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The Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Journal 2023

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 2023

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

Preface

It has been my sincere honor and pleasure to work with the talented authors of the 2023 edition of the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship (MMUF) Journal. The goal of the MMUF program is to directly address one aspect of inequity within higher education by taking deliberate measures to increase diversity within the faculty of colleges and universities writ large. Since 1988, the MMUF has supported over 5,000 undergraduate students from marginalized backgrounds with research funding, professional development, and the opportunity to work closely with a faculty mentor, among other experiences, to best prepare Fellows to enter a PhD program in the humanities or social sciences in the near future. For the past 25+ years, as a branch of the MMUF program, the MMUF Journal has served to provide Fellows with an avenue to publish their original research. Going through the academic publication process—from submitting an article, to revising one's work through the review process, to ultimately preparing and polishing a piece for publication—is a crucial step in the life of a budding scholar. Our hope is that through this experience, our authors feel empowered to continue to publish their work as they progress in their respective academic careers.

The 2023 Journal features contributions by 33 authors from 22 colleges and universities that are part of the MMUF's member institutions. These articles often started as seminar papers or adapted chapters of senior theses and exemplify the breadth and depth of the humanities and social sciences, particularly emphasizing the interdisciplinary work that we find in so many fields today.

In the work proudly featured in this edition of the MMUF Journal some authors explored—and disrupted!—inequitable and problematic norms, behaviors, and cultures within the U.S. school system, ranging from grade school through to university. Others analyzed different ideas of queerness through the lens of contemporary performance and art. Authors also probed understandings of trauma, mourning, and healing through literary analysis. Still others looked to history to illustrate the significant, nuanced body of information held by black farmers and the black agrarian tradition which continues to go underacknowledged by the agricultural industry today, an industry which persists in providing inequitable access to opportunity for people of color. Through clarity of thought, deftness in use of primary sources, a high level of self-awareness, courage to push against boundaries, and strong, persuasive writing, among other traits, these authors demonstrate the powerful impact of new information and new contributions to scholarly conversations.

This cohort of MMUF Fellows, past and present, bravely put their work out there for others to experience and I know that readers of this Journal will be inspired to think critically about a range of issues and to hopefully then act on those which speak most directly to them. We need more authors like these, voices like these, and well-researched works of strong integrity like these to continue to improve upon and further develop conversations not only in academic scholarship, but conversations being had in general society, media, and commercial publications as well. I am gratified to include these articles in the 2023 MMUF Journal. Please read these works with care and thoughtfulness and let them motivate you to change the world in both large and small ways like our authors already do.

I am excited and honored to share their work with you!

Elizabeth Perten, PhD
MMUF Journal Editor-in-Chief
Office of Undergraduate Research and Fellowships
Harvard University

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Using Black Feminism to Disrupt the "School-to-Confinement Pathways"

Audrey Badjouen-Dzouabet, *Carleton College*

Audrey Badjouen-Dzouabet is a senior at Carleton College majoring in Sociology and Anthropology. Her research interests focus on the intersections of race and gender and how these identities play out in education, particularly exploring the operations, complexities, and interventions of the school-to-confinement pathways.

Abstract

The school-to-prison pipeline (STPP) remains one of the most pervasive forms of structural violence that policymakers, activists, and scholars attempt to reform. This pipeline models how schools' disproportionate punishment of students from marginalized socioeconomic and racial backgrounds serves as a barrier to youth's academic and social progress, leading to cyclical contact with the criminal justice system. However, the conditions and experiences of Black and Latino men have dominated much of the discourse about the STPP, despite data demonstrating that Black girls are also unfairly treated at schools. Because Black girls are disproportionately underrepresented in the STPP scholarship, Monique Morris coined the term "school-to-confinement pathways" (STCP) to describe the educational factors that influence a Black girl's risk of confinement. Building on Morris' and other examinations of the relationship between the education and incarceral system, I explore some ways that STCP can be understood through a Black feminist lens, a lens that I advocate should be utilized to guide interventions that seek to reduce school pushout and enhance schooling for Black girls.

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Legal Defense Fund depicts the school-to-prison pipeline (STPP) as the "funneling of students out of school and into the streets, and the juvenile correction system, perpetuating a cycle that deprives children and youth of meaningful opportunities for education, future employment, and participation in our democracy" (Lewis, 2019). While racial discipline disparities continue to be well-researched, the STPP scholarship remains predominately shaped by conditions and experiences of Black men, despite empirical evidence demonstrating the impact on Black girls as well (Morris, 2016; Chakara, 2017; Crenshaw et al., 2015; George, 2015). For instance, Crenshaw et al. (2015) found that Black boys and girls are three times and six times more likely, respectively, to receive suspensions than their White counterparts.

