (2016): 232.
 - 17 Ibid., 235.
 - 18 *Sanjinogut* is a ritual held for a person who is yet alive but expecting death.
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Repatriation as Redress?: NAGPRA and the Mohegan Mask in the Penn Museum's Collection

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Elka Lee-Shapiro graduated from Oberlin College in May 2018 with a double major in Art History and East Asian Studies. During her time at Oberlin, she organized a number of programs at the intersection of art and politics, with a focus on Asian American cultural production. In the future, Elka plans on pursuing a career broadly in the arts, in either museum education or public programming.

Abstract

This paper focuses on a repatriation case surrounding a Native American mask in the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology's collection. In 1996, the Mohegan Tribe filed a claim for the return of the mask under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). The Museum subsequently denied the claim, but instead offered the mask to the Tribe on a long-term loan. Situating this case study within broader cultural property debates and intertwined histories of U.S. settler colonialism and Native American resistance, I examine how NAGPRA continues to fail Native American claims for restitution. More broadly, through this case study, I seek to address the central role nationalism and national boundaries play in problematizing repatriation disputes.

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Introduction

In 1996, the Mohegan Tribe of Uncasville, Connecticut, requested for the return of a wooden mask in the University of Pennsylvania (Penn) Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology's collection (Figure 1). Dating to the 1930s, the mask was carved by a Mohegan man named Harold Tantaquidgeon for the Tribe's Wigwam Celebration, an annual harvest festival held in August.¹ Shortly after it was created, the mask was collected by an anthropologist named Frank Speck, a specialist in North-Eastern Native American cultures at University of Pennsylvania, and acquired by the Penn Museum.² An inscription on the back of the mask includes a name and signature that reads, "Tom Hat," indicating its maker Harold Tantaquidgeon, as well as a sale price of \$3.00 (Figure 2).³

The Tribe's claim for the mask was filed under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), a United States federal law passed in 1990 that provides a legal framework for Native American groups to make claims for the return of ancestral human remains and cultural objects held in American museums. The Tribe requested the mask back on the basis of it being a "sacred object," one of five categories of objects designated by NAGPRA as eligible for repatriation. However, upon receiving the Tribe's claim, the Museum denied it on the grounds that the mask failed to meet the legal NAGPRA definition of a "sacred object."⁴

Instead, they offered the mask to the Tribe on a five-year renewable loan, which the Tribe accepted and has since renewed three times.⁵ The mask is currently in the Tribe's custody via the loan, and continues to be used annually by Tribal members in their Wigwam Celebration.⁶

This case study provides a unique example for examining how cultural property laws are interpreted and implemented. As the case demonstrates, the Tribe and the Museum disagreed over how the mask aligned with NAGPRA's definition of a "sacred object," yet were able to arrive at a solution that was settled outside of the legal parameters of NAGPRA. The central tension that emerges in this case then comes down to one of interpretive limitations: if the Museum was still willing to make the mask available to the Tribe regardless of its status as a "sacred object," what limitations are presented in NAGPRA's definition, and what implications does this hold on NAGPRA's broader framework? What does the loan agreement accomplish in contrast to NAGPRA? By looking closely at NAGPRA's definition of a "sacred object" in relation to the mask's historical and cultural function, I argue that the contradictions presented in this case study reveal inherent flaws in NAGPRA's legal framework that fail to account for the history of colonialism from which the mask emerged.

I. Situating NAGPRA within Cultural Property Debates

In recent decades, cultural property has gained traction as an urgent and controversial topic in the museum world. At the center of these debates are objects that have been removed from their original contexts and brought into predominantly U.S. and European collections under questionable circumstances such as those of colonialism, imperialism, and war. Arguments for the repatriation—or return—of these objects to their original contexts thereby seek to rectify moral and ethical injustices by which museums have built up their collections, where repatriation serves as both a literal and symbolic act of restitution.⁷ Amidst these

debates, a host of international and domestic cultural property laws have been established to provide legal frameworks for regulating and facilitating the return of these objects.

While repatriating objects to their original contexts seems like a clear and ethical solution, a tension that has emerged is the central role nationalism and national boundaries have come to occupy. Oftentimes, repatriation disputes are framed as between a source country, from which the object originated, and a host country, where the object resides. The prevailing logic is such that source countries justify rightful ownership to objects on the basis of an inherited culture, where, as anthropologist Morag Kersel succinctly puts it, “the answer to the question of who owns the past, is, with increasing frequency, the artifact’s country of origin.”⁸ This becomes a problem when the objects in question originate from cultures that are no longer extant or have undergone dramatic changes, which becomes especially clear in cases surrounding antiquities. James Cuno, an art historian and outspoken opponent of cultural property laws, asserts that repatriation legitimizes and naturalizes nationalist identity politics and the constructedness of nations and their borders:

To include antiquities within the political construct of cultural property is to politicize them. It is to make them part of modern, national cultural politics. What is a national culture in this modern age, when the geographic extent of so many cultures does not coincide with national borders, and when borders are often new and even artificial creations [. . .]?⁹

In seeking to address past histories of objects, cultural property laws rely on definitions of culture that are retrospectively applied, not only presenting significant interpretive challenges but also holding deep political stakes.

NAGPRA becomes an interesting outlier in these debates as a domestic law that provides guidelines for the repatriation of objects to sovereign groups *within* the U.S. borders, due to the specific history of the United States as a settler colonial state. The formation of the United States is predicated on the displacement of Native American groups from their land, a process Scholar Patrick Wolfe theorized as “settler colonialism,” a distinct type of colonialism that seeks to replace the original populations of the colonized territory with a new society of settlers.

Wolf argues that settler colonialism is an ongoing structure, where settler colonial states must continuously justify their formation through a “logic of elimination” that relies on the occupation and erasure of indigenous populations. NAGPRA is significant in that it seeks to address a history

of settler colonialism through a legal framework that focuses on ownership and repatriation. As such, the case study surrounding the Mohegan mask allows for an examination of the tense negotiation between the repatriation of Native American objects as seeking to affirm Native sovereignty, and repatriation as continuing to legitimize and naturalize geographic boundaries of the United States that rely on the occupation of Native land.

II. Parameters of the Case: The Mask as a “Sacred Object”

NAGPRA’s guidelines stipulate two key components for determining if an object qualifies for repatriation: firstly, there must be an established cultural affiliation between the object and the group claiming it; secondly, five categories fall under its scope of “cultural items” for repatriation: human remains, associated funerary objects, unassociated funerary objects, objects of cultural patrimony, and sacred objects.

The Penn Museum denied the Tribe’s repatriation claim for the mask on the grounds that it did not meet NAGPRA’s definition of a “sacred object,”¹¹ which NAGPRA defines as “specific ceremonial objects which are needed by traditional Native American religious leaders for the practice of traditional Native American religions by their present day adherents.”¹² While the exact details regarding why the mask failed to meet the standards of a “sacred object” have not been disclosed by either the Museum or the Tribe, an examination of the historical function of the mask in relation to the NAGPRA definition give shape to the contours of this definition and its interpretive limitations.

The mask was originally created for the Tribe’s annual Wigwam Celebration, which would seem indicate that it served a specific “ceremonial function” as stipulated in the NAGPRA definition. Melissa Jayne Fawcett, the tribal historian for the Mohegan Tribe, writes how Gladys Tantaquidgeon, the medicine woman for the tribe and Harold Tantaquidgeon’s sister, “recalled [her brother] wearing [the mask] during the annual Wigwam for the general casting out of bad spirits.”¹³

Fawcett explains how the “Mohegans carved such masks from living trees, to enliven them. These masks also cohosted the spirit of their maker and evoked the powerful aide of Gunci Mundo, the Great Spirit.”¹⁴ Also called the Green Corn Ceremony, The Wigwam is celebrated to honor and thank the great spirit Gunci Mundo for the first ripe corn in August. The celebration derives its name from a dome-shaped structure, a “wigwam,” made with a framework of birch saplings and covered with bark, reeds, and grasses, which would be constructed over the course of the multi-day celebration alongside a great feast, prayers, songs,

and dances.¹⁵ These details suggest that the mask indeed served a specific ceremonial and religious function in the Wigwam ceremony, which seems to align with some aspects of NAGPRA's definition of a "sacred object."

The other aspect of NAGPRA's definition stipulates that a sacred object must be "needed by traditional Native American religious leaders for the practice of traditional Native American religions by their present-day adherents." In other words, NAGPRA's definition of a sacred object is contingent on maintenance of traditional religious practices that have been retained to present. The Wigwam celebration has a long history that has been documented among Native American groups in present-day New England since the 17th century.¹⁶ However, from the establishment of the colony of Connecticut in 1636 to present, continuous encroachment on Mohegan land and a slew of assimilation measures have threatened Mohegan cultural practices.

By the mid-19th century, the Wigwam Celebration was at risk of being eradicated. In 1860, the Mohegan medicine woman Emma Baker revitalized the Wigwam festival, an initiative that occurred, according to the Mohegan Tribe's official website, "just before the break-up of the Mohegan Reservation. The Festival helped galvanize Tribal solidarity during a time of fragmentation."¹⁸ Today, the festival continues to be celebrated as a "symbol of tribal survival."¹⁹ Tracing the historical and cultural function of the mask makes clear the reality that Native American practices such as the Wigwam are far from static, and have changed due to a host of social and political factors resulting from U.S. repression of Native American cultural practices.

Considering this context, the historical and cultural function of the mask stands in tension with NAGPRA's definition of a sacred object, which requires maintenance of traditional practices that have been retained from past to present. American Indian studies scholar Joanne Barker contextualizes Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's theory of tradition as a nationalist construction for the specific conditions for Native Americans:

The study of traditions has often presupposed the nation's claim to historical cohesiveness and continuity against the reality that traditions are continuously being innovated. . . . This would mean that by the very character of cultural history and identity formation, traditions would change and be changed over time. Instead, Native traditions have been fixed in an authentic past and then used as a measure of cultural-as-racial authenticity in the present.²⁰

In other words, according to Barker, notions of cultural authenticity that focus on tradition as defined by laws such as NAGPRA actually undermine Native American projects for self-determination. By over looking the ways that traditional connections are sometimes tenuous or hard to establish due to the violent eradication of Native peoples and practices, and then using fixed definitions of traditional practices "as a measure of cultural-as-racial authenticity in the present," NAGPRA paradoxically reinscribes the very "logic of elimination" of settler colonialism.

III. Beyond Repatriation?: The Agreement Between the Penn Museum and the Mohegan Tribe

Settled outside of the legal parameters of NAGPRA, the loan agreement between the Tribe and Museum provides an example of an alternative to repatriation that circumvents arbiters bound by the nation. The formal loan agreement stipulates that the Tribe should exercise reasonable and professional care in transporting, handling, displaying, and storing the mask at all times, and goes beyond the Museum's standard loan procedures to allow tribal members to handle and use the mask for educational and ceremonial purposes as determined by the Tribe. Through these arrangements, the mask is still used today in the annual Wigwam Celebration, which now includes crafts, food items, and dance competitions.

On one hand, this solution departs from an issue of repatriation and ownership as framed by the legal parameters of NAGPRA, and instead, centers on the object as a Mohegan cultural item that takes on fluid meanings. It allows for the tribe to exercise a great amount of jurisdiction over the mask, including its location, handling, and usage. It is especially significant that the mask is still used in the Wigwam Celebration today, because it shows that objects removed from their original contexts still retain living knowledges and histories that are valuable to their communities, even if the practices in which they were used have changed. On the other hand, the loan agreement raises further questions for responsible museum practices; the burden of proof fell on the Tribe, and the ultimate decision was contingent on the Museum's terms. Through a discussion of this case, I hope to have shown how NAGPRA, which is so often framed as an extension of Native American sovereignty efforts, continues to uphold and naturalize the formation of the U.S. on Native land. Amidst debates surrounding decolonizing practices for museums, this case study points to the necessity of establishing contextually specific models for restorative measures.

Endnotes

- 1 Melissa Jayne Fawcett, *Medicine Trail: the Life and Lessons of Gladys Tantaquidgeon* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2000), 136.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Lucy Fowler Williams, personal e-mail correspondence, December 7, 2017.
- 4 Robert W. Preucel, Lucy F. Williams, Stacey O. Espenlaub, and Janet Monge, "Out of Heaviness, Enlightenment: NAGPRA and the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology," *Expedition* 45, no. 3 (December 2003): 24.
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- 8 Kersel, "The Politics of Playing Fair," 41
- 9 James Cuno, *Who Owns Antiquity?: Museums and the Battle Over Our Ancient Heritage*, New Haven: Princeton University Press (2008), 11.
- 10 Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 4 no. 4 (2006), 388.
- 11 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, Public Law 101-601 (November 16, 1990).
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Fawcett, *Medicine Trail*, 136.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Lucianne Lavin, *Connecticut's Indigenous Peoples: What Archaeology, History, and Oral Traditions Teach us about Their Communities and Cultures* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, in association with the Yale Peabody Museum, 2013): 326
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- 18 "Wigwam Festival." Mohegan Tribe, accessed December 24, 2018. <https://www.mohegan.nsn.us/explore/heritage/wigwam-festival>.
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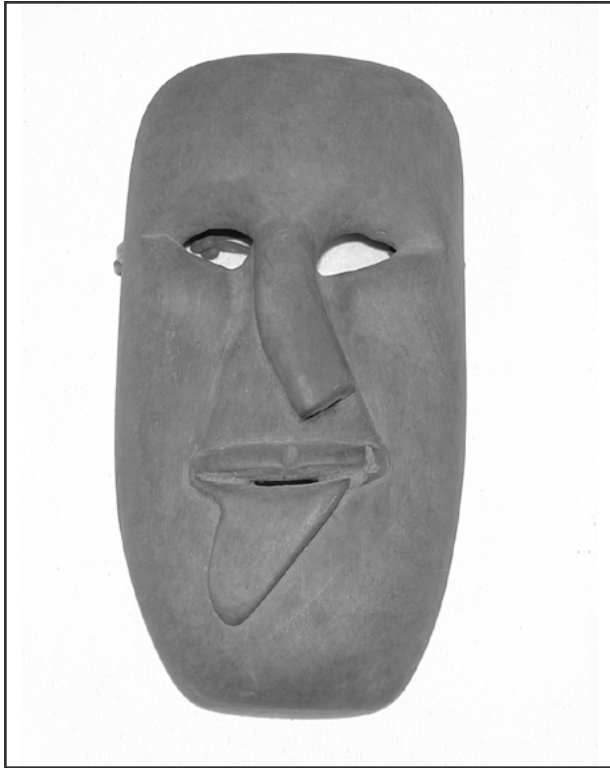


Figure 1. Mohegan, *Face Mask*, ca 1930 (front).
Image courtesy of the Penn Museum, Object 70-9-135.



Figure 2. Mohegan, *Face Mask*, ca 1930 (back).
Image courtesy of the Penn Museum, Object 70-9-135.

The Afterlife of Loss

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Chue is a recent graduate of Carleton College in Women's & Gender Studies. He currently works as a youth educator for the Walker Arts Center and is applying to a Masters of Fine Arts in creative writing. He hopes his writing will bear witness to the history of his people.

Abstract

This article is a part of a larger project that explores how the Hmong American self becomes a subject and object of loss through the processes of displacement and resettlement. My project aims to make Hmong subjectivity legible as an assemblage of forms of loss by analyzing the consequences of historical conflicts in which the Hmong subject is made visible or invisible within U.S. empire. By looking at experiences of refugee failure, death, and abusive international marriages, I argue that loss is embodied in gendered and violent forms; these experiences unveil loss as a restless ghost that haunts the Hmong diaspora, unsettling the narrative of the ends of U.S. empire.

Acknowledgements

For the ancestors who came before and those who will become.

After the Vietnam War “ended” in 1975, it seemed that American ambitions in Asia were at an end. The war was over; the dead and lost were mourned; the refugees were saved, and life could begin anew. However, the failed integration of refugees in the United States calls into question the end of the Vietnam War. The affect of diaspora, as Gayatri Gopinath puts, “is that of irredeemable loss, failure, longing, loneliness, defeat,” and death.¹ Because resettlement fails to alleviate these feelings, refugees still seek to mourn their losses. Yet loss is unrecoverable, and attempts to excavate it only result in violence. Such is the case for Hmong refugees. The attempt of Hmong refugees to recover loss within diaspora has resulted in violence upon the bodies of Hmong queers, youths, and women, a violence that, in turn, unsettles the end of war and empire.

In her seminal work on empire, Jodi Kim demonstrates that U.S. empire lives on in the workings of imperialism, neocolonialism and wars overseas. She details ends as four different elements: temporal terminations, spatial contours, functionality, and fragments and physical remnants.² She argues the Cold War as “a structure of feeling and production of knowledge [is used for] interpreting and acting upon new geopolitical configurations in the ‘post’-Cold War era.”³ While Kim’s work is crucial to charting the life of U.S. empire through various instances of Cold War hermeneutics,

the Hmong American experience of U.S. empire reveals a further dimension, a further manifestation, of its ongoing effect: the affective condition of loss. Through examination of Hmong American narratives, I argue that empire also lives on in the ways that it moves us to mourn.

The Hmong are a stateless people with a history of displacement: from China to Laos, to Thailand, and then to Western countries. From 1961 to 1975, Hmong became America’s foot soldier in direct action attacks against Pathet Lao, a communist political movement within Laos, and communist Vietnam for promised freedom and prosperity. When the United States withdrew from the Vietnam War, they took Hmong’s leaders and their closest supporters and families, while thousands were left to fight or flee for their lives as the Pathet Lao led campaigns to hunt down and exterminate the Hmong.⁴ In their plight, they traveled through mined jungles⁵ and unfamiliar terrains to cross the Mekong River and into the borders of Thailand. An estimated third of the population died during the war and another third died from slaughter, bombs, suicide, drowning, or starvation in their flight for safety. Those who survived the war were able to resettle in foreign countries.

The concern of the Hmong Americans is that there has been no public discussion on their involvement of the war nor recognition of their loss. In fact, the Hmong people’s involvement in the war and eventual displacement is often called the “Secret War.” Though the Secret War may have been unbeknownst to the majority of Americans, the war and its consequences were not a secret for the Hmong people who had fought and died in it, nor was the war a secret for their descendants. It was precisely the “secret” nature and naming of this war that rendered Hmong people invisible within the narrative of U.S. history and made the Hmong subject an object of loss, an absence, in the psyche of U.S. empire. In essence, Hmong subjects were archived as “official secrets” in both memory and national documents. Such archiving has activated the memory of war but, denied a visible history. Secrecy then comes to constitute the remains of Hmong loss. When stories and memories are all that remains, memories become the only objects with which Hmong subjects can trace and articulate their loss. The United States’ disavowal of Hmong’s place within the national narrative of Vietnam reenacts violent displacement, forcing the Hmong subject into a precarious position of constantly needing to name and prove its loss.

Popular in the Hmong American diaspora are melodramas that “depicted the homeland and that trafficked in nostalgia for remembered cultural mores.”⁶ Such programs prompt Hmong men, who never truly had the opportunity to live out their envisioned lives before the war, to return to the homeland. Whether fictional or produced in the style of

a documentary, these films revolve around young Hmong women.⁷ In these films, the image of the young Hmong woman comes to “evoke culture lost but also constitutes an erotic object, highly visual, marked by both beauty and ethnic specificity.”⁸ Louisa Schein, expanding on the cultural works and activism of Hmong feminists, has shed light on the structural and interpersonal violence generated by Hmong men’s melancholic attachment to lost culture, masculinity, and youth.

In her reading of Hmong American melodramas set in Thailand, Schein argues that it is not enough to say that Hmong men return to the homeland to recuperate a masculinity lost as a result of racial castration. She observes that Hmong American men are also drawn to the young Hmong woman in the homeland because by being with her, Hmong American men can “pleasurably and desiringly recall their time in the mountains and refugee camps of Laos and Thailand as their coming of age, their coming into erotic awareness, their early courtship and nascent romantic feelings.”⁹ For Hmong American men, the young Hmong woman is the living embodiment of their loss. Through her, they hope to recover their losses.

The critical, instrumental role of Hmong women in Hmong American men’s politics of mourning has led to the global phenomenon of abusive international marriages/relationships. Abusive international marriage occurs when Hmong American men, who are generally older, travel back to Southeast Asia with the intention of having affairs with young women, often underage, and luring them to the United States with promises of a better life,¹⁰ a claim that their different positions within U.S. empire allows. In cases where marriage does not occur, Hmong American men end up leaving the young girls. The violence of these complex relationships reaches beyond the unbalanced power dynamic between the returnee and girl: it haunts the entire Hmong diaspora, disrupting the community here and across the ocean. Schein, for example, cites Cy Thao’s *Death in Thailand*, a documentary on the life of Nplias Yaj as an example of the violence produced from Hmong men’s returns.¹¹ Nplias Yaj was a young refugee woman, who committed suicide after a Hmong American man falsely hired her to act, slept with her, promised her marriage but then spurned her.

In addition to Hmong men’s attempts to recover loss, Hmong American parents’ also attempt to recover from loss. What are the effects of this endeavor on their children? In 2002, Panhia Vang (aged 17) and Yee Yang (aged 21) drowned themselves together in a lake. They were both Hmong women and lovers. Following Vang and Yang’s death, the *Fresno Bee* reported on a trend of Hmong teenage suicides between 1998 and 2001, a time when the Hmong population made up 3% of Fresno county but the Hmong

teen deaths accounted for nearly half of the county’s suicides. In an attempt to explain the reasons for these deaths, reporter Anne Dudley Ellis wrote of the youths as being lost, an interpretation articulated in the very title of the report, “Lost in America.”¹² The Hmong subject is constructed as “lost” because of its inability to get over the past and orient itself to American society, an assessment that ignores the fact that it is the refugee condition created by U.S. empire and systemic racism that enables the possibility of these deaths. Hmong youths have become an object of loss for their parents. Ellis writes, “The road to a better life has become a trail of tears for some Hmong immigrants, mourning a culture. Hmong parents grieve for a lost generation.”¹³ From this vantage point, the absence of the young Hmong body becomes a register of loss. A deeper issue is the status and meaning of the bodily remains of the youths who have died because of their failure to achieve ideal Americanness (read: white, male, heterosexual, etc.) and Hmongness (read: Asian, male, heterosexual, etc.).

In the eyes of the Hmong parents, their children were lost because they strayed away from their ethnic identity into whiteness, from heterosexuality into queerness. Panhia and Yee, for example, were lost because same-sex desire was not recognizable to their parents as Hmongness. The Hmong American disavowal of such deaths is not simply a disavowal of the youths’ bodies, but a failure to recognize their own psychic death within the refugee condition, to borrow from Eng and Han’s theorization of melancholic suicide.¹⁴ In other words, it is not only the American reporter who saw the youth as lost. It is also their parents who have forgotten them. In this way, the Hmong self becomes the subject of its own loss by the disavowal of its (dead) self. The ghost of Hmong parents’ past haunts Hmong American youths to their death. And in death, they, too, become a part of that ghost.

In his discussion of the death of queer Hmong youth, Pha writes “loss is not simply an ‘I’ that exists outside of the deceased, but rather, through the ways in which our bodies are attached through our queerness.”¹⁵ Beyond understanding the gesture toward loss as a collective feeling, Pha suggests that mourning goes beyond a melancholic attachment to the lost object. Mourning is embodied and materialized through gendered, racialized, and sexualized processes. The deaths of Hmong youth, queers and women are evidence that oppose the enduring claim that the Vietnam War ended in 1975. Furthermore, their deaths reveal that the contours of the war are not restricted to the geography of Southeast Asia. Its hold reaches across borders and oceans into the “safe” haven of America. The dead bodies of Hmong youths, queers and women stand as the uncounted and unaccounted remains of the war. The afterlife of loss across generations of Hmong Americans reveals to us that U.S. empire is not yet at an end.

Endnotes

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- 2 Jodi Kim, *Ends of Empire*, (Minneapolis, Minnesota, University of Minnesota Press), 2010, 4–5.
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A Malady of Provisions: Social Workers' Moral Pedagogy and the Internalization of the Themetical among Homeless Subjects

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Jolen Martinez is an undergraduate student at Rice University, where he is studying anthropology and history. His current work examines the politicoethical frameworks that undergird interpersonal intelligibility and value formation, from which he hopes to understand new forms of power amidst contemporary neoliberalism. As a Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellow, his research interests are related to political subjectivity and imaginaries within historical and ethical contexts. These interests include: social movements and revolutions in Latin America and the Middle East, reformulations of power among social services in post-industrial societies, and climate security and resilience in vulnerable flood zones. Martinez hopes to attend graduate school after his undergraduate education.

Abstract

This paper examines the hermeneutical relationship between social workers and persons who are experiencing homelessness in the downtown area of Houston, Texas, seeking to understand both the ethical framework that underlies their engagement, and the social effects of this ethical inculcation. I illustrate that many social workers and volunteers occupy roles as moral pedagogues and undertake ethical projects to lift homeless persons from their perceived liminality on the streets. I argue that social workers emphasize productivity in their pedagogy towards homeless subjects, establishing an individualized model of ethical responsibility which ultimately alienates the homeless and incurs a process of self-blame. Although this paper presents preliminary research for a larger project, it nevertheless serves as an invitation to understanding homelessness through an ethical and political framework.

Acknowledgements

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Social workers who assist and direct homeless persons often influence homeless individuals' ethical positions by imposing upon them moral imperatives for redemption through productivity. In this paper, I analyze social workers' expressions of societal forms of morality in their assistance to the homeless populations with whom they work. Through sustained observation and interviews with both state and evangelical social workers in two locations in Houston, Texas—a homeless shelter for young adults, and a local food pantry—I argue that social workers view

their work with homeless subjects as an ethical project that enforces normative moralities that are centered on redemption through profitable work. Furthermore, social workers' emphasis on projecting productive behaviors fuses economic conditions of homelessness with an ethical inculcation for personal work ethic. In particular, I explore how social workers' moral pedagogy can further alienate homeless persons from society by turning structural and societal problems into homeless individuals' personal maladies. Drawing from recent developments in the anthropology of ethics, I offer what Michael Lambek terms, "an invitation to the subject of ethics" (Lambek 2015, 5) in the critical and far-reaching sphere of the condition of homelessness. By examining ethical interpretations of homelessness from the lens of social workers, we can understand more generally societal views on homelessness and the prevailing status of homeless persons as social pariahs.

Recognizing "the Ethical" in Conditions of Homelessness

Structurally, patterns of homelessness, intimately influenced by forms of racial discrimination and socioeconomic disadvantage (Carter 2011, 33), result in residential segregation and unequal access to financial resources or support. Still, homelessness is not a singular state or monolithic entity. Instead, it is an experience that is shared among a wide range of individuals, who express a wide range of evaluations of their condition, from despair and disappointment to vigorous self-affirmation. The wide range of experiences and commitments of those who are homeless troubles the category of "homelessness" so much that reducing homelessness to a singular condition would be an irresponsible simplification. Anthropologists Irene Glasser and Rae Bridgman, in their book *Braving the Street*, depict the heterogeneity of homelessness in North America by detailing the difference between literal homeless persons and the marginally housed (Glasser and Bridgman 1999, 2–3). They describe the different experiences of groups of homeless men, women, and youth of different races, and those with mental illnesses.

Despite the diversity of subject experiences that are included in social science literature on homelessness, the topic is dominated by the view of homelessness as a social affliction. Throughout their book, Glasser and Bridgman call homelessness a social problem (1999, 40), and they articulate symptoms of this problem in explaining two schools of thought: homelessness as personal pathology, and homelessness as caused by external factors (Glasser and Bridgman 1999, 44). Although these distinctions help to explain how homelessness is viewed within society as both a personal issue that includes mental illness and drug addiction and as a structural issue of low wages and racial and ethnic discrimination, they do not provide a means for addressing

why homelessness is often seen as a social disease (Allen 2015). My research builds on Glasser and Bridgman's interpretation of the heterogeneous conditions of homelessness by examining the different subject positions that homeless persons occupy.

However, my research moves beyond treating homelessness merely as a social problem and instead attempts to understand the shame and stigma attached to transience (Allen 2015) by examining how social workers perceive of their work with homeless persons as ethical work. The relations between homeless subjects and social workers are crucial to understanding the moral investments that social workers bring to their engagements with homeless people and the role that redemption through work plays itself out in those investments. Thus, an examination of ethics, ethical investments, and ethical interpretations in these engagements provide insight into how social workers and homeless subjects perceive of themselves, internalize societal moralities, and/or project these ethical views into wider society.

Social workers' interactions with homeless subjects exemplify what Michel Foucault terms "elements of ethical relations" (Foucault 1984). The first of these elements is "ethical substance"—the aspect of the self that is the focus of the development of the self as an ethical subject. Second is the "mode of subjection," or the way in which an individual relates to any given moral code. Third is "ethical work," or the self-forming activities persons engage in cultivating themselves as subjects meriting ethical attention (n.b: I use the terms "ethics" and "the ethical" anthropologically, and do not attach normative value to them). Lastly is "telos," or teleology, which is the ideal mode or state that one strives towards in ethical work. Although I will not be focusing on telos in this paper, it remains an important part of the ethical projects that social workers put forth towards their homeless subjects. Foucault's ideas serve to locate ethical relations in conditions of homelessness.

I draw from the anthropology of ethics as a framework for analyzing the relations between ethical subjectivity and homelessness (Lambek 2015). As Michael Lambek argues, the anthropological subject of ethics is crucial to understanding human behavior "at its most universal and intimate scales" (Lambek 2015, 8) because ethics provides us with direction and value in how we understand ourselves and the world. Anthropologist James Faubion's critique of Foucault's elements of ethical relations is among many anthropological contributions to the study of ethics. Faubion elaborates on Foucault's elements of ethical relations, arguing that they include techniques, regimes, and methods that subjects might "follow or perform in the pursuit of their ethical formation" (Faubion 2011, 48). Faubion's descriptions of ethical practices are foundational principles for examining social

workers' work with homeless subjects. In addition to examining the ethical questions that inform the relations between social workers and homeless persons, my research focuses on the interactions between social workers and homeless persons as everyday engagements, or what anthropologist Veena Das calls the quotidian (Das 2015). Das and Lambek both argue that to understand ethics and moral systems as driving forces in human sensibility and action, one must think of ethical life through the lens of the ordinary rather than as extraordinary instances of ethical dilemmas or moral breakdowns (Zigon 2007).

Methodology

In the course of my study, I conducted qualitative research with ethnographic methods. This included sustained observation, in which I gained entrance into two homelessness service providers and became familiar with volunteers, social workers, and homeless clients in Houston, Texas. I also conducted 12 ethnographic interviews with these different populations. These interviews lasted approximately one hour each and took place at the institutions in which I worked. My interlocutors and I would converse with open questions and fluidity as to allow the interviewee to express their full experience without my prompting. All participants in my research gave informed consent and were aware that they could drop out of the interview at any point in time or request that I delete any record of our conversation. My research was consistent with the parameters outlined by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), maintaining ethical procedures and confidentiality. Lastly, the participants in my research ranged in age, although all interlocutors were older than 18 years of age. There was a considerable age difference between the homeless subjects that I interviewed at the two locations mentioned in this paper. Nevertheless, I found similar pedagogies and responses despite the age differential. I will discuss the setting-specific methods in the proceeding sections.

Moral Pedagogy among Social Workers

In my ethnographic research at a local homeless shelter, I discovered that many social workers thought that homelessness remained a personal choice. They saw homeless individuals not as abject, but instead actively capable of assessing the virtues and shortcomings of integrating or reintegrating themselves into ordinary (middle-class) ethical life. The homeless shelter at which I conducted participant observations and several interviews was part of a nationwide program to address homelessness in youth aged 18–24 through crisis mediation, immediate aid provision, and outreach. During these encounters, I was introduced to Michael Barber, a social worker who had formerly worked as a parole officer before assisting homeless youth. I joined Mr. Barber

on several weekday night-drives in October and November, 2017, in which we boarded a van with other volunteers and delivered food, water, and clothes to various well-known homeless tent-communities in the downtown area. Before departing from the shelter during one of our night-rides, Barber stated that our job “was to help these people, and if they don’t want it then it’s okay.” He continued: “for every person that rejects our help, there’s probably someone who needs it.” He concluded by saying that many homeless people make the decision to be homeless, but that he would still offer them a choice to come to the shelter.

Homeless persons’ choice whether to adhere to the shelter’s suggested system of societal morals reflects James Faubion’s differentiation between the themitical and the ethical. For Faubion, the themitical is the subject’s relation to norms and values. The ethical, on the other hand, is not normative, but includes a process of autopoiesis, or self-making, by which subjects occupy different ethical positions through askesis, or training to become a subject of collective esteem (Faubion 2011). Mr. Barber viewed homelessness as a temporary state of liminality, or betweenness, and regarded many homeless persons as adrift in the potential for immoral behavior. This liminal state exists between recognized normative ethics, or the themitical, and the immoral potentialities (drugs, crime, etc.) that Mr. Barber believed threaten the homeless populations I visited. He believed that many homeless persons were adrift. A young man that Mr. Barber described as his student success-case was his example of a homeless subject that made the choice to volunteer at the shelter by providing food and clothes to homeless encampments throughout the city. The young man’s choice represented his acceptance of the social workers’ endorsement for normative ethics. Rather than remain on the liminal space of the streets, he agreed to enter into the confines of the shelter and volunteer his time under the social workers’ watch. Under the guidance of social workers, homeless persons must reflect upon the ethical substance of the state of homelessness. Homeless subjects are encouraged to examine their life and their choices in a process that Foucault calls “problematization” (Foucault 1984, 10). They must then choose whether to work with the homeless shelter. This decision establishes the homeless subject’s position in relation to normative ethics.

The role that social workers play in their ethical project to bring homeless individuals outside of their perceived liminality resembles what Faubion calls the “moral pedagogue.” Mr. Barber stated that he was drawn to his current occupation from his work as a parole officer because it allowed him to “influence youth.” He described the success case of a student who had “come off the streets” after he decided to join the shelter volunteer group. He added that the student was “trying to make a difference” by giving

other people the chance he had received. Barber glowed about his student’s progress and provided examples of other youth who had been homeless. He said that after they had entered the shelter and enrolled in programs offered by the social workers, the homeless youth had been able to go to college and get jobs to “make themselves better and return to society.” Barber’s work with the young men that he described, and his intent to influence others’ autopoiesis during moments of problematization, epitomize his position as an ethical pedagogue (Faubion 2011, 34). Social workers are trained to recognize these moments of problematization. A key component of their job is, as Mr. Barber puts it, to “offer themselves as a resource” to help homeless individuals “make themselves better.” The moral pedagogue teaches the student-subject important components of ethical self-formation and self-governance; their ethical model is a source of socialization/re-socialization (Faubion 2011) for the student. Finally, ethical pedagogy is tied to askêsis, or the process by which homeless subjects are trained by social workers to become ethical subjects.

The “Work Ethic Cure”: Social Workers’ Perception of Homelessness as a Personal Sickness

The strength of social workers’ influence as moral pedagogues is derived from their projection of the themitical. Homeless persons become exposed to prevailing moralities through social workers’ provision of shelter, meals, and lessons in leaving the streets to reenter society. Social workers’ endorsement of the themitical was particularly prevalent at the second location of my ethnographic research. I worked at a local food distribution center and kitchen that served meals to homeless persons every day for breakfast and lunch, where I volunteered almost every weekend between the months of January and August, 2018. During my time volunteering, I would prepare and serve meals or pour cups of coffee and water. After the meals were distributed, I talked with persons who identified themselves as homeless as they ate on the patio outdoors. The social workers who also worked at the food pantry projected onto their homeless subjects, what Webb Keane calls, ethical affordances—invitations to ethical reflection—and perceptions that enable ethical decisions (Keane 2015, 27). This was exemplified by a group of volunteers from a local evangelical Christian organization that routinely drove to the kitchen with coolers of food and barrels of coffee and juice. In an interview with a member of the religious organization, I was told that the world would always have the poor, and the church cannot make their decisions for them, but it can help them to “get better.” Many volunteers and social workers’ perceptions of homeless persons reflected this evangelical morality, viewing homeless persons as fallen children of God.

The evangelical group, as well as many of the state social workers at the food kitchen, sought to reform homeless persons by encouraging them to work. Outside of the distribution center and kitchen, the group set up a prayer table where they encouraged the homeless to take a bible and a reform booklet and pray for better days. Several individuals visited the table and picked up the books. They also took flyers that detailed how homeless persons can reform themselves to be hired or be more productive. When I asked about the goal of their prayer table/career booth, several workers and volunteers claimed that their role was to promote a virtuous work ethic. Evangelical social workers believed that this ethic would please God, while state employed workers believed it would make homeless persons become productive members of society. The pastors who administered the prayer tables at the food kitchen, and the social workers who offered workshops to homeless youth at the shelter, endorsed the themitical virtues of efficiency and productiveness. Many of them saw stagnant or unproductive conditions such as homelessness as unvirtuous, and a few saw it as immoral.

Certain volunteers and social workers' perceptions of homeless persons saw personal productivity as a moral imperative. In an interview at the food distribution center, a female volunteer told me that the condition of homelessness "was a sickness." She added that the homeless person must make the decisions necessary to find a cure. When I asked about the nature of this malady, she paused and thought. She then stated that their sickness was "a lack of provisions." She offered examples of these provisions, such as "losing a house or a husband." Her description of homeless subjects as "sick persons" attributed structural problems and uncontrollable events such as the loss of a job or a spouse to an individual malady. The volunteer's incorporation of external, largely amoral, factors influencing individual behavior provides a picture of the form of themitical that these particular social workers project onto homeless subjects.

Homeless subjects' encounter with social workers' projection of a normative ethics of productivity is what Didier Fassin describes as the link between the microsocial realm of moral subjectivities and the macrosocial realm of moral economies (Fassin 2015, 196). Social workers' moralizing efforts represent the integration of individual acts in the moral context of the state or society. Homeless agents act and react to the evangelical and societal moralities that they must experience as they receive food from distribution centers or seek safety at homeless shelters. By regarding homelessness as a "malady of provisions," social workers and volunteers who serve homeless persons at the food pantry frequently incorporate the macrosocial themitical into the behaviors of individual homeless persons. When these evangelical and state social workers enter into their roles as moral pedagogues, the morality that they project may encourage homeless persons to internalize the structural

problems that they face. The difficult experiences of discrimination, loss, or alienation that homeless subjects may suffer are turned inwards.

Conclusion: Social Implications of the Themitical in Social Workers' Pedagogy

This paper argues that social workers and volunteers' efforts to reform homeless persons into productive members of society inherently carry a moral project of drawing homeless subjects back into the themitical, and towards a form of normative morality centered on productivity. In my ethnographic research at a homeless shelter and a food distribution center, I found that social workers take on roles as moral pedagogues, becoming crucial components in the process of subjectivation among homeless subjects who frequent shelters or food pantries. Social workers assist homeless persons in refashioning their lives to adhere to a productive work ethic. Lastly, evangelical and state social workers may perceive homelessness as a personal malady, despite the fact that the symptoms they attribute to this sickness (i.e., loss of a family member, a job, or a home) reflect external provisions. Although the scope of this paper is limited to a description of the processes of ethical subjectivation and subjugation in a very particular case, the insights I provide are important for recognizing the ethical components of economic and political ideologies and institutions, and how vulnerable populations are affected by prevailing standards of what is good and right.

The productive telos that remains a common feature of social workers' ethical pedagogy is intimately tied to neoliberal ideas of efficiency, which promotes the internalization of personal accountability for structural issues such as racial discrimination in employment opportunities, or corporate layoffs. Foucault's elements of ethical relations can be easily understood in terms of economic productivity and personal accountability, features of neoliberalism that encourage citizens to engage in the market and invest themselves in economic growth. Even though this paper does not focus on these economic influences on homeless subjectivities, I wish to further explore how homeless individuals engage with these neoliberal ideas. Future research must analyze the moral systems that many social workers and volunteers offer to homeless persons as a neoliberal ethics (Chandler and Reid 2016) that places vulnerable subjects at the center and cause of their own misfortune.

As Michael Lambek reminds us, humans are not programmed via universal metrics but are instead always conditioned by the norms and values distinctive of the social environment in which they are embedded. Ethical subjects must make sense of the world into which they, as Martin Heidegger described, are thrown (Heidegger 1927). The

power relations that underlie the interactions between state and evangelical social workers and homeless subjects are connected to the economic and political contexts (Fassin 176) in which the ethical practices of both are based. Not all ethics is political, and not all politics is ethical, but they are intertwined to the point that seemingly amoral behaviors carry intensely ethical underpinnings (Fassin 177–178). Although their interactions may appear purely economic—as in getting a job or a house—social workers and homeless subjects interpret one another’s microsocial moral subjectivity and undergo ethical projects that translate ethics from this personal interaction into the macrosocial realm of moral economies. Likewise, the social worker’s seemingly innocuous effort to help homeless persons find employment carries the thematical, such as societal understandings of transience, in their pedagogy. Although further research is needed to understand homeless persons’ navigation through the ethical projects endorsed by social workers and volunteers, this paper establishes that the perception of homelessness as a “malady of provisions” is a crucial component of social workers’ moral pedagogy and an invitation to intervene in reductively individualistic judgments of moral failure.

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Paralyzing Violence: Cannibalism and Culture in *Macunaíma*

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Abstract

In 1969, Joaquim Pedro de Andrade released an adaptation of Mario de Andrade's novel *Macunaíma*. Through vivid colors, outlandish fantasy, and a shift to a contemporary setting, the film version of *Macunaíma* reinterprets and updates de Andrade's novel. Most scholarship on the film analyzes the different visual and narrative elements of *Macunaíma* in the context of their lasting impact in ushering in a new, contemporary aesthetic approach to cinema in Brazil. By focusing on the use of one motif, cannibalism, throughout the work, one sees that the analytical weight of *Macunaíma* goes beyond new cinematic style. By placing the film in dialogue with several key Brazilian artistic texts from the cultural cannibalism movement, one can see how the film uses its evolving motif of actual cannibalism to inscribe the history, promises, and shortcomings of the concept of cultural cannibalism. Centralizing the film's cannibalism thusly demonstrates the film's critical engagement with the long history of movements for cultural independence in Brazil, highlighting how its lens extends beyond the contemporary moment.

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In the late 1960s, Brazilian filmmakers maintained that through selective chewing and digesting of outside influences, Brazil could grow its own independent identity. The cinematic use of this cannibalist metaphor is particularly evident in Joaquim Pedro de Andrade's 1969 film *Macunaíma*, an adaptation of Mario de Andrade's 1928 novel

by the same name. Much has been written about the presence of cannibalism in this work. However, these writings primarily discuss the presence of this metaphor as proof that de Andrade's film helped usher in a new visual language. This essay, however, argues that de Andrade's use of cannibalism is not exclusively aesthetic. Rather, the film traces the evolution of the idea of cultural cannibalism through its principal character's experiences. By examining *Macunaíma* in conjunction with its director's interviews, its source novel, Oswald de Andrade's 1928 "Cannibalist Manifesto," and Glauber Rocha's 1965 "Aesthetics of Hunger" essay, it becomes clear how the film charts the trajectory and transformation of the concept of cultural cannibalism in Brazil. Ultimately, *Macunaíma* reveals the enduring power of the idea of ritualized consumption of metaphorical and real flesh in the Brazilian context, while also highlighting its limitations as a means for independent identity.

The 1969 *Macunaíma* film is an adaptation of Mario de Andrade's 1928 novel by the same name. Published during the Modernismo literary movement in Brazil, de Andrade's novel blends together the epic genre, colonial epistolary practices, and stream-of-consciousness fantasy into a unique, experimental literary style. The novel's characters, plot, and language draw from European, indigenous, high-brow and low-brow sources, as well as proverbs, archaic expressions, and regional dialects. This melding is perhaps best represented by the titular character's name, which is the word used for translations of "God" into Brazilian native dialects (Johnson 179). The melding of these different sources aims to create a cohesive synthesis of Brazil—an exclusively Brazilian language. This effort to develop an exclusively Brazilian literary style by reinterpreting external and internal content is sustained throughout the book and is reflective of what much of Brazilian art in the 1920s and early '30s was attempting to achieve.

The film shares the novel's concern with creating a distinct mode of expression. A pastiche of period costumes, locations that evoke the varied geographic environments of Brazil, winking appropriation of Hollywood and New Wave references, and incessant varied colors merge together into a cinematic experience that contrasts sharply with the austere, sparse and harsh images of most Brazilian films released throughout the early and mid-sixties. Indeed, Brazilian cinema had been dominated by the thematic and aesthetic principles of the new cinematic school known as Cinema Novo, or "new cinema," during this time. Prior to *Macunaíma*'s release, directors favored a neorealist style that emphasized stark and harsh visuals as a means to capture reality. Yet, the Cinema Novo project struggled to find an audience, and in a 1966 interview, de Andrade notes that Brazilian Cinema Novo had failed to create a cinematic language that could convey its concerns to the Brazilian public (De Andrade and

Viany 74). *Macunaíma's* visual exuberance appears to be de Andrade's solution to this problem: if grit cannot capture reality, perhaps fantasy can heighten it.

In the same interview, de Andrade further suggests that Cinema Novo should turn to the Modernismo writers to find a solution to this problem (De Andrade and Viany 74). While de Andrade's film is an adaptation, it also deviates substantially from its source novel. It should be noted that this summary hardly begins to describe the multitude of fantastical, incongruous events that take place during Macunaíma's highly episodic, absurdist, Odyssean narrative. The overarching plot tells the story of the main character's mission to recover a magical amulet given to him by his lover after her death. It can be divided into two broad segments: the first is Macunaíma's childhood in the jungle, when he is played by the middle-aged black actor Grande Otelo; the second covers Macunaíma's adult life as a youthful white man, played by Paulo José, and his quest for the *muiraquitã* amulet.

Cannibalism appears in a variety of forms during Macunaíma's childhood. Primarily, it is a process related to Macunaíma's growth and development. Macunaíma spends his days eating soil, a visual representation of a Brazilian finding resources to grow through consuming the essence of the country. His favorite game involves diving underwater so that he can take playful "bites" out of his brother's girlfriend. Here, Macunaíma is doubly cannibalistic, literally biting a human and figuratively eating the soil-that-is-soul of Brazil. These two incidences playfully invert the definitions of cannibalism; Macunaíma literally eats a figurative Brazil (represented by the soil), and figuratively eats a literal human. Furthermore, these cannibalistic acts sustain growth through eating soil and indicate an increasing maturation with the sexualized biting.

The practice of consuming the actual land of the country also ties Macunaíma's body to the nation. In the main action sequence in the first half of the film, he treks through the ubiquitous fields and forests of Brazil. Along the way, he escapes capture by an Amerindian mythic figure who gives him a piece of his thigh to eat. He also receives help from a woman living in a *senzala* (a traditional slave home), finally returning home clothed in a businessman's trousers and button-down shirt. Macunaíma effectively interacts with the entire history of the country in this sequence. The connection between nation and character is also strengthened by the use of costuming, colors and montage in this first phase of the film. The opening music of the film is a patriotic march over a watercolor composed of the green, gold, and blue of the Brazilian flag. Later, in one illustrative shot nineteen minutes into the film, the young Macunaíma wears yellow against a backdrop of blue and green, thus

completing the three colors of the Brazilian flag. This motif of the hero in his yellow smock surrounded by verdant and blue tones repeats many times throughout the first section of the film. These cues visually indicate that we are meant to see Macunaíma, who the film introduces as "the hero of the people," as a representative of the country, too.

The type of consumption seen here—as the means for growth, or a metaphoric maturity—echoes strongly with the earliest Brazilian understandings of cultural cannibalism. The founding text of the cultural cannibalism movement is often considered to be the writer Oswald de Andrade's 1928 "Cannibalist Manifesto." This manifesto transcends the meaning of the word "cannibalism," which has dogged Brazil since Montaigne's famous essay on the subject. In the manifesto, this negative practice becomes a positive act by which a culture can be born. One of this document's most famous lines is, "Tupi or not Tupi" (38). This homophonic play on Shakespeare's "to be or not to be," captures the essence of the cannibalistic project. "Tupi" refers to an Amerindian tribe from southeast Brazil. Here, Shakespeare's phrase, and its powerful expression of divided consciousness remains, but these are expressed and reinterpreted through uniquely Brazilian forms. Hamlet's internal struggle is cannibalized to express Brazil's need to embrace its traditional peoples, languages and practices in order to develop a being. De Andrade calls cannibalism a "vaccine," a modern remedy, that will protect the country against "outside inquisitions" by connecting the now with the past (39). The modernists maintained that "heritage. Contact with the Carib side of Brazil" is the means by which cultural imperialism could be resisted (43).

Macunaíma's childhood experiences almost act out the argument of the "Cannibal Manifesto," and are in clear dialogue with theories like that of de Andrade. For example, when the protagonist eats dirt, he enacts literally the argument that Brazilians must draw from the essence of the country to nourish themselves. When he playfully bites his brother's girlfriend, he mimics the behavior of Brazilian communities infamous to the world in a lighthearted tone. Macunaíma's introduction as the "hero of our people," is a direct instantiation of the "Cannibalist Manifesto's" call to make the cannibal the revered and heroic representative of the country. Yet, as Macunaíma ages, the cannibalism presented in the film changes drastically. After transforming into a white man, the hero journeys into the city, falling in love with a female revolutionary who kills herself accidentally with one of her own bombs. In the explosion, a magical amulet she had promised the hero disappears. The foreign industrialist "giant" Venceslau Pietro Pietra finds the amulet, and the main narrative drive of the second piece of *Macunaíma* involves recovering it from the evil giant.

In this second act, Venceslau is now the cannibal, a cannibal who repeatedly attempts to consume Macunaíma. Twice Macunaíma is almost cooked and eaten by Venceslau and his family. Venceslau's cannibalism also operates on a more metaphoric level as well. We meet him in the fiftieth minute of the film, standing on top of dirt mounds with a background of construction cranes puncturing the as-yet undeveloped skyline. In a thick Italian accent, he gloats about his discovery of the amulet inside a fish he has eaten. From his rotundness and his loud zealous description of his ingestion of the fish, we learn that he greedily eats objects that do not belong to him.

The setting of this scene and his Italian identity point to his participation in another type of voracious digestion—the international, capitalist consumption of Brazil's resources. This cannibalism is not generative; the land is desolate and barren, and de Andrade appears to depict capitalism's gluttony, as taking what is valuable in the country (the amulet) at the expense of the rightful owners and leaving behind little more than the empty promise of future industrialization symbolized by the construction cranes dotting vacant land. Venceslau, capitalism's official representative in the film, reinforces the connection between this economic model and gluttony through his bulging frame. We begin to see a radically different, negative, interpretation of the meaning of cannibalism. Brazil does not do the eating anymore; instead, its treasures are eaten by outsiders.

This change in how cannibalism is depicted again reflects the trajectory of the concept of cultural cannibalism in Brazil. By the 1960s, "cultural cannibalism" had taken on a new, negative meaning, as seen in Glauber Rocha's "An Esthetic of Hunger" essay from 1965. This manifesto is considered to be one of the earliest formal articulations of the Cinema Novo's trajectory and aims (Johnson and Stam 68). Rocha concludes that the unique "esthetic" of Brazilian cinema is hunger. He states that "the hunger of Latin America is not simply an alarming symptom; it is the essence of our society . . ." (Rocha 70). To Rocha, foreign powers are the ones who "taste" Brazil (Rocha 69), consuming its essence without understanding it. The parallel to Venceslau's behavior is clear and direct. Yet Rocha does not argue for a turn away from cannibalism. Rather, he states that the necessary behavior of the hungry is violent, implying that Brazil must become the eater to make itself understood.

Macunaíma, also, does not do away with cannibalism, and it remains central in the climactic final confrontation between Macunaíma and Venceslau. Macunaíma has been invited to the giant's home to celebrate his daughter's engagement by eating the traditional Brazilian dish of *feijoada*. Instead of pork and beans, the giant's *feijoada* is a pool-sized cannibalistic stew of body parts and blood. While

the giant tries to throw Macunaíma into his monstrous cookpot, the hero foils his plans, and Venceslau himself ends up drowning in the bloody liquid.

We are tempted to conclude that Macunaíma's traditional cannibalism has won out over Venceslau's exploitative consumption by turning that very consumption against itself. Yet this is not how the film ends. After recovering his amulet, Macunaíma journeys back to his forest hut with dozens of modern, foreign electronics which do not work there. Once home, he is stuck in a state of ennui, unable and unwilling to do anything. Instead, he demands that those around him fulfill his every need. Soon, his family abandons him and his lazy entitlement. One day, while wandering by a river, he sees a beautiful woman in the water. He jumps in after her, but it turns out that she is Uiara, the eater of men. She eats the hero. In the final shot, Macunaíma's coat, green like the Brazilian flag, floats on the blue river, a growing pool of blood reddening the waters. With this bleak vision of cannibalism, the director rejects the promises of independence that de Andrade and Rocha put forth in their understanding of cannibalism, just as he denies the viewer any possibility of catharsis.

After watching this scene, one cannot help but think that cannibal violence does not create a Brazilian identity. Macunaíma's cannibalism has not freed him from the foreign influences around him, rather, his urge for those objects appears to have grown and compounded the more he gorged on them. His psychological condition is perhaps best summarized by his physical state during the majority of the final sequence: recumbent on a hammock, stuck and inactive. It is not that the final cannibalistic, violent confrontation with Venceslau leads Macunaíma to becoming like his oppressor, but rather that it leaves him static and without agency. Esthetically, hunger is configured here as a greed for material possessions and the passive lifestyle that accompanies it leads to powerlessness. It does not, as Rocha argues, become a means by which the self can be understood by others.

Macunaíma the film, then, questions rather than endorses cannibalism as a viable means for cultural emancipation. While cannibalism is perhaps useful in the nascent stages of an identity-building project, as it was during Macunaíma's childhood, it is no longer appropriate for the present situation. Oswald de Andrade himself stated that cannibalism was about "the Absorption of the sacred enemy. To transform him into a totem." When the enemy is both cultural and economic imperialism, *Macunaíma* illustrates that this totemic transformation is not a reduction of its influence, but rather a perverse veneration that paralyzes the consumer. Just as violent process cannot create a peaceful consciousness, ingestion, the taking in of something, cannot create separation from cultural imperialism.

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Phenomenology and Epistemic Injustices: A Critique of the Original Position

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Abstract

In the context of mainstream political and social philosophy's prioritization of ideal theory over non-ideal theory, this essay argues that the original position should be reconsidered as an appropriate thought experiment to justify notions of justice. The original position posits that we can construct a fair society if all people were devoid of characteristics that would bias their reasoning. I argue that the original position has numerous pitfalls that discount the perspectives of marginally situated persons which in turn creates distorted notions of justice. To complete this argument, I connect the social phenomenological and epistemic injustice literatures. First, I outline three pitfalls of the original position by using the phenomenological tradition. Second, I connect these three pitfalls to three forms of epistemic injustice. The critique hopes to spearhead the production of literature on why we should prioritize situated imagination, non-ideal theory, and realistic justice over ideal theory.

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I. Introduction

Since the publication of *A Theory of Justice* by John Rawls in 1971, mainstream political philosophy has been concerned with what constitutes justice. *A Theory of Justice* marked a watershed moment in Anglo-American philosophy because it shifted the traditional focus of political philosophy from the question of whether or not individuals should obey the state to a consideration of what society's basic structure should be (Mills, 162). *A Theory of Justice* is so influential that it was translated into over 30 languages (Mills, 162). Moreover, an extensive literature has been generated that considers the importance of *A Theory of Justice*, the importance of Rawls' subsequent works, and

even adds to the Rawlsian paradigm that was created in *A Theory of Justice*.

In the 40 plus year aftermath of *A Theory of Justice*, the resulting revival of justice related topics in the newly generated philosophical literature has created two justice-conceiving methods that are at odds with one another and largely viewed as irreconcilable portrayals of how to instantiate the end goal of justice. These two methods are called ideal theory and non-ideal theory and have created various sub-debates in the literature concerning the methodological nature of justice (Valentini, 1). One such sub-debate is the dispute between realistic justice and utopian justice (Valentini, 1). The former takes into account potential constraints that would need to be considered when thinking about what justice constitutes while the latter "altogether rejects the need to place feasibility constraints on principles of justice" (Valentini, 4).

Rawls relies on a thought experiment called the original position in order to construct his influential notion of justice. The original position posits that we can construct a fair society if we were all devoid of characteristics that would bias our reasoning. The original position thought experiment is a flagship example of ideal theory's relationship to utopian justice because it creates an infeasible situation from which we begin to conceive of justice; it imagines that we can devoid ourselves of our identity so that we can begin to mutually create a society that is just for all. In this essay, I will utilize a philosophical tradition that examines the structures of consciousness from the first-person perspective, the phenomenological tradition of embodied social cognition, to reject John Rawls' original position thought experiment on the basis that it perpetuates epistemic injustices.

II . Phenomenology and the Original Position

In his book, *A Theory of Justice*, John Rawls provides an innovative thought experiment that seeks to illustrate how individuals would rationally agree to a basic set of principles to structure society if a fair situation presented itself (118). To him, this fair situation is called the 'original position' and can be conceived of by thinking about the principles of justice behind a 'veil of ignorance' in which persons are devoid of aspects of their identity that may pre-incline them to be at odds with one another (Rawls, 136). To support the claim that individuals will agree to a basic set of principles, Rawls assumes rationality on the part of all individuals based on their ability to apprehend "general considerations" without limitations on general information, laws, or theories (Rawls, 137–138). The purpose of the original position as a thought experiment and philosophical method is to take the principles of justice as the object of an initial fair agreement and structure society according to those fair principles (Rawls,

118). In other words, it seeks to create a society predicated on fair principles of distributive justice. Rawls' thought experiment is considered widely influential in the political and social philosophical literature. I argue that its usefulness should be reconsidered, however.

The original position makes three general commitments that each cause problems for the way that individuals could possibly conceive of justice. The first two commitments can be discerned when evaluating Rawls' characterization of who the person behind the veil is. According to Rawls, the moral subject who makes decisions behind the veil is an individual whose identity is separated from all ends, commitments, and capacities (Baker, 898). This has two implications. First, it creates a mind-body dualism to the extent that people must be disembodied in order to rationalize principles impartially. Second, it makes individuals "atomistic individuals" who conceive of knowledge in virtual isolation. As some argue, "since this prior-individuated agent is barren of all concrete features, she cannot, in any way, be constituted by community" (Baker, 898). As such, the individual is simultaneously a disembodied individual and a decommunalized subject. The original position's third commitment is that individuals will rationally agree to a set of basic principles because of their ability to apprehend "general considerations" without limitations on general information, laws, or theories (Rawls, 137–138). The phenomenological tradition's consideration of embodied social cognition has critiques for each of these three commitments.

First, the phenomenological tradition largely repudiates disembodied cognition. This is evidenced by the vast majority of contemporary phenomenologists rejecting the transcendental turn, a philosophical argument posited by one of the foremost phenomenologists: Edmund Husserl. For Husserl, we should bracket the existence of the natural world and turn our intention towards our consciousness—the transcendental turn (Smith, 9). Thinkers like Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, et al. resist this methodological approach and instead emphasize our embodied relation to the world. For example, Heidegger reveals the neo-Cartesian dispositions extant in Husserl's analysis by emphasizing that our fundamental way of relating to things is through activities such as hammering or being-with-others instead of Husserl's pre-reflective activity about things (Smith, 9). More contemporarily, thinkers such as Emily Lee have denied disembodied cognition altogether. They argue that embodiment fundamentally conditions our cognition in ways such as our ability to understand front and back, upright positions, and the limitations of human body movements (Lee, 3). Embodied cognition is not the only critique useful when considered the usefulness of the original position, however.

The phenomenological method can also be used to critique the original position's reliance on atomistic individualism. Behind Rawls' original position, the individual is stripped away from all their qualities. In this way, the "Rawlsian person is incapable of self-reflection or of cognition in the sense of learning or comprehending who she is" (Baker, 899). This would be concerning for authors such as Jean-Paul Sartre and those who ascribe to similar methods. In his book *Being and Nothingness* (1956), Sartre makes a distinction between being-in-itself and being-for-itself. To Sartre, being-in-itself is static, pre-reflective, and contingent thus having no agentive purpose whereas being-for-itself takes the in-itself as its intentional object and thus has purposive direction. This distinction is important for Sartre because people derive their being-for-itself, or their ability to be purpose driven, through being-for-others—or the realization that we do not inhabit the world by ourselves because of an omnipresent look (Sartre). In this way, Sartre solves the problem of other minds, the notion that we cannot confirm that others are similar to us by having minds similar to our own. Contrastingly, the problem of other minds persists in Rawls because the person is stripped of all their qualities and thus cannot even perceive of themselves. Moreover, their disembodiment prevents them from 'being-for-others' to the extent that they are not subjected to what Sartre considers the look. To this end, the inability to be-for-others prevents a person from being-for-themselves.

Last, phenomenology's emphasis on the subjective first-person experience of individuals in their everyday lives sheds light on what people could consider behind the veil. Behind the veil, people have unlimited access to "general considerations" (Rawls, 138). But disembodiment limits these considerations to the extent that it erases, via abstraction, rather than rectifies the mundaneness of racial performances. Contemporary philosopher George Yancy describes race as relationally lived, as bodily performances in socially and existentially interstitial spaces (Yancy, 49–51). In this way, if one does indeed have a concept of race or racism behind the veil of ignorance it is limited to a structural analysis and fails to encompass a quotidian analysis of the embodiment of race and the way it affects people in everyday situations. After all, if it were possible to make claims about the normality of racial relationality from a micro perspective while rationalizing behind the veil, who would be able to make these claims? No one, because everyone is disembodied once they step behind the veil.

These three general critiques of the original position via a broad reliance on the phenomenological tradition of embodied cognition serve to demonstrate the pitfalls of the original position. In the next section I extend my critique of the original position by explaining the consequences of disembodied cognition.

III. The Original Position, Ideal Theory, and Epistemic Injustice

Employing the original position as a method for constructing utopian accounts of justice, which is ideal theory, creates a number of hazards for marginally situated knowers. These hazards can be quantified by the literature on epistemic injustice, a concept that was innovated by Miranda Fricker in her book *Epistemic Injustice: Power and Ethics of Knowing*. Ultimately, I claim that the original position has a relationship to three forms of epistemic injustice and can be evaluated by considering the phenomenological tradition of embodied social cognition. That is, when one discounts the phenomenological tradition of embodied social cognition in favor of disembodied cognition, three different forms of epistemic injustice occur.

In Fricker's book, *Epistemic Injustice*, she outlines two paradigms of epistemic injustice: testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice. Since the publishing of *Epistemic Injustice* in 2007, various authors have added to the literature by providing additional accounts of what constitutes epistemic injustice. In this section, I will consider Fricker's analysis on hermeneutical injustice and also two authors who have added to the discourse. I will examine Gaile Pohlhaus Jr.'s analysis on willful hermeneutical ignorance and Kristie Dotson's analysis on testimonial quieting.

To Fricker, hermeneutical injustice amounts to "the injustice of having some significant area of one's social experience obscured from collective understanding owing to hermeneutical marginalization" (Fricker, 158). She supports this claim with an example of victims of sexual harassment not having the language or the conceptual apparatus to explain their experiences because of their marginalization from political discourse and legal scholarship (Fricker, 153–154). Much progress has been made on this issue overtime but progress needs to continue. The original position also perpetuates hermeneutical injustices.

Despite its claim to equalize the epistemic playing field, the original position discounts the epistemic contributions of marginally situated knowers by preventing their narratives and experiences from being considered behind the veil. When disembodiment happens as a result of hypothetically stepping behind the veil, we discount the relationally lived experiences of race and prevent marginalized persons from making claims about these quotidian experiences. As such, race as a socially lived experience is obscured from understanding because people cannot make or interpret these claims. The relationship between Fricker's analysis of hermeneutical injustice and the original position amounts to a methodological distortion that skews the grounds of justice before one even considers what justice is or should

be. This certainly does not exhaust the pitfalls of the original position, however.

In her essay, "Relational Knowing and Epistemic Injustice: Toward a Theory of Willful Hermeneutical Ignorance," Gaile Pohlhaus Jr. adds to the literature on epistemic injustice by defining what she terms willful hermeneutical ignorance, a concept that she thinks is absent from Miranda Fricker's accounts of epistemic injustice. According to Pohlhaus Jr., willful hermeneutical ignorance occurs when "marginally situated knowers actively resist epistemic domination through interaction with other resistant knowers, while dominantly situated knowers nonetheless continue to misunderstand and misinterpret the world" (Pohlhaus Jr., 716). This results in the devaluing of true epistemic interdependence (Pohlhaus Jr., 726).

Willful hermeneutical ignorance applies to the original position as a method because it dominates the literature and makes no room for alternative methods to exist. For example, authors such as Charles Mills have rejected ideal theory because of its abstraction from necessary facts (Mills, 173). Furthermore, he argues that we ought prioritize non-ideal theory because ideal theory abstracts away from considerations that may ultimately change one's conception of justice when theorizing. Unsurprisingly, the majority of mainstream philosophers have been unmoved by Mills' critiques and criticisms and continue to use ideal theory unflinchingly.

The original position employs ideal theory by abstracting away from particularities insofar as it strips people of all of their qualities behind the veil. It also inflates their ability to know general considerations thus creating a positive abstraction as well. Ultimately, the abstracting process stacks the cards in favor of dominant and overrepresented conceptions and or purviews by disembodiment the subject and stripping them of factors that could positively influence their conception of justice. More importantly, however, is that some continue to use the original position without meaningfully grappling with the concerns addressed by Mills overall criticisms of ideal theory. Doing so results in what Pohlhaus Jr. terms willful hermeneutical ignorance to the extent that marginally situated knowers have resisted the methodological approach, but most have failed to take their alternatives into consideration. Alternatives to disembodied rationalizing processes include the black feminist tradition's use of embodied knowers as the subject of knowledge and intersectionality as the disposition of epistemic processes (Collins, 115–125).

In her essay, "Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing," Kristie Dotson attempts to track practices of silencing by situating her analysis in the

literature on epistemic violence. Her basic premise is that testimony requires audiences/hearers and that the process of testimony sometimes results in unsuccessful linguistic exchanges. These unsuccessful linguistic exchanges can be further examined in context-specific or case-by-case situations to determine whether they are pernicious (any reliable ignorance that, in a given context, harms another person/or set of persons) or not (Dotson, 238); and also whether they amount to testimonial quieting. According to Dotson, testimonial quieting occurs when “an audience fails to identify a speaker as a knower” (Dotson, 242).

Testimonial quieting applies to the original position because the original position fails to recognize embodied cognizers insofar as the individual is denuded. This creates a nuanced distinction between hermeneutical injustice and testimonial quieting. As argued above, hermeneutical injustice occurs as a result of the inability to apprehend quotidian experiences because one is prevented from making claims about the mundaneness of everyday experiences, microaggressions for example, due to the original position’s disembodiment. Contrastingly, testimonial quieting occurs as a result of *prima facie* failing to identify speakers *qua* speakers. In this way, testimonial silencing happens as a result of the method in and of itself whereas hermeneutical injustice happens as a result of the application of the method once a person tries to step behind the veil. By default, the original position prevents linguistic exchanges from occurring because of the failure to identify a speaker.

The relationship between these three forms of epistemic injustices are striking. The arguments have been presented in chronological form above for genealogical purposes, but rearranging them may illustrate a different relationship between the original position and each of these critiques. The first issue that arises with the original position is what Dotson’s concept of testimonial silencing. This is because failing to identify the speaker *qua* a speaker represents the *prima facie* bias that is built into the original position. Next is Fricker’s analysis on hermeneutical injustices insofar as the original position creates a distortion in what justice looks like as a result of not acknowledging speakers’ situatedness. As such, Fricker’s analysis points to the shortcoming of how the original position actually works for marginally situated knowers who have their identities erased if we do indeed decide to adopt the original position as a method for constructing portrayals of justice. Last is Pohlhaus Jr.’s analysis that sometimes people are willfully ignorant. This ties back to the original position because the vast majority of the mainstream has insisted on or have not critiqued the use of the original position as a device in favor of ideal theory.

IV. Conclusion

Contrary to wide acceptance, using the original position as an abstract thought experiment to create normative visions of justice is ultimately deleterious. People typically side with the original position because it presents itself as a fair situation that would eliminate the power and privilege that people possess. But the phenomenological tradition of embodied social cognition illustrates how the ability to conceive of justice behind a ‘veil of ignorance’ is severely limited. This paper presented a phenomenological critique of the original position in order to undermine the justification for using the original position thought experiment to construct notions of justice. In recognizing the argument that disembodied cognition results in a number of epistemic injustices, I weakened the justification that one should use in preferring ideal theory in the first place. As a consequence, further arguments can be developed to demonstrate why we should prioritize situated imagination, non-ideal theory, and realistic justice instead of ideal theory and utopian justice both of which rely on disembodied cognition and an infeasible thought experiment.

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Precious Verdant Matter: The Iconography of Quetzals, Feathers, and Maize in Olmec Art

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Eric Mazariegos is senior at the University of California, Los Angeles and is currently focusing in Art History with a strong concentration on Pre-Columbian Mesoamerican art. Having spent time in the American Southwest and in Mexico, his research interests focus on topics such as identity and transnational material culture. Tackling Pre-Columbian studies from an art historical perspective, Eric hopes to broaden the field's scope, especially in regards to aesthetics and materiality. Having spent the summer before his senior year at Columbia University studying with a South American specialist, Eric plans on approaching material with an interdisciplinary approach in mind. After graduation, he hopes to attend graduate school focusing on art history.

Abstract

In Pre-Columbian Mesoamerica, the area extending between the modern United States and South America, birds were admired for their lustrous, glimmering feathers. The tail feathers of the quetzal were particularly potent, and Mesoamerican artists figured these feathers as motifs into a wide variety of media: figurines, petroglyphs, murals, ceramic vessels, and stone statuary. Beyond the aesthetic, what deeper associations did feather imagery denote in Pre-Columbian Mesoamerica? This study elucidates striking symbolic implications for feather imagery by tracing and evaluating its presence within the broader economic and social contexts within which it was carved and chiseled.

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Introduction

When an ancient Olmec carver incised the iconographic symbol for maize onto a jadeite figurine almost 3,000 years ago (Figure 1), he made a striking statement: he made the presence of material equivalencies in his natural world visualized through art. The nascent Olmec culture flourished between 2000 and 200 BCE in the modern Gulf Coast region of Veracruz, México, and there they mastered maize agriculture. Their world was replete with material analogs: the leaves of maize, the smooth surfaces of jade, and the curvilinear tail feathers of the resplendent quetzal. A

critical visual inquiry into a 3,000-year-old lapidary figurine elucidates a captivating notion: they likely thought of these materials as metaphorically linked. The typical Olmec symbol for maize was formed by artists with three simple lobe or foil shapes (Figure 2). However, on this figurine, the Olmec carver chose to figure the maize symbol through explicit imagery of quetzal heads (Figure 3A). What led the artist to make such a decision, and how did this decision showcase the presence of metaphorically linked organic matter in the Pre-Columbian world? In this paper, I argue that this artistic innovation of the Olmec carver signals a worldview founded on the principle of duality, particularly between the quetzal feather and maize leaf, as both shared striking formal similarity, material pliancy, and radiant viridescence.

An Olmec Worldview Based on Duality

To preface the discussion of Olmec art, I will draw from the work of Beatriz de la Fuente, a key Olmec scholar whose research has elucidated much of the understanding around Olmec statuary and monuments, particularly on the famed colossal heads. De la Fuente pinpoints the stylistic elements of Olmec art and constructs a categorical framework based on its common themes. Due to the large, sometimes confounding corpus of interpretive analyses on this material,¹ as well as a lack of writing, de la Fuente utilizes intuitive thinking to assert a non-hypothetical categorization of Olmec styles: the Olmec artistic corpus can be best conceptualized through duality.² This worldview of dualities could extend to “heaven and earth; they may represent other paired dualities of day and night, black and white, hot and cold, or red and blue.”³ De la Fuente further asserts that for the Olmec, dualism could extend to the real world: “dualism, in both spiritual and material [my emphasis] senses, approaches the profound meaning of life and the cosmos.”⁴ In this way, the divine and the earthly were understood as intertwined, symbiotic, and interactional. Because this dualism extends to the material, can we apply the notion to organic matter? Might this purported duality be aptly expressed in the materials heretofore posited as metaphorically linked? Like heaven and earth, does the quetzal's tail feather share a conceptual duality with the leaves of a maize plant?

Light Feathers, Prized Feathers

Light, portable materials like quetzal feathers can eventually be endowed notions of wealth once a surplus of subsistence goods, like maize, is secured. Terence D'Altroy et al. articulate this point in their 1985 study centered in the Mantaro Valley of modern Jujin, Perú. There, they assert that states and polities eventually moved from valuing subsistence materials such as corn to those representing notions of prized wealth. Their core findings suggest that

light, portable materials can eventually become endowed notions of wealth once a surplus of those subsistence goods is attained.⁵ As nascent South American centers grew and became more dispersed within the Andean highlands, the Inka imperial state of Cuzco employed a wealth system in order to control far-reaching political centers and provinces. Cuzco was successful because it controlled the flow of wealth goods at the initial stage of production as well as the final stage of trade. Therefore, Cuzco officials had the inherent ability of attributing any particular good with an ascribed value. The system's success relied on innovative methods of storage to preserve subsistence goods, and a relevant example was the freeze-dry processing of maize. These storage systems allowed for the eventual development of surpluses throughout Tawantinsuyu, thereby assuaging the burdens of agricultural farmers.

A mastery of maize agriculture (like the aforementioned Olmec) to a point of surplus, thus necessitating storage facilities, a control over production, and an ascription of value to objects all allowed Cuzco to centralize, quite literally, their control of wealth. Most importantly, the innovative storage systems allowed the empire to move from economies based on subsistence to what the authors call more "institutional forms of statehood."⁶ In this system, products gathered from the Andean world such as "shell beads, gold, copper, salt, coca, and a variety of other commodities," along with textiles and the leaves of the coca plant actually served as the principal wealth items.⁷

Cuzco ascribed value to "light, portable special products . . ."⁸ and when these objects were coupled with the institutionalized control over production, an "incipient market exchange" could arise.⁹ A quick comparative note is that this incipient market is notably different from the Aztec case, which was commerce-based with individuals selling their wares, like the one from Tlatelolco.¹⁰ The Inka political state—largely interested in an attainment of dispersed polities for centralized control—thus achieved their prosperity through a systematic installation of a wealth-based economy. In other words, early Inka societies transitioned from agriculturally based complexes to investing in light, portable, and "prized" materials. This gradual development from "staple finance" to "wealth finance" provides an apt comparative framework with which to consider the Olmec case in point: can a material that is initially associated with subsistence (maize, maize leaves) eventually become connoted with notions of wealth (quetzal feathers)?

Given the aforementioned introduction to the Olmecs' natural world, along with the discussion of Cuzco's centralization, such a material that finds itself neatly situated and related to both notions is quite clearly the quetzal's green tail feather. Did this particular material become a prized one

over time, and if so, for what reasons? What might have implicated the quetzal feather's intrinsic, ontological, value? I do not posit that the Olmec case is directly similar to that of the aforementioned Inka—the cultures mentioned here flourished at different periods and in different locales—but it is curious that the Inka placed such high value on "light, portable . . . products," apt terminology to describe feathers. Given the formal similarity, materially pliancy, and radiant viridescence of feathers and maize leaves, I ask us to consider that for the Olmec, who mastered maize agriculture, green quetzal feathers were attributed associations of agricultural success, if not direct and explicit wealth. It is not farfetched to posit that this transitional phenomenon, based on a relationship between subsistence, materiality, and value, is situated within comparable parameters between both cultures.

Material Equivalencies in Olmec Art

Carved around 900–400 BCE from jadeite, a Seated Lord figurine provenanced to the site of Arroyo Pesquero in Southern Veracruz, México, serves as a nexus point that visually bridges the points discussed heretofore. The figurine exhibits a royal lord sculpted in the round, and is in the collections of the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library (Fig. 1). Exemplary of a masterful, exacting carving technique, the Seated Lord figurine sets a model precedent for Olmec craftsmanship. The iconography incised onto the figurine herein serves as a case study to illustrate an interconnected, striking implication for verdant feathers and maize.