The landscape of scholarly studies focusing on the intersection of race, gender, and class within the context of the STPP has seen recent expansion, thanks to the pioneering work of scholars like Phillip Collins, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Monique Morris, and others. Notably, Monique Morris, recognizing the underrepresentation of Black girls in the STPP scholarship, introduced the term "school-to-confinement pathways" (STCP) in her 2016 book, Pushout: The Criminalization of Black girls in Schools. Drawing inspiration from this and other investigations of the intricate relationship between the education and carceral system, this paper explores the ways in which STCP can be understood (and disrupted) through a Black feminist perspective (Rich, 1978; Collins, 1990; Crenshaw 1991;Taylor, 1998; hooks, 1994; Hurley, 2007; Mills 2015; Lindsay, 2017; Rodgers 2017).

Specifically, this research underscores the essential incorporation of several key tenets of Black feminism in the understanding and disruption of STCP. These tenets encompass 1) valuing lived-experience-based wisdom, 2) recognizing intersecting identities, 3) promoting interpersonal interaction and connection, 4) upholding the ethics of care, and 5) acknowledging individual responsibility in the generation and defense of knowledge. These traditional Black feminist principles are fundamental for enhancing the overall learning environment for Black girls.

Theorizing Black Feminism

Feminist theory has long suffered from what Adrienne Rich (1978) calls "[W]hite solipsism to think, conceive, and speak as if [W]hiteness represented the world" before modern scholars made an effort to recognize disparities in women's experiences (p. 299). Over time, political tensions between Black and White women led many Black women to develop their own theories and engage in activism, which paved the way for the feminist theories and practices that have since become referred to as Black feminism (Taylor, 1998). While some have argued that Black feminism emerged as a response to White feminist movements' erasure and subjugation of Black women's contributions, others have traced its roots all the way back to slavery in the U.S. (Mills, 2015; Rodgers, 2017).

Despite the "differing epistemic positions and politics associated with Black feminism" (Henry, 2005), Black feminism is generally governed by a few core principles. Key among them is the centering of Black women's experiences while also increasing awareness of the multiple forms of oppression they encounter simultaneously (Lindsey, 2017). Collins' *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and The Politics of Empowerment*, published in 1990, became recognized amongst Black feminist scholars as one of the epistemological cornerstones of Black feminism for its insistence that Black women of all ages and socioeconomic classes were, are, and can be intellectuals; its emphasis on the fact that knowledge economies are instruments of oppression; and its tenacity in developing a Black feminist epistemology (BFE). BFE values dialogue and lived experiences as sites of knowledge production. From this perspective, music, literature, daily conversations, and everyday behavior—including acts of resistance and forms of expressive culture—are important sites of knowledge production (Collins, 1990). An emphasis on Black women's diverse and intersecting identities (i.e., race, gender, and class) is another key aspect of Black feminism (Crenshaw, 1991). Commonly known as intersectionality today, this method of analysis examines how different forms of power influence how Black women comprehend and conceptualize their experiences as an analytical subcategory (Crenshaw, 1991; Hurley, 2007).

Black feminist pedagogies enhance, and critique conventional/mainstream pedagogical practices, materials, and procedures based on the basic tenets of Black feminism, explore power relations inside and beyond the classroom, and work to build liberating and emancipatory learning settings. It proposes learning strategies that are informed by Black women's historical experiences with racial, gendered, and class bias as well as the effects of marginalization and isolation. Black feminist pedagogy seeks to foster an attitude of intellectual inclusiveness and growth. It provides the student, instructor, and institution with a framework for advancing equitable practices as well as a variety of perspectives that parallel Black women's efforts to be recognized as human beings and citizens rather than as objects and victims. Incorporating Black feminist tenets such as 1) the importance of lived experience-based wisdom, 2) intersecting identities, 3) interpersonal interaction and connection, 4) the ethics of care, and 5) individual responsibility in the creation and defense of knowledge, into school-to-confinement interventions is fundamental to disrupting the STCP (Collins, 1990; hooks, 1994). While there are some overarching tenets, different scholars vary in the degree to which they embrace/advocate for those tenets. The purpose of my paper, though, is not to adjudicate between those differing perspectives. Rather, my goal is to illustrate the ways in which the overarching tenets can be applied to analyzing the STCP.

How Can We Use Black Feminist Analyses to Understand the STCP?

Without a Black feminist framework, forces of neoliberalism, penal populism, and conservatism may misinterpret the school-to-confinement pathway, blaming the individual and their "defiant" actions for being incarcerated (Mora & Christianakis, 2013). This interpretation of the STCP further criminalizes minority youth and supports policies and practices that systemically push at-risk youth out of mainstream public schools and into the criminal justice system (i.e., zero-tolerance policies) (Mora & Christianakis, 2013). Black feminist analyses, by contrast, start by highlighting the narratives and experiences of Black girls who have been affected by the STCP. While the former seeks punitive measures to prevent Black girls from misbehaving, assuming the student is the problem, the latter seeks to answer what "matrix of domination" (i.e., structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains of power) is at work that is placing alarming rates of Black female students in contact with the criminal justice system and how their intersecting identities can result in various experiences with these different power structures (Collins, 1990).

Many researchers contend that Black girls endure an inherent intersectional burden (Crenshaw et al., 2015; Morris, 2016; George, 2015). Studies suggest that Blackness is commonly associated with aggression and that girls and women are unfairly punished for gender-transgressive conduct (Morris, 2016). These two dynamics, coupled with a racially coded interpretation of "aggressiveness" and additional penalties for being assertive as a girl, can give rise to Black girls' increased vulnerability to STCP in comparison to other females.

The policing of Black girls can start as early as childhood (Crenshaw et al., 2015; Chakara, 2017). In 2007, Desre'e Watson, a 6-year-old from Avon, Florida, was arrested for having a temper tantrum in her kindergarten class (Herbert, 2007). In 2019, another 6-year-old, Kaia Rolle, was arrested in Orlando, Florida, for the same reason (Cachero, 2020). Unfortunately, these events are not isolated cases for Black girls who too often encounter negative perceptions from their educators, school administrators, and peers (Brunson & Miller, 2006). Despite constituting only 20 percent of the nation's female preschool population, Black girls account for 54 percent of female preschoolers who have received more than one out-of-school suspension (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2016). Furthermore, students who have had repeated

suspensions as children are more likely to experience ostracization and unfair punishment in their later formative years, making it increasingly more difficult to escape the cyclical nature of STCP (Mittleman, 2018).

According to Goff et al. (2014), society falsely perceives Black children as less innocent than White children, even when they are toddlers. The findings of Jamilia Blake et al.'s (2017) research on adultification bias show that Black girls are subjected to adult perceptions that perpetuate the notion that they require less nurturing, comfort, and protection than their White counterparts. The ramifications of educators' proclivity to equate the behavior of Black girls with stereotypes of adult Black women can be far-reaching. According to Edward Morris (2007), "Black female students appeared less restrained by the . . . view of femininity as docile and compliant, and less expectant of male protection than [W]hite girls in other educational research" (p. 499). Morris (2007) observed that teachers shifted their focus from assisting Black girls' academic development to criticizing such behavior, effectively berating Black girls for perceived loudness and un-ladylike behavior that question their authority (Blake et al., 2011). Others have noted that Black girls are subjected to more scrutiny for their demeanor than their White counterparts (Wun, 2015; Annamma, 2016). Researchers propose that the process of adultification may lead to increased disparities in school punishment for Black girls (Blake et al., 2011). Furthermore, Black girls are more likely than other girls to face disciplining techniques that isolate them from the school environment (Blake et al., 2011).

School policies and practices, such as dress codes, have exacerbated Black girls' complicated relationships in these pathways, emphasizing the racial inequities in self-expression that Black girls face (Edwards, 2020), particularly when it comes to their hair (Crenshaw et al., 2015). Stories of Black students and youth of color being denied entry to (Kai, 2018) or expelled from school (Harris, J., 2016; Jackman, 2018; Lazar, 2017), having their natural hair cut off (Whelan, Jr., 2018), facing disciplinary action (Pulliam, 2016; Taketa, 2020), or being barred from extracurricular activities (Lattimore, 2017) for hair styles or accessories deemed unacceptable in mainstream White culture are all too common in the news. These incidents illustrate the politics around hair management (Banks, 1997) as well as the prevailing narrative surrounding Black hair, which is that "[B]lack people, especially [B]lack women . . . are not acceptable as we are . . .," (hooks, 1989b, p. 5). Oyedemi (2016) claims that this message is undoubtedly an indicator of cultural violence. This cultural violence is perpetrated on Black girls and boys through hair restrictions and dress code laws, which were permitted in every state in the United States until recently (see the CROWN Act).

School-to-Confinement Pathways (STCP) Interventions: How Can Black Feminism Inform Them?

When devising interventions for Black girls in the STCP, Black feminist theory applies the five highlighted tenets on page 3 as three key rules. These interventions should: 1) allow for the full expression of Black girls that gives them autonomy and empowerment; 2) take into consideration how systems of race, class, and gender (and other hierarchical signifiers of identity) intersect to affect Black girls in the classroom; and 3) develop techniques and cultivate educators who accurately interpret the cultures, languages, and behaviors of Black girls (Collins, 1986; Crenshaw, 1989; Lane, 2017; Dumas & Ross, 2016).