In Elizabeth P. Benson's formal analysis of the Seated Lord, the figurine's "extraordinary" level of detail is noted.¹¹ The Olmec lapidary worker dexterously alternated between rounded and angular surfaces, incising onto the figure iconography that is unusually rich in its level of embellishment and design.¹² This iconography—a "wealth of low-relief carving and incision"—is of utmost importance, as it is "diagnostic of the [broader] Olmec style," and includes elements which signify "a very large part of the [Olmec] vocabulary."¹³ Particularly pertinent is the iconography on the headdress that adorns the Seated Lord (Figures 3A, 3B). Benson dubs this headdress element a "headdress-extension finial," and it is fundamentally constructed from the Olmec diagnostic symbol for maize: three adjacent, pendant shaped lobes (Fig. 2).

The maize symbol even identifies the estimable Olmec Maize God, a deity who Karl Taube ingeniously traces and identifies in much of his work.¹⁴ He scrutinizes the visual, symbolic depictions of this god, and analyzes how those depictions changed over time. His 1996 investigation into Olmec iconographic systems—the study largely drawing from David Joralemon's seminal work¹⁵ on the same subject—elucidates an understanding of the headdress

adorning our Seated Lord. Taube argued that the Maize God was commonly identified with a three-tipped foliate element typically placed atop its head.¹⁶ He dubbed this iconographic element the *trefoil* motif (Fig. 2). This motif is essentially an abstracted maize cob; the lobed elements resemble a central cob wrapped around the side by an enclosing husk. Over time, the trefoil motif was stylized, with new elements appended to the standard mode. These artistic innovations still denoted maize and the Maize God, but with a key qualifier: artists eventually affixed topping, curving elements on the central cob element, meant to depict the outgrowing tassels that appear on maize at a matured stage of growth (note tassels or “silk” in Fig. 2). In his immense iconographic survey, Joralemon identified the newer, stylized trefoil motif as the “maize with flowing silk” sign.¹⁷ These sinuous, extended tassel elements—the “flowing silk”—emulate none other than lithe, curvilinear, pliant quetzal plumes (see Fig. 2, bottom 2 rows).¹⁸

The trefoil motif is plainly visible on the iconography decorating the headdress of the Seated Lord (Figs. 3A, 3B). Its diagnostic format is visible when viewed from behind (Fig. 3B), exhibiting three out-curving pendant-shaped foils forming an abstracted central maize ear wrapped by an enclosing husk. But upon taking an obverse view (Fig. 3A), the three lobes are figured with imagery that strikingly resembles the heads of quetzal birds.¹⁹ The artist adopted the format of the trefoil motif, which denotes maize, but here rendered it with expressly figurative bird imagery. In this artistic play—Benson noting²⁰ this level of stylization to be rare in general—the Olmec lapidary worker has thus exhibited for our present eyes the intricate, metaphorical, dualistic ideology that pervades the Olmec worldview.

Another vestment worn by the Seated lord alludes explicitly to feather and maize imagery. His cape (Figure 3C), only visible in the hunchbacked silhouette from a side view, is intriguingly composed of feathers. We can identify this organic component through visual “backstreaming;” the iconographic technique for depicting feathers is visible on other, non-Olmec art. Mesoamerican artists usually employed a *scalloping* method to depict feathers, as illustrated on an earlier duck vessel from the site of Tlatilco, in the Basin of México, in the collections of the Museo Amparo. This scalloping technique is also exhibited in a later Mexica depiction of a *cuauhxicalli* vessel in the form of an eagle (Figure 4). That the Seated Lord’s cape is composed of feathers becomes significant when we draw our eye to the skirt element that extends outward below it. Incised onto the skirt are, according to Benson, iconographic elements that depict stylized flowers.²¹ However, Joralemon analyzed this same motif and concluded it to be a variant of the “maize with flowing silk” sign (see Fig. 2, bottom two rows).²² If we take the latter assertion to be true, these are not stylized

flowers as Benson purports, but are rather silken, “feathered” maize cobs. Thus, the lapidary worker who crafted the Seated Lord not only exhibited suggestive imagery that conflates quetzals and maize in the headdress extension-finish, but also on the feather cape affixed to the skirt, where the feathers and maize are directly and visually juxtaposed. I argue that this iconographic play and proximal positioning of symbolic matter would have signaled to an Olmec viewer the latent, dualistic, material metaphors present in their natural world, here represented through quetzals, feathers, and maize.

Conclusion

At the outset of this discussion I posited that Mesoamerican artists sought to figure feathers in their material culture for more than just their aesthetic qualities. Throughout a visual examination of indigenous materialities and feather iconography, along with considerations of duality and economics, I hope to have parsed some deeper, symbolic meaning to the feather in early Mesoamerican art. The relationship established between maize and feathers in the Formative Period would eventually pervade all subsequent cultures in Mesoamerica. In later Maya art, for example, feather iconography remained a common visual motif seen in muralism, architecture, ceramic vessels, and statuary. The Maya in particular made the conceptual connections between maize and quetzal feathers explicit, as is seen from the aforementioned “maize with flowing silk” trilobate no longer topped with generalized, sequential lines but with definitive quetzal feathers. In later Aztec art, feathers were integral components to bodily adornment, as seen in the headdress of Motecuhzoma II in the Museum of Anthropology in México City. In the colonial period, feathers were used in mosaic “paintings,” whose iridescence seemed to emanate brilliant, divine grace.²³ And today, these feathers are curiously still components in recreations of indigenous dances, as motifs in political murals, and even Day of the Dead ceremonies. It would seem that, for the incipient Olmec, quetzal feathers represented a material synonymous with the wealth of successful maize agriculture, and the two materials, given their striking formal similarities, eventually became visual indices of one another. Their artistic innovations would catalyze the world of indigenous artisans who valued feathers for centuries. Evidently, the significance placed on quetzal feathers was more than just aesthetic. There were other associations and implications hidden within quetzal feathers, latent and concealed, obscured from view by its shimmering, viridescent glare.

Endnotes

- 1 “The main themes of Olmec art and iconography have been discussed by several scholars (Saville 1929; Stirling 1943; Covarrubias 1944; Coe 1965; de la Fuente 1977; Joralemon 1971; Reilly 1996). All of these proposals, however, remain hypothetical as none has yet been demonstrated fully” (De La Fuente 2000: 254).
- 2 De la Fuente, Beatriz. “Olmec Sculpture: The First Mesoamerican Art.” (2000).
- 3 Ibid., 259.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 D’Altroy, Terence et al. “Staple Finance, Wealth Finance, and Storage in the Inka Political Economy.” (1985).
- 6 Ibid., 192–6.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid., 189.
- 9 Ibid., 197.
- 10 Coe, Michael D. “The Aztec Empire: Realm of the Smoking Mirror.” 1991.
- 11 Benson, Elizabeth P. “An Olmec Figure at Dumbarton Oaks.” (1971).
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Ibid.; Taube. “Lightning Celts and Corn Fetishes: The Formative Olmec and the Development of Maize Symbolism in Mesoamerica and the American Southwest.” (2000).
- 15 Joralemon, Peter D. “A Study of Olmec Iconography.” (1971).
- 16 Taube, 1996.
- 17 Joralemon, 1971.
- 18 Taube, 2000.
- 19 Although Benson (1971) and Michael Coe (Cited in Benson 1971: personal communication) have suggested alternate identifications for these profile bird heads as owls, or even fire-serpents, Taube (2000) has convincingly identified them as quetzals, due to the tell-tale “flame-brow” motif that commonly appears in depictions of this bird.
- 20 Benson, 1971.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 The elements Benson points out are essentially Joralemon’s (1971) “maize with flowing silk” symbol.
- 23 Wolf, Gerhard. “Incarnations of Light: Picturing Feathers in Europe/ Mexico, ca. 1400–1600.” 2015.

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Figure 1. Seated Lord, 600– 400 BCE. Diopside. Olmec. Arroyo Pesquero, Veracruz, México. (Image: © Dumbarton Oaks, Pre-Columbian Collection, Washington, D.C.)

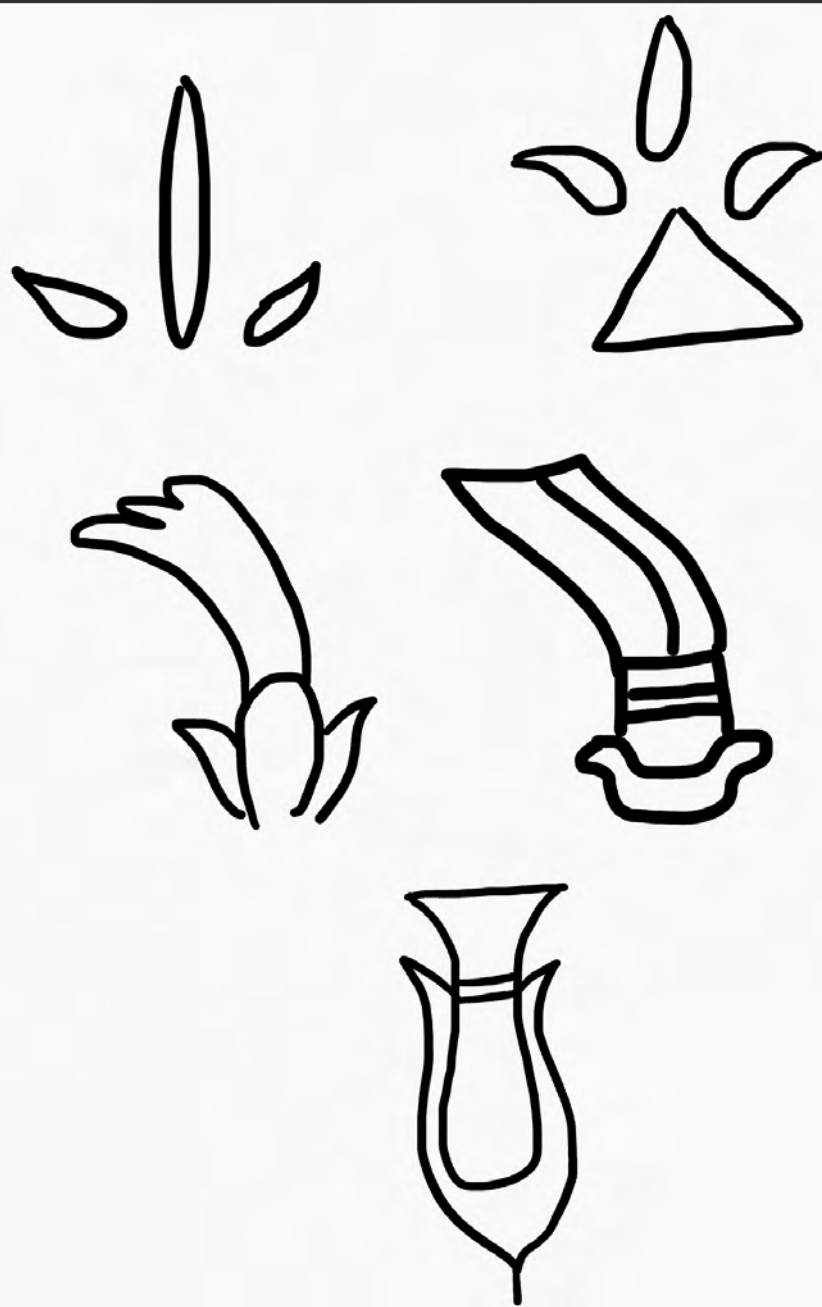


Figure 2. Olmec Maize sign variants. Note “flowing silk” in bottom two rows. (Author’s drawing after Taube 1996)



Figure 3A. Headdress Obverse, detail from Dumbarton Oaks Seated Lord figure. (Image: © Dumbarton Oaks, Pre-Columbian Collection, Washington, D.C.)



Figure 3B. Headdress Reverse, detail from Dumbarton Oaks Seated Lord figure. (Image: © Dumbarton Oaks, Pre-Columbian Collection, Washington, D.C.)



Figure 3C. Feather cape, detail from Dumbarton Oaks Seated Lord figure. (Image: © Dumbarton Oaks, Pre-Columbian Collection, Washington, D.C.)



Figure 4. Eagle Cuauhxicalli ("heart vessel") in the form of an eagle, andesite with traces of red pigment. Postclassic Aztec. Museo del Templo Mayor, México City. (Image: Author photograph)

Resistance in Practice: Cultural Education, Self-Determination, and Social Autonomy in a Black School Community

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Abstract

Educational settings serve as significant institutions through which to examine the production and maintenance of cultural knowledge and values. In the United States, educational institutions have been used as a mechanism to oppress and subjugate African-American populations through the creation of the African-American subject as the racial other, leading to significant erasure from the normative definition of student. This study interrogates the ways in which racial “others” navigate U.S. systems of education and resist white supremacy through assertions of cultural education, self-determination, and social autonomy. It does so through an ethnographic analysis of The Penn Center, historically a school for formerly enslaved Africans and currently a cultural center on St. Helena Island, South Carolina. Participant observation, interviews with former students and current staff members, and archival research, provide us with critical discursive and symbolic examples of the ways in which strong cultural education and self-determination can work to provide importantly normative spaces outside white hegemonic cultural systems that favor white, Western conceptions of knowledge and identity as the standard of value.

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Introduction

“If you don’t know where you’re going, you should know where you come from.” This central Gullah proverb reverberated off the lips of individuals as they described their knowledge of their Gullah culture. Indeed, these words, rhythmic in the way they flow to one’s ear, permeate the space of St. Helena Island, South Carolina in a way that draws one to question the trajectory of a person’s cultural and historical experience. Further contemplation introduces deeper questions: How do individuals come to know who they are? How do they connect that knowledge to place, and what might be created in that space of identity formation?

During six weeks of fieldwork at the Penn Center on St. Helena Island, South Carolina, these questions were central to understanding how educational spaces that fall outside of U.S. mainstream culture function for black students. The Penn Center, historically one of the first sites of education for formerly enslaved African Americans, is now a historical and cultural center that focuses on the preservation and dissemination of Gullah cultural forms. Penn serves as a nexus in the St. Helena community for Gullah identity and importantly as a critical space of ownership, in which the people of St. Helena assert their self-determination, social autonomy, and the value of their cultural knowledge. In taking ownership of the physical and cultural space of Penn, Gullah people on St. Helena are doing the critical work of creating a culture where blackness is unmarked and whiteness is largely ignored as a hegemonic structure.

The Gullah culture, mainly present in the low country and coastal regions of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, is comprised of communities across these regions who trace their ancestry directly to enslaved West Africans from countries such as Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Angola. In large part, these communities have developed distinct cultural identities that are directly reflective of African traditions and practices. Through the affirmation of Gullah history and blackness in this space, Gullah people are (re)conceptualizing the given negative or marked relationship to the overbearing structure of whiteness in society. Spaces such as Penn are rare but critical because they offer the possibility of revealing how oppressive institutional spaces, be those schools or other public sites, can be rearranged to be racially diverse spaces that are not centered on whiteness.

Anthropological theory on identity formation within societies, the organization of institutions, and the relationship between the individual, social, and political body are all pertinent to this study as they provide the theoretical framework through which to examine the experiences of marginalized populations within educational spaces and a broader normative majority culture. Critical race theory in

the context of education provides an additional framework through which to critically examine how structures act on marginalized individuals in complex ways that color their experiences within the educational institution.

Anthropologists, sociologists, critical race theorists, and other social thinkers have consistently identified school communities as particularly salient institutional spaces whereby culturally understood and racially marked norms and practices are symbolically and practically reaffirmed through classroom instruction (Levinson 1999, 599; Lewis 2003, 4). Educational spaces are substantial institutions that play a role in the production of cultural knowledge and embodied praxis through constructions of what Bourdieu termed “habitus,” those things which underlie the actions of individuals as a set of rules or standards that structure society (Bourdieu 1977, 95). Moreover, the social cues and symbols within and outside of the classroom become significant contributors to cultural understandings of that which becomes manifest as “self” and “other” within the institution. The construction of the “self,” “through opposition to an other always entails the violence of repressing or ignoring other forms of difference” (Abu-Lughod 1991, 468). Thus, one can suggest that identity comes from an acknowledgment and dissociation of *difference* or, as Hall terms it, within a “play of power and exclusion” (Hall 1997, 15). Here, representation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. It involves the use of language, signs, and images, which stand for or represent other, often hidden, hegemonic orders (Hall 1997, 15). Thus, representation becomes the place where meanings and constructions of identity play out in the public space. It is in these signs, this language, and these images where key points of identifications work to reveal what is valued or signified within a culture. In the case of institutions, identity and representation are essential to developing an understanding of how communities whose identities are not represented come to understand themselves, assert their own identities, and engage in struggles for power. Critically, scholars have identified the particular interactions of minority students with white hegemonic systems of education as critical moments where a person’s understanding and identification of herself is formed—often as the systematically marked other.

Historical Context of Penn Center

At the onset of the Civil War, abolitionist circles in the Northern U.S. focused much of their efforts on “integrating” formerly enslaved African-Americans into “American society” (Burton and Campbell 2014, 25–26). Penn School was founded in 1862 as a part of The Port Royal Experiment, an endeavor designed to teach “citizenship and civility” to this newly freed population. St. Helena provided an ideal

location for this experiment because of its isolation from the South Carolina mainland and its occupation by the Union army. As Union troops gained control of St. Helena and the surrounding Sea Islands, enslaved Africans suddenly found themselves in a liminal space between slavery and freedom (Burton and Campbell 2014, 33). Officially considered contraband of war by the United States Government, the people of St. Helena were free in the sense that they were no longer bound to their slave masters, but not yet allowed to participate freely in American society as citizens. Thus, when the Penn School was established in 1862, residents of St. Helena and the surrounding Sea Islands had a chance to take part in the pursuit of education and thus receive a semblance of what they had been denied.

As an educational institution, Penn made clear by way of its leaderships and teachers, its belief that students at Penn needed to be taught “civilization” in order to have any chance at individual, social, and economic survival. Of course, civilization as a linguistic and symbolic code in this context reflected the majority white values and social structures brought to the Island from outside. Most poignantly in the letters, diaries, and books written by teachers and principals at Penn, there is a consistent narration of local Gullah language and religious practices as savage and in desperate need of correction. For example, Rossa B. Cooley, principal of Penn School from 1905–1937, wrote, “we have been working at *breaking down the old superstitions* [emphasis added]. These are remnants of things which must hark back to Africa and the East. But as the new leadership comes on, *the old superstitions are passing* [emphasis added]” (Cooley 1930, 156). Acting within a form of benevolence that held Northern, largely white assumptions of civility and normalcy as true, early teachers at Penn held a perception of St. Helena Island rooted in understandings of whiteness as an American norm to which blackness seemed odd and outside of “intelligible” American society. Thus, in the early days of Penn as an academic institution, the underlying idea that Gullah culture had to be expunged from the people of St. Helena in order to teach them “civility” introduced a critical dissonance between the Gullah way of life on the Island and the education Penn sought to bring to the Island.

Methodology

In order to investigate the knowledge production taking place in this school community, a number of questions guide this research: 1) How did Penn Center seek to influence African-Americans on St. Helena Island, South Carolina? 2) How do students describe the influence Penn had on them? and 3) What is the evidence of this influence and how has it worked?

To conduct this research, I utilized a combined methodology rooted in ethnographic fieldwork that included participant observation, targeted interviews, and archival research. As a discipline, anthropology posits participant observation as crucial to the research process because of the ability it gives the researcher to engage in depth with the communities in which they work. Ethnography provides descriptions of how people define and explain aspects of the world, allowing researchers to understand personality, society, individuals, and environment as they are interrelated in a community (Spradley 2016, 11). Participant observation in particular allows the researcher to engage with the community on an emic level, to gather evidence and “thick description,” and to ask how the community makes meaning for themselves (Geertz 1973, 10). In this paper, informants will be referred to using pseudonyms. Ultimately, the methodological conglomeration of archival material and targeted interviews has allowed me to act as a historical ethnographer in the production of this research.

Findings from the Field

My work at Penn suggests that students at Penn Center and subsequent generations of Gullah people on St. Helena Island found important ways to break the dissonance present between the Gullah way of life and the education Penn sought to bring to the Island and assert the importance of their culture, resisting its erasure through a heightened sense of selfhood and cultural autonomy that is still present today. Central to these assertions of identity is a critical understanding of the Penn Center as the backdrop where Gullah forms of knowledge production are communally negotiated and interpellated.

Ginny, for instance, describes her experience as a Penn student as largely positive, noting that while teachers at Penn held racist ideologies about Gullah people, the opportunity for black students like herself to receive an education was significant and changed the trajectory of their lives. Ginny's account of the largely positive experience she had at Penn, despite the racist ideologies held by teachers, indexes the ability of Gullah students at Penn to absorb forms of knowledge and transform them for their own use. In Ginny's case, as in the case of other former students of Penn, education at Penn became a critical part of how Gullah culture would be maintained on the Island. For Gullah residents, education became a critical aspect of being autonomous.

Ginny credits both her academic experiences at Penn and her upbringing on St. Helena Island as critically important to her understanding of the world, and most poignantly of herself. Recounting her time as a child on St. Helena, Ginny recalls a feeling of cultural wealth. She says, “Here,

we were rich: rich because we had respect for each other. We were taught independence. We were concerned with sharing, and not taking. The community looked out for everyone.” In several of our conversations, Ginny drew a direct connection between the independence she learned as a child on St. Helena and a communal ethos that was rooted in assertions of the value that her Gullah identity carried. This value is intrinsic to the Gullah way of life on this island, as Gullah knowledge forms take center stage at Penn Center, where people like Ginny are actively working to preserve their culture, reject white assumptions about what tenets of their culture are valuable, and practice a communal autonomy in deciding what aspects of their culture is shared with the public, and what is not.

The York W. Bailey Museum serves as a material and geographical representation of the critical space of ownership that Penn is. Moreover, it is a central point where the history of Gullah knowledge production is recorded and the contemporary continuation of this knowledge production takes place within this context. The museum, as a physical space is housed in one of the original school buildings, where students like Ginny completed their studies. For Ginny and other affiliates of Penn, sharing the history of Penn allows them to craft the space as one of Gullah ownership, in which Gullah culture is centered and seen as a site of knowledge production. For St. Helena residents and Penn students, Gullah assertions of identity represent narratives shared across generations of former students of Penn and their families. This cultural autonomy is seen as continuations of a long practice of autonomy and shared community maintenance.

For instance, Dianne asserts the importance of her Gullah ancestry in her life today. During our discussions over the course of my time at Penn Center, Dianne helped me understand how the knowledge she received from her ancestors is directly reflected in her life today. Dianne, like many others I spent time with on the Island understands her own identity in a multigenerational sense and she draws connections between her ancestors' time as slaves on the plantations of St. Helena, students at Penn School, and citizens committed to preserving their culture and asserting the power they held. She says,

On this island, those descendants of those formerly enslaved Africans were educated, they were autonomous, they were powerful, because they were powerful in terms of numbers. They spoke in one voice in many cases and they said this is how we want things to go on this island. They held on to their culture.

Dianne asserts that it is a combination of education, language, and independence that define the Gullah residents of St. Helena. Further, Dianne directly links knowledge with the lessons her grandparents taught her, that

while falling outside of what America deemed important knowledge, they saw as necessary for her development as a young adult. Dianne's accounts of her grandparents, both educated at Penn School, point to an increased focus on collective Gullah identity that is passed down from people like Ginny for people like Dianne to put into practice. Citing her grandmother, Dianne says, "There's more than one way to be knowledgeable, there's more than one way to exist successfully." For Dianne and other residents of St. Helena, they define success as a direct link between one's knowledge of their history and self.

Assertions that knowledge does not solely operate in an academic space were common among the narratives of people I interacted with on St. Helena. While realizing and understanding the value that came with Penn's establishment on St. Helena, individuals constantly also asserted how their Gullah education, their ability to understand themselves in terms of their identity was paramount to any education they received in school. Dianne asserts that she never felt a sense of inferiority growing up on St. Helena and was largely unaware of her socially inferior status. Dianne says,

I did not know about our inferior status. I'm gonna attribute it to the way our folks raised us here. Their expectation was there is no one better than you but God—no one. They had this expectation that when you walk into a room, you command that space because you are from St. Helena Island, and no one has anything on you.

Dianne goes on to connect her strong sense of identity to understandings of Gullah history and culture stating,

You know, I caused riots in high school during black history month because we had a white teacher and he wasn't teaching us anything about black history and I'm sitting there like, oh no you didn't. I don't know what you thought, but we are not having this. I gave him hell, and I look back on that and say who told me that, but I had no fear. There wasn't a shadow of a doubt that my grandma, if she knew that, would stand behind me. She would be like akimbo, that's right child, they 'sposed to learn you your correct history and if they ain't telling you what you 'spose to know, then you tell them.

Dianne's reflections on the role her grandparents' cultural lessons have played in her life point to an increased focus on collective Gullah identity that is passed down from older St. Helena residents with the intention of continuing the practice of knowing where one comes from.

Dianne's account of St. Helena as a space that does not reflect internalized racial inferiority reflects a practice of Afrocentricity taking place on St. Helena. St. Helena, as a geographic region decenters whiteness as the center

of valuable knowledge production, by focusing on Gullah and blackness as the center of St. Helena life. Western conceptions of knowledge are not privileged in the current space of St. Helena. Gullah cultural knowledge is thus seen as paramount in the construction of identity and value. In this way, residents of St. Helena view it as a successful space where they can freely engage in cultural practices that frame their way of life. For my informants and other residents of St. Helena, they define success as a direct link between one's knowledge of their history and self. Moreover, one's ability to translate that knowledge of self into a life philosophy is a liberatory act that for the people of St. Helena allows them to craft a space that is distinctly black and Gullah. This space becomes incredibly powerful in how it is managing culture through the retelling of an oppressive history from the perspectives of the people whose lives are affected by it.

Conclusion

Among my informants, assertions of selfhood took the form of an increased awareness of one's ability to determine for themselves who they were and what they wanted to be, harkening back to the Gullah proverb I began this paper with: they "know where they come from." This assertion suggests moreover that blackness as an identity at Penn and on St. Helena Island is not something that exists tangentially or even contentiously in relation to whiteness but operates under a form of autonomy that places it outside of the bounds of white normativity. The reality of St. Helena as a place where blackness functions without consistent references to whiteness follows in the scholarly tradition of Afrocentricity, where marginalized populations have the ability to reclaim and recreate cultural values to their communities, while constructing black forms of knowledge that exist outside of the largely white educational structure as valid (Sefa Dei 1994, 16).

Scholars of education and critical race theory have considered how educational spaces in the United States act as sites of suffering and trauma for black students, whose identities are often erased or made invisible in these settings (Dumas 2014, 2). Considering the damage inflicted to black communities when history, language, and forms of cultural expression are silenced or erased from educational institutions, asserting the importance of one's culture as a form of knowledge carries unique possibilities for liberation. Because whiteness as an identity has largely functioned as a form of property in American educational institutions, schools and other spaces of learning have become "culturally specific artifact[s], designed to maintain a White supremacist master script" (Ladson-Billings 1998, 18). In asserting that valuable forms of knowledge production lie in cultural understandings of self-determination, social autonomy, and ultimately a privileging of one's cultural identity, the Gullah

people on St. Helena Island are resisting classifications of their lives as “other.”

Moreover, the cultural education and knowledge production that is taking place at Penn is critical in terms of what it is doing in the lives of people on St. Helena Island. Rather than erasing the oppressive histories that shaped Penn’s founding, Penn is engaging with them, while asserting that the story of St. Helena is a liberatory one that does not end with white educational intervention. The roots of knowledge production are being reimagined at Penn where assertions of the value of one’s culture and being educated in the tenets of that culture, encompass Penn as a space. In this way, cultural education, as expressed by the Gullah community, is breaking the initial dissonance that existed between Penn teachers, such as Cooley and the students of Penn and the larger St. Helena community.

Through this work, I situate cultural education as a critical part of formal education as a means of rethinking racial dichotomies of black and white as the normative standard that constructs blackness as “other.” The Gullah people of St. Helena’s cultural assertions can be understood as larger forms of resistance and a particular form of cultural maintenance and continuity that negates erasure of the history and persistence of Gullah communities. In the context of Penn Center, in its early days as a formal academic institution, dissonance was clearly present in the way knowledge was produced at Penn. However, it was ultimately in the responses of students at Penn and subsequent generations of Gullah people on St. Helena to this dissonance that has shaped the unique space of cultural pride and ownership that Penn is today. Informants’ narratives suggest that this space has been constructed through active assertions of cultural education as expressed by self-determination, social autonomy, and ultimately the production of a Gullah knowledge that centers blackness and Gullah culture as paramount in the space of St. Helena Island.

Expanding views of knowledge production and what is deemed as valuable knowledge is critical in examining the experiences of minority populations in educational settings. Spaces such as Penn offer anthropologists of education, educational theorists, and other social thinkers areas to examine how oppressive histories can be grappled with through an increased focus on telling the stories of the people these histories affect. Moreover, understanding how educational institutions can operate as reproducers of oppression is critical in understanding the experiences of black students. When black students are given the space to consider their cultures as relevant to the way knowledge is interpreted, produced, and disseminated, they are able to engage in a resistance that removes them the peripheries of society and grants them ownership of their experiences.

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“Madmen are Made Here”: Mass Trauma, Mental Illness, and Psychiatry in the German Expressionist Thriller

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Abstract

German Expressionist cinema is often associated with a morbid fascination with murderers, evil psychiatrists, and distorted psychological states. Where did these obsessions, that are now so inextricable from the film movement, emerge from? This paper analyzes how the cinema of the Weimar Republic was largely shaped by contemporary advances in the field of psychiatry following the trauma of World War I. This study examines how shifting attitudes towards mental illness as well as the role of the psychiatrist in modern German society were explored and rationalized through Expressionist films that incorporated these themes in thriller and horror narratives. While critics such as Siegfried Kracauer assert that the “villain psychiatrists” of the Weimar Cinema are necessarily accompanied by political commentary on totalitarianism, this paper argues that the archetype is used more broadly by Weimar filmmakers as explicit criticism of psychological abuse rather than veiled support of political despotism. By analyzing two of Fritz Lang’s films—*M* and *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse*—in the context of the seminal *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, the paper traces the way the field of psychiatry became a subject of fascination for Weimar era directors who delved into the complexities of the human mind from a scientific perspective in their films.

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The cinema of the Weimar Republic was greatly influenced by the climate of defeat, abrupt change, and economic misfortune following the First World War. Expressionist films addressed issues of collective psychological trauma in Weimar Germany, as well as mental illness, by explicitly engaging with themes of psychoanalysis and psychiatry. Filmmakers such as Fritz Lang became preoccupied with displaying the interiority of criminals, as exemplified by the nuanced and unexpectedly sympathetic portrayal of Hans Breckert, the child murderer in *M* (1931). This depiction established the cinematic archetype of the murderer who is driven by abnormal psychology rather than by some abstract evil. The figure of the villainous psychiatrist was also popular at the time, a tradition originating with Robert Wiene’s *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919), and later revived in Lang’s *Dr. Mabuse* films. In particular, *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse* (1933) uses the archetype of the villainous psychiatrist in order to caution against authoritarian figures who use fear in order to exploit the psychologically vulnerable masses. In this paper, I argue that these films reflect a society in turmoil that turned to the emerging field of psychiatry for a scientific perspective on how to live in the increasingly chaotic modern world.

The obsession with madness and the mind in the German Expressionist Cinema has its origins in the advances in the field of psychology that occurred in Europe during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Beginning in the 1890s, pioneers such as Hippolyte Bernheim, Pierre Janet, and Sigmund Freud countered the somatic theory, which posited physical damage to the brain as a necessary factor for the development of mental illness.¹ These psychiatrists introduced the idea of mental illness as a phenomenon that could exist without an organic cause. This concept was welcomed in postwar Germany largely out of necessity. The First World War had affected all facets of German society, and the Weimar era (1918–1933) was a radically transformative period that saw a series of reforms and cultural debates following the nation’s defeat and the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II. As historian Anton Kaes writes, “the experience of trauma became Weimar’s historical unconscious.”² There was enormous demand for the treatment of shellshock in German soldiers who had now returned home. Debates emerged regarding the “traditional model” of war psychiatry, characterized by straitjackets, padded cells, and barbarous treatment at the hands of psychiatric professionals.³ Freud’s new approach of psychoanalysis stood in direct opposition to old methods, actively engaging the patient in the process of understanding their own mind.⁴ In addition, there remained a popular fascination even within the realm of science with fantastical interpretations of the inner workings of the brain, as exemplified by the mysticism of Carl Jung’s theories, Freud’s interest in dream interpretation, and early concepts of hypnotism as treatment. From these

postwar trends in psychiatry emerged a social consciousness that was concerned with the psychiatrist's potential for tyranny and cruelty, and captivated by the mysteries of the human mind and extreme psychological states.

A common theme in German Expressionist films was that of the murderer compelled to kill by supernatural means, such as the somnambulist Cesare in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* and the titular character in *The Hands of Orlac* (1924). Fritz Lang's *M*, however, breaks from this mold by presenting a more complex portrait of a compulsive murderer who is driven to violence out of mental illness. Lang humanizes the character of Hans Breckert by including a monologue at the end of the film that illuminates Breckert's interiority as he defends himself before an improvised court. "I can't help myself!" Breckert exclaims. "I haven't any control over this evil thing that's inside me—the fire, the voices, the torment! Always . . . always, there's this evil force inside me. It's there all the time, driving me out to wander through the streets . . . following me silently, but I can feel it there. It's me, pursuing myself . . ." ⁵ Breckert's speech reflects Lang's empathy for the mentally ill, emphasizing that Breckert is also a victim of his condition and prisoner in his own mind.

While Lang's interest in human psychology and the field of psychoanalysis is evident in his work, the director also spoke publicly at length about his fascination with the topic in later interviews. In a 1962 interview on the making of *M*, Lang detailed the research process he underwent in order to accurately convey Breckert's psychology, revealing that he consulted "with psychiatrists and psychoanalysts about the mental state of compulsive murderers." ⁶ Lang explicitly incorporated the study of the human mind into his ethos as a director and storyteller, stating that, "I consider the director to be a type of psychoanalyst. He must get under people's skin." ⁷ Critics at the time took notice of the ways in which Lang's films showcased the process of forensic psychology as a legitimate science. In a 1935 edition of the American Institute of Cinematography's publication *Cinema Progress*, Frederick Weisenheimer writes of the editing style employed in the handwriting analysis scene in *M*: "From the sound of the psychologist's voice describing the personality of the murderer, a cut was made to behavior verifying the psychologist's diagnosis. In this case, the words continued in conjunction with the pictures, thus eliminating a return to a shot of the psychologist between each shot denoting a single personality trait of the murderer." ⁸ Weisenheimer argues that Lang's innovative formal choices lead to a "noteworthy characterization" of the Breckert character.

Additionally, *M* engages with themes of mass paranoia and mob mentality, a concept that is masterfully explored in a sequence of scenes in the first half of the film where

friends, citizens on the street, and neighbors turn against each other with accusations of murder. Lang considered his films to be documents of the world he saw around him ⁹ and the film remains a striking reflection of the urban climate of hysteria and anxiety in Weimar Germany. *M* addresses collective public feelings of anxiety surrounding the possibility of individuals in their midst who might turn against the tenuous social order holding together the modern German city by committing violent, non-normative acts. Interestingly, the cautionary tale at play differs from previous films that engaged with themes of murder and morality. Instead of warning the individual not to succumb to temptation and greed, in turn leading to violence, *M* admonishes society at large. Lang warns the public against succumbing to hysteria and hastily condemning the mentally ill criminals without attempting to understand their interior state. *M* is exceptional in its subtlety and its accuracy in portraying human psychology, and it marked a turning point in the crime thriller genre, moving towards new ways of representing murderers and the criminally insane that was more nuanced and reflective of contemporary advances in psychiatry.

To understand the emergence of the "evil psychiatrist" motif in Expressionist cinema, it is crucial to look to the seminal 1919 film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, as it set a precedent for an archetype that is still echoed in cinema today. The setting of the film is a claustrophobic fantasy city full of gothic constructions that convey paranoia and unease in every angle. A recurring theme throughout the film is authority and hierarchy, and Wiene offers scathing criticism of officials ranging from the bureaucrat who is murdered for wasting Caligari's time to Caligari himself, who turns out to be the director of a mental asylum. The asylum itself is presented as a space of abuse, which is likely inspired by the debates of the time surrounding the horrors veterans suffering from war neurosis underwent in psychiatric hospitals. Central to the film's narrative is the exploitation of the sleepwalker Cesare by an authority figure who takes advantage of his mental illness. Wiene's film introduces the archetype of the psychiatrist as villain, an oppressive figure who preys on the mentally vulnerable, more of a magician than a scientist. This character embodied the public's fears regarding surveillance, hypnotic control, absolute authority, and modernity.

Fritz Lang's 1933 film *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse* revives the memory of Caligari as well as that of the titular character—the mad psychiatrist Mabuse—from Lang's earlier film, *Dr. Mabuse the Gambler* (1922). Testament significantly adds on to the themes of the first film by exploring the effects of mass trauma. The opening images themselves are revealing of the film's historical context, featuring an overpowering sound montage of unseen mechanical machinery that symbolically "recreates what many soldiers

described as *Trommelfeuer*, or the unceasing barrage of loud rumbling from artillery fire near and far.”¹⁰ The scene which directly follows depicts a lecture in which the character of Dr. Baum expounds on a “pathological condition that is not as rare as one suspects”: mental illness as a result of large scale traumatic events. Baum instructs his students that “exposure to catastrophes such as explosions, earthquakes, and railway accidents . . . often triggers insanity.” As it turns out, mass trauma leading to insanity is the ultimate goal of this reimagined Dr. Mabuse, who now runs his criminal network not for monetary gain, but for the express purpose of causing public shock and panic through pointless, horrific crimes. In the scene where Mabuse appears as a ghostly hallucination to Dr. Baum, he summarizes his goals as the creation of a “state of complete insecurity and anarchy.” Lang uses the evil psychiatrist archetype to directly comment on public hysteria and mass mind control during the final years of the Weimar Republic, as opposed to the individual mind control seen in Dr. Caligari and the earlier Mabuse film. A 1939 historical survey of international cinema pointed towards the duality of the Mabuse character, “both doctor and criminal,” as an analogy for the fractured society of the Weimar period and identifies the archetype as a distinctly German product.¹¹ This social commentary was carefully engineered by Lang himself, who once again claimed that his films were documentaries at the New York premiere of *Testament*, where the prospectus materials asserted that Mabuse was a figure deeply rooted in the decade in which he was created.¹²

The Testament of Dr. Mabuse also displays Lang’s distinctive interest in psychiatry as a legitimate scientific field. Here, the evil psychiatrist is explicitly a scientist, not a magician. By the end of the film, it is revealed that Mabuse did not, in fact, commit crimes from beyond the grave; they were the actions of the asylum director Dr. Baum himself. Baum is clearly portrayed as a scientist, dressed in a white lab coat and frequently shown giving medical lectures to his students, or reviewing clinical cases in his office. His methods of mind control are not mystical, but rather dictated by what Baum refers to as “*übermenschlich logik*,” or superhuman logic. This is representative of Lang’s vision as the director revisited his fascination with the world of psychiatric practice. The fact that the psychiatrist is now a legitimate medical professional rather than a magician or carnival showman may also be reflective of the evolution of psychiatry as more mystic approaches to the human mind were deemed outdated.