Morris (2022) identified five elements as crucial for fostering noteworthy learning environments for Black girls based on the lessons, trends, and insights gained through engaging with Black girls in the STCP across the U.S.: 1) school-based wraparound services; 2) proactive discussions in schools about healthy intimate relationships; 3) strong student-teacher relationships; 4) an increased emphasis on student learning with a decreased emphasis on discipline and surveillance; and 5) consistent school credit recovery processes between alternative schools and traditional district or community schools. As Collins (1990) underscored, Black feminism demonstrates Black women's emerging position as agents of knowledge. By depicting Black girls as self-defined, self-reliant individuals confronting race, gender, and class oppression, Black feminism speaks to the value of knowledge in empowering oppressed people. For this reason, interventions must address how school codes and practices pathologize displays of Black femininity (e.g., how girls talk, dress, or wear their hair). Oftentimes, in our eagerness to teach children social rules, we neglect to consider whether these rules are rooted in oppression—racial, patriarchal, or any other form (Morris, 2022). Such a failure hinders Black girls' entire expression and learning. Black girls need instructors, administrators, and school policies that do not regard their Black identity as inferior or something to be feared.

For Black feminist pedagogies to be properly integrated into the conceptualization of these interventions, the voices, experiences, and achievements of Black women must be acknowledged and considered. Addington (2023) suggests two additional options for confronting these racial and gendered prejudices that Black girls face: culturally competent programming and professional development for teachers and administrators. Culturally competent programming challenges hegemonic authority by rejecting colorblind interventions that are subject to unconscious prejudices and perpetuate punishment inequities. Training and development opportunities challenge hegemonic power

paradigms by providing anti-racist and anti-sexist checks on teacher biases as well as alternative classroom practices that do not rely too much on punishment (Addington, 2023). These trainings would provide educators with ways to prepare students for difficult conversations as well as the vocabulary needed to theorize and interpret their own and other people's experiences.

Additionally, there should be ample opportunities for students to practice reflexive thinking so they can connect classroom lessons to larger social contexts. John Heron's (1996) participation in and development of participatory research methods demonstrate how experiential (i.e., lived experiences of affected populations), presentational (storytelling, art, etc.), propositional (quantitative data, etc.), and practical (applied) understandings can inform the knowledge production of Black girls. A community of scholar-activists has employed this strategy to delve deeper into ways to combat school dropout and the consequent confinement of Black girls (Morris, 2016; 2019; Girls for Gender Equity, 2017; National Women's Law Center, 2018).

For the growth of a learning community where teachers and students may both learn, it is also crucial that educators foster an environment in which students are seen as sharing responsibility in their education (hooks, 1994, p. 167). Strengthening teacher-student relationships has been shown to reduce disparities by enhancing student engagement and feelings of belonging at school for Black girls (Blake et al., 2011). Black feminist theory encourages educators to view themselves as "stewards of healing, not just intellectual educational attainment" (Morris, 2022). Students should be encouraged to provide regular feedback on course material and classroom experiences in order to "critique, evaluate, make suggestions, and make interventions" (hooks, 1994, p. 168; Pastore & Luder, 2021). Involving Black girls in research and youth-led advocacy projects might also help them feel empowered (Wun, 2018).

I advocate for the reevaluation and expansion of Morris and Black feminist literature in general, urging scholars to empirically support specific Black feminist tenets within the STCP context. In my senior thesis, I substantiate this with 18 interviews from policy makers, educators/students, and non-profit workers, along with participant observations from intervention site visits. Preliminary findings reveal that individuals involved in disrupting the STCP incorporate key aspects of Black feminist tenets in their frameworks by emphasizing intersectionality, critical pedagogical evaluation, and establishing what they believe are "liberating learning environments." I highlight my own work as an example of how Black feminist research in the context of the STCP can be further expanded on. Through sustained efforts in research of this caliber, we can attain comprehensive understanding to guide the enhancement of educational experiences for Black girls within the STCP.

The methods presented in this paper are not meant to be prescriptive or exhaustive; rather, they provide a set of practical tools that can be applied both in and beyond classroom-like settings. These tools are partially present in well-known interventions such as restorative justice programs, trauma-informed and culturally responsive/sustaining pedagogical practices, and others (Basford & Trout, 2021). While some interventions, classrooms, and organizations may employ some of these tactics, a stronger push for the widespread adoption of Black feminist theory in educational contexts remains crucial for further disrupting school-to-confinement pathways for Black girls in particular.