While critics such as Siegfried Kracauer assert that the “villain psychiatrist” is explicitly accompanied by political commentary on totalitarianism, I would argue that the archetype is also used more broadly to criticize the concept

of psychological abuse rather than necessarily invoking images of political despotism. At the time of *Testament*’s release, critics were conflicted over the film’s political goals. A 1934 publication of *Cinema Quarterly* was quick to address the film’s “alleged anarchistic tendencies” as a possible reason for its censorship.¹³ On the other hand, in *From Caligari to Hitler*, Siegfried Kracauer posits Mabuse as a reflection of “German fatal tendencies” towards fascism, as a sort of premonition of the Third Reich.¹⁴ How does one reconcile Mabuse’s desire for anarchist chaos with his desire for totalitarian control? I argue that Mabuse is not meant to represent a set political ideology, but rather the dangers of using fear in order to exercise control over the public. Additionally, I refute Kracauer’s claims that *Caligari* is a “conformist” film that celebrates authoritarianism due to its use of a framing narrative that “reverse[s] [the filmmaker’s] intrinsic intentions.”¹⁵ While the film does end with the revelation that the narrator, Francis, is a mentally ill inmate of the asylum himself, this does not definitively contradict the honesty of Francis’s account. In this final scene, we see Caligari descending an exaggerated staircase that emphasizes his position at the top of the administrative hierarchy of the asylum. The implication remains, Caligari is a symbol of absolute power, a figure that has total control over a group of vulnerable individuals, and it is unclear to what extent this power is being abused.

The motifs and themes discussed throughout this paper have had a lasting impact on cinema worldwide, becoming codified as staples of the psychological thriller and the horror film. Due to the influence of émigré German directors who came to the United States to escape the Nazi regime, the legacy of Expressionist cinema became ingrained in the Hollywood mythos, most notably through the development of the film noir genre. However, these archetypes and narratives were directly shaped by the historical context of Weimar Germany. Directors such as Wiene and Lang were interested in capturing the climate of mass psychological shock and unrest following the result of the Great War and preceding the rise of the Nazi party. In order to rationalize and explore the phenomenon of collective trauma and disrupted psychological states, Weimar filmmakers became interested in incorporating psychoanalysis into their narratives, as well as directly telling stories about psychiatrists and the mentally ill.

Endnotes

- 1 Kaes, Anton. *Sbell Shock Cinema: Weimar Culture and the Wounds of War*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2009. Print. p. 10.
- 2 Ibid., 2
- 3 Ibid., 54.
- 4 Ibid.

- 5 McGilligan, Patrick. *Fritz Lang: The Nature of the Beast*. New York: St. Martin's, 1997. Print. p. 155.
- 6 Lang, Fritz, and Barry Keith Grant. *Fritz Lang: Interviews*. Jackson: U of Mississippi, 2003. Print. p. 33.
- 7 Ibid., 28.
- 8 Weisenheimer, Frederick. "Sound Technique in Motion Pictures." *Cinema Progress* 1935: 200–03. *Media History Digital Library*. Web. p. 203.
- 9 Kracauer, Siegfried. *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1947. Print. p. 81.
- 10 Kaes, Anton. *Shell Shock Cinema: Weimar Culture and the Wounds of War*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2009. Print. p. 209.
- 11 Robson, E. W., and M. M. Robson. *The Film Answers Back; an Historical Appreciation of the Cinema*. London: John Lane, 1939. *Media History Digital Library*. Web. p. 200.
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Filmography

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Personal Identity: John Locke, the Self and Social Relations

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Sanelisiwe P. Ndlovu graduated cum laude from the University of the Western Cape in South Africa with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Philosophy. Her academic interests focus on exploring more African Philosophy, particularly, epistemology and reason. Her main objective is to pursue a PhD in philosophy, so she can teach philosophy at the university level and one day return the favor many professors bestowed on her. She wants to challenge the internalized stereotypes which code philosophy as a male discipline and challenge the female underrepresentation in the philosophy profession. In 2018, she received the University of the Western Cape's Flagship Fellowship in recognition of her exceptional academic performance and leadership traits.

Abstract

The issue of personal identity has long been of concern to many philosophers. There are several general theories on this identity problem; however, this paper focuses on that of John Locke. Locke's theory of personal identity is a prominent subject of discussion among modern philosophical circles. In this paper I aim to argue that Locke's account of personal identity is not entirely plausible; it is limited in certain ways. To establish this case, I shall first present a brief account of Locke's theory of personal identity. Second, drawing from the Prince and the Cobbler thought experiment, I illustrate that there is something missing in Locke's account: social relation. Next the paper will move on to look at Galen Strawson's (2014) take on Locke's scholarship on personal identity. I argue that the interpretation that Strawson endorses is also unable to provide a solution to the social relation concern Locke's theory faces. Finally, the paper will argue that Strawson's understanding of Locke's personal identity scholarship is logically flawed in that Strawson commits the fallacy of presentism.

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1. Introduction

The issue of personal identity has long been of concern to many philosophers. In philosophy, the matter of personal identity deals with questions such as what does being the person that you are, from one day to the next, necessarily consist in, or "What kinds of things are we persons?" (Thiel, 2011 p. 41). There are several general theories on this identity problem; however, this paper focuses on that of John Locke. The concept of "person" that Locke once proposed

has become an absolute standard in this field of philosophy ever since. In the 1696 second edition of his work, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke proposes that one's personal identity extends only so far as their own consciousness. Locke's theory of personal identity is a prominent subject of discussion among modern philosophical circles. In this paper I aim to argue that Locke's account of personal identity is not entirely plausible; it is limited in certain ways. To establish this case I shall first present a brief account of Locke's theory of personal identity. Second, I wish to centre my analysis on Locke's 'the Prince and the Cobbler' thought experiment. I illustrate that there is something missing in Locke's account—social relation—and I argue that the conclusion Locke draws from the case is not warranted. Next, the paper will move on to look at Galen Strawson's (2014) take on Locke's scholarship on personal identity, and I argue that the interpretation that Strawson endorses is also unable to provide a solution to the social relation concern Locke's theory faces. I argue that Strawson's understanding of Locke's personal identity scholarship is logically flawed in that Strawson commits the fallacy of presentism.

2. John Locke on Personal Identity

Locke holds that personal identity is a matter of some form of psychological continuity. In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke (1696) argues that personal identity is constituted by the continuity of what he calls 'consciousness and memory that stretches backward and forward' (p. 332). Locke makes it clear that the most important part of identity for a person is the psychological continuation of the same life. Locke distinguishes between the terms person and man to clarify his ideas of personal identity. According to Locke (1696) an idea of man is the same as an idea of organism; man is nothing but a particular sort of animal. Locke (1696), however, says that the idea of person is different from that of man, and persons retain their own distinct identity conditions. A person, on Locke's view, is "a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider it self as it self, the same thinking thing in different times and places; which it does only by that consciousness, which is inseparable from thinking, and as it seems to me essential to it. . . ." (Locke, 1696, p. 335).

The person described by Locke in terms of psychological continuity does not have to be the same physical body over time; conscious memory is the only determinant of personal identity (Locke, 1696). Since, the distinction Locke makes is that a man is a material body, while a person is a thinking, intelligent being, it is obvious that this implied something extra is a quality belonging to persons, rather than bodies. Locke argues for this point using the prince and cobbler example. Locke considered the hypothetical case of a transfer of consciousness from one person to another.

Locke offers a series of hypothetical questions and asks the reader to think about how one would make forensic judgments in these cases. ‘The Prince and the Cobbler’ is a simple thought experiment: Imagine that the memories—or consciousness—of a prince were transferred to the body of a cobbler. When the Cobbler-body wakes up, he thinks he is the Prince, claims to be the Prince, and has all of the memories of the Prince (Locke, 1696). We would say that the Prince now inhabits the living body of the Cobbler.

“For should the soul of a Prince, carrying with it the consciousness of the Prince’s past life, enter and inform the body of a Cobbler as soon as deserted by his own soul, everyone sees he would be the same person with the Prince, accountable only for the Prince’s actions” (Locke, 1696, p. 44).

In this example, Locke shows that sameness of the human body is not necessary in personal identity. Here, Locke seems to maintain that the body within which one’s consciousness is housed is not necessary for personal identity, rather it is sameness of consciousness that plays the fundamental role. Locke (1696) argues, “For the same consciousness being preserv’d, whether in the same or different Substances, the personal Identity is preserv’d” (p. 45). Given this assertion, any change in the consciousness reflects a change in personal identity.

Locke (1975) offers the argument that because in order to be a self, one must be a thinking thing, and that because “consciousness always accompanies thinking” (p. 36), the self with which one personally identifies extends and persists only so far as one’s consciousness. Accordingly, if the psychological life is transferred from the body of a Prince to the body of a Cobbler, Locke argues that the resulting person will be the Prince and not the Cobbler: it is just the Prince trapped in the Cobbler’s body. The Prince in the Cobbler’s body would be responsible for the Prince’s actions and not the Cobbler’s, and those who were close to the Prince could continue their relationships with him but those who had relationships with the Cobbler could not (Noonan, 2005). As such, Locke’s account of personal identity revolves around the continuity of consciousness. However, Locke’s case of the Prince and the Cobbler does not capture everything that needs to be captured if one needs to understand personal identity.

2.1. Objection to Locke’s Memory Account

Locke’s account omits any relational aspect to the concept of personal identity. Locke focuses on the individual (the Prince and/or the Cobbler) and he ignores the wider community with which each of their lives intersects. In transferring a consciousness from one body to another, our intuition that personal identity is transferred in the

exchange of consciousness is based partly on the assumption that such a transfer would not lead to an exchange of social roles (Lee, 2006). However, there is noticeable change in social roles. Supposing the Prince had a wife and children, it does not seem like the royal princess would go to sleep with a peasant Cobbler who could merely remember the bed they had shared. Similarly, it does not seem like the children would say “Daddy” to a peasant Cobbler whose body they have never seen before even though this unknown individual seemingly knew all about them. This is to point out that relationality is important in understanding identity over time. Our identity, our narratable self, is interlocked not only with our gendered body and its history but also with the memories and narratable selves of others (Thiel, 2011). Due to relationships and social expectations associated with personal identity, if one were to go through an experiment such as that of the Prince and Cobbler people would treat you differently. While psychological continuity seems like the right kind of relation to define personal identity (in terms of which Locke defines persons), it ignores the interdependent relationships that also seem necessary to personal identity. This is not to say identity over time depends on what people say or how people treat one another; rather, social relations play a crucial one in personal identity, it is one of the features there (that you could perhaps do without). It is a decisive feature that could determine whether or not the Prince is the Cobbler-body person and Locke seems to ignore this. It is clear that while Locke’s statements seem perfectly rational in theory, practically though, they have no weight. There is more to the practical significance of human life than the capacity for moral agency, reflective self-consciousness, and reason, and this is why when they are lost we are confused not just about metaphysical identity questions but also about how someone should be treated (Lee, 2006).

2.2. A Possible Response by Locke

A possible response for Locke would be that the third-person perspective—the relational aspect—is mistaken. The first-person perspective is the foundation and origin both of personal identity and what matters about us. Locke might argue that the first-person perspective carries more weight than the relational aspect. The Prince would live in the Cobbler’s body, and although he would look like the Cobbler, he would be the Prince and know himself as such, remembering the Prince’s life-story as his own, and having awareness of this unshared experience and the awareness of internal activity, such as the continuous flow of thoughts and feelings, which are private to the extent that they cannot be directly known by others (Locke, 1975). Accordingly, private self plays a more crucial role than the third-person view (Baker, 2009). Further, it is not clear what the third-person view can say about the Prince’s psychological continuity, which seem to make him to be the Cobbler.

There seems to be little ground for thinking that Prince is the same person as Cobbler. Accordingly, the third-person relational perspective is mistaken. Thus, we cannot neglect the first-person perspective; it is central to personal identity. The first-person perspective explains the importance of being a person and the characteristics associated with personal identity. It enables one to be responsible, because one knows what one is doing and what one has done. The first-person perspective, then, is the ground of our personal identity, our rationality and our moral agency. Some understanding and some representation of the private, inner aspects of the self is more important than what the community holds. For Locke, personal identity has nothing to do with social relationships, the next section aims to argue that there is something completely artificial about this.

2.3. A Problem with Locke's Response

There is more to the practical significance of human life than the capacity for moral agency, reflective self-consciousness, and reason. Being a person is identified in reference to one's social relations which in many cases determine the very nature of individual experience, including cognition, one's morality, and one's destiny. For instance, while inhabiting the body of the Cobbler, the Prince may try to order someone around and everyone would laugh at him, naturally unaware that a royal person was contained in a common man's body. This newfound lack of respect and authority could turn him from a confident Prince into a resentful peasant. The Prince now has the characteristic misfortunes defining the Cobbler's former life. Due to relationships and social expectations associated with personal identity, social roles are fundamentally important. The Prince housed in the Cobbler's body cannot fulfill the social roles of the Prince, for he now exhibits the Cobbler's physical life. Our view of ourselves is to some extent manifested in the social roles we occupy. It is worth mentioning that Locke (1975) is interested in the question of what makes a person at a given time identical to a person at some future time, and his psychological continuity has a point. However, his psychological view only works because he ignores these important social relations. And it is just hard to make sense of Locke's psychological view without social relations. Accordingly, one cannot privilege the first-person perspective because it depends entirely on social relations. Social roles help to make clear what is personal about personal identity. Locke wrongly ignores the importance of our social role in the criteria for personal identity. This is to say the self and personal identity—deeply personal but socially patterned and communicated—are essential for understanding personal identity and offer us the ability to identify empirical links between self and social structure (Hitlin, 2003). Given this, one cannot make judgments of personal identity purely in terms of psychological continuity.

If personal identity is viewed exclusively from the first-person perspective (that is, as consisting in psychological continuity), it is not clear if we can determine the attribution of responsibility and have a legal system for human actions at all (Fortstom, 2010). For clarity, Locke (1975) says, "Is not a Man Drunk and Sober the same Person, why else is he punish'd for the Fact he commits when Drunk, though he be never afterwards conscious of it? . . . the Drunkard perhaps be not conscious of what he did; yet Humane Judicatures justly punish him; because the Fact is proved against him, but want of consciousness cannot be proved for him" (p. 56). As is evident, Locke clearly develops an argument that this kind of first-person consciousness is not decisive in judging whether the agent should be punished or not (Somers, 1994). The first-person perspective does not conform to our common sense and it does not work as well in actual matters of fact in court proceedings. For clarity, legal concepts like criminal negligence would not make sense and the system of criminal law must suffer fundamental changes (Lannstrom, 2007). The attribution of responsibility and personal identity relies on the third-person perspective from the outside point of view. This reveals how social relations are important when it comes to personal identity, morality and the legal system. The final section aims to engage with Galen Strawson's view of Locke's personal identity.

3. Strawson on Locke's Account of Personal Identity

I aim to argue that Strawson does not help Locke on the notion of social relations. The problem of personal identity over time in philosophy is the problem of giving an account of the logically necessary and sufficient conditions for a person identified at one time being the same person as a person identified at another (Behan, 1979). Similarly, Locke is usually understood as offering a theory of what makes a person at a given time identical to a person at some future time (Thiel, 2011). However, Strawson (2014) insists that Locke is concerned with a different question of personal identity—the question of what a person is morally and legally responsible for. Strawson (2014) sees Locke's account of personal identity as restricted to the forensic nature of personal identity. In Strawson's view, the crucial feature of Lockean persons is their forensic character. But, Locke does seem to be concerned with personal identity as a matter which deals with questions such as, "What makes it true that a person at one time is the same thing as a person at another time?" (Thiel, 2011, p. 96) and not only with the question of what a person is morally and legally responsible for, as Strawson proposes. Although I think that Strawson is right that Locke has a forensic notion of personal identity in mind, nowhere does Locke say that the forensic conception of person is prior to the metaphysical conception of person (Ichinosi, 2014). Locke (1975) says, "to find wherein personal identity consists, we must consider what Person stands for; which,

I think, is a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection” (p. 54). Further, to determine whether a person is accountable for a certain action, Locke says, one has to appeal to his consciousness. For example, Locke (1975) argues, “in the great Day, wherein the Secrets of all Hearts shall be laid open, it may be reasonable to think, no one shall be made to answer for what he knows nothing of; but shall receive his Doom, his Conscience accusing or excusing him” (p. 41). Accordingly, Strawson’s argument does not conform to Locke’s ideas. Second, Strawson dismisses Locke’s Prince and the Cobbler thought experiment, so consequently he does not provide a solution for the social relation problem. Strawson argues,

“Thought-experiments involving cobblers and princes are one thing, reality is another, and in reality, when we ask which set of actions and experiences we must pick from, when we try to identify the set of actions and experiences John is Conscious of (and so responsible for, and so constituted as a Person by) it is, again, simply the complete set of actions and experiences of John the human subject of experience” (Strawson, 2014, p. 122).

Strawson (2014) protests that Locke’s theory is about actual people and not about these weird body-swapping cases. But Locke too is talking about actual people: ‘The Prince and the Cobbler’ shows one what is going to happen on Locke’s account to all actual people on the Day of Judgment (Ichinose, 2014). One of the most obvious and important motives for Locke’s scholarship was to provide an account of personal identity that would make sense of the Christian doctrines of human immortality, the resurrection of the dead, and the Last Judgement (Noonan, 2004). And, of course, for Locke these were not mere “puzzle cases,” as they might be for many philosophers interested in personal identity in the present day (Thiel, 2011). They were facts which any account of personal identity had to accommodate if it was to be considered adequate (Noonan, 2004). Consequently, Strawson commits the great mistake of reading Locke and neglecting the historical context in which Locke wrote. Consequently, Strawson commits the fallacy of presentism.

3.1. Objection to Strawson

It is illogical and anachronistic to impose today’s morals on the past. The argument Strawson presents in favor of Locke’s scholarship is out of context, thus logically flawed, as it commits the fallacy of presentism. The fallacy of presentism is the anachronistic introduction of present-day ideas and perspectives into depictions or interpretations of the past (Mitronic, 2011). Strawson’s response is endorsing a radical claim in Locke. In other words, Strawson is imposing ideas which philosophers did not hold during Locke’s time

period. Locke was not writing about personhood or identity in isolation but rather in a context and engaging with other philosophers of his time. In any given time period, human thinking is largely a product of the socio-historical context in which one thinks it. When looking at the past one has to understand the world as they did. Strawson’s take on Locke results in a misleading portrayal of the past. Thinkers like Strawson should be careful about arguing on Locke’s behalf when Locke’s text is supposed to do the talking. Locke (1969) has posited a theory of what makes a person at a given time identical to a person at some future time, not the question of what a person is morally and legally responsible for as Strawson proposes.

When one studies the past, it is meant to be a deeply introspective experience that is informed by the relevant socio-political and historical context. Butterfield (2011) argues that when reading historical text one should be a “recording angel” rather than a “hanging judge” (p.11). The goal is to enter into conversation with historical figures, to understand their world as fully as we can, and to learn from them in the context that they were writing and teaching at the time. Philosophers should not abandon original interpretation in favor of some more “exact” and “rigorous” form of thinking and reasoning (Gadamer, 1989). Thus, one should interpret the picture of the past (and the people of the past) in the context of the past to avoid making anachronistic conclusions. Accordingly, it is a great mistake in reading Locke to neglect the historical context in which he wrote, or the particular concerns which motivated him.

4. Conclusion

Psychological features and memory are grounded on more basic facts, body embodiment, and social relations. Social interactions influence and determine one’s memory, cognitive development, and knowledge construction (Lenta, 2004). Locke does not make this crucial. Similarly, being a person is identified in reference to one’s social relations which in many cases determine the very nature of individual experience. Thus, one cannot simply isolate these psychological features and make them a criterion for personal identity. In this paper, I argued that Locke’s account of personal identity is limited in certain ways. Looking specifically at ‘The Prince and the Cobbler’ thought experiment, I illustrated that there is something missing in Locke’s account: social relation. Next, I moved on to look at Galen Strawson’s (2014) take on Locke’s scholarship on personal identity, and I argued that the interpretation Strawson endorses is also unable to provide a solution to the social relation concern that Locke’s theory faces. Further, the paper argued that Strawson’s understanding of Locke’s personal identity scholarship is logically flawed in that Strawson commits the fallacy of presentism in his analysis of Locke. Personal

identity is generated from both an internal and an external perspective, and consists of relationships, moral duties, roles and commitments that matter most about a person (Lindeman, 2009). Accordingly, Locke's view suffers from an overly narrow conception and fails to appreciate basic practical concerns connected to our animality and social relationships (Schechtman, 2018).

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Tracking Where Drought Hurts the Most: A New Socio-Health- Based Approach to Social Vulnerability Measurement in Mexico

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Oluwaseyi Olojo graduated from Barnard College in May 2018 where she majored in Environmental Policy. At Barnard she was the president of Christian Union at Columbia University and worked as an empirical reasoning fellow for Barnard's Empirical Reasoning Center. There she was able to assist students and professors in their statistical data analysis and map making needs. She firmly believes in the use of data transparency for mobilizing marginalized populations so she hopes to pursue doctoral studies in demography in the near future. She currently works for a tech company in NYC.

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Abstract

Infant mortality rate (IMR), among other health indicators, can serve as a useful measure of social stratifications of wealth and economic prosperity. This indicator can be used in composite indices, which have been applied in many human-environment studies and have played a significant role in public policy decision making. For Mexico, a historically drought afflicted country, indices can serve as multidimensional tools of analysis for measuring social vulnerability to drought events. The aim of this project is to combine the climate vulnerability index described in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's 2001 report and Dr. Susan Cutter's Vulnerability of Places model into a holistic framework to understand how drought affected the Mexican population in 2000. This study more specifically explores the influence of integrating IMR into an index. Historical IMR data was obtained from the NASA Socioeconomic Data and Applications Center (SEDAC). A composite vulnerability framework was developed and featured three sub-indices (sensitivity, adaptive capacity and exposure), where IMR is assigned to the sensitivity sub-index. For comparison, a Factor Analysis (FA) was used to inform the design of two alternative drought vulnerability indices. While the integration of IMR did greatly influence vulnerability ranks, its inclusion varied greatly depending on the type of index used. The rankings reported wet states to be socially vulnerable to drought because of the high weight assigned to IMR within indices. Although the results of this analysis were unexpected, I did see that IMR does play a significant role as a proxy for social vulnerability and its use should be explored in sea level rise based vulnerability studies.

Introduction

For most of the latter half of the 21st century, index methodologies have played a significant role in the decision-making process within national governments and NGOs. Notable examples of widely used indices include the Human Development Index (UI Haq & Kaul 1990), the Food Security Index (Titus & Adetokunbo 2007) as well as the Climate Vulnerability Index (CVI) (Sullivan & Meigh 2005, Pandey & Jha 2012). While they serve as tools for resiliency measurement, they also expose the multidimensional nature of vulnerability measurement through the use of interdisciplinary frameworks. Vulnerability, which is defined as the potential for loss, is an important part of risk management and hazard mitigation (Turner II et al. 2003, Gruber & Caffrey 2005). Its etymological presence within sustainable development conversations have helped both policy makers and activists alike move beyond the buzzwords of "resiliency," "mitigation," and "adaptation" towards preventative advocacy.

In this study, I assess how Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), a social-health proxy, interacts with the Palmer Drought Severity Index (PDSI), a biophysical risk proxy, and other social vulnerability factors (Table 1). IMR, which is defined as the number of deaths of children under the age of one per 1,000 live births (OECD 2001), serves as a useful indicator for studying social vulnerability assessments (Erikson & Kelly 2006, de Oliveira Mendes 2009). Causes for infant mortality generally include but are not limited to influenza, pneumonia and respiratory and nutritional deficiencies (Vandale et al., 1997) and these causes are ubiquitously linked to drought (Biellik & Henderson 1981, Clemens & Moss 2005, Goodkind & West 2007). It is important to note that while drought has an acute effect on agricultural production and water scarcity, it has second order impacts as well. For example, farmers living in the most drought-afflicted areas are most affected by famine which, if prolonged enough and poorly mitigated, can induce fatal maternal and post-natal malnutrition. Ultimately, while drought episodes have direct impacts on agricultural yields and water availability, the extent of drought reaches most sectors of society as well (Wilhite 1994).

State	Score	IMR	PDSI
Yucatan	100	27	-1.86
San Luis Potosi	93.47	27.3	-2.63
Tamaulipas	86.29	23.9	-1.85
Baja California Sur	76.85	22.1	-2.26
Guanajuato	75.07	25.1	-2.64

Table 1. Ranking of social vulnerability scores, IMR and PDSI values for the equal weight additive index.

Background

Studied frequently under various human contexts such as development, urbanization, land cover change and agriculture (Bruce 1994, Meehl & Talbidi 2004, Srinivasan et al. 2013), droughts have historically challenged the livelihoods of many different communities. Unlike other natural hazards, droughts are harder to predict, therefore causing most drought management to be reactive (Wilhite 1997a, Mishra & Singh 2010) rather than proactive. For the Southwest U.S. and Mexico, the rise of drought episodes is expected to continue (MacDonald et al. 2008, Wehner et al. 2011). Mexico's modern drought crisis began in 1994 (Stahle 2009) with contributions from the rise in maximum daily temperatures due to land cover change (Englehart & Douglas 2005). Mexico has begun to take steps towards mitigating drought and is among the few nations to have incorporated preventative methods such as employment guarantee programs (Anderson & Woodrow 1991), specifically drought-planning workshops by the National Drought Mitigation Center and an action plan referred to as *El Comisión del Plan Hidráulico Nacional* (Jauregui 1997).

Gradual changes to global ocean-atmospheric circulation and global warming due to fossil fuel based markets from our global hegemony have exaggerated the effects of drought throughout developing countries (Stahle et al. 2009). The effects of these *business as usual* consumption patterns more directly devastate developing countries rather than their developed counterparts. For a developing country, finding a way to prevent or at least pinpoint areas of high drought vulnerability could help minimize the high cost of mitigation since droughts are the costliest type of natural disasters due to the long periods in which they can occur (Changnon 1991, Sönmez et al. 2005, Cook et al. 2007, Mishra & Singh 2010). With Mexico's heterogeneous topography, extreme climate variability and social dichotomies, drought impacts should continue to be assessed from not only a biophysical viewpoint, but also from a social one. Twenty-one percent of Mexico's population is indigenous and three-fifths of Mexico's federal entities have a higher

percentage of females than of males. These social distinctions, which often times characterize the most oppressed, are likely to spatially distort the effects of drought between each of Mexico's 32 federal entities. With extreme topographical heterogeneity, biosocial indicators can act as useful tools for understanding the salience of vulnerability caused by natural disasters amongst human populations in varied physical geographies.

Methodology

The methodology for this study is similar to that used in previous studies that feature the "Vulnerability of Places" framework or otherwise known as "Hazards of Place" (Wu et al. 2002, Busby et al. 2014). This framework integrates both social responses and a biophysical risk, which is the Palmer Drought Severity Index, using a location based approach and composite ranking system. Additionally, I aimed to combine this framework with the IPCC's CVI into a composite social vulnerability index (Figure 1) to further expand the climatic focus of the framework.

A base layer map of Mexico's 32 federal states including *Distrito Federal* and *El Estado de Mexico* was obtained from the Database of Global Administrative Areas (GADM) and used to collect a yearly mean subset for the year 2000. In result, raster grids for Mexico were retained as the output raster layer. Each of the 32 states were then assigned the drought severity (PDSI) value that was closest to its polygon boundary. PDSI values ranged from +8 (most wet) to -8 (most dry). Each indicator was then transformed to avoid noise from outliers. This included taking the log of the population density indicator and converting raw counts to percentages. Lastly, the differing scales were adjusted using normalization, each column of indicators was rescaled from 0 (least vulnerable) to 100 (most vulnerable).

$$x_{new} = \left(\frac{(x_i - x_{min})}{(x_i - x_{max})} \right) \times 100$$

Equation 1

This equation illustrates the min-max method used where i is the i th indicator and x_{nw} is the normalized value. After the data was transformed, factor analysis and equal weights weighting were utilized to create aggregate scores for each of the 32 states.

Factor analysis was used as the data reduction approach because it strengthens the overall visibility of the descriptive capabilities for each indicator being observed and it explains

the covariance between the indicators. Ultimately, factor analysis then reduces the number of variables into composite factors using a statistically derived latent factor. Three indices were created in order to understand the relative significance of IMR in comparison to other social vulnerability indicators. The first index which features an additive and equal weights aggregation model is referred to as the “Equal Weights Additive Index” in this study. The second and third indices utilize factor analysis on all 13 indicators. The second index is referred to as the “Five-Factor Index” because five common factors were retained and had been identified as sufficient after imploring the Kaiser-Guttman Rule (Howard T.C. 2009). The last index, which excludes the Infant Mortality Rate indicator, is referred to as the “Four-Factor Index” because four principle factors were determined to be sufficient for this composite index. For this study, I made the assumption that each indicator had equal descriptive power meaning that all 12 indicators were weighted equally (Tate 2013) in order to create an additive index:

$$\text{Equal Weights (EW)} = \left(\frac{1}{n}\right) \times 100$$

$$\text{EW} = \left(\frac{1}{13}\right) \times 100$$

$$\text{EW} = 7.69\%$$

Equation 2

This could also be described as linear aggregation where (n) is the total number of indicators. Each of the aggregated scores were multiplied by 7.69 in order to reach an equal weights (EW) distribution within the dataset. After applying the weights, composite means of the indicators were rescaled again to the range 0 to 100 within all 32 Mexican states. Factor scores, eigenvalues, factor loadings and a correlation matrix were collected from the second and third indices in order to understand the level of variance that IMR accounts for as a predictor of drought. An ANOVA table was used to compare the differences in means between each of the indicators. Lastly, I created maps of each indicator to visually illustrate the spatial distribution of indicators to for Mexico’s 32 states. Composite score maps were created to spatially depict the composite social vulnerability scores for each Mexican state for the equal weights, five-factor and four-factor indices.

Results and Discussion

Overall Social Vulnerability Ranking

Tables 2, 3, and 4 show the vulnerability scores and rankings for each state for the equal weight additive, five-factor, and four-factor (excluding IMR) indices, respectively. The Yucatan ranked 1st as the “most vulnerable” state (Tables 2 and 3). Hidalgo ranked as 6th in Table 2. In Table 3, Colima ranked 1st and Oaxaca ranked 5th. In Table 2, Oaxaca ranked as the 2nd most vulnerable state and is the least most vulnerable in Table 3.

State	Score	IMR	PDSI
Yucatan	100	27	1.86
Oaxaca	90.48	31.7	-1.84
Quintana Roo	61.21	23.6	0.01
Hidalgo	50.86	27.4	1.11
Coahuila de Zaragoza	67.93	31.9	-1.37

Table 2. Ranking of social vulnerability scores, IMR and PDSI values for the five-factor index.

State	Score	IMR	PDSI
Colima	100	23.4	-0.61
Sonora	78.23	22.6	-0.67
Chiapas	63.29	22.3	-0.37
Durango	49.63	25.7	+0.09
Oaxaca	34.20	31.7	+1.84

Table 3. Ranking of social vulnerability scores, IMR and PDSI values for the four-factor index, excluding the IMR variable.

Data Analysis & Geographic Distribution

The ANOVA table (Table 4) showed that IMR had a large coefficient of 1138.37 and is significant at the 90% confidence level. Factor 5 which accounts for 6.5% of the variance, contains loadings for PDSI and IMR. This variable has a higher correlation to PDSI (+0.715) relative to the 4 other factors. Similarly, it is positively correlated to IMR (+0.715), Percent indigenous (+0.159) and Percent under 5 (+0.178). Irrigation (-0.227) is negatively correlated to this factor. The positive relationships between PDSI, IMR, percent indigenous, and percent under five show that as a descriptor for social vulnerability, these share the same directionality within their relationship with vulnerability. This empirically supports the idea that low educational access, public health infrastructure and economic development can all lead to a decrease in social mobility (Breen and Johnson 2005, Bertaux and Thompson 2017).

ANOVA summary table

Source of Variance	Degrees of freedom	Sum of squares	Mean square	F	p value
PDSI	1	0.01304	0.01304	0.00012	0.99154
IMR	1	1138.36791	1138.36791	10.09550	0.00522**
Literacy	1	1090.10032	1090.10032	9.66745	0.00606**
Irrigation	1	250.94423	250.94423	2.22547	0.15307
Distance to city	1	95.99775	95.99775	0.85135	0.36838
Percent disabled	1	0.06612	0.06612	0.00059	0.98095
Percent employed	1	1489.31585	1489.31585	13.20785	0.00190**
GDP	1	63.07775	63.07775	0.55940	0.46416
Percent female	1	202.25215	202.25215	1.79365	0.19715
Percent under 5	1	931.80440	931.80440	8.26361	0.01008*
Percent indigenous	1	1684.52539	1684.52539	14.93905	0.00113**
Gini coefficient	1	3075.84738	3075.84738	27.27785	0.00006***
Population density	1	105.49186	105.49186	0.93554	0.34624
Residuals	18	2029.67834	112.75991		

Table 4: Summary of an analysis of variance table.

The geography of social vulnerability according to the composite vulnerability framework modeled from the vulnerability of places and the CVI (Figure 1) shows that higher levels of social vulnerability are clustered around south central Mexico (Figure 2) where the climate is tropical. According to the four-factor and equal weights indices, social vulnerability was less prevalent along some coastal states such as Chiapas, Baja California, Quintana Roo, Jalisco as well as states that had less land area like Morelos, Tlaxcala and El Estado de Mexico. According to the five-factor index, high rates of infant mortality (>25.0) clustered around the country's southern border in states such as Guerrero, Oaxaca and Puebla (Figure 3). The lowest levels of infant mortality rate were among Distrito Federal, Nuevo Leon, Chihuahua and the Baja California Peninsula and generally in the northern part of Mexico.

I found that IMR takes on a very different relationship to the Palmer Drought Severity Index than expected. While mortality rates for infants were reported as high for the highest ranked states, their drought severity was extremely low. This indicates that the most socially vulnerable states all had relatively low drought severity in 2000. The results from my ranking analysis showed that states receiving more precipitation had the highest rates of infant mortality compared to states that were more drought afflicted. For example, Yucatán (−1.86) which has a distinct tropical climate, was ranked one of the most drought afflicted states due to its growing issue of erratic rainfall (Tuxill 2004). It scored 100% on the equal weight additive index as both severely afflicted by drought and had a corresponding high rate of infant mortality (27.0). San Luis Potosi ranked as the second most vulnerable state in the equal weights additive

index. Similar to Yucatan, this state is also extremely dry with a high PDSI value of −2.64 and a high rate of infant mortality (27.3).

The five-factor index produced similar rankings to the equal weights index. Yucatan retained its rank as the most vulnerable state but Oaxaca was ranked as the second most vulnerable state, even though its PDSI is +1.86 (very wet). Coahuila de Zaragoza (+1.37), another state with high precipitation levels, ranked 3rd. Other highly ranked states included Quintana Roo (+0.01) and Hidalgo (+1.11), both of which have what is consider normal precipitation levels (PDSI values close to 0). Within the five-factor index, the most vulnerable states were both extremely drought afflicted and wet. The four-factor index ranked Colima as the most vulnerable state. Colima had a normal PDSI score of 0.61. Sonora ranked as the second most vulnerable state with a PDSI score of +0.67 and a low infant mortality rate of 22.6. Among the top five most vulnerable states within the four-factor index, most received high levels of precipitation. The exclusion of IMR in this index allowed for very wet states to rank amongst the most vulnerable states.

Ultimately, the five factor and equal weights additive indices, which both contained an IMR indicator, classified wet states with relatively high IMR values as the most vulnerable states in Mexico for the year 2000. The inclusion of IMR seems to be heavily associated with wet states and has a positive relationship with wetter PDSI values. Within the function of these indices, IMR could arguably act as a better proxy for identifying vulnerability in states that have more tropical climates.

Conclusion

The use of factor analysis makes a minor difference in state vulnerability rankings for each of Mexico's 32 states but the exclusion of IMR makes a notable difference in how we define "social vulnerability" to drought. Since IMR correlates strongly with wet conditions, I found that IMR distorts the spatial distribution of drought vulnerability within Mexico's most arid regions. Nonetheless, the positive relationships between PDSI, IMR, Percent indigenous, and Percent Under Five still shows that these particular descriptors for social vulnerability work well together in defining the social component of environmental vulnerability. Ultimately in Mexico the unpredictable nature of drought makes it a difficult climate hazard to predict using

IMR, an acute measure of mortality. This exploratory factor analysis of social and demographic indicators as proxies for social vulnerability was an important start to answering the question of how we as researchers understand and choose certain variables to be proxies for climate vulnerability. The inclusion of IMR varied greatly depending on the type of index used but the rankings reported wet states to be socially hvulnerable to drought because of the high IMRs within these states. Although the results of this analysis were unexpected, I did see that IMR does play a significant role as a proxy for social vulnerability. IMR could possibly be a more useful indicator for oceanic nations facing the effects of sea level rise or water borne illnesses. Although, IMR might not be the best predictor in arid regions, it deserves to be continuously explored in more tropical geographies.

Figures

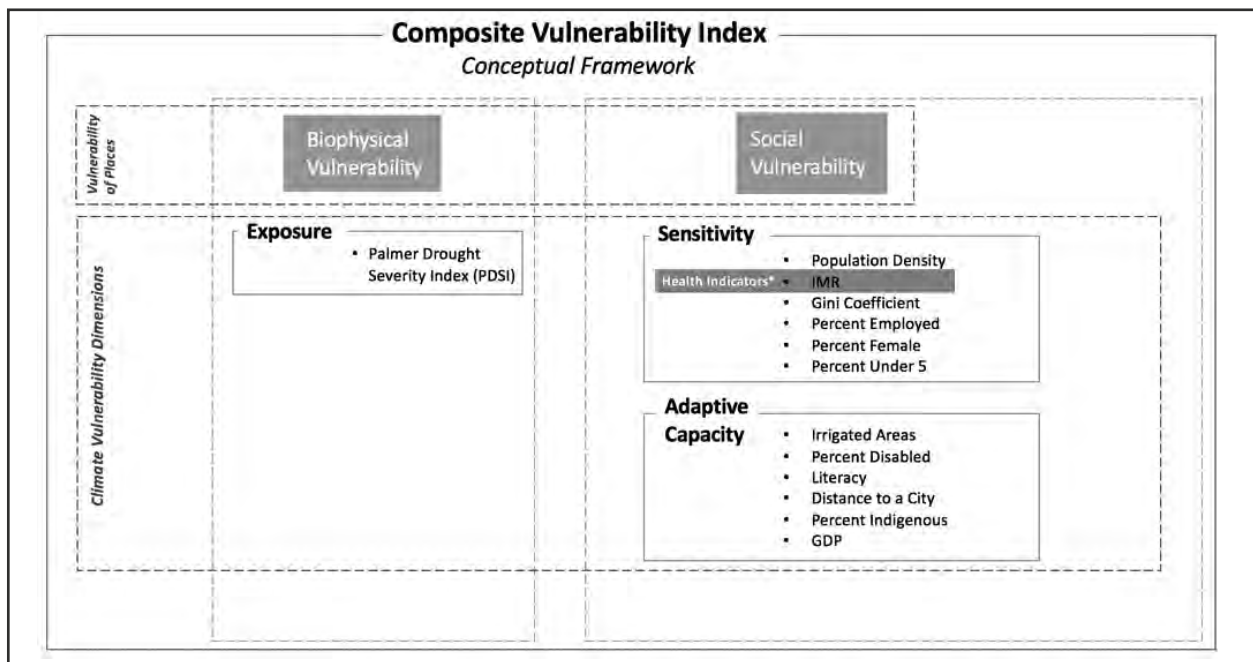


Figure 1. Composite Vulnerability Index. A visual display of the combination of the classic climate vulnerability dimensions and Cutter's (2000) vulnerability of places method to incorporate social and health related indicators in the climate related assessments.

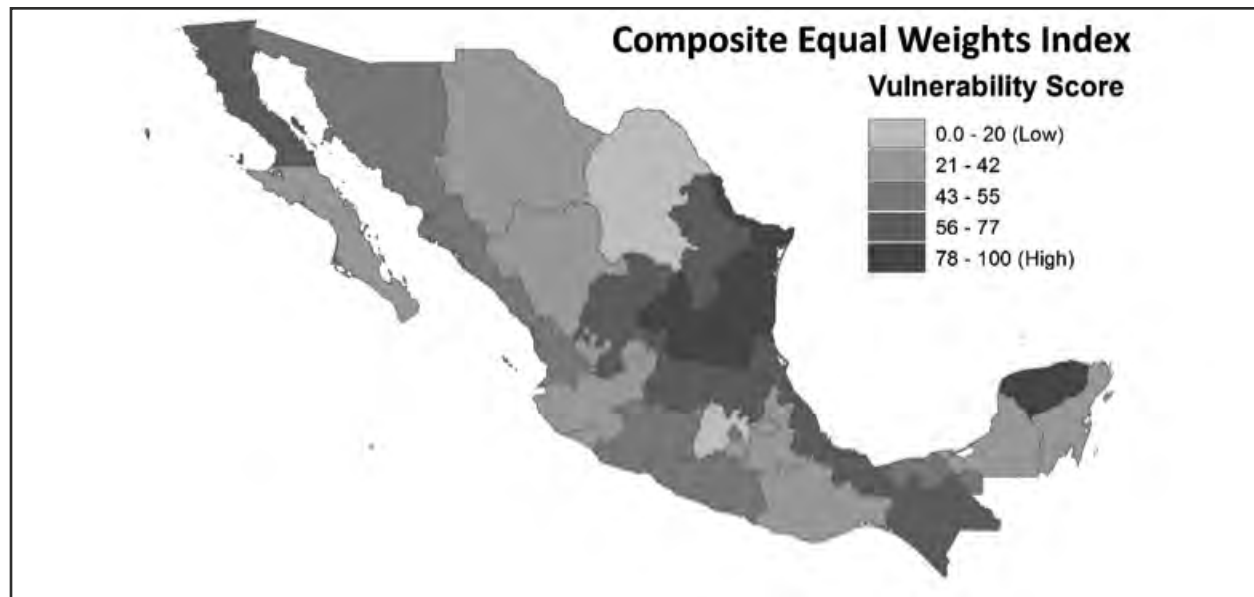


Figure 2. Composite score values for each Mexican state in 2000. These scores were calculated using the equal weights method.

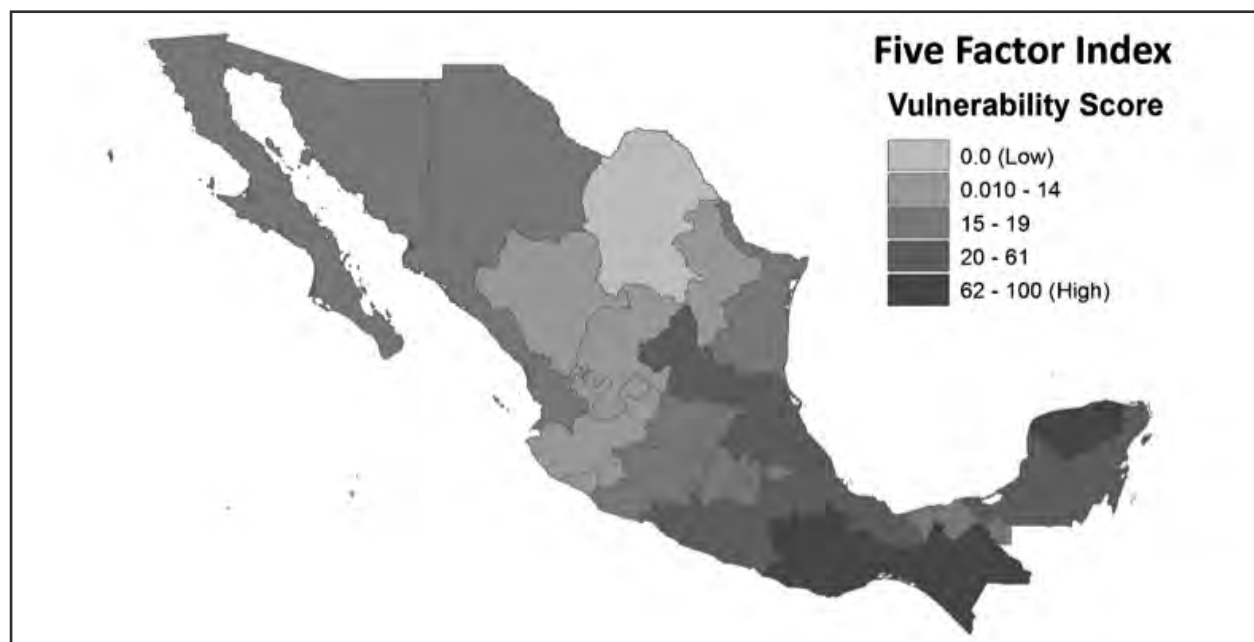


Figure 3. Composite score values for each Mexican state in 2000. These scores were calculated using the five-factor index.

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Pase a La Red: The Representations of the Identity, Nationalism, and Marginalism of Afro-Ecuadorians through Soccer and the Media

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Abstract

Very little has been published in the United States on the Afro-Ecuadorian experience in the field of soccer. A few Ecuadorian scholars, such as Rodolfo Muñoz, Ana María Morales Troya, and Onofre Jordán, have examined the relationship between race and sports in Ecuador. They usually focus on racism and stereotypes that affect social interactions between the Afro-Ecuadorian players and the rest of the Ecuadorian society. In this study, while I will look at racism and stereotypes, I specifically look at the connection between media representation, racial stereotypes, and social implications that follow Afro-Ecuadorians through every realm of life, nationally and internationally. In order to examine these phenomena, I analyze pre-modern Spanish literature and newspaper articles, in the two most popular Ecuadorian newspapers, *El Comercio* and *El Universo*. I also use the sociology of sports and critical race theory and combine it with a close textual analysis of newspaper articles speaking to the most renowned Black players on the Ecuadorian soccer teams. My findings indicate that Afro-Ecuadorians experience a duality, which I reference to as “the monstrous and the marvelous,” which stems from a colonial legacy that adapted with each historical period thereafter. Furthermore, it is crucial to recognize that the double discourse of the hero and the villain, or the marvelous and the monstrous, causes an internalization of inferiority and “othering” by Afro-Ecuadorians.

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Soccer is a fundamental part of society for Ecuadorians. This investigation examines the representation of Afro-Ecuadorians in soccer. Britannica states that in Latin America, soccer is the most popular sport, with every country employing a national soccer team and vying to play in the World Cup (Weil et al.). As a country in Latin America, Ecuador is a place that has national and historical investment in the game of soccer and continues to produce top soccer players, who play globally. According to Andrei Markovits and Lars Rensmann in their book, *Gaming the World: How Sports Are Reshaping Global Politics and Culture*, the soccer world is a reflection of society—the good and the bad (56) and the national soccer team and their success is “crucial in the formation . . . of national identity” (72). Soccer has a grand influence in the lives of the spectators and the players, which can be seen in how individuals show their national identity. In his article titled “Afro-Ecuadorians and the Beating Heart of Soccer Culture in the Chota Valle of Ecuador,” about soccer culture in a predominantly Black region of Ecuador, Walter Thompson-Hernández emphasizes: “soccer is seen as the only vehicle for social and economic mobility for players . . . [and] indicates that the legacy of anti-black racism in Ecuador has created searing disparities that continue to negatively affect every aspect of Afro-Ecuadorian life.” It is therefore important to analyze the significance of soccer in the lives of Afro-Ecuadorians because it is a way to see the marginalization in society that they experience.

A few scholars who have already begun to examine this relationship are Ana Maria Morales Troya, Rodolfo Muñoz, Carlos Iniguez, Jean Muteba Rahier, and Onofre Jordán.¹ All of them agree that Afro-Ecuadorians experience invisibility and subalternity based in racism from the formation of national identity of Ecuador but also in their roles on the national team. I agree with the presence of invisibility for Afro-Ecuadorians in Ecuador, but I would like to add that this phenomenon is a historical colonial legacy. Furthermore, by examining the language used in stadiums and newspapers through a literary and sociological analysis, I have found that there is a double discourse that describes Afro-Ecuadorians as heroes and villains. This discourse, as I will show, is not new, but rather a colonial legacy, based on a dichotomy called “the marvelous and the monstrous” (Molinero 3).²

This dichotomy attributes inferiority and essentialism to the African being to justify slavery. On the other hand, it attributes the marvelous with entertainment and the physical body. The “good,” or the marvelous, is solely connected with the body; whereas the “bad,” or the monstrous, is associated with a lack of morality and intelligence. Because of this dichotomy, the process of racial formation and “othering” was established in relation to the African

body. This othering calls attention to the creation of stereotypes that extends to society and the literature of this time.

Language serves as a way to constantly reinforce the stereotypes present in everyday contexts and is also reproduced in realms of society that are important to social interaction, like literature and song. Through words, people can craft the way certain things are thought about, processed, and taken in. Language also defines how people join together surrounding certain topics and how they express their feelings about the topic. In order to analyze the power of language in Ecuadorian society, we must look at which values are most important to Ecuadorians. In *Gaming the World*, Markowits and Rensmann emphasize the importance of soccer as a global and local language that is a reflection of societies and their beliefs. Stereotypes of Black soccer players show how these generalizations and preconceived notions are not only reserved for soccer players, but for Afro-Ecuadorians in general. The Ecuadorians are sharing their beliefs through their love of soccer, and unfortunately, many of these beliefs imply that Afro-Ecuadorians are inferior and morally inept.

Stadium language reveals the essentialization of the Afro-Ecuadorian body, which reinforces the dichotomy of the monstrous and the marvelous. Language is not only a driving force in the insults and stereotypes associated with Afro-Ecuadorian soccer players in the stadium, but it also frames the journalistic discourse that is written regarding Black (*negro*) soccer players. In Spanish, it is important to note that the word “negro” can be used as a negative or positive word, and this double discourse is a colonial legacy in itself, which was used to essentialize the African being. It can either signify assumptions that are racist, in tone and meaning, or it can be used to praise players. During the colonial era, there was a common practice of associating Blacks with positive connotation, if the positivity was in correlation with their physical strength. In contrast, if there was any reference to morality or intelligence, the connotation was always negative (Molinero 2). From this type of thinking emerged the dichotomy of the “monstrous and the marvelous” (Molinero 2). The artists of the Spanish Renaissance created this dichotomy and used it to essentialize the Africans and establish their low status in society (Molinero 3). Today during games, the word “negro” can be paired with suggestive adjectives that showcase the different stereotypes that are associated with Afro-Ecuadorians in society. For instance, the phrases *negro lindo*, *negro hermoso*, and *negro de oro* (pretty black, beautiful black, black of gold) can be used in the same sentence as *negro bestia*, *negro hijueputa*, *negro vago*, *esclavo desgraciado*, and *negro idiota* (black beast, black son of a bitch, lazy black, disgraced slave, and idiot black) when passionate fans are yelling in the stadium (Troya 57). These insults are yelled at the players whether

they make a good play or a bad play. The shouted insults, or ‘praises,’ are important for two reasons. First, they show that Ecuadorians are aware of race, even though the country touts itself as a pluricultural society where race is not a central focus. Nevertheless, all of the insults are racist in nature and intent, as they highlight the players difference as well as specifically target their race. Secondly, the fans mention past social status, current stereotypes, and physical attributes, which demonstrates the active way Ecuadorians place difference on Afro-Ecuadorians to further their separation from white and mestiza society.

In terms of what language says about national identity, we can build off of the ideas of Markowits. If soccer is a global and local language that is a reflection of societies and their beliefs (Markowits and Rensmann 56), then that means that race is intrinsically linked with the language used to describe Afro-Ecuadorian men. The importance of language as a unifying factor between men, in this instance, shows that men are coming together over derogatory slurs being used towards other men. This leads me to ask: who is being unified by this language and who does it benefit in the end? Furthermore, as 77.6% of Ecuadorians identify as white/mestizo, and most of the players are Afro-Ecuadorians, the stadium as a space and soccer as the activity, in Ecuador is a good way to witness the discrimination and prejudice Afro-Ecuadorians endure as well as give insight to the role national identity plays in Ecuador. Most Ecuadorians, regardless of gender, are huge soccer fans, and when they go to games, they bring their intolerances with them. Therefore, we see that the large percentage of white/mestizos who watch the game, can enhance their typical behavior against Afro-Ecuadorians, but on an even larger scale, effecting a smaller population of blacks. Additionally, this is a chance for them to use the word ‘*negro*’ in whichever state they like and face little to no repercussions because of the differing meaning the word can take on. Finally, the word itself demonstrates how racism is intrinsically tied to the identifier and, similarly to the goal of the artists in Renaissance Spain, to make sure that Black civilians were consistently aware of their low-class. Afro-Ecuadorians will never be able to forget their place in society as long as the term, and its ambiguity, still exist in society.

Highlighting another realm of public discourse, the significance of newspapers and representation reinforce “the monstrous and the marvelous dichotomy” through the reproduction of stereotypes and the essentializing of Afro-Ecuadorians. One of the ways that Ecuadorians stay up to date on what is going on in the soccer world is through media. The two main news outlets are *El Comercio* and *El Universo*. I utilize these two outlets because they are easily attainable on the streets and come out daily, which means that they are constantly re/producing discourse in Ecuador.

Media is an important force in our lives that shapes our opinions on a plethora of topics. Sports fans, in particular, utilize journalism as a way to get recaps from games, find out information about their favorite players, and learn about player statistics. Outlets like ESPN/ESPN2 (note, there are two channels) are important in shaping this dialogue, and most mainstream news sites have sports sections. So how does media play a role in reproductions of stereotypes and racial structures?

In the Ecuadorian context, race is a powerful force. Social prestige, power, status and economic life are all based on racial identification (Dixon 55). As print media is tasked with representing society through paper, a reflection of societal values will be present in the literature. Additionally, journalists literally reproduce societal discourse, as papers come out weekly, even daily at this point. This leads me to ask, how are Afro-Ecuadorians soccer players represented in the media? Many articles note their race or their racial/physical differences as starting points.

On June 9, 2014, *El Comercio* wrote that “Esmeraldan Soccer players are the motor of Ecuadorian soccer.” The article has a map that shows where Esmeraldas is located in the country, and then a graph that illustrates the large amount of soccer players from the region. They go on to write that “Esmeraldas aporta 90 de los 336 jugadores ecuatorianos de la Serie A [90 of the 336 Series A professional players are from Esmeraldas],” and that soccer is the reason for being amongst many Esmeraldans. In this one quote, we see the direct reproduction of stereotypes that imply that this region of Ecuador exists as a source of soccer players for the national team and that soccer is innate to the Afro-Ecuadorian being.

Here, we can identify the same essentialization of Afro-Ecuadorians as we saw during colonial times. Afro-Ecuadorian being is associated with physicality and entertainment for the non-White masses. Later on in the article, one of the forwards for Universidad Católica, a public university in Ecuador, Henry Patter, states that “In Esmeraldas, they breathe soccer, it is the dream of the little boys” (*El Comercio*). In the article, they are reproducing a discourse that the province of Esmeraldas, one I noted earlier as heavily populated with Afro-Ecuadorians, breeds soccer players. There is no commentary on the political or economic state of the province, but only that the people there are good at soccer. As Onofre Jordán noted in his essay, the reproduction of certain races with certain skills is deplored here as black men are being equated with playing soccer, and doing it well, and it being a part of their hopes in dreams as opposed to it being thought of as one of the only ways to obtain economic mobility. As the article continues, a scout, Eduardo Stelik, stated:

Hay tres características que hacen que el jugador esmeraldeño sea apetecido, de acuerdo a Stelik: la primera es el biotipo. “En su mayoría, el jugador de esa provincia tiene extremidades largas, buena velocidad.” Luego está el manejo de balón: “desde pequeños muestran buenas condiciones en el manejo del balón y la tercera es la forma de ser: “son despiertos desde niños y tienen desapego por la tierra, lo cual les permite adaptarse a otras realidades.”

*[There are three characteristics that make Esmeraldan soccer players desirable, according to Stelik: the first is biotype. “In their majority, the players from this province have large extremes, good velocity.” Then, is it the way they handle the ball: “from little ones, they show they can handle the ball in good conditions” and the third is their form of being: “they wake up, from their time as kids, and have a disinterest in the land, which permits them to adapt to other realities.]*³

The scout begins with the biotype, or a group of organisms having an identical genetic constitution in all of the Afro-Ecuadorians. He continues with the way they handle the ball and their form of being. The ‘they’ in these statements are the Afro-Ecuadorians and within these three statements, we can identify colonial legacies, which Fran Molinero explores in his book, *El negros en el teatro del Siglo de Oro*. He states that “the Spanish literature of the 16th and 17th century developed a binary of the ‘black/slave’ with a wide variety of treatments and reflections” (Molinero 1). There existed the idea that “He was black because he was naturally a slave he was a slave because he was naturally black” (Abacus 1). Here we see the idea of blackness and subordination being equated to one another. The Spanish created a dichotomy which framed blackness around servitude and inferiority which they then used to justify slavery in Latin America.

He quotes explicitly say it is the biotype of the Afro-Ecuadorians that allows them to be so good at soccer. This goes back to the colonial period where the Spanish were in awe of African peoples for their physical capacity and utilized the inferiority complex they created as a way to justify using them for slavery (Molinero 2). The recruiters are imploring eugenics as a way to justify the use of Afro-Ecuadorian men from this region. Additionally, we see the marvelous aspect of the “marvelous and monstrous” dichotomy come into play with the comment about their skills. The Afro-Ecuadorian men are marvelous because of their physical prowess and the supposed skill they possess, which could be inferred as inherent. Lastly, the comment about their form of being echoes the Siglo de Oro “esencia negra” or the black essence, is used by artists in order to portray Blacks in a way that would explain why they were so different from the Spanish. Now the black essence is being used as

a way to explain why they are so good at soccer. Additionally, there is a reference back to their lack of care for the land, which could be interpreted as a reference to their past experiences as slaves. Again, here we see the implication that if they cannot be slaves, they will have to find another way to integrate themselves into society, and this time around it happens to occur with soccer. The national newspaper therefore employs eugenics to describe why these players are the best. The publication also implies that it is simply a part of their human nature to play soccer, and that it will continue in the future, as it is the dreams of the small boy children as well. This means the cycle of exploitation will continue, as soccer is seen as the one of the only ways to get out of Esmeraldas and obtain economic mobility.

The perpetuation of the idea of genetics and the essentializing of the Afro-Ecuadorian body is not only present in medias nationally but globally. Following the World Cup, on June 20 2014, John Otis of Public Radio International, a global non-profit media company focused on the intersection of journalism and engagement to effect positive change in people's lives, wrote an article titled: "Ecuador's World Cup squad brings hope to this poor, Afro-Ecuadorian province." The article emphasizes the importance of Esmeraldas in the success of the national soccer team as well as the hope soccer brings to the low-class residents of Esmeraldas. The author states that ten of the twenty-three players come from the province "yet Esmeraldas is home to just 530,000 people—a mere 3% of Ecuador's population—which would be like North Carolina supplying half of the U.S. national men's squad." He also notes, as I have stated before, that there is a "strong economic incentive to pursue" soccer because, to many young men, it is seen as the only way to help their families and move up the socioeconomic ladder. Otis points out that:

Rangel and other players and coaches talk up the race factor. They claim that black players are simply more talented. And Esmeraldas, which is populated by descendants of African slaves, is one of the few predominantly black provinces in Ecuador. "It's genetics," said John Cagua, the coach of the Deportivo Esmeraldas Petrolero, a semi-pro club.

Throughout the article, we see media discourse being used to reproduce the Ecuadorian notions of blackness onto the world. The article even captures the marvelous aspect of Ecuadorian thinking as the coach implies genetics is the reason behind their success as soccer players. Not only do Afro-Ecuadorians have to endure this sort of rhetoric in their own society, now this rhetoric is being shared with other societies. I bring this back to the colonial Renaissance era where the artists wanted to make sure that Africans knew they had no other place in society. They were thought of as marvelous and therefore were only to be portrayed positively when it

came to entertainment, but not in any other sphere of life. Their status was unchangeable and they had no agency over how they would be portrayed, which has not changed since the early modern period and Afro-Ecuadorians still have no agency over their portrayal in media. Also, when looking for articles written by *El Comercio* or *El Universo* about the presence of Afro-Ecuadorians in the World Cup, I only found one. The lack of media attention to race demonstrates the invisibility tactic white/mestizo Ecuadorians used to make the blackness in their country invisible. Additionally, thinking back to *Gaming the World*, and the emphasis the authors put on soccer being a global and local language, here we see an actualization of the power soccer has over the Afro-Ecuadorian soccer player, but on a global level. The article title even mentions that they live in a poor Ecuadorian province, reproducing the poverty associated with their beings in their own society, which is now known by anyone who has access to the article outside of Ecuador.

An analysis of newspapers demonstrates that regardless of how politically correct the Afro-Ecuadorian soccer players are, they still experience extremely overt racist occurrences which can be attributed to their association with being perceived as monstrous. On June 16, 2017, *El Universo* reported "Felipe Caicedo respondió a los comentarios de Phillip Butters" [Felipe Caicedo responded to Phillip Butters' comments]. This article talks about the aftermath of an instance where Peruvian journalist, Phillip Butters, made racist comments towards Afro-Ecuadorians and Felipe Caicedo, a player of La Tri (considered some of the best players of the Ecuadorian national team). He states,

"Los ecuatorianos no son negros, son cocodrilos de altura (.). Ustedes le hacen una rueba de ADN a (Felipe) Caicedo y no es humano, es un mono, un gorila."

[Ecuadorians are not blacks, they are tall crocodiles (.). You all should do a DNA test on (Felipe) Caicedo and he is not human, he is a monkey, a gorilla.]

The construction of the Africans as monstrous, like the animals in their country, from colonial Spanish society, is now being perpetuated in media in present-day society. The equation of the player, and his teammates to monkeys, shows that there is an acknowledgment that most of the team is Afro-Ecuadorian and that is something that is not accepted. The soccer player was praised for his 'maturity' and 'resolve' in handling the situation and for his response, and he gained support and praise from many people, including the former President, Rafael Correa, who tweeted his support. Even though the player shows humility in his response, he still had to endure the slur being said against him in the media, and the constant reproduction of his humiliation, in print and online.

Using language and media as a way to analyze representation of marginalized groups in their society is a tool that helps reveal how the inherent biases many societies hold are reflected through their institutions, mores, and values. Language serves as a way to reinforce values in everyday life and to relegate people to different realms of society. Media functions as a tool to perpetuate this relegation and allows for the dominant group to hold control over the representation and view of marginalized groups. Media is used as a control method because not only does it form common conceptions of marginalized groups, but its known power makes these groups perform and present themselves in positive ways at all times, almost as if there were a control over their bodies. The dominant society's reinforcing of the Afro-Ecuadorian inferior status that was present in colonial times is still present in their lives today, no matter if they are a nationally renowned soccer players or an assemblyman. In other words, there is no escape for the Afro-Ecuadorian from the negative representations they face, their marginalized place in society, or the "Othering" of their beings as less than. The dichotomy of the "marvelous and monstrous" that was created for them in Spain during the Golden Ages, perpetuated in the colonial era, and then continued into the present day, has not given them much space in society to experience any other type of life, nor is there any indication that this may change in the near future. While they are recognized and even idolized for their physical prowess, the notions that surround their intellectual and moral ability will always have an everlasting dismal impact on the ways they are perceived and integrated into their dominant society.

Endnotes

- 1 Morales Troya writes from a bibliographic and ethnographic focus and analyzes like the idea of "race," created in the 19th century, manifested itself in sports, especially in Ecuadorian soccer. The principal objective of Muñoz's work has been to confirm or deny the prevalence of symbolic forms, racist and power based, against Afro-Ecuadorians through a documentary which shows the history of the life of Ecuadorian soccer star Javier Agustin Delgado Chala. The objective of Iniguez is to use the concept of the status of incoherence and apply it to afro descendent soccer players to construct an analysis of race and national identity. Jean Rahier Muteba speaks about the intersectionality between race, soccer and national identity, which is available for Afro-Ecuadorians in their society. Onofre Jordán writes about racist stereotypes in sports and how they reflect racist discriminatory practices within Ecuadorian society.
- 2 The term "the monstrous and the marvelous" was coined by Fran Molinero and was used by artists during the 15th century Spanish Renaissance to speak about Black bodies in relation to the humor they induced in society.
- 3 All translations of quotes in Spanish are my own.

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What the Doppelgänger Says about Female Characters in Murakami's Fiction: Close Reading *The Strange Library*

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Abstract

Haruki Murakami has been often criticized for his objectified, underdeveloped female characters that frequently disappear at the end of the story. In response to this trend in Murakami Studies, this discussion focuses on exploring the portrayal of women in his works and how they establish gender relations. The examination will briefly analyze the relationship between the main character of *The Strange Library* (called “the boy”) and his closest female character, “the girl,” to unravel a dimension of gender interaction in the author's work that differs from traditional perceptions. This is done by reading the relationship between these two characters as one of doubling or doppelgängers, defined as a phenomenon stirred by society's moral code that impels individuals to develop a split or fragmented self, which is geared towards securing a place in society. Along with double theory, the analysis is complemented by Sara Ahmed's phenomenological discussion on the process of identity formation in order to argue that the girl, instead of being a mere tool for the protagonists' development, acts as an active mirror that alters the perception of the narrative world. Simultaneously, this world challenges traditional notions of the double, as purely male or objectified female, to present women that subvert the way genders interact. In doing so, I propose that Murakami's work demonstrates the possibility for a new conception of cross-gender doubles.

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Haruki Murakami's undeniable popularity has inspired many studies around the world ranging from diverse angles, but it was not until recently that Murakami studies began to pay close attention to the representation of women and gender interactions inside his texts. My work aligns with this trend, upon noticing in some of his stories a pattern where the male main character starts off as an ordinary individual who lacks in-depth knowledge about himself and is unknowingly involved in a soul-searching journey. In this journey, we encounter women who point out the actions that the protagonists should take in order to overcome their existential predicaments, yet it stands out that they share little information about themselves while maintaining a pronounced interest in the main character's personal struggles. In short, they are presented as aloof yet attentive listeners, whose relationship with and interest in male protagonists is left unclear, producing ambiguity in regards to the role of these key, fleeting characters.

This study focuses on the close reading of such females' behavior, as well as the perception and portrayal of women in these stories, in order to understand the role that they play and their relationship with the main character. Moreover, it intends to examine how their role might be that of doppelgängers that challenge the traditional understanding of this literary device through a contemporary conception. Briefly, here the double is defined, drawing from the work of scholars Milica Živković, Robert Rogers, and Baryon Tensor Posadas, as a phenomenon stirred by society's moral code that impels individuals to develop a split or fragmented self, geared towards a secure place in society. The aim is not to provide a definite or concrete answer to the question, but rather to propose an argument that brings attention and contributes to an open discussion of gender roles in Murakami and how they may change the perception on the uses of the double. To that purpose, this essay ends with a brief reference to Sara Ahmed's thoughts on queer phenomenology and how it influences Murakami's characters' identity construction process, arguing in favor of a contemporary representation of the double where women stand as active mirrors that permanently influence and alter the narratives they inhabit. The essay is intended to provide a general sense of the angle that this analysis takes in the completed version of this project. In it, I call for a revision on emerging literary perceptions on female and cross-gender doubling in late twentieth-century and contemporary fiction as well as the impact they have on traditional doubling/doppelgänger studies, so as to include more explorations of female and cross-gender doubles' in literature.

The discussion focuses on the interactions between the boy and the girl from *The Strange Library* (here onwards TSL), given that female and male interactions are clearly

described so that textual evidence is clearer to analyze their relationship as one of doubles. In TSL, the protagonist is a boy who is kidnapped inside his local library by the head librarian after passing by to check-out some books, and is later locked up in a cell-like room guarded by a man in a sheep skin suit called “the sheep man.” When he is on the verge of losing all hope of escaping, he meets a character named “the girl,” who is voiceless and invisible to everyone else except the boy until the end of the story, when the sheep man can finally see her. Throughout the narrative, she assumes the role of pushing the boy into attempting an escape and fights against the old librarian so he can achieve it. However, when the boy finds himself outside the library, the girl is not around and he never sees her again.

In the past, Jay Rubin has argued that although Murakami characters tend to be good listeners, it is only the protagonist, Boku,¹ who pays close attention to details in other characters’ tales while fully believing in them, the perfect listener. Rubin also identifies him as the only fully rounded character—understood as characters with complex thoughts and behavioral patterns, as opposed to flat characters that are very simple and lack development—since the others don’t reveal much of their lives or personalities. With this interpretation, in *Haruki Murakami and the Music of Words*, Rubin relegates secondary characters to a position where they are “functions of [the protagonist’s] psyche.” (39) While this is true for some of his texts, there is enough textual evidence to question the idea of Boku being round in regards to them. Nominally, at least in TSL but also in other works like *Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki*, protagonists are called into being within the same semantic sphere as other characters: just as no character is named with a proper noun in the *novella* most if not all characters are assigned their own names in the latter work. This does not seem a coincidence, since Murakami’s odd naming patterns have caught the attention of different scholars (Strecher 275). Therefore, rather than one fully developed “personality,” in the work analyzed I would argue that we have an underdeveloped personality, in need of guidance from those closely around him.

For example, the boy in TSL travels to the local library following his mother’s suggestion of researching things he does not know, just to find himself trapped and unable to escape due to his inability to affirm his will before a figure of authority, that is, the old librarian. Knowing what he has to do but with no idea of how to achieve it, he worries in his cell and asks the sheep man for help, but the latter being as scared as the boy, is unable to assist. It is only upon the appearance and agency of the mysterious girl that the protagonist is provided a tangible escape plan. Within this set of events, it would be difficult to argue that the main character is a round, complete character, since the whole

premise of the story seems to revolve around his perilous adventure to find himself. Instead, before us lays an insecure, meek boy whose will is not strong enough to oppose when he feels he should because, as he himself says “I’m no good at giving anybody a clear no” (Murakami, sec. 4).

If we trace a web of these interactions, we find that there are three key turning points: the moment when the boy stirred by his mother, enters the library; the instance he is unable to reject the old man’s imperative to stay, and when he decides to escape, influenced by the mysterious ghost-like girl. In none of them does the boy act by his own conviction. Therefore, reading the library as the boy’s unconsciousness, we find that all characters, including the boy, are incomplete. This incompleteness in turn generates several questions: why are they incomplete? What is the connection between them? Following Rogers’ comment on what he calls the subjective double which “represents conflicting drives, orientations or attitudes” (5), two characters stand out as potential doubles: the sheep man and the mysterious girl; they play very different roles. Both are deeply connected with the protagonist through the narrative, since the sheep man pushes the boy to be obedient out of fear while the girl simultaneously impulses the boy to follow his goals to make them come true, and both disappear once the boy escapes the library, like the girl and him wanted.

Like the boy, the sheep man is meek and terrified of the old man; he is unable to fight back and escape, even if he wants to. A direct connection can be established between them, as when the boy asks the sheep man what will be the consequence of refusing to go into the cell, he answers “then he’ll [the old man] hit me even harder” (Murakami, sec. 8). This suggests that the sheep man embodies the weakness of the boy’s present self, a part he expresses dislike for when he says “why do I act like this? . . . letting people force me to do things I don’t want to?” (sec. 6) which in turn allows us to effectively identify the sheep man as a double that, as paraphrased by Tensor-Posadas is “marked by the process of negation and interruption” (14).

Similarly, the girl shares enough similarities with the boy to argue a double relationship between them—let’s not forget that the boy is the only one able to see her for most of the narrative. Like the sheep man who feeds the boy, she enters the cell to bring him dinner, and the boy immediately points out that she is about his age. Shortly after, it is revealed that just as he had a traumatic event with a dog when he was younger, her vocal cords were destroyed when she was little (Murakami sec. 12) and that her presence makes him very sad. Upon asking the sheep man about the pretty girl, he says that he has no clue as to who the girl might be, and that the one who brought him food was the

sheep man himself, not a pretty girl. The common aspects with the boy and the convergence with the sheep man work together to ensure the girl's positioning as a double to the male protagonist. That is to say, her presence allows us to see that doubles "perform the complexities . . . of the contemporary norm through links between its individual characters and their combined competences and positionings" (Hansen 51). On one hand, he was taught to obey the rules at all costs, but on the other this pattern has rendered the boy clueless as to what to do when two sets of rules, that of his mother and the old man, converge.

As I mentioned, however, these doubles' roles differ: where the sheep man stands for cowardice, weakness, the girl represents his will and the text suggests that she understands these roles, as she mentions to the boy that the sheep man can't see her because he "has his world. I have mine" (Murakami sec. 14). Also, it is her who becomes the agent of change that motivates the protagonist to defy authority, as it's highlighted in the scene where she talks about escaping the library and asks the boy to take her with him, stimulating him to step out of his comfort zone. Moreover, she seems to be aware of the fact that she will not make it out of the library because this is the realm of the boy's unconscious as she tells the boy that she will join him later (Murakami sec. 19). The sheep man, however, goes after the boy believing he will make it out to open his own doughnut shop, ignorant of his absence of materiality.

Thus, in the narrative of TSL, between these two cases of doubling the proactive role is the girl's as she actively ensures that the boy will escape the library and not succumb to fear like the sheep man. The double, being a female character in this case identified as part of the boy's psyche, calls for a blurring of gender division. In this respect, both boy and mysterious girl's character unit in the *novella*, are consonant with doppelgänger use in fiction, as they create a destabilization "of the unified self to encounter oneself as another," (41) like Hansen points out the double does in her book *Femininity, Self-harm and Eating Disorders in Japan*.

However, as Murakami has been often criticized for portraying poor female characters that only serve as "vanishing vessels of male futurity," (Harrison) and he himself has described his female characters as mediums that "make something happen through herself" referring mainly to sex (Wray), I propose that these females function as active mirrors that change their narrative world in spite of the author. Using Sara Ahmed's discussion of Merleau-Ponty's queer moments of disorientation that he argues are like mirrors who slant a spectator's perception, this work contends that these women function like those mirrors (Ahmed 561). In the article, Ahmed also explains that these slanted, oblique

moments are fleeting since they are eventually "straightened," just like a person reads a lesbian couple as "sisters" instead of what they really are (562). Nonetheless, she also explains that following an orientation that strays from the norm, or undergoing a "habit-change" (564) requires a reorientation that, as it distances itself from the norm, prolongs the oblique moment of perception.

Instead of proposing women that disappear as a vessel for masculinity or via a straightening device, the study looks into how the very act of disappearing prevents the narrative from straightening them, in accordance with Ahmed's argument that when an object orients itself towards what slips, it sustains an oblique perception (566). The girl disappears once the boy is out of the library and so he has no option but to return home; there is no coming back from those actions for protagonist. Instead of its perception going to back to normal, the main character is left without resources to overcome the oblique instance (563). Women inflict a habit-change in these protagonists that forces them to inhabit a new body because they have nowhere else to return to. And so, as the philosopher explains, it is ultimately distance which becomes the means to sustain the oblique angle in the perception of the main characters. These females, then, disturb and bent perception of the narrative by actively disrupting the emotional pattern practiced by the protagonist (Ahmed 561). In this scenario, women do not merely appear in the narrative to guide the men into other worlds through themselves, they are active mirrors, agents, that through their agency change the course of the narrative universe where they operate to "open another angle on the world" (Ahmed 566).