Conclusion

For the American education system to stop contributing to the criminalization and institutionalization of Black girls, meaningful educational reform must be implemented. Teachers and administrators must be able to identify the informal and formal policies that criminalize their Black female students in order for learning environments to become safe for them. Black feminism can influence how these educational settings are designed. We must also keep working to dismantle discriminatory rules that limit Black girls' self-expression while fostering strong and compassionate student-teacher relationships. Black girls' education should include learning environments that stimulate their curiosity about the world, as well as teachers and support systems that are emotionally and mentally available to them. The purpose of education should be to prepare students for the world, not for confinement.

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The Great Outdoors? Discrimination Theory and Black Park Use

Kristina Bell, *Northwestern University*

Kristina Bell is a senior at Northwestern University majoring in Anthropology and Environmental Policy and Culture. She is primarily interested in Black outdoor leisure and how politics impacts how people interact with the environment. After she graduates, Kristina plans to pursue a Master's in Cultural or Environmental Anthropology.

Abstract

Leisure study scholars discuss four prominent theories for Black park disuse: marginality, ethnicity, assimilation, and discrimination. Much of the support for these theories is ahistorical and does not consider how history has affected Black people's relationships with the environment. To address this gap, this paper engages in historical anthropology and political ecology to discuss the four prominent Black park disuse theories. Through these frameworks, this paper argues that discrimination theory, the idea that discrimination is the primary factor in Black park use, is the primary reason for Black park disuse and asserts that the other theories are products of discrimination. To further this argument, this paper examines Rocky Mountain National Park as a case study. This paper will address the following questions: How has history shaped Black people's relationship with public leisure spaces? Why has Black park use remained low?

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The topic of Black park use has troubled researchers and popular news outlets alike as they try to diversify National Parks usage. Leisure studies scholars focus on four main theories when discussing Black park (non)use: marginality, ethnicity, assimilation, and discrimination. However, much of their analysis of these theories is ahistorical and fails to consider how systemic injustices may affect Black people's relationship with National Parks. When acknowledging history, I argue that discrimination theory becomes the primary reason for park use and the other theories serve as ways in which discrimination has affected Black park use.

A Brief History of U.S. National Parks

When Europeans first came to what would become the United States, they were stunned by the sheer abundance of land and animals (Cronon 1983). Early manifestations of transcendentalism and deism resulted in Europeans who came to the Americas harboring a great appreciation for the land. As colonization increased, there was a sense that the fleeting wilderness should be preserved before it vanishes as it had in Europe. In 1832, George Catlin recognized that the buffalo were decreasing in number and proposed something entirely novel: a wilderness park. Prior to this, parks were heavily manicured places to take walks; wilderness parks were a paradoxical new concept (Nash 1970). In 1872, Catlin's idea became a reality as President Ulysses S. Grant, aided by Roosevelt's removal of indigenous people from their land, created Yellowstone National Park.

However, National Parks were not intended to serve everyone. Considering that only white, land-owning men had rights when the parks were created, they were tailored to be spaces for them. National Parks are generally considered to be rugged, natural landscapes to escape the stress and pollution of their lives in the city (Nash 1970). These landscapes were intended to remind visitors of the frontier, a lifestyle that is highly masculine. While women were hired in the parks beginning in 1918, most were only temporarily hired to fill in the roles of men during the first World War (Kaufman 1990).

During the Jim Crow era, park administrators knew they could not openly discriminate against Black visitors, so they had to find other ways to prevent Black people from visiting the parks frequently (Young 2009). The National Parks Service used both architectural isolation, the placing of "Whites Only" signs at the entrances to parks as a form of exclusion, as well as duplication, or the creation of separate space for Black park patrons or a "Negro Area" of a park (Weyeneth 2005). Although these examples are historical, active exclusion and discrimination still have an impact on the way Black people perceive public parks today.

Literature Review

Marginality Theory

The Marginality Theory of park disuse proposes that marginalized people lack resources that facilitate park use due to historical discrimination. Randel Washburne's 1978 and 1980 studies examining Black people's use of wildland parks are commonly cited as foundational in the discussion of the Marginality Theory. His findings with Paul Wall denotes a defining characteristic of the Marginality Theory which is that if Black people had the same socioeconomic

opportunities as white people they would have similar participation rates in National Park usage (Washburne and Wall 1983). However, within that same, often-cited study, Washburne and Wall find Black people do not consider cost to be any more of a limiting factor than white people (5). In their conclusion, Washburne and Wall expressed a need for more ethnographic research about Black leisure to determine what other factors could be at play. A 2022 study relying on a national general population survey examined marginalized people's park use and determined race, education level, and income were highly associated with leisure constraints leading to low park visitation (Xiao, Lee, and Larson 2022). Marginality studies commonly emphasize how Black non-visitors of National Parks cite the parks as being too far away.