Such reading presents an opportunity to destabilize masculine superiority by creating spaces where women and men interact as equals, and feminine insight is seen as an essential component to a developing psychological state. Even if this was not a part of the author's conscious design, the textual evidence is enough to sustain the claim and open a door to a multiplicity of readings in a dimension of Murakami studies that remains to be further explored. At the same time, an understudied line of questioning on double theory emerges as a subversive tool to improve our understanding of gender relations, as there is hope in the fact that characters like the girl and Sara thrive *in spite of* masculinity.

Endnote

- 1 This is a casual, masculine pronoun for "I" in Japanese. Murakami often employs it with his protagonists.

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To the Roots and Wounds: The Case for Restorative Justice in the Juvenile Correctional System

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Abstract

Interest in the American criminal justice system has reached an unprecedented level. This interest has risen alongside a growing awareness of the system's failures. The public's attention to this issue has manifested in thematic shifts within popular culture and the passage of policies such as the First Step Act. To address the harms of this system, many are calling for changes that are, in effect, tweaks. These do not suffice; fortunately, a radical and viable alternative approach can be found in family group conferencing (FGC).

This corrective program aims to identify and address the causes and impacts of a crime in order to prevent reoffense. By placing the power to determine offenders' means of restitution into the hands of victims, rather than the state, FGC increases victims' senses of satisfaction and lessens their fears of revictimization. As for offenders, FGC's practice of "reintegrative shaming" preserves integrity and increases life chances; as a result, FGC significantly lowers rates of reoffense.

Despite the proven successes of this corrective approach, America continues to rely upon traditional criminal court proceedings. Moreover, in counties wherein conferencing is in practice, the implementation relies upon judicial discretion, resulting in a staggering racial disparity. A wider implementation of the practice will lessen the reach of this bias. This shift will also result in substantial government savings. Given these certain outcomes, it is imperative that policymakers implement the practice on a wider scale. A wealth of research on FGC and juvenile offenders exists; thus, the juvenile justice population is the appropriate starting place for standardization.

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American criminal court proceedings usually center around the relationship between the accused and the state. Within this framework, crime exists as an offense against an institution. In contrast, community-based approaches such as restorative justice respond not to the offense itself, but to the offense's roots and resulting wounds.¹ By identifying and addressing a crime's causes and impacts, restorative programs greatly reduce the likelihood of repeat offenses.² The prevailing restorative justice model—termed "family group conferencing"—fosters communication between affected parties through mediated conversations between offenders, victims, affected community members, law enforcement personnel, and a third-party facilitator.³ Together, the attendees "negotiate a mutually agreeable resolution" in place of a traditional sentence.⁴ This model has proved to be a viable alternative to incarceration in juvenile cases. Yet, within the United States, the practice operates on a small scale; in short, judges implement the practice at their own discretion. Given conferencing's successes, this underutilization is disquieting; moreover, this unchecked judicial discretion has resulted in a striking racial disparity. Conferencing should be the norm for all juvenile offenders. The wider implementation of the practice would not only lessen the impact of racial bias, but also significantly lessen recidivism rates and reduce government spending.

Family Group Conferencing: Origins and Outcomes Abroad

In 1989, family group conferencing (FGC) arose in New Zealand. It initially served as a means of empowering the indigenous Maori people, whose youth were overrepresented within juvenile prisons.⁵ Though the popularity of FGC has since skyrocketed within the country, the objectives remain the same: the empowerment of victims, harm repair, and lowered rates of reoffense, or *recidivism*.⁶ Conference facilitators employ the themes of debt and redemption to achieve these objectives. In lieu of a traditional, punitive sentence, offenders pay restitution through an official mandate created by conference members.⁷ Mandates often include monetary reparations, counseling and rehabilitation, and a variety of mandated lifestyle changes.⁸

If a conference fails to reach a resolution, the offender may be sentenced to a more traditional form of punishment.⁹ Fortunately, failure is unlikely. In a study of British conferences, participating members reached agreements in seventy-nine percent of cases.¹⁰ Thus, in most cases, FGC renders punitive measures wholly unnecessary. In fact, New Zealand's FGC system has superseded prosecution; today, the latter merely exists as a "backup."¹¹ This shift has proven beneficial. New Zealand studies reveal that the recidivism rates of offenders who have participated in FGC are significantly lower than the rates of the control group, comprised of traditionally sentenced offenders.¹²

Family Group Conferencing Within the United States: Limits and Biases

Despite its proven successes, FGC remains an uncommon practice within the United States. Though restorative justice programs operate within thirty-five states, they exist along the margins.¹³ In most states, the practice relies upon third-party nonprofits for both funding and execution. Due to limited funds and personnel, even some of the most effective and well-known programs have struggled to persist.¹⁴ Moreover, in the few states wherein larger-scale FGC exists, case selection occurs on a referral basis. A young offender's community members may refer them to a court official or restorative justice provider.¹⁵ More often, offenders are referred by law enforcement, prosecutors, probation officers, or prison staff.¹⁶ Already, offenders harboring social capital have a significant advantage. After reviewing referrals, presiding judges either order offenders to participate in FGC or proceed with traditional proceedings. Though judges are to use criteria such as criminal history and crime classification to determine an offender's eligibility for conferencing, states allow them to exercise total discretion in each case.¹⁷ This discretion creates space for bias. Public defenders often express concerns that judges will not deem their clients—most of whom are poor and many of whom are of color—"good candidates" for this alternative correctional program.¹⁸ These attorneys' fears find grounding in statistics.

Judicial bias is especially evident in Colorado, a state often praised for its embrace of alternative corrective practices. Black youth currently account for thirty-one percent of Colorado arrests and twenty percent of the state's juvenile detention population.¹⁹ Yet, of the 264 juveniles selected for FGC in 2016, only three were black.²⁰ Despite their overrepresentation within Colorado's criminal justice system, black offenders constituted a mere *one percent* of the conferencing pool. In addition, a 1992 study on restorative programs in four American states found that, out of every listed racial category, the judges selected black offenders least often.²¹ Evidence from other studies on the restorative selection process—such as Warner's 1994 examination of conferencing and offenders' rights—reveals a clear bias towards white offenders.²² Though late twentieth-century research into burgeoning restorative justice programs explored this racial imbalance, the issue is largely absent within contemporary restorative justice discourse. The inattention to this disparity contradicts the seemingly progressive objectives of the practice's leading proponents. Thus, a shift towards standardization is crucial to the integrity of the practice as a whole.

The Proposal

America's standardization of juvenile FGC should mirror that of New Zealand. In essence, this standardization will transform the States' infrequent, discretionary program into a customary aspect of the juvenile justice system. The choice to limit this standardization to juvenile cases is intentional. In terms of preventing reoffense, juvenile conferences are far more successful than adult conferences.²³ Scholars have attributed this difference to the disintegration of offenders' social bonds over time. While the social bonds of adult offenders are usually quite weak, juvenile offenders often still retain these bonds.²⁴ The FGC model is dependent upon these social connections; as a result, the practice is more effective within juvenile facilities. Due to these divergent outcomes, the majority of existing FGC discourse focuses upon juveniles. Scholars and FGC practitioners should certainly continue to explore adult conferencing; however, the juvenile justice system is the appropriate starting point for standardization.

This appeal for standardization does not call for a complete disavowal of judicial discretion. Some discretion is vital to victims' wellbeing, public safety, and the efficient use of funds. Courts should continue to screen each defendant, primarily for a propensity towards violence. Offenders should also be screened for signs of retaliation and denial.²⁵ The identification of such signs is crucial, given that a facilitated conference with a vengeful or dishonest offender can greatly harm—and, in a sense, revictimize—the victim.²⁶ Judges may also use discretion to disqualify inveterate offenders who have previously participated in restorative processes.²⁷ That said, judicial discretion should be limited to these criteria, enabling many more offenders, victims, and community members to participate in this remedial practice.

Benefits: Victims

FGC has proved to be of significant benefit to victims. In discussing experiences at trial, many victims note that they are forced to forego their own perception of the crime and its impact, in favor of a narrative that fits the prosecution's case theory.²⁸ Within the traditional system, victims merely serve as persuasive tools of the state. This limited victim role stands in stark contrast to the authoritative position they hold within FGC.²⁹ During conferences, facilitators encourage victims to recount the crime from their own perspective; victims and their families are also given space to detail the effects of the crime. This divulgence usually prompts the offender to apologize. Scholars consider expressed remorse a critical aspect of the conferencing process, regardless of the offender's sincerity. By apologizing to the victim without any direct involvement of

legal counsel or the state, the offender submits to the victim—and the victim alone. Technically, an apology “cannot undo what has been done,”³⁰ yet, by positioning themselves at the mercy of the victim, “this is precisely what [offenders] manage to do.”³¹

Lastly, FGC offers victims a leading role in determining the offender’s final course of redress. The value of victims’ power to decide—a power that the traditional court system withholds—is reflected in victims’ reported levels of satisfaction. A case study of two Canadian mediation programs found that, in comparison to victims whose offenders were traditionally prosecuted and sentenced, FGC victims were “significantly more satisfied” and felt that the case had been handled in a just manner.³² The satisfaction rates of FGC victims average around eighty-nine percent, while the satisfaction rates of traditional victims hovers around a mere thirty-four percent.³³

Benefits: Offenders and Recidivism

FGC also catalyzes a unique transformation in offenders. According to many restorative justice facilitators, after hearing victims’ raw accounts, even the most seemingly apathetic offenders displayed empathy, guilt, and shame.³⁴ Though all of these emotions are imperative to the transformation of the offender, shame plays a unique role. The shame produced through rehabilitative programs—termed “reintegrative shaming”³⁵—differs from the shame and stigmatization birthed through traditional prosecution and incarceration. The primary objectives of the traditional process are the determination of guilt and punishment. This process humiliates offenders, leading to an unshakeable stigma that is unforgiving and permanent.³⁶ This stigmatization breeds defiance in offenders, which causes a long-term attachment to their criminal identity—or, a “psychosocial identification with non-conformism”³⁷—and subsequent reoffending. This stigma also significantly limits offenders’ job and housing prospects, leading many to reoffend.³⁸ On the contrary, reintegrative shaming involves a simultaneous disapproval of the crime and respect for offenders.³⁹ In essence, FGC facilitators shame the crime while enveloping the offender in compassion and forgiveness. By encouraging offenders to confront the relationship between their own trauma and their path to criminality, FGC prompts offenders to change their behavior for the benefit of both themselves and their victims.

So far, American juvenile restorative justice programs have significantly reduced recidivism rates. In 2016, less than eight percent of the juvenile offenders who participated in Colorado’s 2015 conferencing program committed another offense.⁴⁰ This stands in stark contrast to the staggering

forty-four percent generated by the state’s traditional corrective program.⁴¹ Similarly, the recidivism rates of participating offenders in Baltimore’s juvenile FGC program are around sixty percent lower than those of non-participating offenders.⁴² In addition, a Wisconsin juvenile conferencing program has generated a thirty-percent drop in recidivism between participating offenders and a non-participating control group.⁴³ These studies prove FGC to be an effective crime deterrent. If deterrence is truly the chief aim of American correctional services, such institutions should not hesitate to implement FGC on a broader scale.

Benefits: Government Spending

Those unmoved by the practice’s remedial effects may be swayed by its economic benefits. The traditional court system is pricey; costs include the wages of public defenders, court clerks, law enforcement, prison staff, court security, jury stipends, plus steep per-inmate costs of incarceration.⁴⁴ By diverting juveniles away from lengthy court proceedings and incarceration and towards FGC, states will reap substantial savings. Policy analysts have estimated that the expansion of restorative practices such as FGC can save states twenty-seven million dollars annually.⁴⁵ A study of a Canadian conferencing program determined that for each dollar spent on FGC, the national government would have spent between two and twelve dollars on traditional corrective measures.⁴⁶ Similarly, representatives of the United Kingdom’s Justice Research Consortium estimate that the government saves nine pounds for every one pound allocated towards conferencing efforts.⁴⁷ These findings do not account for the savings wrought by lower rates of reoffense;⁴⁸ thus, the actual savings are undoubtedly even higher.

The aforementioned victim benefits will also lessen state spending. Studies have found that the feelings victims gain through the practice—namely, a sense of authority and lessened fear of revictimization—combat symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.⁴⁹ Therefore, family group conferencing can serve as a component of victim counseling and restitution, a service that many states are constitutionally bound to provide.⁵⁰ Currently, the federal Crime Victims Fund totals over two billion dollars.⁵¹ Scholars project that the psychological healing found through FGC would significantly decrease the budgetary demands of victim services.⁵² Of course, the positive effects of FGC do not serve as reason to curtail or eliminate more traditional forms of counseling and restitution; this budgetary shift should occur only alongside changes in victims’ needs. Though these savings may not be as immediate as those that result from cuts to court and incarceration costs, the possibilities are nevertheless promising.

Conclusion

The American criminal justice system is currently on trial. Though calls for harsh criminal justice policies persist, knowledge and interest in the America's hyperpunitive system have reached an unprecedented level. Growing awareness of the traditional system's failures is evidenced in the recent passage of the First Step Act. In many respects, the Act is a win; however, it is indeed merely a first step. Less time and less contact with the traditional system cannot suffice when the system is the problem. This system not only fails to solve the problem—it recreates it. Fortunately, an alternative exists. As discussed, a standardization of family group conferencing will contribute to victim welfare, offender behavior modification, and government savings. The wider implementation will also lessen the reach of judicial bias. It is imperative that funding for juvenile incarceration is reallocated to offer this remedial approach on a broader scale. Proponents of this shift towards restoration are offering the American criminal justice system a means of redemption; policymakers would be wise to embrace this opportunity.

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Lessons from Salinas, California: Spatial Inscriptions of Racial Ideology and the Economics of Whiteness, 1930s–1950s

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Abstract

In California urban and suburban areas, spatial arrangements reflect racial ideology. Most works identify spatial inscriptions of racism. But whiteness has afforded greater social and economic mobility to working-poor whites from different geographic backgrounds. In this article, the author instead focuses on how spatial inscriptions reflect the economic and social mobility of whiteness. The author does so with a case study of Alisal, a working-class neighborhood of Salinas, California. Dust Bowl refugees, derisively labeled “Okies” and “Arkies” by middle-class whites in Salinas, settled in Alisal in the early 1930s. There, they coexisted with working-poor ethnic minorities in neighborhoods that reflected their economic marginalization. Whiteness privileged the economically marginalized “Okies” and “Arkies” in the 1930s and 1940s by allowing the possibility for social integration into middle-class Salinas circles upon overcoming their working-poor backgrounds. With a booming lettuce industry in the 1930s, the former “Okies” and “Arkies” were no longer considered different from other working-to-middle-class whites in Salinas. Spatial developments reflected this economic mobility, as dilapidated “Okie” and “Arkie” neighborhoods attracted investment from Salinas politicians, residents, and business owners. In the span of two decades, working-poor white spaces in Alisal transformed into working-to-middle-class spaces that resembled Salinas and paved the way for annexation. The case of Alisal from 1930s–1950s demonstrates how space can also reflect the power of whiteness to trump class differences.

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Introduction

Recent humanists and social scientists have questioned how space reflects and shapes norms and identities. Space, like race, arbitrates social relations and codifies power structures into physical and lived constructs like families, homes, and neighborhoods. Spatial arrangements not only provide the physical location for inter-group relationships but shape those interactions. Los Angeles and San Diego are two well-documented examples of this.

In Los Angeles, architects, city planners, and purveyors of entertainment organized space to order the masses and sanitize popular culture in the mid-20th century through white flight, arranging space, or a combination of both. These developments mirrored the anxieties of white residents who sought to be separated from ethnic minorities. For this reason, Walt Disney chose to build Disneyland in Anaheim, far from the urban core of metropolitan Los Angeles, to frame park-going as orderly and free from the chaos and bustle of urban life—and the concentrated minority populations. The Los Angeles City Council sold land to Walter O'Malley that was earmarked for public housing so that his Dodger Stadium could instead host family-friendly recreation on a site built over a large working-class Mexican American neighborhood.¹ In San Diego, city planners in 1959 cleared run-down Mexican American homes and transplanted buildings to create a public recreation park that paid quasi-fictional homage to a “peaceful Spanish Heritage” in Balboa Park. A few miles away, planners replaced a once-thriving cannery with a tourist shopping plaza reminiscent of a New England fishing village. The spatial reconfigurations of Los Angeles and San Diego neighborhoods reveal how racial ideology buttressed residential segregation in the mid-20th century.²

But space can also shape and reflect privilege. The history of Alisal, a neighborhood of Salinas, California, shows how spatial reconfigurations could reflect the economic mobility afforded by whiteness. In the early 20th century, impoverished Japanese, Filipino, Mexican, and white farmers built shacks outside of Salinas city limits. In this article, I show that physical location, separation from city sewers, and building appearances all reflected these groups' marginalized existence. Residents and politicians in Salinas treated the residents of Alisal—regardless of ethnic background—like second-class citizens in the early 1930s. But a booming lettuce industry in the 1930s pulled Alisal farmers into the high-working class. Physical improvements in Alisal only partly reflected the prosperity. I also argue that the former Dust Bowl refugees benefitted disproportionately from the economic mobility afforded by their whiteness. Salinas city planners and businessmen ordered spatial improvements in parts of Alisal to integrate the former “Okies” and “Arkies” into the greater Salinas community. The previously poor

whites joined the clubs, opened and frequented Salinas businesses that expanded into Alisal, and became part of a built and lived community that physically and socially was an extension of Salinas. That these spatial and social benefits were only afforded to the former “Okies” and “Arkies” reflects the economic and social mobility afforded by whiteness.

Spatial Markers of Economic Marginalization

Alisal began as a refuge for impoverished Dust Bowl refugees. No more than 500 people lived in Alisal before 1930; most were the Japanese, Filipino, and white farmers who could not afford to live in Salinas. The population swelled during the early 1930s as Dust Bowl refugees settled outside of Salinas city limits.³ At the height of the Great Depression in 1932, farmers faced a severe drought in the American High Plains, an area that encompasses Oklahoma, Texas, and Kansas. Contemporary farming techniques also damaged natural mechanisms for topsoil retention. The combination of drought and loose topsoil contributed to intense dust storms throughout the region. Their livelihoods threatened by natural disaster, as many as 400,000 white Dust Bowl refugees moved to California—the “Okies” and “Arkies” represented in John Steinbeck’s *Grapes of Wrath*.⁴

Alisal migrants were representative of most other California-bound Dust Bowl refugees. Families from Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas, Missouri, and Arizona comprised the greatest numbers of migrants, two-thirds of whom arrived after 1935. A contemporary study found that of 170 families in Monterey County, California, 69 percent left their home states because of farm failure or other economic distresses. These families generally moved directly to Monterey County, where relatives or work arrangements awaited them.⁵ Most of these farming families were poorly educated, with only one-third having finished primary school and one-tenth having finished high school. Accordingly, most families moved to California with expectations of retaining rural farming lives. These Monterey County farming families generated half of their total incomes from agricultural production and lived on a median family income of \$300-\$699 per year, which contemporary organizations like the California Research Committee on Labor Problems recognized as “precariously low.” As such, three-quarters of Monterey County Dust Bowl families received some form of public assistance, and that number increased steadily throughout the early 1930s due to insufficient employment.⁶

In stark contrast, Salinas was a highly developed and urbanized city. By the 1930s, Salinas had been an incorporated city for nearly 60 years with established businesses and infrastructure. Founded inorganically in a well-watered valley near the Pacific Ocean, Salinas went from being a farming town to an agricultural and commercial hub. Enterprise-minded

settlers enticed San-Francisco-based investment developers, and the nascent city quickly attracted the Southern Pacific and Central Pacific railroads. By 1874, Salinas was a major railroad stop, an incorporated city, and the Monterey County seat. Of course, city property values ballooned in proportion to Salinas’s ascent, going from about \$100 for a 50-by-100-foot lot to \$100 per foot. This change kept pace with property valuation increases throughout late-19th century California, when state developers focused equally on urbanization and agricultural production, but for families struggling to earn \$300 per year in the 1930s, those prices were prohibitively expensive. Dust Bowl families moving to the Salinas Valley settled outside of city limits in unincorporated Alisal, where land was significantly less expensive.⁷

Neighborhood spaces in 1930s Alisal reflected the economic differences between the “Okies” and the Salinas residents. For one, the layout of Alisal neighborhoods and infrastructure reflected the economic differences from Salinas. The neighborhoods were physically on the margins of the Salinas Valley, far from the Salinas city center. Alisal neighborhoods were unconnected to Salinas infrastructure as well: 98.9 percent of residences lacked access to Salinas’s sewer system, meaning families dumped refuse in holes outside houses.⁸ Where Salinas streets were paved and maintained, Alisal thoroughfares were unpaved well into the 1960s. But Alisalites were also socially distinct from Salinans. Salinas residents in the 1940s derided Alisal as a dilapidated neighborhood populated by “Okies” and “Arkies,” pejorative terms that grouped poor farmers together regardless of true origin. Language regarding “Okies” and “Arkies” as threats to city property values bore a similar resemblance to the redlined African-and-Mexican-American neighborhoods in Oakland and Los Angeles, among others.⁹ One columnist in the local newspaper complained about the predominance of ramshackle housing and auto trailers, arguing that such “Okie” residences “posed a health menace” to the residents of Salinas. Another article in the newspaper derisively labeled East Alisal “Little Oklahoma.”¹⁰ Thus, Alisal spaces reflected the physical and social separation between poor and middle-class whites.

Class-based marginalization also affected resource distribution in Alisal, such as in academic spaces. As shown earlier, most Salinas farming families expected their children to work on the farms to supplement the family’s income. Some families, though, sent their children to schools so they could find higher-paying work to support the family. These Alisal parents viewed schools as meritocratic spaces that would enable upward economic mobility. In practice, Salinas educators funneled the white residents into what they saw as the best that could come from an Alisalite: low-working-class occupations. Salinas teachers consistently denigrated Alisal students’ intellectual capabilities and discouraged them

from taking college-preparatory classes. One white Alisalite recalled: “No matter who you were or where you came from, everyone was an Okie who lived in the Alisal, and they were considered low-class people. Of course, they had to get this from their folks.”¹¹ Instead, teachers directed the working-class Anglos into technical and vocational classes like mechanic repair.¹² By controlling educational resource distribution, Salinas teachers fashioned academic spaces into sites that distinguished middle-class and working-poor whites. Through the early 1930s, Alisal spaces not only reflected but reified the distinction between the working-poor and middle-class whites.

However, profits from a fruitful lettuce industry weakened class differences between Anglos in Alisal and Salinas. In 1921, growers identified lettuce as a potential cash crop in the fertile Alisal soil. Lettuce growing in the Salinas Valley, though, required intense cultivation and a large labor force, which farmers in the early 20th century lacked. A group of lettuce farmers formed the California Vegetable Union in 1922 to attract farm laborers and develop the framework for lettuce growing.¹³ Dust Bowl families provided that labor. The crop flourished, and Alisal lettuce farmers saved enough money to improve their residences on their own. One Alisal Dust-Bowl-refugee-turned-farmer profited from growing lettuce, purchased property from nearby farmers, and developed the land into an entire city block.¹⁴

Whiteness and Spatial Reflections of Economic Improvement

Prosperity generated physical improvements in Alisal—for the white residents. Salinas politicians supported infrastructural improvements in the parts of Alisal that had higher proportions of white residents. The neighborhood in Alisal bounded by Sanborn Road to the east, Madeira Avenue (and later the US-101) to the west, and John Street (also later the US-101) to the south had been one of the only areas in Alisal where poor whites made the majority. Salinas-based retail firms like Hank’s Drug Store and Monterey County Bank opened branches on this block of Alisal Street in 1948.¹⁵ The Fox Theatre Company also moved into the neighborhood in 1948, adding an artistic and cultural element absent from early Alisal years.¹⁶ Business-owning Alisal residents created the East Salinas Improvement Association in 1942 to develop infrastructure, overcome their “Okie” reputation, and attract commerce from Salinas. One publication quickly recognized the Association, saying it “must be credited with the building up of Alisal” by establishing a sewage system, constructing three schools, and paving blocks of roads. Salinas residents took notice of the physical changes, too: the *Christian Science Monitor* reported that “gardens [we]re replacing bare yards.”¹⁷

The physical similarities also begat social similarities, as Salinas-based services, firms, and stores made the white-majority block of Alisal more like a spatial extension of Salinas than the unincorporated and unwanted Alisal. The subsequent physical changes allowed white residents to frequent the same spaces—stores, banks, and cultural venues—in Alisal that their counterparts in Salinas enjoyed. Being white in Alisal became more similar to being white in Salinas. Affluent Alisalites also joined social circles that emphasized their similarities to middle-class whites in Salinas. Instead of viewing their neighbors to the east as “Okies” and “Arkies” living in “eye-sore trailers,” Salinas residents became “closer friends with the migrants” by the late 1940s.¹⁸ White Alisal women and men intermarried with the same middle-class Salinas residents who derided them just a decade earlier. Many Alisal residents like educator Bill Ramsey moved out and became important community leaders in Salinas by the 1970s.¹⁹ As certain Alisal physical and social spaces resembled Salinas, residents began to question whether or not the two were more similar than dissimilar. After the East Salinas Improvement Association re-invested more than \$100,000 in permanent improvements, one periodical posited that “[t]he best way to insure a good settlement is to practice the same development that Salinas is using,” iterating the idea that the two settlements could be one.²⁰ Over time, white racial similarity created a common experience for whites in Alisal and Salinas.²¹

All the while, the nonwhite neighborhoods in Alisal still bore the physical and social markers of marginalization through the 1940s. The largest nonwhite or mixed-race neighborhoods were east of Sanborn Road, and especially east of Laurel Drive. Physical improvements of Alisal bypassed these neighborhoods, and they remained the least developed, lacking paved roads, sidewalks, street lights, and basic tenets of infrastructure. In many neighborhoods, the only changes between the 1930s and the 1940s were the increased disrepair of houses. Just as before, most of these marginal neighborhoods remained unhooked to the sewer system, a spatial reminder of their disconnect from urbanized white Salinas spaces.²² Incomes in nonwhite tracts of Alisal also remained lower than those in whiter parts of Alisal, despite similar occupational makeup.²³ Journalist Carey McWilliams provoked community backlash after he highlighted the unequal patterns of development in the 1940s. In response, McWilliams conceded in another statement that Alisal was generally “better than it was before.”²⁴ Nonetheless, the lack of development in nonwhite neighborhoods of Alisal showed how racial ideology most determined the lasting spatial markers of marginalization. For the neighborhoods with fewer whites, Alisal spaces remained markedly different in physical and social makeup than the spaces with more white residents. The economic mobility afforded by whiteness bypassed

the marginalized neighborhoods, and neighborhood spaces reflected this.

Calls for incorporation emphasized a common whiteness and downplayed the former economic differences. The *Salinas Californian*, the same newspaper that printed complaints about trailer parks and the Alisal “menace to public health,” ran a 1944 article titled “This is Your Newspaper.” The article, bending truths for politics’ sake, claimed “Never once have we hinted at the so called ‘Little Oklahoma’ or the ‘Oakies.’ Those are unfortunate cognomens, to say the least.”²⁵ Incorporation backers courting the white neighborhoods of Alisal spoke of similarities. Once the economic differences abated, incorporation could absorb the newly middle-class whites who were already enjoying the same physical and social spaces as other whites in Salinas. Accordingly, an op-ed argued:

How true is it that we are one and the same community except for imaginary lines between us. Our interests are the same, our aims and objects are identical. *We are the same people, brothers under the skin, socially inclined alike.* We live only once. Why not, then, improve ourselves and our community standards? Here dear friends, is an opportunity that must not be denied.²⁶

Calls for unity became official policy in 1948 when the Salinas City Council unanimously voted to offer annexation to Alisal. No longer divided by class differences, the Salinas government and Alisal businessmen jointly preached unity through annexation. Pro-annexation forces failed on three separate occasions. On June 11, 1963, though, Alisal residents voted for annexation among a flurry of political reorganization that saw hundreds of incorporations and annexations across the state.²⁷

Conclusion

A rich literature suggests that racial ideology, though intangible and socially constructed, influences residential segregation. The history of Alisal, though, demonstrates that whiteness also afforded a certain flexibility that made class differences flexible and forgivable. When impoverished Dust Bowl refugees first moved into the valley, Salinas politicians and middle-class residents derided their presence and marginalized them to the outskirts of Alisal. In the span of a decade, the booming lettuce industry raised farmers out of the low-working class. Because of racial similarities, “Okies” and “Arkies” became like kin to the Salinas residents, who provisioned for infrastructural improvements in the white neighborhoods of Alisal. These developed neighborhoods served as spatial markers of the “possessive investment in whiteness” that benefitted the farmers.²⁸ White spaces in Alisal improved while ethnically mixed neighborhoods remained

unchanged for three decades longer. Racial ideology—specifically the economic mobility afforded by whiteness—allowed for the flexibility of class-based marginalization that first plagued white residents. Physical and social spaces in Alisal reflected these deeply ingrained racial and class identities. Understanding how space reflects the economics of whiteness provides a framework for rethinking how the built and lived environments reproduce racial ideology.

Endnotes

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- 13 Gabriella M. Petrick, “‘Like Ribbons of Green and Gold’: Industrializing Lettuce and the Quest for Quality in the Salinas Valley, 1920–1965,” *Agricultural History* 80 (2006): pp. 269–295, 275.
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- 15 This contrasts with later developments in Californian cities like Compton, Seaside, and East Palo Alto that were marginalized by class and race. Each of these three cities by the 1960s had sizeable African American populations, and when they began to move in, white residents and business owners began moving out in what one historian has called the “white exodus.” This, in turn, led to dried-up city coffers that couldn’t maintain the city’s infrastructure, which led to deterioration that in turn led to further white flight. In Alisal, however, owners moved their businesses into Alisal despite class differences because racial similarities trumped class differences. This would have been unthinkable for white business owners in each of the aforementioned minority-majority cities. Albert M. Camarillo, “Cities of Color: The New Racial Frontier in California’s Minority-Majority Cities,” *Pacific Historical Review* 76 (2007): pp. 1–28, 14–15.
- 16 Alvarado, oral interview.
- 17 “Poverty Town”; newspaper clipping from Alisal Chamber of Commerce, undated but likely 1940, in “The Alisal” Collection, Folder 1.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Bill Ramsey, oral interview in “Dust Bowl Stories.”
- 20 “Editorial,” *Salinas Index-Journal*, March 16, 1940, “The Alisal” Collection, Folder 1.
- 21 See Stephen Pitti, *The Devil in Silicon Valley: Northern California, Race, and Mexican Americans* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003), and Self, *American Babylon* for similar phenomena in East San Jose and Oakland, respectively.
- 22 “Poverty Town”; Hadley, “A Study of One Hundred Seventy Self-Resettled Agricultural Families,” 117.
- 23 United States Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population: 1940, General Characteristics of the Population, Volume VI* (Washington, District of Columbia: United States Government Printing Office, 1942).
- 24 Untitled clipping from *Salinas Index-Journal*, October 9, 1940, “The Alisal” Collection, Folder 1.
- 25 “This is Your Newspaper,” *Salinas Californian*, March 3, 1944, “The Alisal” Collection, Folder 2.
- 26 Untitled op-ed, *Salinas Californian*, November 17, 1948, p. 4, “The Alisal” Collection, Folder 2. (Emphasis is mine.)
- 27 Self, *American Babylon*, chapter 4; Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight*, 44–45.
- 28 See George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Benefit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998).

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“Terrorists Destroyed Everything in Their Way”: Depictions of Communist Terror in the Salvadoran Civil War

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Abstract

In both literary and political spheres, El Salvador has been configured as a place of extreme “terror.” At no time was this more common than during the Salvadoran Civil War, a U.S.-funded conflict that lasted from 1980–1992. This article tracks the way that political discourses, which I define as hegemonic narratives perpetrated by individuals working on behalf of a federal government, in both the United States and El Salvador relied on the threat of “communist terrorists” to justify foreign policy and repressive war strategies. It then shows how the bulk of the violence committed during the Salvadoran Civil was a result of state terror, rather than the actions of leftist guerrillas.

Acknowledgements

For the thousands of disappeared Salvadorans whose only crime was their desire for a more just future.

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Terror has been configured as an essential part of El Salvador, but it was especially critical around accounts of the Salvadoran Civil War which lasted from 1980–1992. In 1983, American journalist Joan Didion published *Salvador*, a book that came from a series of essays she wrote for the New York Review of Books after visiting El Salvador the previous year. “Terror is the given of the place,” she writes in a moniker that stuck in the mind of the public observing the conflict from the United States.¹ The promotional blurb for the book advertises that Didion, “delivers an anatomy of that country’s particular brand of terror.”²

But terror as a part of Salvadoran life in the 1980s is not just a configuration of Didion’s creative nonfiction. Salvadoran writers themselves, both in the moment and retroactively, speak of the role terror played in daily life. In an essay entitled “Rich Eyes and Poor Hands,” Salvadoran-American journalist Robert Lovato writes about hearing “on the radio, men in dark green military uniforms loaded with medals uttered the words *terrorismo* and *terrorista*.”³

Salvadoran-American poet Claudia Castro Luna writes, in her short story “The Stars Remain,” that in 1980, “Terror and silence are the baseline of our everyday.”⁴

Terror during the civil war did not result as simply a symptom of war, but was a tool consciously willed through terrorism—that is to say, deliberate attempts to sow fear in the general population as a means to some political end. Despite the fact that 85 percent of human rights violations during the civil war were perpetrated by a U.S.-financed Salvadoran government, terror was framed as originating from the actions of armed “communists.”⁵ Political discourses, which I define in this article as hegemonic narratives perpetrated by individuals working on behalf of a federal government, sought to convey that terrorism in El Salvador was being committed by the leftists, guerilla forces of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN). Thus, the governments of El Salvador and the United States justified both foreign policy and a number of human rights violations under the guise of fighting terrorist communists who, supposedly, posed a national security threat in both El Salvador and, if not controlled, the United States.

Combating Communist Terrorists

With the success of the socialist Nicaraguan Revolution in 1979, El Salvador became a priority in the Reagan administration’s foreign policy initiatives. Still in the midst of the misleadingly named Cold War, the United States government invested \$6 billion dollars, coming out to about \$1 million a day, in the Salvadoran government’s efforts against the guerilla forces throughout the 1980s.⁶ The hefty investment was meant to curb communism. As Reagan himself put it in his 1988 State of the Union Address, “there must be no Soviet beachhead in Central America.”⁷

The stated goals were not to simply stop communism in El Salvador on ideological grounds, but also because of a supposed threat “communist terrorists” posed. In his very first State of the Union address in 1982, Ronald Reagan accused nations with leftist governments of sowing terror beyond their own borders. “Toward those who would export terrorism and subversion in the Caribbean and elsewhere, especially Cuba and Libya,” he said, “we will act with firmness.”⁸

In a now-declassified memo from 1985 entitled, “Combating Terrorism in Central America,” Reagan begins by saying that “the recent terrorism attack against Americans in El Salvador is clearly aimed at creating public apathy in the United States toward our support for democratic institutions in Central America.” In response, the memo called for increased resources to be sent to El Salvador, including support that would allow the Salvadoran government to

“enhance the [. . .] counter-terrorist [. . .] capabilities of the national police” and establish “an effective Salvadoran anti-terrorist unit.”⁹

In his State of the Union Address a few months prior, he told the American public that “The Sandinista dictatorship of Nicaragua [. . .] arms and provides bases for Communist terrorists attacking neighboring states.”¹⁰ Again, Reagan used rhetoric to paint the Salvadoran guerrilleros as communist terrorists to diminish political support for their cause, and in turn the Nicaraguan government, which was in fact smuggling weapons to the FMLN through Honduras and the Gulf of Fonseca.

By continually returning to the assumed threat that communist revolutionaries posed to the Salvadoran people, and those abroad if the ideology was not contained, Reagan found a way of justifying his foreign policy. Though there were various forms of solidarity and anti-war efforts in the United States, fueled especially by grassroots organizers, the Reagan Administration kept using communism-induced terror in El Salvador to justify funding a war that was increasingly unpopular.

Memorializing Terror in El Salvador

The political discourse that accused the FMLN and its supporters of sowing terrorism in the country was also adopted in El Salvador, specifically in the way the conflict was memorialized retrospectively after it ended with the signing of the 1992 Chapultepec Peace Accords that signaled the end of the war.

In 2005, David Panama, one of the co-founders of ARENA, the political party that controlled the Salvadoran government throughout the conflict, published a book entitled *Los Guerreros de La Libertad*. The book posits himself as a “‘freedom fighter,’ which refers to his and ARENA’s anticommunism.”¹¹ At one point he claims that “‘While the terrorists destroyed everything in their way,’ D’Aubuisson and his followers engaged in an ‘arduous fight,’ with the additional disadvantage that ‘the global press was under total control of terrorists.’”¹² Panama poses the anti-communist fight as an antiterrorism fight.

General Juan Orlando Zepeda Herrera adopts a similar narrative in his 2008 book, *Perfiles de la guerra en El Salvador*. He writes that, “the primordial nature of the conflict developed by the FMLN in our country was, in large part, that, ‘Terrorism’ in essence, the creation of fear or of panic through the indiscriminate use of bombs, kidnappings, assassinations, extortions, through the destruction of everything that meant development, well-being, comfort.” In a section titled, “The Period of Terrorism,” he continues to characterize terrorism as a strategy used by leftist forces.

Herrera writes, “the characteristic principle of the guerillas and the entire insurgent movement is the use of terrorism like a weapon, one that is defined as the use of violence because of its tenebrous nature.”¹³

Both Panama and Herrera frame terror as the result of leftist efforts, and in turn frame the actions of the right-wing government they support as necessary actions for combatting a violent ideology. Like the Reagan administration, political actors used the threat of “communist terrorist” to support their political and ideological efforts. But political discourses in El Salvador went further than it did in the United States, since linking senseless violence to the communists was a discursive tool used to directly justify repressive war strategies and a number of human rights abuses committed by the state.