Generally, modern-day discussions of the Marginality Theory focus on systemic injustices unrelated to the parks themselves. These discussions are willing to acknowledge that discrimination has resulted in differing socioeconomic statuses of white and Black populations but they do not consider the ways in which those same forms of discrimination have altered Black people's relationships with parks. Marginality Theory fails to consider the history of segregation in public spaces and how that may affect Black people's relationships with them. Furthermore, existing discussions of this theory seem to play into stereotypes about Black culture and do not generally consider park participation of wealthy Black people. Overall, this theory has too narrow of a focus on economic forms of inequality and entirely misses the historic forms of inequality within the parks themselves.

Ethnicity and Assimilation Theories

The Ethnicity Theory of park use suggests that visiting parks is not how Black people prefer to spend their leisure time. Much of the present-day support for this theory stems from Black people in popular sources and in research settings commenting on how common National Park activities like hiking and camping are white activities (Jackson 2020; 2018; Taylor 1989; Byrne 2012; Finney 2014; Erickson, Johnson, and Kivel 2009). Although this sentiment is commonly shared by Black people, the theory does little to explain the cultural difference. It readily accepts that white people prefer wilderness settings while Black people prefer urban parks without much consideration for why or how such a racialized difference originated.

Furthermore, the Ethnicity Theory promotes viewing Black culture as a monolith with the implied sentiment that Black people find certain forms of outdoor recreation culturally unacceptable for engagement. The Ethnicity Theory maintains an inflexible idea of ethnicity and culture largely out of touch with current conceptions of ethnicity (M. F. Floyd 1998). The combination of this rigid concept of culture and an unwillingness to acknowledge change results in a theory with no room to consider Black people's interactions with the environment in what would be deemed a "white way." Thus, the theory cannot account for historical prominent Black vacation spots such as Idlewild in Canada where Black vacationers participated in outdoor white activities which the theory would claim Black people would not enjoy such as camping and hiking.

Assimilation Theory notices this lack of attention to Black people engaging with wilderness-based parks and proposes an alternate idea. Assimilation Theory argues that park-based activities were not originally part of Black culture, but eventually, Black people will assimilate and subsequently adopt it as part of their culture. Assimilation Theory is much more transparent about its underlying assumption: enjoying parks is a luxury created by white people and positions it as a higher-level leisure goal not yet reached by the average Black person. Its underlying assumptions about Black culture are rooted in black primitivist ideology, the idea that Black people are less advanced than white people, and implies Black people used the land incorrectly and that the white way of outdoor leisure was the only appropriate way to interact with the environment (D. M. Floyd 1999; Jackson 2020; McCammack 2021). Currently, the Assimilation Theory posits that only a certain percentage of Black people, the Black social elite, are capable of appreciating nature in the same way white people do. Like the Ethnicity Theory, the Assimilation Theory relies very little on historical evidence and implies Black park use, or rather non-use, is incidental. The theory fails to recognize the systemic legacy of chattel slavery and ignores the impacts of discrimination.

Discrimination Theory

The Discrimination Theory opines that discrimination has affected the way Black people attend parks. Compared to the aforementioned theories, discrimination theory is new and somewhat less refined. Some researchers discuss it in terms of perceived discrimination and focus on present matters such as feeling watched while in the parks (Erickson, Johnson, and Kivel 2009). Other researchers take a route more akin to political ecology and discuss it in terms of systemic injustices limiting Black park use (Lee and Scott 2016; Finney 2014).

Although marginality and ethnicity have been shown to have an impact on Black park use, the factors they discuss are the result of discrimination. Therefore, discrimination is the primary factor affecting Black park use. Examining

other theories in an ahistorical context facilitates reaching the inaccurate conclusion that the politics of race were entirely separate from the Black experience in national parks (Weber and Sultana 2013; Runte 2002).

The following case study will explore Black National Park use at Rocky Mountain National Park, applying the Discrimination Theory to show how the politics of race impacted the Black experience at this particular park.

Case Study: Rocky Mountain National Park

Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP), founded on January 26, 1915, is a popular National Park located in Colorado about 65 miles northwest of Denver (Figure 1). The history of leisure in the RMNP area begins with the establishment of the nearby town of Estes Park founded in 1859 by Joel Estes. The Estes Park Trail newspaper praises Estes and claims he was "an embodiment of the Pioneer Spirit" (*The Estes Park Trail* 1935). During the gold rush, Joel Estes migrated from Florida to California with his family and slaves. In 1859 he became enamored by the area that would later become Estes Park. In 1861, Estes left Colorado for Missouri, but he was unwelcomed as a slave owner. After facing social pressure and an unsuccessful attempt at ranching, Estes freed his slaves for economic reasons and returned to Colorado (Buchholtz 1983). The National Parks Service mentions Joel Estes in their Timeline of Historic Events, but does not acknowledge that he was a slave owner. C.W Buchholtz's *Rocky Mountain National Park A History* is available to read for free through the National Park Service, however, it is not linked on the RMNP page. The *Estes Park Trail* mentions that Estes had slaves, but an article published in *Estes Park Trail* in 2021 calls into question Estes' history, specifically doubting whether or not he owned slaves (Messiner 2021). This article was written by a respected local historian, which may suggest he was giving voice to an otherwise silent group who believe that Estes did not own slaves.