The True Proponents of Terrorism

Though members of the Salvadoran government would claim otherwise, government actors were those responsible for the true campaigns of terrorism during the civil war. In his memoir, Herrera claims that “in our country, perhaps ninety-nine percent of the population suffered because of the acts of terrorism unleashed by the FMLN throughout the conflict.”¹⁴ The statistics Herrera claims are inaccurate, considering the amount of people killed, tortured, and disappeared by the state during the Salvadoran Civil War. In 1993, the U.N. Truth Commission for El Salvador found that more than 85 percent of “serious acts of violence” committed during the war “were carried out by state agents or those acting under the direction of state agents.”¹⁵ In the “Index of Accountability” published in 1992 using data collected from Tutela Legal between 1982 and 1990, “the data demonstrates beyond reasonable doubt that the majority of victims [. . .] were unarmed civilians.”¹⁶

Of those victims, 30 percent were rural farm workers, 20 percent were urban workers, and 12 percent were individuals under 12 years old or over 50 years old, placing them outside the typical age of a guerilla soldier. The report concluded that “with the exception of mine explosions, it is difficult to find any aspect of human rights violations during the Salvadoran civil war in which there was symmetry in the pattern of abuses committed between government forces and the FMLN.”¹⁷ In other words, the government was systematically targeting innocent Salvadorans who had no affiliation with the leftist guerillas, all under the guise of addressing the problem of “communist terror.”

General Juan Orlando Zepeda Herrera himself, who claimed that around one percent of the suffering were because of actions of the Salvadoran military, had a role in sowing fear among the general public. According to

statistics presented in the Index of Accountability, Herrera himself was responsible for 644 victims, overseeing torture, summary executions, and disappearances.¹⁸

The threat of communist terrorism was then used largely as a rhetorical tool to hide thousands of human rights violations that the Salvadoran government was committing against innocent or apolitical citizens. But the bulk of “terrorism” was not coming from the leftist individuals who wielded guns smuggled in from Nicaragua, but rather those who relied on artillery that the United States government paid for. Thus, throughout the 1980s, the average Salvadoran citizen was more likely to fear for their well-being at the hands of their own government than the guerrillas.

The repeatedly invoked boogeyman of the terrorist, communist soldier was simply a political strategy to conceal the source of the terror in El Salvador. An article from 1982 found that “such phrases as ‘guerilla warfare,’ ‘revolutionary movement,’ and ‘communist-supported terrorism,’ only heighten ideological sentiment and play to emotion rather than intellect.” The authors also concluded that even though terrorism is often imagined as solely in the jurisdiction of “out groups,” “terrorism is also an activity of “right-ists” or reactionary organizations [. . .] Quite often it is the mode of operation of a regime, as is the case in El Salvador, where a kind of official terrorism seems to be practiced.”¹⁹

State-sanctioned acts of terror were carried out under anticommunist guises, especially through government-linked death squads. A number of these were branded as anti-communist paramilitary groups, including the Escuadron Secreto Anticomunista (ESA) and the Accion Anticomunista Revolucionario de Exterminio (AARE). Specific groups, simply because of profession or age, were especially susceptible of being accused of being communist and thus subjected to acts of state terrorism. A report filed by Amnesty International to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in 1978 documented 62 individuals who were disappeared and another 30 who were murdered “with apparent complicity, or with the direct involvement of government security forces.”²⁰

Many of the “disappeared” were union organizers and members, a class often conflated with leftist subversives. For example, in July of 1977, Julio Enrique Flores Aviles, the secretary general of the teacher’s union ANDES San Salvador, and four other teachers were detained without official acknowledgement that they were in police custody. Religious leaders were also often accused of being subversive, especially since many of them worked with poor campesinos. All 30 of the murders cataloged in the Amnesty International Report were of campesinos, and two were religious leaders accused of being “an extremist group falsely

disguised as cursillistas de cristiandad and who were dedicating themselves to undermining public order and preaching doctrines against the democratic system.”²¹

In addition to assumptions of communist tendencies on the basis of class and profession, any other potential link to the ideology also made individuals targets of government terror. Amnesty International reported that Dr. Carlos Madriz was kidnapped by the government because “information that Dr. Madriz received his doctorate in Cuba and that [. . .] he has some connection with subversive groups,” though his family refuted the claim, saying he simply went to Cuba to learn medicine.²² In one account taken by Tutela Legal, Esteban Escobar Fuentes, a 62-year-old catechist, was targeted for supposedly being a communist. “La Defensa Civil [. . .] accused him of being a communist and began to threaten and pursue him. my father felt forced to flee to Honduras.”²³ Again, the Salvadoran government terrorized innocent men for nothing more than the weak, vague possibility that they might have communist leanings.

Conclusion: The Lasting Impacts of Political Discourse

Political discourses that conflated communists with terrorists and then civilians allowed for essentially any poor, working class Salvadoran civilian to face detainment, torture, or death under accusation of being a communist. And in the United States, political discourses that framed terrorist actions coming primarily from communist rebels allowed the government to continue financing human rights violations in El Salvador while simultaneously denying asylum to refugees fleeing the country. Less than three percent of Salvadorans who applied for political asylum had their application approved. According to sociologist Leisy Abrego, “the official version of why Salvadorans were in the U.S. [which] negated their experiences as refugees; failed to register the state terror that drove them to this new place; and denied them a justification for their need to heal.”²⁴

The long-term effects of the constructed “communist terrorists” extended not only to individuals who were genuine FMLN sympathizers but to the vast majority of Salvadorans whose migration made claim to the state sanctioned terrorism occurring in their country of origin. The violence they sought refuge from was made invisible under the political rhetoric the United States used to support their Cold War objectives, and thus the denial of asylum was justifiable. Even though many Salvadoran qualified for refugee status under the United Nations 1951 Convention and the U.S. Refugee Act of 1980, the majority had to come to the United States as undocumented immigrants.²⁵

The rhetoric of the terror sowed by “communist terrorists” was used indiscriminately by actors in the Salvadoran

and United States governments as a way of justifying their support for a repressive right-wing government, human rights violations, and immigration policy. Further than simply being words used in speeches or memoirs, the political discourses had very real and tangible effects on the lives of Salvadorans, both in the way they experienced the violence of the Salvadoran Civil War and their displacement from their home countries.

Endnotes

- 1 Didion, Salvador, 14.
- 2 Zola Books.
- 3 Lovato, "Rich Eyes," 302.
- 4 Castro Luna, "The Stars Remain," 260.
- 5 Wood, *Collective Insurgent Action*, 8.
- 6 Abrego, *Sacrificing Families*, 13.
- 7 Reagan, "1988 State of the Union Address."
- 8 Reagan, "1982 State of the Union Address."
- 9 Reagan, "Combatting Terrorism in Central America."
- 10 Reagan, "1985 State of the Union Address."
- 11 Lindo-Fuentes et al., "Remembering a Massacre in El Salvador," 246.
- 12 Sprenkles, "Militancy, Memory Work and Human Rights," 22.
- 13 Zepeda Herrera, *Perfiles de la Guerra*, 85, 92.
- 14 Ibid., 92.
- 15 Wood, *Collective Insurgent Action*, 8.
- 16 Tutela Legal, *Index of Accountability*.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Taylor et al., "Defining Terrorism in El Salvador: La Matanza," 109, 116.
- 20 Amnesty International, "El Salvador: Case Studies."
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Tutela Legal, *Index of Accountability*.
- 24 Abrego, "On Silences," 76.
- 25 Ibid., 75.

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Right Under Your Nose: Hayes's "American Sonnet for My Past and Future Assassin (Why are you bugging me...)" and the Call for American Political Mobilization

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Abstract

In the aftermath of the 2016 U.S. presidential election, Terrance Hayes began to compose a series of sonnets entitled, "American Sonnet for My Past and Future Assassin." In one of these sonnets, he alludes heavily to John Donne's "The Flea" as he compares the 45th President of the United States to a stinkbug. He deftly combines comedic undertones within his rigidly serious lines, with frequent utilization of erotic and religious imagery, all culminating in what is ultimately a destabilizing read. My paper argues that the sonnet form, due to its esteemed place in literary history, allows Hayes an apt analogy for the type of change he seeks. By showing how within the bounds of structure, there is the possibility of reinvention and innovation, Hayes subtly models how citizens of the United States should work for change in the aftermath of the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election—through the ballot box in future elections.

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In the aftermath of the 2016 U.S. presidential election, Terrance Hayes began to compose a series of sonnets entitled "American Sonnet for My Past and Future Assassin," which focus on a myriad of themes, including love, death, and fear. These sonnets, however, are not mere meditations on these subject matters, but also comprise a call-to-action, a demand for change in response to the results of the election. In this essay, I will focus particularly on Hayes's "Why are you bugging me..." American sonnet. I see Hayes as advocating for the first steps to reform: that is, by raising awareness, spreading the word for the need for change through searing critique. Hayes strategically does this through the literary form of the sonnet. In this paper, I argue that by invoking this esteemed literary tradition and the structure it provides, Hayes is subliminally modeling how citizens of the United States should achieve their change—through the ballot in 2018 and 2020.

Framing my analysis is Paul Munn, who writes about the development of the American sonnet in the early 20th century. Munn finds that, "the use of the sonnet form might trigger in readers associations with other sonnets, how each sonnet might be fruitfully read in relation to certain sonnets or sonnet traditions" (62). With its literary tradition extending back to the Romantic-era in Italy and England, Munn writes that, "The sonnet invites readers to observe variations in typical formal devices, such as the capping couplet of the Elizabethan form and the turn in the line of the Italian form" (62). However, even within these specific traditions, there are stylistic variances amongst the writers within them that the sonneteer enters. For the purposes of my research, I find Terrance Hayes as drawing heavily upon the "rapturous religious utterance of Donne" (Munn 62). Specifically, Hayes alludes to the "Holy Sonnets" and "The Flea" by John Donne, within his "Why are you bothering me..." sonnet. In the following pages, I will demonstrate how Hayes relies on his predecessor in Donne to craft a sonnet that doubly critiques the president of the United States and calls for political mobilization against his oppressive policies.

Across all of these sonnets are erotic and religious imagery, and the conceit of "the pest" which Hayes utilizes to destabilize the reader and spur his audience to action. The literary conceit is an extended metaphor, a way in which two very dissimilar things are compared across a poem. Donne was particularly known for incorporating this literary style throughout his career, and particularly in his sonnets. The conceit, as Claudia Brodsky finds its power in its ability to "condense many logically consistent meanings within the scope of a single image or word, and conversely . . . to expand the semantic field of an image into a multiple range of possible meanings" (830). In Donne's poetry, he uses the

conceits to articulate coded messages to his lovers; in his earlier career, the lover takes the form of a woman, while his later writing, such as the “Holy Sonnets” are dedicated to the Church. In this essay, I will show how the conceit of the pest allows Hayes to convey simultaneously critique the president and spur Americans to advocate for political change.

Like many sonnets, Hayes’s starts with a question. Unlike Shakespeare’s famous “Sonnet 18” which compares the beloved to “a summer day,” “American Sonnet” begins by asking, “Why are you bugging me you stank minuscule husk/Of musk” (Hayes 1–2). From the start, the reader can tell that this sonnet *is not* for someone’s beloved. Rather, the sonnet is about a bug. The use of enjambment here emphasizes the rhyme to “musk” thus stating that not only is it the sight of the bug, but the smell as well that’s disarming to the speaker. By the end of the poem, the speaker reveals that the bug in reference is a stinkbug. By alluding to a stinkbug, Hayes harkens back to the work of Donne’s “The Flea,” another poem which centers around a pest.

Donne introduces his pest from the opening lines, saying, “Mark but this flea, and mark in this . . . /It sucked me first, and now sucks thee,/And in this flea our two bloods mingled be” (1.1–2). The play on words with “mark” and “suck” reflects a playful tone that Donne is taking through the conceit of the pest. In contrast, the speaker of Hayes’s poem is extremely irritated by the presence of the bug. For example, the speaker ponders why the stinkbug is “crawling over reasons/And possessions I have and have not touched” (Hayes 2–3). While these reasons and possessions are never specified, the language and the conceit of the stinkbug suggests that the author’s discomfort is internal. This directly relates to the discomfort that Hayes aims to make the reader feel—a feeling he likely lives with, in part as a Black man in America, but further magnified under the current presidency.

When considering the functionality of both pests in each author’s respective work, it is important to examine how both the flea and the stinkbug received their perceptions as pests. This can then reveal the significance of how the pests work as extended metaphors for their respective authors. The flea is known for taking the blood from its hosts (Gullan and Cranston 492–493), feeding primarily on warm-blooded mammals. While its bites can be an annoyance due to the itching sensation they leave, they also can have very serious implications. Fleas, for example, can spread infectious disease, including the bubonic plague, which is known for the havoc it wrought throughout Europe in the mid-fourteenth century (Gullan and Cranston 492–493). Because the flea can go from host to host, often blood between humans and

animals, or with other humans, can intermingle inside it. Like the flea, the stinkbug is a pest, though it thrives on agricultural-based goods as its source of sustenance. As such, it is an extreme annoyance to farmers (“Brown Marmorated Stink Bug” 2017). Primarily, it feeds on tomatoes and corn. It does not eat the corn’s husk, but rather crawls into the actual stalk and eats the kernels. The crop appears healthy until farmers go to harvest it (“Brown Marmorated Stink Bug” 2017) and realize the harvest is hollow. Considered in the context of Hayes’s poem, the American people are rotting because of the “pest” that has, and is, presently eating away at its citizenry. Namely, Hayes is pointing toward the millions of Americans that voted for the 45th president, as well as the millions who ultimately were indifferent toward voting. Hayes finds that the results of the 2016 election are emblematic of this “hollow” harvest, that his bigotry and vitriol have tapped into the prejudices that many in the country hold.

In addition to acting as parasites to their respective victims, fleas and stinkbugs share a similar morphology. The similarity that is namely highlighted by Donne and Hayes is that of the hard exoskeleton that both insects possess. The speaker in Donne’s poem asks, “Cruel and sudden, hast thou since/Purpled thy nail, in blood of innocence?” (3.19–20). The flea’s exoskeleton can be pierced by a person’s fingernail. In this line, the speaker asks his lover if she has killed the flea, which has their blood inside of it. In contrast, the speaker in Hayes’s sonnet addresses the stinkbug, saying, “The meat inside your exoskeleton/Is as tender as Jesus” (11–12). However, the statement is ironic; it’s implying that the stinkbug, representative of the 45th president of the United States, is not tender. The speaker is stating the opposite, that the president isn’t caring, or compassionate like Jesus.

The speaker’s allusion to Jesus within the sonnet gestures toward Donne, and his “Holy Sonnets.” Donne’s “Holy Sonnets” are more aligned with the sonnet’s tradition of writing toward one’s beloved, his beloved being Jesus. In Hayes’s sonnet, the use of Jesus is meant to be both contradicting and unsettling. Biblically, Jesus is a sacrificial figure. In the Old Testament of the Bible, a lamb without blemish would be sacrificed on behalf of the Israeli people; Jesus marks the end of sacrifice in the New Testament through his crucifixion. However, in a modern context, Jesus is a complicated figure, especially when one considers the evangelical Christianity often cited as the 45th president’s electoral base. Evangelicals are similar to the husks of corn; they are empty on the inside. The Bible refers to God’s people as the harvest (Matthew 9:37; Romans 1:13). However, through their allegiance to the president, their acts reflect an emptiness, acts

done in the name of Christianity, but failing to live up to its name due to the immorality of their support.

Hayes's contemplation on morality is perhaps inspired by Donne. In "The Flea" the speaker attempts to suggest that to engage in sexual activity with his lover is innocent—despite what conventions of the time may suggest. Donne writes:

Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare,
Where we almost, nay more than married are.
This flea is you and I, and this
Our marriage bed, and marriage temple is;
(2.10–13)

Here the speaker engages in a playful request of his lover. By using the imagery of "three" in "one" they allude there is a religious allusion to the Trinity, and by bringing up the institution of marriage—which is sanctified Biblically—it is fair to wonder, is the speaker actually jesting? The speaker implies that they may as well have sex; they are already "more than married" because of the flea. In the speaker's mind, engaging in sex isn't morally ambiguous. It is in fact, the right thing to do.

Both poems incorporate religious and erotic themes, the juxtaposition of which many would consider sacrilegious. After all, "The Flea" represents the imploring of a lover telling his beloved that they should engage in premarital sex. Hayes acknowledges his predecessor in Donne by incorporating the use of the erotic, though rather than using Donne's playful manner, Hayes seems to desire the reader's destabilization by being direct. His pointedness directly contrasts Donne who subtly implements its usage. At the *volta*, and throughout the sestet as a whole, Hayes's poem uses erotic imagery, turning away from the religious imagery found earlier in the poem. It is most striking when Hayes writes, "you are the jewel/In the knob of an elegant butt plug, snug between/Pleasure & disgust" (8–10). It seems incongruous and even unsettling to reference a sex toy in the same context as Jesus. In some ways, it's even humorous that Hayes uses "elegance" as an adjective in this line. These shifts and the tone of the language all work to convey the feelings of perplexity that Hayes seeks to foster. The speaker is articulating that while the president, by virtue of his position, may seem like a "jewel" he in fact fails to live up to his position. The speaker further emphasizes the complications within the erotic, saying, "You are the scent of rot at the heart/Of lovemaking" (Hayes 10–11). Rotting implies decay and is incongruent with lovemaking, which has connotations to life. This view of sexual love also connects to the feelings of pleasure and disgust that the speaker previously articulates. What is the reader supposed to do with these contrasting images? What do they have to do with the questions that the speaker poses in the opening lines of the sonnet?

The answer to these questions may ultimately be found in the final couplet. In Hayes's sonnet, the speaker's answer is, "Yes, you are an odor, an almost/Imperceptible ode to death, a lousy, stinking stinkbug" (14–15). The speaker of the sonnet's question seems like it is never answered. The couplet answers *what* is bothering the speaker but fails to answer *why*. Instead, the reader is left with more questions by the end of the poem. For example: how can the "odor" of the stinkbug, particularly known for its strong scent when threatened, be "imperceptible"? Here, Hayes is critiquing the country's ability to be duped by the 45th president. Citizens will eventually feel the consequences of his election, and realize it happened "right under their noses." The language is once again direct. The use of "Yes, you" for example, seems to be accusatory and pointed, firm at the address of the stinkbug. Once again, Hayes leaves the reader with a feeling of not having enough and wanting more. The feeling of not having answers is in fact the conclusion that the reader is supposed to reach all along. This is the exasperation that the speaker feels because of the election. By using words like "lousy" (which also alludes to another sort of parasite, the louse) and "stinking" the poem seems to take a resigned, or even childish tone. This should not be taken as surrender, or as giving up in face of the circumstances. Rather, it is recognition that the desired solution is a long-shot.

In both poems, the death of the insect is explored as a means of achieving an end. For the speaker in Donne's poem, he hopes, "Let not to that, self-murder added be,/ And sacrilege, three sins in killing three" (2.17–18). The speaker in Donne's poem asks that his beloved not kill the flea, though we know by the conclusion of the poem that the beloved follows through with their intentions: "Just so much honor, when thou yield'st to me,/Will waste, as this flea's death took life from thee" (3.27–28). Ultimately then, the beloved chooses not to have sex with the lover. The speaker's request seems to be declined. Unlike in Donne, though, Hayes's speaker hopes for the death of the bug. He writes, "Should I fail in my insecticide, I pray for a black boy/Who lifts you to a flame with bedeviled tweezers/Until mercy rises & disappears" (Hayes 4–6). The Black boy of Hayes's sonnet *literally* sacrifices the stinkbug. This begs the questions: What does it mean for the Black boy to participate in this seemingly ritualistic experience? And why the need for sacrifice in the first place? By who and for whom? The message that the speaker conveys is clear though: he hopes that the president meets an untimely end. This "insecticide" connects to the idea of "homicide" or the murder of another human being. The speaker views this act as a necessary (and even righteous) sacrifice. Biblically, sacrifice is necessary for the cleansing, purification, or atonement of sins (Leviticus 9:3–4), as well as to bring peace.

It is interesting to note that while the sonnet stays true to the length of 14 lines, Hayes breaks from the sonnet tradition of writing in iambic pentameter. These rules would require Hayes to write in the pattern of stressed followed by unstressed syllables, with each line of verse being composed of five metrical feet. Hayes's metrical lines exceed this, and he writes in blank verse. These are characteristics of the American sonnet, which he articulates he is writing from the title. While it may seem ironic that Hayes writes within the confines of the 14 lines about an invasive and exponentially reproducing pest, it proves Hayes's ultimate point—that within the bounds of restrictive form, there can be a freedom or liberation. The sonnet has historically been represented as an exclusive form written by white men, despite the rich literary legacy that women, people of color, and other marginalized groups have contributed to it. Munn's research highlights the contributions of Claude McKay, Elinor Wylie, and Louise Bogan, amongst dozens of others as providing critical literary contributions in the development of the American Sonnet (Munn 62). In referencing Donne, Hayes's poetry builds then not only done in the Romantic-era, predominantly by white men who are traditionally cited, but also these writers who, at the turn of the 20th century, innovated the sonnet form for contemporary purposes.

Before compiling and formally publishing his sonnets into a book in summer 2018, Hayes shared his sonnets on websites, blogs, forums and on social media. I see these actions as active forms of resistance. Because the "insecticide" he calls for is a long-shot, Hayes's finds an alternative solution for resistance at the ballot box. Hayes finds through the act of writing and distributing this particular sonnet, and this series of them, that despite the (political and racial) boundaries placed on him, he can use the sonnet form as an allegory, for how one can call for change within the bounds of a system. The American sonnet is a way to raise awareness about a seemingly "imperceptible" problem—the 45th President. It acts as a critique of America and exposes the injustice he sees. By invoking the conceit of the pest, he is not merely alluding to the work of Metaphysical sonneteers like Donne before him, but strategically pointing the way forward. Everything the president, and his policies stand for, must be squashed, in order to save the nation.

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American Sonnet for My Past and Future Assassin ("Why are you bugging me . . .")

by Terrance Hayes

The full text of this poem can be found in the September 2017 issue of *Poetry* magazine. This issue can be found online at the following website: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/issue/143908/september-2017>.

The Flea by John Donne

Mark but this flea, and mark in this,
How little that which thou deniest me is;
It sucked me first, and now sucks thee,
And in this flea our two bloods mingled be;
Thou know'st that this cannot be said
A sin, nor shame, nor loss of maidenhead,
Yet this enjoys before it woo,
And pampered swells with one blood made of two,
And this, alas, is more than we would do.

Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare,
Where we almost, nay more than married are.
This flea is you and I, and this
Our marriage bed, and marriage temple is;
Though parents grudge, and you, w'are met,
And cloistered in these living walls of jet.
Though use make you apt to kill me,
Let not to that, self-murder added be,
And sacrilege, three sins in killing three.

Cruel and sudden, hast thou since
Purpled thy nail, in blood of innocence?
Wherein could this flea guilty be,
Except in that drop which it sucked from thee?
Yet thou triumph'st, and say'st that thou
Find'st not thy self, nor me the weaker now;
'Tis true; then learn how false, fears be:
Just so much honor, when thou yield'st to me,
Will waste, as this flea's death took life from thee.

“Rap Indígena”: *Linaje Originarios* and Indigenous Representation

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Abstract

The hip hop duo *Linaje Originarios*—comprised of cousins Bryan and Dario Tascón—challenges Colombian state notions of indigeneity and cultural memory by mobilizing hip hop music online. Over the past seven years, the Colombian president Juan Manuel Santos has promoted policies that seek to incorporate the native peoples of Colombia into the political discourse. Spearheaded by the Ministry of Culture, the administration has redesigned their policies and public image around the notion of preserving indigenous groups, in an attempt to include them as a part of a collective Colombian identity. The western state apparatus, however, by its very nature seeks to homogenize the populations it controls, therefore by including indigenous people within the political construct of Colombia’s current political discourse, the administration is reducing indigeneity to the past. Groups such as *Linaje Originarios* present contemporary notions of indigeneity through hip hop both live and online. The Tascón Brothers rap in their native language and dress, and create videos that mediate their experience; in this way, they are able to present their culture to a local audience while re-presenting performances to a global one. My project argues that internet hyperlink culture in tandem with the global appeal of hip hop creates spaces where indigenous identities might be represented outside of the western state apparatus. Further it seeks to demonstrate the ways that *Linaje Originarios* mobilizes their identity online through the combination of music, language, and visual media.

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Introduction

In January of 2017, *Linaje Originarios*—a Colombian hip hop duo comprising Bryan and Darion Tascón from Colombia—was featured on the popular LatinX social media platform MiTú¹ as a duo that preserves their indigenous, Emberá-Chamí language and traditions through hip hop (Molandes 2016). The group first started freestyling lyrics in their native Emberá language on the streets of their *resguardo* (reservation), Marcelino Tascón, after seeing the popularity of rappers freestyling with teenagers in Medellín. Initially, the duo was inspired to rap in their native language to reach younger generations who are disconnected from their culture. They credit the launching of their career as hip hop artists to the connections they made with members of a Medellín underground hip hop collective (Ramos 2016). Through their music videos, the group evokes and deploys the ancestral knowledges and memories in the environment around them to create, promote, and archive indigenous culture for younger generations.

To understand these complex relationships between identity, music, media, and activism, I highlight the ways in which *Linaje Originarios* uses the popularity of hip hop and digital distribution platforms like YouTube to create spaces that allow for the creation, preservation, and promotion of indigenous identities and communities. I demonstrate how the group’s music negotiates the cultural ethnocide caused by State sponsored nation building and environmental control.

To do so, this paper examines how the musical activism of *Linaje Originarios* co-opts the drive for Colombian nationalism to negotiate a more nuanced picture of indigenous identities. In post-war Colombia, indigenous communities must actively assert and perform their indigenous identities to fight against cultural erasure. Since 2010, the Colombian government, led by president Juan Manuel Santos and the minister of Culture Mariana Garcés Córdoba, has developed a campaign to unify the country under a national identity that reduces the plurality of indigenous identities into one category. While the campaign’s language of inclusivity seems promising, it also threatens to erase the complexities of indigenous identities and cultural practices under the promise of unification and peace by exploiting the public’s fear of continued violence.

This tension became the catalyst that prompted *Linaje Originarios* to deploy hip hop as a way to negotiate complex indigenous identities that draw and depend on the relationship between the environment, media, and ancestral knowledge. The Tascón cousins are acutely aware of the erasure of indigeneity, saying that “in some countries, they have already forgotten indigenous culture. They forgot how to speak the native language” (Ramos 2016).² The Emberá language has been losing speakers as a result of the displacement of Emberá from their communities. Since the origins

of Emberá language are oral, community separation leads to a break in the channels of linguistic transmission, and therefore the loss of the language through cultural erosion (Agirrebeitia and Pérez-Cauel 2017).³ The perceived disappearance of their own language is what led the members of *Linaje Originarios* to start freestyling rap music in their native language, as a way to engage the younger generations with Emberá language and culture (Ramos 2016).

In Colombia, there is a history of using rap and hip hop to self-fashion identity (Tickner 2008), and the global popularity of the genre has enticed companies such as Red Bull to sponsor Colombian hip hop collectives and festivals across the country. In fact, *Linaje Originarios* has performed at such festivals, and has gained thousands of viewers as a result. The popularity and accessibility of hip hop and YouTube has allowed the group to expand its original vision of finding new ways for young members of their community to engage with Emberá language. By releasing their lyrics in Spanish, the duo makes that vision available to multiple communities in Colombia and internationally, highlighting the complexities of indigenous culture in Latin America.⁴

Further, digital distribution platforms such as YouTube provide the ability to archive information that can be accessed any number of times so long as the video file remains online. For music groups like that of *Linaje Originarios*, this means that cultural information like their language and visual depictions of the environmental on which they depend—what Pietrobruno (2013) calls intangible heritage—can be preserved and reproduced to audiences at will. Here, the group's negotiation of indigenous identities is able to be deployed for nationalist movements while still maintaining indigenous communities' agency to define their own identities.

Linaje Originarios and Indigenous Resistance

Linaje Originarios is one example of how members of threatened communities resist oppression that is enacted through cultural and environmental destruction. Important elements of the Emberá identity are rooted in geography and the environment.⁵ For the members of *Linaje Originarios*, the importance of the environment extends beyond the naming of different ethnic divisions; in their most popular track, "El Candor Pasa,"⁶ the group explores the connection between indigenous communities and the environment by drawing attention to the ways in which the destruction of the environment parallels the decimation of indigenous culture:

In my mind, in my language, just reflection
I am singing, saying murmuring:
Our culture is in danger
And our mother earth and the animals also.
There is a danger to the water of life
That we consume and the ancestral spirit
That I have in my heart⁷

They go on to highlight the ancestral spirits that they interact with for healing:

They [ancestral spirits] give us the knowledge and the plants
With which we make healing remedies;
Healing is offered through
Conversation with the teacher
Chuma so that we can do it.
Emberá Chamí of the resguardo are singing it,
Our culture is in danger,
The resguardo of our ancestors that already have been.⁸

Here, the conversation between ancestral spirits, the deity Chuma, and the plants is what allows for the making of healing remedies, whether they be physical or spiritual. It is only through the dialogue between the environment, the Emberá-Chamí ancestors, and the deities of the natural world that the culturally specific healing remedies can be concocted. Further, the group shows that the Emberá-Chamí ancestors are also aware of the destruction of culture. Healing, then, takes on another meaning—cultural preservation—in which the group's hip hop is in conversation with the environment and the ancestral spirits, promoting the healing of Emberá culture. Hip hop serves as a gateway for younger generations of Emberá to be in conversation with the ancestral spirits and promote the "healing" of indigenous culture through the duo's engagement with ancestral knowledges to make the songs and videos that are then deployed to audiences both locally and online.

By using the story of *El Condor Pasa*, in which the sight of a condor flying overhead is a symbol of the mediation of knowledge from the spiritual realm to the corporeal world (Dorr 2018),⁹ the group engages all indigenous communities in the conversation with the environment, creating a community of peace and healing:

The Condor Passes, we give you thanks
For giving us strength
Indigenous Culture we are sharing
with you, my siblings,
and with thanks to the day and night
with the moon and the sun that give us strength.
y indigenous Colombian people
With the unity and peace that our mother gives us,
She gives us the teachings
To live united with people of other ethnicities,
So that are all not lacking the Condor.¹⁰

In this case, the strength that is being given is the strength of engaging with one's ancestral knowledge given by the passing of the Condor. *Linaje Originarios* use their music to promote the idea of unity and peace between all groups of people, where the main unifying factor is the strength and knowledge given by the ancestral spirits in the environment. In such a framework, their music and YouTube (or social media distribution networks in general) becomes the condor that mediates their message between elements of locality and internationality within the indigenous community, giving strength and unity. The music,

full of cultural information, uses these media distribution networks (the condor) to actively promote awareness of important cultural and environmental factors, while at the same time connecting with indigenous communities across South America, therefore seemingly fulfilling the State's view of the peaceful unification of a diverse nation.

Linaje Originarios mobilizes the visual aspect of performance to strengthen their message. In the video for *El Condor Pasa*, the group offers a window into what it is like to live as Emberá in Colombia. The duo is pictured rapping in their *resguardo* and the surrounding area (Figure 1) while wearing traditional Emberá attire, immediately linking the lyrics about Emberá and environmental relationships with a specific place and visual culture.



Figure 1. *Linaje Originarios* drumming and rapping amongst foliage.

The two are also often presented rapping in one video scene while another clip—usually of the environment, such as ants crawling or waterfalls amongst foliage, or some aspect of everyday Emberá life—is overlaid over the main frame. The people in the video are practicing smudging, a ceremonial cleansing through the burning of sage, and another ritual involving percussive instruments (Figure 2). Further, the video begins with a scene of brown sugar production, one of the agricultural labors in which they say they participate for most of the year (Figure 3). Given the importance of geography and place in Emberá ethnicity detailed above, the presentation of indigenous knowledge and ancestral spirits in the environment through the lyrics alongside the images of the group's home life codifies their music video as a representation of Emberá-Chamí identity. This more nuanced presentation of Emberá-Chamí identity allows the audience to see how indigenous culture and livelihood are tied to the environment, and thus, how catastrophic environmental destruction is for indigenous communities.



Figure 2. A clip of Darion Tascón rapping superimposed over a person smudging.



Figure 3. Bryan Tascón watching an older community member mixing brown sugar.

As the duo's videos gain more views domestically and abroad, the two cousins augment how they represent their cultural traditions and environmental settings. Their newest video, *Niños Conciencia* [*Conscience Children*] maintains the depictions of traditional clothing, Emberá rapping, and rituals involving the environment. The two rappers, now joined by a third member, MC Killer Liriko, are shown making music in a classroom, in various environmental spaces, and on the roads around their *resguardo*. Images of the landscape around them are enhanced by drone footage; several shots show the duo on a road and zoom out to show an overhead view of the surrounding mountains and forest, as well as fields of sugar cane, further situating the group in a specific place (Figure 4).



Figure 4. *Linaje Originarios* on the street with mountains in the background and a glimpse of sugar cane growing in the bottom right corner.

Similarly, the group is now husing higher quality cameras—as seen through an increase in frames per second and the option of higher resolution playback on YouTube—which may come from the record and film company whose logo opens the video. The duo is showing that, regardless of their success, they are dedicated to continuing Emberá culture and traditions through engaging younger generations in hip hop. The group places themselves amongst younger kids in the video who are dancing, participating in face painting, practicing environmentally based religious rituals, or simply just in the shots.

Often music technology plays a role in how these traditions are taking place. Several scenes depict a human-made clearing of moss-covered stone where two lines of people dressed in Emberá-Chamí attire are dancing to the music being produced live on a turntable by MC Killer Liriko (See Figure 5). Here, there is an explicit link between the new hip hop related technology and the traditions of Emberá ritual dance. While the laptop screen and turntables may not actually be making sound, the gesture of performing indigenous dancing with the aid of the duo's music is an undeniable connection between the duo's music making and the traditions of the Emberá-Chamí.



Figure 5. MC Killer Liriko Djing with *Emberá* children dancing; Bryan and Darion Tascón sit in the back rapping.

Further, the group is now recording their musical samples as opposed to downloading them from the internet. The YouTube description of *Niños Conciencias* says that the track uses rap in Emberá and Spanish, flutes and pan-flutes recorded by John Jairo Niaza, and other instruments recorded live.¹¹ The duo's music is situated within the sound and physical worlds of their *resguardo*. A quick Google search for John Jairo Niaza reveals his Facebook page with the full name John Jairo Tascón Niaza, who is an elder in the Marcelino Tason *resguardo*. The group, then, actively recreates the sound world that they understand and grew up with, engaging the sounded ancestral knowledges from their community in their musical archive of Emebrá indigeneity.

Niños Conciencias ends with two logos: one for the Organizacion Indigena de Antioquia (O.I.A) and one for Alcaldía (town hall) Valparaíso. The O.I.A is the governing body of the indigenous groups in the department of Antioquia that is "responsible for the political representation of the more than 212 indigenous communities of Antioquia, of the Embera Eyábida, *Emberá Chamí*, *Emberá Dóbida*, GunaDule, and Senú peoples of the department of Antioquia."¹² Their website further states that the organization is active in the project of resistance through the guiding principles of the indigenous groups: Unity, Earth, Culture and Autonomy. The website houses information about the indigenous peoples in Antioquia, news about political movements, and access to indigenous radio stations. Similarly, the website for the town hall is a similar center of political organization, with the town's anthem featured on the front page. The lyrics to this anthem describe the history and the amalgamation of peoples that make up Valparaíso, culminating in their motto "we are all Valparaíso."¹³ The duo is clearly in dialogue with these two organizations that promote the same unification, peace, and indigenous consciousness that the Ministry of Culture promotes.

Conclusion

On July 20, 2017, the pair performed a set including *El Condor Pasa*¹⁴ at an event organized by the Ministry of Culture; the event simultaneously celebrated the talent of young Colombians and the 207th anniversary of Colombian independence (Ministry of Culture 2016). The concert was attended by the Minister of Culture, who commented that "it is for them [i.e., the new generations of Colombians] that we have engaged in achieving peace. The concert was named 'Colombia Generacion T, de talento' and that is what perhaps best characterizes our young people, kids from every region of the country, of this diverse Colombia, full of entrepreneurship, creativity, and talent." Here, *Linaje Originarios* is co-opted and promoted by the state, legitimizing their message of the dangers facing indigenous people.¹⁵

Linaje Originarios' music still complies with the state definition of diversity and unity, because the duo states that they want their music to be about peace and indigenous culture, not about violence and drugs (Ramos 2016);¹⁶ this attitude lines up with the State's and public's desires to move away from the drug wars the nation has seen in the past. Further, the group can be seen as manifesting the State's desire to be a "creative Colombia," because diversity is addressed through the creation of new media about Emberá culture rather than through violence against those who oppress indigenous people.

On the other hand, YouTube also allows the duo to create a cultural artifact that can be preserved and presented by the State for their unification project, while still highlighting the issues of cultural and environmental destruction that the Emberá face, allowing the group to co-opt the State's agenda and use it to spread their cultural activism through electronic media. In combination with the group's rhetoric on indigenous language engagement in younger communities, their music shifts responsibility toward indigenous communities, and not the State, for preserving their language by those among them who have lost interest. *Linaje Originarios* produces music, then, that is situated within the dialogue of nationalism and indigenous identity in two ways: first, as an intangible object of cultural heritage that can be seen, heard, and distributed for the purpose of nation building, and second, as a younger generation bringing new definitions to what indigeneity means to the people of Colombia, Antioquia, Valparaíso, and the *resguardo* Marcelino Tascón.

Endnotes

- 1 <https://wearemitu.com/about/> MiTú is a social media platform invested in youth at the intersection of Latinx and American identities; this is how they describe their mission: "mitú engages our audience through a Latino POV across multiple platforms. our inspiration is 'the 200%'—youth who are 100% American and 100% Latino. we reach a massive, cross-cultural audience who will soon be the majority of youth in the U.S. [. . .] latinos are key to unlock the power of american youth. mitú saw the future first. we started a company 5 years ago inspired by this change. we can help you ride this wave better than anybody else by being the only digital first media company powered by technology that empowers and gives voice to young latinos." [all lower-case, their own]
- 2 "En otros países ya olvidaron a los indígenas. Olvidaron cómo se habla la lengua indígena."
- 3 Agirrebeitia and Pérez-Cauarel discuss the imminent loss of Emberá and an education reform that would teach Emberá as a written language in schools.
- 4 *Linaje Originarios* is one example in a recent trend of *Rap Originario*, an emergent type of rap music in which young people rap in their indigenous language about their customs and traditions. Perhaps the clearest sign of the of this trend's momentum is the recent conference on Rap Originario; called "Honrando la Palabra" [Honoring the Word], the conference took place on November 9th through the 11th of 2018, and will feature twenty artists from across Mexico who rap in their respective indigenous languages. <https://www.somoselmedio.com/2018/10/28/realizaran-primer-encuentro-de-rap-originario-honrando-la-palabra/>.