RMNP had a tense relationship with Black locals and tourists due to Colorado's active Ku Klux Klan (KKK) chapter in the 1920s and Estes Park's exclusivity. The KKK was so active and accepted in the Denver area it maintained

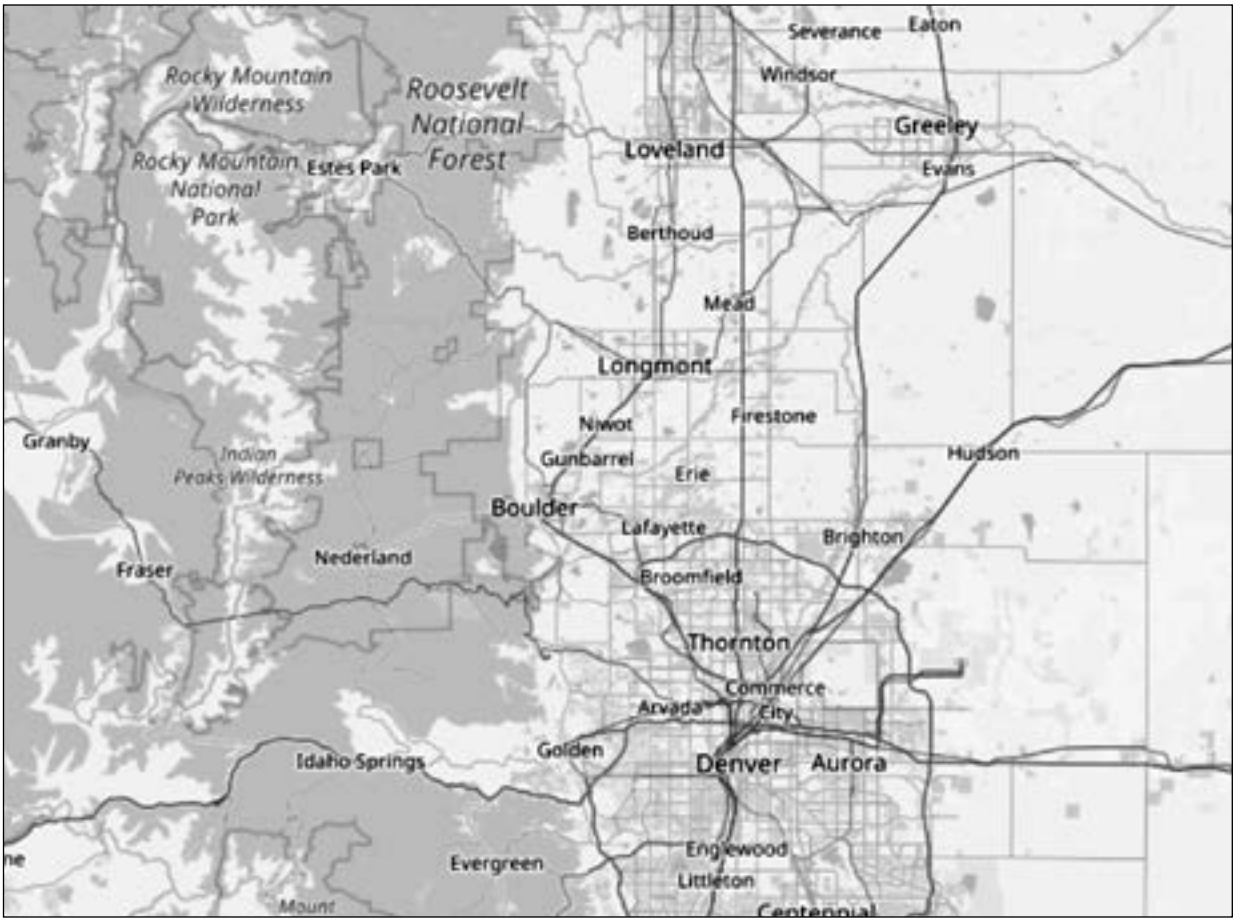

Figure 1. Map of the Denver area showing RMNP and Estes Park. Image reproduced from OpenStreetMap