- 5 There are the *Eyebida* (people of the mountain), *Dobida* (people of the river), and *Pusabida* (people of the sea). Other regional identities such as the *Emberá-Chamí* and the *Emberá-Katio* are named for their community's place of origin. See: World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples: <https://minorityrights.org/minorities/embera/>.
- 6 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Q68wBc4naQ>.
- 7 The group releases their lyrics translated from Emberá to Spanish. I have translated the Spanish versions into English for the purpose of this paper. "En mi mente, en mi palabra, solo reflexión/le estoy cantando, diciendo murmurando/nuestra cultura/hay que cuidar/y nuestra madre tierra y los animales también/hay que cuidar y el agua de la vida/que nosotros consumimos y del espíritu ancestral/en mi corazón lo tengo."
- 8 "Ellos nos dieron la conciencia y las plantas/que con nosotros conversamos para a hacer curación/Sanación les está brindando o esto es así que con el maestro/Chuma también lo hacemos. /Emberá Chamí del Resguardo le están cantando/nuestra cultura hay que cuidar/El Resguardo de nuestros antepasados que ya se fueron."
- 9 *El Condor Pasa* became well known in 1913 after Spanish ethnologist Daniel Alomía Robles arranged the traditional Andean melody for a zarzuela, or Spanish lyric drama, and has since become one of the most widely recognized South American Folk songs.
- 10 "El condor pasa, gracias te damos nosotros que nos da la fuerza/ Cultura indígena estamos mostrando y también a ustedes mis hermanos/ y con gracias en el día y en la noche con la luna y el sol que nos da la fuerza/ Mi pueblo Colombia indígena con mucha alianza y paz/ que nos da nuestra madre, ella nos da la enseñanza/ Para que vivamos unidos y con las personas de otras etnias/ a ustedes nos les falte el condor."
- 11 From the YouTube description: "Les presentamos el mas reciente sencillo y video del grupo de rap y hip hop linaje originarios, (rap en lengua embera chami). Pero esta vez quisimos hacer algo diferente y para todo el publico y seguidores, esta vez lanzamos esta cancion titulada, "niños conciencia" el cual tiene una mezcla de rap, flautas (grabada por jhon jairo niaza), sampona y otros instrumentos grabados en vivo, acompañado de un mensaje y rapeo en lengua embera, y traducido al español. Con un mensaje muy particular y de conciencia el cual va dedicada a nuestros niños originarios (y para todos nuestros seguidores) esperamos que lo disfruten, se lo gozen y lo puedas compartir por todas las redes sociales y nos regales un like y te suscribas a nuestro canal y redes sociales. Muchas gracias por el apoyo, linaje originarios."
- 12 "La Organización Indígena de Antioquia, reivindica la integridad de los derechos humanos y étnicos, busca que las comunidades indígenas del departamento logren el pleno ejercicio de éstos para el buen vivir y para el fortalecimiento de los Planes de Vida Comunitarios, del proyecto de resistencia y la pervivencia cultural de los cinco Pueblos Indígenas de Antioquia/Antioquia, a través de los cinco principios rectores del Movimiento Indígena: Unidad, Tierra, Cultura y Autonomía."
- 13 "Somos Todos Valparaíso."
- 14 Colombian Government. Ministerio de Cultura (2017) Con talento joven MinCultura celebra el 20 julio en Pamplona. From the Ministry of Culture: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9HnUUZnpNd0>.
- 15 Another song at the same performance by Linaje Originarios: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYAb4Le8eSI>.
- 16 "El rap también tiene mensajes positivos. Hay un rap que habla de drogas y violencia, pero en nuestro caso queremos concientizar al mundo entero."

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BLACK F[you]tures: Time Travel and Worldmaking in Dystopian Nonfiction

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Abstract

This paper defines “dystopian nonfiction” through a dystopian reading of Elaine Brown’s autobiography *A Taste of Power*. In particular, this research discusses new ways of reading autobiographical genres that have often been thought of exclusively in terms of “realism” and the way in which ideas of what is “utopian” and what is “dystopian” are themselves differently valued in racialized terms. Samuel Delany defines genres as ways of reading in *Generic Protocols* and D. Scott Miller theorizes the “past-future” in *Afro-Surrealist Manifesto*; together these concepts form the theoretical framework for this research. Time-travel is the thematic departure from reality in the close reading of *A Taste of Power*. Time-travel here refers to the way Black women navigate the relationship between spatiotemporality and racial construction in the built environments to which they travel and from where they depart. The African-American experience is always real, but past. The dystopia is always in the future, but unreal. Dystopian nonfiction is the present and it is real and it is black.

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In a time marked by increased interest in dystopias, evidenced by George Orwell’s 1984 sudden resurgence as a bestseller, the HBO remake of *Fahrenheit 451* and Hulu’s *Handmaid’s Tale*, Angelica Jade Bastien ponders “why don’t dystopias know how to talk about race?” She continues, “the genre hyper-consumes the narratives of people of color—which read as allegories for slavery and colonialism—yet remains starkly white and often refuses to acknowledge race altogether.” The hyper-consumption of Black narratives and refusal to acknowledge race within the dystopia genre, a subgenre of science fiction highlighting issues with the broader genre as a whole, are symptomatic of colorblindness, cultural hegemony, and appropriation. The aim of this

essay is to define “dystopian non-fiction” through a dystopian reading of Elaine Brown’s autobiography. The conventional lenses for approaching texts such as Elaine Brown’s *A Taste of Power* are autobiography and memoir. As will be demonstrated later in this paper, Elaine Brown’s story isn’t an exceptional case of Black experience as dystopic; rather it is a familiar and exemplary one. Elaine Brown was the highest-ranking woman in the Black Panther Party (BPP). While BPP co-founder Huey Newton was in exile, she served as the Minister of Information of the international organization. I argue that dystopian readings of the autobiographical works of Black women activists is necessary to highlight and address the inherent linear temporality of the dystopia genre as problematic specifically as it pertains to the lived reality of marginalized people and the implications of such.¹

Theoretical Framework

Sheryl Vint explains that “traditional claims about what ‘counts’ as speculative fiction (sf) should be understood as tending to exclude the perspective and experience of peoples of color” and continues “as much as realism is insufficient for representing African-American experience of the past, the dominant conventions of science fiction are insufficient for representing and African-American vision of the future (241). This tendency to exclude the ‘perspectives and experiences of peoples of color’ within a genre is a tendency to erase the possibilities of people of color in the future. Erasure from the future is, at once, a result of dishonest and irresponsible engagement with history and indicative of implicit racism that further marginalizes people of color. Can this erasure and exclusion be understood as anything other than implicit racial superiority? The white subconscious asserts “only the strong will survive” and white supremacy affirms that the superior white race will inhabit the future alone.

Moreover, this exclusion and erasure reflects the stratification of racial worlds that currently does exist and has been a mainstay in American history. The homogeneity of white spaces afforded through de jure and de facto segregation does not demand that white people honestly reckon with the ‘colored realities’ outside of their world. In *Playing in the Dark* Toni Morrison explains that “White authors exercise privilege in writing of whiteness in a way that suggests it is both abstract and universal. The tendency of white writers to write about a world free from issues of race while using a racially inflected language makes it possible to unread race in American literature” (18). This un-reading of race in a society to which race is inextricably connected and weaponized is dangerous and has resulted in the erasure of people of color from the collectively imagined future.

Can Black women activists' narratives be read as dystopian nonfiction? Black experience transcends space and time and by extension genre. So, what is the function of genre in literature as it relates to black storytelling? Dystopian nonfiction proposes a way of reading that does not fall into the trap of assuming a future in science fiction or a past in realism. It does not allow these assumptions to confine or erase the black experience. Black experience transcends the ways in which genre has functioned. Neither of these notions of time, past in realism or future in science fiction, capture the juxtapositions.

Necessarily, Afrofuturism as a literary genre and aesthetic is the outgrowth of critiques on the limitations and exclusions of Black worlds and futures in the dominant discourse of science and speculative fiction. It disrupts, challenges and otherwise transforms those futures with fantastic stories that, as Ruth Mayer puts it, "move seamlessly back and forth through time and space, between cultural traditions and geographic time zones and thus between blackness as a dystopic relic of the past and as a harbinger of a new and more promising alien future" (556). Still however, in Afro-futuristic writing the Black experience is confined to the realms of the past and future in stories that read as eerily familiar to a Black present and yet unreal, 'alien' and imagined. As a response to the harmful exclusions of Black perspectives and experiences the work done by writers and thinkers within Afro-futurism is valid and necessary in considering questions of who creates and exists in the future, but further analysis of when the future takes place and its alien, imagined nature must be explored.

Afro-surrealism is the result of critiques of the linear temporality and the distance created between the worlds of our making and the world in which we live. Amiri Baraka, as cited by D. Scott Miller, describes Henry Dumas' 1974 book *Ark of Bones and Other Stories* as demonstrating "skill at creating an entirely different world organically connected to this one. . . . The Black aesthetic in its actual and contemporary and lived life" (Miller). This description becomes the basis for D. Scott Miller's *Afrosurreal Manifesto*. Expounding upon Baraka's formulation of Afro-surreal Expressionism, Miller explains the necessary movement beyond the aims of Afrofuturism: "Afro-futurism is a diaspor[ic] intellectual and artistic movement that turns to science, technology and science fiction to speculate on Black possibilities in the future. Concentration camps, bombed-out cities, famines, and enforced sterilization have already happened. . . . What is the future? The future has been around so long it is not the past" (Miller). These fantastic futures have already occurred. The dominant narratives of the dystopic future are mere re-formulations of our past. This reiteration of the past termed as the future, perhaps, has some purpose as a cautionary tale on human tendency to repeat the past if the

lessons of the past are not learned and applied to the present. Future imagined in this way is a blueprint of what not to do and is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish from past and present as a result.

Reading the narratives of Black women in the BPP as dystopian non-fiction suggests that these authors do not imagine Black dystopias, their lived experiences are the Black dystopias. Asserting that the lived experiences of Black women are dystopic challenges the function of dystopic futures and the temporality of the Black experience in literature. It cannot be relegated to the past, it is not contrary to reality, and it is re-valued as the place from which constructions of a future that has not already happened must be imagined.

Robert Heinlein defines speculative fiction as stories in which "the action takes place in a culture that never existed, a world we know nothing of, or an earth that might have been or might be" that "take place in a setting contrary to known reality" (219). This concept of known reality is subjective, though, and relies on a set of exclusions. Popular sci-fi franchise *The Hunger Games*, for example, produces a known reality based on appropriation. The projection of the future thus is simultaneously produced by exclusions and reproducing exclusions. Defining speculative fiction in this way explains the simultaneous exclusion of Black voices and experiences from white conceptions of dystopic futures in which white people experience the oppression that is the past and lived reality of Black people.

The Black world plagued by the effects of systemic oppression as a result of white supremacist capitalist hetero-patriarchy is foreign and 'contrary to known reality' from which the white literary imagination writes and therefore becomes the space colonized by white conceptions of the future. Black experiences of the present are never imagined and always displaced. Considering nonfictional texts as dystopias however forces us to confront the fact that the state of national and world affairs is, in fact, as dire as we think, if not worse. Dystopian non-fiction builds on the claim of Afro-surrealism that "all 'others' who create from their actual lived experiences are surreal" (Miller).

Moreover, Gene Jarret discusses social realism as the privileged mode of reading autobiographical works, laying the foundation for the critical analysis of the privileged relationship of social realism to truth. Realism displaces the narratives and experiences of Black women into science fiction and African-American fiction. Both science fiction and realism displace the black experience of reality. Dystopian non-fiction forces us to rethink our modes of reading. Samuel Delany explains "a genre, to the extent that it can be said to exist as genre, is constituted of a way of reading" ("Generic Protocols" 176). Further, "In mundane fiction,

any expression at odds with a given normal world picture becomes information about the internal state of the character observing the world. In SF, we must retain the margin for reading every expression away from a given norm as informing us not about the fictive character so much as it informs us about organization of the fictive world” (“Generic Protocols”177). This explanation of genre as a way of reading allows for a fluidity that enables us to utilize genre as a tool for experiencing diverse meanings. In nonfiction, as in mundane fiction, these odd expressions are read as informational about the internal state of the characters, but something interesting happens when we retain the margin for reading these expressions as information about the organization of a different world rather than a fictive world.

Close Reading of *A Taste of Power*

An application of Delany’s notes on reading between fictive and different worlds structures the basis of this close reading. For example, consider this passage from Elaine Brown’s *A Taste of Power* in the opening pages of the work as she introduces the setting of her childhood: “York street was buried in the heart of the Black section of North Philadelphia. Its darkness and its smells of industrial dirt and poverty permeated and overwhelmed everything. There were always piles of trash and garbage in the street that never moved except by force of wind, and then only from one side of the street to the other. . . . Rusted streetcar tracks from another time, a time when people who were alive occupied the territory, ran up and down York Street” (19). York Street “buried in the heart of the Black section of North Philadelphia” is an underground dwelling for the Black underclass. Brown describes “rusty streetcar tracks from another time, a time when people who were alive occupied the territory, ran up and down York Street” which forces the reader to ponder if the people in this time are no longer alive, what are they? The quality of being alive is connected to conscious existence. The existence of the people in the community where Brown finds herself is unconscious. The position and ever-presence of trash as a marker of time in this place, as opposed to the natural seasons further implies the lifelessness here. The “rusty streetcar tracks from another time” are surviving relics of the golden age of booming American industrial towns. The white utopian future exists above ground and is quite literally born of the technological advancement that lead to the systemic dismantling of the industrial past.

The dystopian reading of the above passage reveals departures from reality and affirms the possibility and value of reading this text for new meaning. This acknowledgment of different worlds requires us to consider the extent to which interaction is possible and takes place between

them. For this, I turn to Sheryl Vint’s analysis of Octavia Butler’s use of the fantastic and the realist modes in *Kindred*, which highlights the way in which fusion of past and present forces the reader to acknowledge the story as both having happened and happening in our reality (241). This fusion of the past and present forces us to remember the past and honestly engage with the present as a pre-requisite for discussing and imagining the possibilities of the future. Even the way time-travel, a convention of science fiction, is employed throughout the novel is radical in that it attempts not to change the past, but to respect it, understand it and reckon with its implications in the present moment. Time-travel, here, is much more than a means to escape, it is a tool, a lens through which the protagonist and readers alike can see themselves across the time continuum.

Similarly, Elaine Brown is an almost-passing time traveler between the Black dystopian past and the white utopian future. Initially, her time travel happens as a result of being summoned into the white utopian future, overtime however, she learns to command control of time travel with development of her consciousness. Brown is invited to witness the white utopian future in her privileged educational experiences. Through the relationships she develops within these experiences, she gains access into more intimate and private white spaces. She is invited into and allowed this access because she is not like other coloreds. She is nevertheless colored and never a part of the white utopia, only a witness to it. She attempts to escape Blackness, but upon returning to the African-American Dystopian past, the destitute York Street, North Philadelphia ’hood the very blackness that she attempts to escape is what she must reconnect with to survive. There is no acknowledgment of the self that exists in between the two worlds, that exists in the present. This realization of self and commitment to embracing the “in-between,” existing and transforming the Black present comes with adulthood. As a member and the leader of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense in the Black present Brown exists in and works to create “the Black nation” with a new agency to move between various worlds in support of the Party’s Black nationalist aims.

Brown confides: “Whatever my out-of-the-ghetto, white-is-right confusions, their friendship was home, the place where people wait for you to return from flights of fancy. . . . As white schoolmates had stopped offering me a place in their sun, however I talked and behaved, I had stopped seeking it, time and circumstance sending us to our proper corners” (44). In this passage Brown refers to her ability and willingness to perform whiteness, hence almost passing, as that which allows her access to the white utopian future world, the “place in their sun.” She continues “time and circumstance sending us to our proper corners” which maintains the concept of time as something over which she

has no control, and yet it inevitably dictates what is possible in her world. This is a microcosm for the larger generic argument of this paper on the way that literary possibilities can be maneuvered through critical conversations on linear temporality, more specifically when the future takes place and how our understanding of the past affects this.

Passing historically refers to an escape from the ills of anti-black racism, Brown however is unable to ever fully escape blackness. No matter how expert her performance of whiteness, vestiges of her blackness remain, and she must return to her reality, her world. To read this return to reality solely as an internal affair, is to read the grandeur of whiteness as illusory. This is not so and the physical experience of being transported to and from these worlds is expounded upon here as Brown writes “I realized I had almost escaped the memory. . . . I felt dizzy from being slammed so hard against my reality. *If you black, git back, way back*” (87). Prior to Brown’s forceful reminder of her Blackness in the Las Vegas beauty salon as she is refused service, as is the case on all her trips with lover Jay Kennedy, the couple provide an escape for each other from the restrictions and constraints of both of their worlds. The insular space created within their relationship though is destroyed by this reminder of her blackness and it becomes clear to Brown that she can no longer attempt to escape this experience.

Brown’s experiences time traveling represent a schism and possibility. The actual worlds we live in are constructed by facts that are fabricates. Knowing and understanding as no more a matter of finding than of making. Evidenced through the implementation and impact of survival programs in Black urban ghettos across the country, the BPP was actively engaged in worldmaking, specifically utilizing their agency to create a new world in which they could thrive. They recognized the world they presently lived in was the world that had been constructed for them and into which they had been confined. The worldmaking acts of the BPP are its community survival programs, over twenty of which operated nationwide, including liberation schools, cooperative housing, medical clinics, pioneering sickle cell anemia research, free prison commissary and bussing programs.

As Brown is lead to community work by Beverlee Bruce in the opening of the chapter titled *Getting Black*, we see Brown begin to understand the national crises of anti-black racism in urban America. As her consciousness raises she claims “We needed a world in which to grow, a new and better arrangement where little black girls like us could blossom and live on equal footing with other human beings, no stuffed away in Watts or North Philadelphia, which were the same place” (Brown 101). She calls for the creation of an entirely new world, not mere interventions in the present, where “black girls like us could blossom,” implying

that maturation toward self-actualization and growth, more generally, through the full natural life cycle is impossible for black girls in the space between consciousness (Brown 101). This further emphasizes the unnatural and problematic state of Black urban ghettos and affirms the need for revolution in that life for black people exists beyond the white supremacist capitalist hetero-patriarchy.

As the resolution of the memoir draws nearer and Brown has ascended to the highest leadership position within the party, she reflects “The City Center, the new housing, the school were being built, the police and the drug dealers had been pushed back. Our bank accounts were swelling. Everything was behind us. Everything was before us” (447). This is a major shift from her observations of the state of the Black community, others and her own, that we witness in the opening of the memoir. “Everything was behind us. Everything was before us” implies a sense of time, and more importantly the characteristics of life are now present in the lives of Black people. Awakening, consciousness, and an awareness of agency even if they have not yet created a new world, have created new possibilities and this restores the fullness of life.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has sought to address the issue with the historical tendency to relegate blackness to the past and understand dystopian as future and unreal. The close reading of Brown’s work demonstrates the potential and necessity to reconsider the inherent linear temporality of autobiographical and sf genres. The future is a highly racialized social construct in that it is produced out of understandings of the past and present and must be confronted as a social construction that is invariably problematic through which understandings of the world are at play. Both memory and constructions of the future have been weaponized in the continued oppression of people of color globally. The importance of this research lies in its assertion that the only real futures come from an honest reckoning with who we are and how we came to be. Which stories are told and how those stories are read can have grave political consequences. I have preliminarily defined “dystopian non-fiction” as that which is real and ever-present. Dystopian non-fiction, as a genre, is a way of reading the world which is critical of the distance in time and from truth manifest in traditional dystopian writing, is critical of linear temporality and the erasure of peoples and truths from the past, present, and future, and purports that human solutions to human issues can be revealed in this lifetime.

Endnote

- 1 This paper is a part of a larger project where, in addition to my treatment of Elaine Brown's memoir, I conduct dystopian readings of the autobiographical works of Assata Shakur and Erika Huggins, other women members of the BPP.

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Spiritual Activism in Latinx Young Adults: The Influence of Aesthetics and Social Media

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Abstract

Spiritual activism, a spirituality for social justice, coined by the scholar, Gloria Anzaldúa, is flourishing among Latinx young adults who are shifting towards a spirituality that uplifts their activism, challenging patriarchy/machismo, respectability politics, and white supremacy. The central research question is: How are Latinx young adults engaging in spiritual activism through aesthetics and social media? Latinx brands, such as Hija de tu Madre, employ style as resistance with clothes and media platforms to create a body-positive, spiritual infused community. The rise of Latinx social media is a form of alternative knowledge sharing, specifically the podcast Locatora Radio sharing femme-centered narratives and resources. Changes in Latinx young adult spirituality and cultural productions calls for reshaping the study of Latinx religion and focusing on Los Angeles as a spiritual activist hub.

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Introduction

A gender non-binary Latinx young adult, Salina Zazueta-Beltrán, with the Instagram handle @salinala feminista, adorned with bright blue eyeshadow, multiple gold hoop earrings, and a heart tattoo on their left temple, posts a selfie wearing a tube top with a portrait of Jesus Christ.¹ The caption pleads for Salina's 21k followers to defend the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program by signing a petition and contacting their senators. Instagram posts by Latinx young adults wearing clothing with religious images accompanied with captions about the influence of spirituality and activism in their life are a recent phenomenon growing in popularity within digital spaces.

Latinx young adults are increasingly leaving institutional religious structures, especially Catholicism, and identifying as more spiritual than religious.² This phenomenon calls for new scholarship focusing on alternative spiritualities. For the queer Chicana scholar-activist, Gloria Anzaldúa, her writings on spirituality, particularly spiritual activism, are at the forefront of the changing Latinx religious landscape. Spiritual activism is "spirituality that recognizes the many differences among us, yet insists on our commonalities and uses these commonalities as catalysts for transformation" through the development of personal and communal care.³ Focusing on the "interconnections among body, mind, and spirit" is crucial to spirituality, as opposed to religion in which the body, mind, and spirit are often split.⁴ Activism entails "engaging in healing work . . . creating spaces and times for healing to happen, *espacios y tiempos* to nourish the soul."⁵ Furthermore, Anzaldúa asserts that "spirituality is oppressed people's only weapon and means of protection. Changes in society only come after that."⁶ The ability to develop one's spirituality is significant in combating personal and societal marginalization.

Primarily based in Los Angeles, a "religiously multicultural and spiritually hybrid cit[y]," Latinx spiritual activist communities thrive aesthetically and on social media, forming "newer, socially relevant, and trendsetting forms of both art making and new religiosities."⁷ In order to delve into the Latinx spiritual activism in Los Angeles, I employed qualitative research methods consisting of close visual and textual analysis of social media posts, in addition to conducting semi-structured interviews with the spiritual activist leaders for the purpose of gaining their in-depth personal insight regarding their experiences and labor in advocating for activist-engaged spiritualities. Young Latinxs, especially women and femmes, are reclaiming spirituality by challenging both the conservative, Eurocentric mainstream and the heteropatriarchal, *machista* Latinx strains of religion. Searching for community and spirituality led by women of color, Latinxs are "demonstrating that women [and femmes] can and ought to pursue their own approaches to engage with the Divine."⁸ Through interviews with Patty Delgado of the Latinx brand Hija de tu Madre, popular for custom-made denim jackets with full-back sequin patches of Our Lady of Guadalupe called *Virgencita* jackets, and the co-hosts of the "Radiophonic Novela," the podcast Locatora Radio, Diosa Femme and Mala Muñoz, I seek to provide insight on how Latinxs mix their aesthetic and online networks to create innovative spiritualities rooted in social change. By curating Latinx aesthetics and social media committed to social justice, Hija de tu Madre's use of Guadalupe and Instagram to forge Latinx representation and Locatora Radio's public sharing of femme-centered knowledge to address trauma, demonstrate the power of cultural productions in advocating for Latinx spiritualities.

Hija de tu Madre: *Virgencita's Got Your Back*

Created in November 2016, the name Hija de tu Madre (Daughter of your Mother) reclaims the use of a pejorative slang phrase by not playing into the gender constructs of the “good” daughter role. In my interview with the founder of Hija de tu Madre, Patty Delgado, she shared her desire to “create apparel that is the perfect depiction of my cultural intersection” began when she made a *Virgencita* jacket, a denim jacket with a large sequin patch of the Virgin of Guadalupe, the mestiza Virgin Mary believed to have miraculously appeared outside Mexico City in 1531, who is a central figure being reclaimed as a feminist and decolonial image in Latinx spiritualities.⁹ Asking, “What’s more American than denim? And what’s more Mexican than la Virgen de Guadalupe?” Delgado addresses the aesthetic implications of U.S. Latinidad.¹⁰ Delgado does not identify as religious, but is “into my own magic, that type of spirituality.”¹¹ By sharing her spiritual journey through Hija de tu Madre’s social media accounts, Delgado is able to “have those conversations online and feel accepted. I don’t have to worry about the judgment or the shame that comes with threatening a Catholic upbringing.”¹² This sense of disgrace is a common sentiment experienced by Latinxs who are mixing various spiritual practices given the colonial foundations of Catholicism in Latin America transported to the U.S. Patty Delgado describes that in Los Angeles, “Chicana religion works like a buffet, people pick and choose what works for them. It’s more functional.”¹³ This mixing of religious and spiritual practices is increasingly popular among Latinx young adults.

In the activist realm, Hija de tu Madre maintains a constant focus on current social and political issues. When asked about the application of spiritual activism in Hija de tu Madre, Delgado agreed that spiritual activism “is more implied. . . . I’m trying to create and curate different representations of Latinidad.” For Delgado, “value number one would be inclusivity” because she believes that “creating representation is a form of activism.”¹⁴ Hija de tu Madre does not claim to represent all Latinas and Latinxs, yet the brand is creating a space for identity formation. Delgado asserts that “redefining this narrative [of Latinidad] is a spiritual practice because it is related to self-care and how we see and feel about each other.”¹⁵ As a spiritual activist, Patty Delgado is creating aesthetic and spiritual avenues of identity development that are crucial to everyday survival. Many Latinx young adults are active in bringing about the values of inclusivity and representation that Hija de tu Madre proclaims.

Hija de tu Madre has shifted from solely being a Latinx brand to an empowering online community and more recently, a showroom in the Mariachi Plaza of Boyle

Heights where events commonly take place.¹⁶ Delgado states that “the more inclusive I become of these different identities, the greater bond I create with my followers. There’s this intimacy being created and this acceptance and a dialogue being shared that is a form of spirituality, like an internet spirituality. It’s a safe space.”¹⁷ That the “community exists online is so radical and revolutionary” because Hija de tu Madre is leading work on social issues that affect the Latinx community, such as immigration, body positivity, and spirituality.¹⁸ Since the election of Trump, aesthetic pieces “screaming cultural identity without having to say anything” have been in high demand.¹⁹ Instead of hiding from Trump and his supporters, Latinxs are reactively flexing their Latinidad as protest. Further in the interview with Delgado, she acknowledges the:

privilege that I can wear these giant hoops and they say Bruja on them. I can’t wear this in my parents’ small town in Mexico . . . in this very L.A. Latinx, Mexican American context, I can wear these things that are stigmatized in Latin America, but feel accepted. I can feel like I’m proclaiming my own magic and my own spirituality.²⁰

Wearing hoop earrings that state “Bruja” (Witch) or “Fuck Trump” are acts of performance, but it is not enough to just wear the aesthetics to be an activist. In Los Angeles, a global city facing countless urban problems, such as gentrification, homelessness, and police violence, Latinxs active in Hija de tu Madre are on the frontlines of community activism, both online and on the streets of the City of Angels.

When asked about the significance of La Virgen de Guadalupe, Delgado expressed that “La Virgen defies borders. Her image is international . . . she’s constantly crossing borders.”²¹ This act of border crossing is significant in the reclaiming of Guadalupe, which is central to Latinx aesthetics:

as a transnational icon, not only for crossing east/west, precolonial/postcolonial borders, but also for rethinking history from the vantage point of borderlands that resist the constraint of such locations and identities. ‘In the flesh,’ the Virgin is a mestiza who honors the Chicana body, builds alliances with the colonized and seeks social justice both at home and abroad.²²

The embodiment of literally wearing *La Virgen* on your back, which Anzaldúa refers to as a bridge in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, connects Latinx aesthetics to the theories of Latinx scholars.²³ In creating a “her-story” for Guadalupe, Latinxs are taking Guadalupe back from the colonization by Catholic Church.

Locatora Radio: Brown Girl Hour

Also launched in November 2016, Locatora Radio, a play on the Spanish words *loca* (crazy) and *locutor* (radio announcer), releases *capítulos* referred to as “brown girl hour” in which co-hosts Mala Muñoz and Diosa Femme, “make space for the exploration and celebration of the experiences, brilliance, creativity, and legacies of femmes and womxn of color.”²⁴ So far, Locatora Radio has released 55 *capítulos*. The *capítulo* topics range from activism, aesthetics, femme defense, interviews with prominent Latinxs, *loca* epistemologies, self-care, sexuality, spirituality, to survivor narratives. In addition to producing the podcast and managing multiple social media accounts, Diosa and Mala constantly lead events throughout the U.S. and especially in Los Angeles, from being keynote speakers at universities, hosting workshops, and “femmeceeing” celebrations. Locatora Radio is one of the most popular Latinx podcasts, which is significant in challenging traditional means of knowledge production.

In an interview with Mala and Diosa, they shared about the role of Locatora Radio as a Latinx podcast and the influence of religion, spirituality, and aesthetics.²⁵ As local L.A. Latinas involved in the community, Diosa and Mala’s podcast has an authenticity lacking in content targeting Latinx audiences, yet not made by Latinxs. Locatora Radio is a popular Latinx podcast because the content is “intentional and original . . . our stories resonate.”²⁶ At the center of Locatora Radio, “is flipping power dynamics and taking traditional narratives, especially narratives in which women of color are stigmatized and it has something to do with sex and sexuality,” which is key to “finding the survivor narrative in those kind of demonized histories.”²⁷ Locatora Radio is more than a podcast, but also YouTube videos, social media accounts, and in-person events for “reimagining the *novela* as a community space.”²⁸ The people listening to Locatora Radio, referred to as Locatoras and Locamores, are mainly young Latinxs, “either undergrads or grad students. They are somewhere in their academic career . . . our content is academic, but accessible.”²⁹ As a result, Locatora Radio often enters academic spaces, workshops, keynotes, assigned class material, or student theses/dissertations.

The discourse surrounding Locatora Radio is one of reclaiming, especially delving into spirituality and healing. Mala and Diosa do not claim to be brujas or healers and hope that the podcast serves as “a stepping stone of spirituality.”³⁰ Both Diosa and Mala were raised Roman Catholic and attended local Catholic schools. For Diosa, “I always felt I didn’t identify with Catholicism. As a queer person, there is a disconnect from the Catholic Church. I could not be a practicing Catholic even if I wanted to be, you know what I mean?”³¹ For Mala, “the policing surveillance of our bodies” during Catholic school turned her away.³² She is “trying to

figure what actually works. What do I actually believe in? Where am I not going to be sex shamed and dissuaded from living my best life?”³³ The seeking for a spirituality that is free from sexual trauma and works towards healing is a desire that resonates with many Locatoras.

Locatora Radio illuminates spiritual activism by bringing about judgement-free discussions on spirituality and sharing resources for Locatoras to learn more about spiritual practices. The increasing use of Christianity by white supremacists in the U.S., where “whiteness and white supremacy uses God as a weapon. It makes sense to use our spiritualities as a shield and tool in our own way.”³⁴ In order to arm ourselves, Latinx young adults are not being complacent with religion. Mala states that if you are “being shamed into watering yourself down or changing yourself” for a religion, you do not have to stay.³⁵ The process of turning away from institutional religions in Latinx cultures is difficult because Christianity and Catholicism are built into the cultural and familial structures. However, dismantling the stigma around leaving Christianity, especially Catholicism, is happening online. These discussions are often difficult to have with family members; online platforms are crucial for Latinxs who are contemplating stepping out of Christianity and/or Catholicism.

Another crucial facet to the activism of Locatora Radio is aesthetics. By placing “power and value in femininity,” Diosa and Mala intentionally challenge notions of professionalism.³⁶ Instead of playing into respectability politics, “we’re going to adorn ourselves with our hoops, with our hair, with our make-up, with our lipstick.”³⁷ For Mala, “a lot of what we do is an extended performance art, from the Locatora IG page itself to our own personal Instagram pages.”³⁸ Diosa adds that this performance is a “heightened version of us.”³⁹ Since “clothing for women is still extremely political,” the decision “to put something on my body or not, has to be an act of resistance.”⁴⁰ Especially in academic spaces and predominantly white spaces, voyeurism occurs in the looks and stares directed towards Mala and Diosa. It is not only the government legislating women’s bodies, but also “machismo, patriarchy, and street harassment as surveillance.”⁴¹ The surveillance of women’s clothing, particularly for women of color, is an attempt to keep women in line with toxic masculinity.

By focusing on the experiences of femme and queer Latinxs, Locatora Radio presents narratives that are rarely seen in mainstream and Latinx media. Latinx young adults “want our own shit,”⁴² with Latinx-owned businesses and equal representation for Latinxs in the media. This generation of Latinxs “is done focusing on just the struggle.”⁴³ Not that we will forget the hardships of our parents, grandparents, and previous generations, but Latinx young adults

want to “move beyond” the overplayed narratives that privilege certain facets of Latinidad in order to showcase the “depth in our communities.”⁴⁴ Social media is an effective tool for circulating the overlooked narratives of Latinidad. Articles, memes, podcasts, and posts can reach thousands of people and start conversations that may be impossible to have in person. Locatora Radio demonstrates spiritual activism by calling out the colonialism of Christianity, contributing to online spirituality, crushing respectability politics, hosting events for followers to meet, and promoting diverse Latinx productions.

The Future of Spiritual Activism

Hija de tu Madre and Locatora Radio exemplify approaches to Anzaldúa’s call to action for “new images of identity, new beliefs about ourselves, our humanity and worth no longer in question” evoked in *Borderlands/La Frontera*.⁴⁵ By aesthetically creating and advocating for change in daily life and on social media, Latinx young adults are leading decolonial efforts. The “need for research on non-Christian and hybrid Mexican American and U.S. Latino religions and spiritualities” requires a more inclusive approach in favor of spirituality within the study of Religion.⁴⁶ By focusing on modern-day, lived experiences of religion and spirituality as intersecting with political engagement through artistic means, there is a call for more intersectional research on Latinx rituals and material culture. The blurring of disciplinary lines assists in capturing the real-life ways spiritual activists assist their communities. With increasing globalization, transnational research is a means to make connections between spiritual activism and how women and femmes of color in different regions reclaim religious structures through spiritual empowerment.⁴⁷

Endnotes

- 1 Currently, the term “Latinx” is the most inclusive term to refer to people of Latin American origin in the United States because gender is not imposed. Gender non-binary encapsulates various identifications, such as having “a single fixed gender position other than male or female . . . a fluid gender . . . no gender . . . [and] those who disagree with the very idea of gender.” Christina Richards, Walter Pierre Bouman, and Meg-John Barker, eds. *Genderqueer and Non-Binary Genders* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 5.
Salina Zazueta-Beltrán (@salinalafeminista), 2017, “DEFEND DACA!!!” Instagram, September 4, 2017, https://www.instagram.com/p/BY07ZmAhMou2yuHp5DDRZJkVdD1lg1_urs4gqE0/?taken-by=salinalafeminista.
- 2 Comparing data obtained in 2010 to data from 2013 on the religious self-identification of Hispanics from 18–29 years old, there was a 15% decrease in identifying as Catholic and a 17% increase in identifying as unaffiliated. Pew Research Center, “The Shifting Religious Identity of Latinos in the United States,” *Pew Forum*, last modified May 7, 2014.
- 3 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark Luz En Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*, ed. AnaLouise Keating. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2015), 246.

- 4 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, ed. AnaLouise Keating (New York: Routledge, 2000), 8.
- 5 Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark*, 90.
- 6 Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 98.
- 7 Laura E. Pérez, *Chicana Art: The Politics of Spiritual and Aesthetic Altarities* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), pp. 9, 93.
- 8 Clara Román-Odio, *Sacred Iconographies in Chicana Cultural Productions* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 96.
- 9 Hija de tu Madre: Patty Delgado, interview by Natalie Amador Solis at the University of Southern California, CA, February 20, 2018.
- 10 Patty Delgado, Hija de tu Madre, accessed December 12, 2018, <https://hijadetumadre.com>.
- 11 Hija de tu Madre: Patty Delgado, interview by Natalie Amador Solis at the University of Southern California, CA, February 20, 2018.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 “Visit Us,” Hija de tu Madre, accessed December 12, 2018, <https://hijadetumadre.com/pages/visit-us>.
- 17 Hija de tu Madre: Patty Delgado, interview by Natalie Amador Solis at the University of Southern California, CA, February 20, 2018.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Román-Odio, *Sacred Iconographies in Chicana Cultural Productions*, 150.
- 23 Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, ed., *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, 4th ed. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015).
- 24 Locatora Radio. Podcast. Accessed December 12, 2018, <https://soundcloud.com/locatora-radio>.
- 25 Locatora Radio: Diosa Femme and Mala Muñoz, interview by Natalie Amador Solis at Boyle Heights, CA, April 14, 2018.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 2012), 109.
- 46 Miguel De La Torre and Gastón Espinosa, *Rethinking Latino(a) Religion and Identity* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2006), 87.

47 I am building on this senior honors thesis for my master's thesis on transnational art and aesthetic movements in creating spiritual activist dialogues between Los Angeles and Mexico City, focusing on how activists traverse the U.S.-Mexico Border to bring Los Angeles to Mexico City and Mexico City to Los Angeles.

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