a ledger with over 1300 pages of members' information. Additionally, there were three sundown towns (i.e. all-white towns that were hostile towards Black people) and at least one neighborhood, Loveland, that had restrictive covenants to prevent Black people from buying homes there in the Denver area (Payne 2017). Estes Park's contemporary history is not absolved of this racist past. On October 23, 1992, the Rocky Mountain Rendezvous met in Estes Park. The gathering was in response to a militia that was led by a white supremacist clashing with the government and militia members being killed by gunfire. The meeting was heavily attended by neo-Nazis, Klansmen, and antisemitic religious groups; the meeting is considered by some to be the birthplace of the militia movement ("Jekyll Island Gathering Recalls Another" n.d.; Berlet 2012). Although militias are not always race-based hate groups, those inspired by the Rocky Mountain Rendezvous evidently were (Simi 1999).

The popularity of Lincoln Hills opposes Ethnicity Theory's idea that camping and outdoor activities were not part of local Black culture and instead demonstrates a love for wilderness recreation by Black people. With Estes Park maintaining a 0% Black population into the 2020s, Black tourists likely felt unsafe in the park and frequented the Black resort community Lincoln Hills instead ("U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Estes Park Town, Colorado" n.d.). Beginning in 1922, Lincoln Hills offered Black vacationers outdoor experiences generally unavailable to them because of segregation (*The Estes Park Trail* 1935). Although the plots of land available at Lincoln Hills were relatively small, 2500 square feet, a family could place a down payment for $5 and pay it over time ("Lincoln Hills Country Club" 2017). In 1922, the Winks Lodge opened which later became a cultural hub for Black musicians performing in Denver. Lincoln Hills opened a YWCA girls camp in 1927 in response to Black girls not being allowed to participate in a local YMCA girl's camp due to segregation.

The history of discrimination embedded within RMNP and the surrounding areas has significantly impacted Black park use. The popularity of Lincoln Hills demonstrates interest in wilderness leisure was an aspect of Black culture; however, this Black park leisure did not continue in the predominantly white space of RMNP once Lincoln Hills closed. Researchers Erickson, Johnson, and Kivel acknowledged how the legacy of Jim Crow and high racial tensions prevented older generations from visiting RMNP in their Bourdiean analysis of Black use of RMNP. They found the history of discrimination within the National Parks to be cultural capital that contributed to the habitus of not going to RMNP. This cultural capital is the root of what some researchers consider to be the cultural difference preventing Black people from attending RMNP at proportionate rates as white people. Out of the five major historical and cultural factors studied and found to be significant, racism and discrimination were at the root (Erickson, Johnson, and Kivel 2009). Participants discussed their perception of RMNP as a white space and how park use was not a form of leisure their parents passed down to the next generation (Erickson, Johnson, and Kivel 2009). This aligned with sentiments of Black locals in studies of other National and State Parks who viewed those parks as white spaces due to past and present day instances of racism and discrimination (Lee and Scott 2016; Taylor 1989).

The Future of Black Recreation

Black park use is typically framed as a comparison to white park use despite injustices committed by white people being the primary factor contributing to Black park (non) use. In order to be more effective, the conversation about Black park use should not focus on questions of how to get more Black people to attend parks or what is preventing Black people from attending parks. Instead, there should be an acknowledgement of the history of Black people and their struggles in accessing wilderness parks. The goal of park managers should be to take impactful steps toward making the parks a welcoming space for Black visitors; although appointing Black people to positions of power in the park is beneficial, the change cannot stop there (Runte 2002; Davis 2020). Park managers should celebrate historic and present-day sites of Black leisure and acknowledge the role slavery and segregation may have played in the lives of the park founders or in the acquisition of park land. This sort of dedication to the historic joys and struggles of Black people will showcase the park as committed to portraying history accurately. In addition to increased research about Black leisure within National Parks, there should also be more research conducted about Black recreation occurring beyond the boundaries of wilderness parks. More historical and ethnographic research to understand the leisure habits of Black people would result in a greater understanding of how Black people have adapted to feeling unwelcomed in national parks. Additionally, this would unsettle the normalized notion that there is one "correct" or "American" way to interact with the environment used to underscore many theories in leisure studies such as the marginality, ethnicity, and assimilation theories.

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The Case for Transgression: (Re)locating Queerness in Carnival

Kayla Bobb, *Wellesley College*

Kayla Bobb graduated from Wellesley College in May with a degree in Art History and a minor in Women's and Gender Studies. They came to this research through a passion to learn more about their Trinidadian heritage and its intersection with their queer identity. Kayla works as an Executive Assistant at the MFA in Boston during their gap years before pursuing a PhD in Art History.

Abstract

When one thinks of Trinidad & Tobago's carnival, smiling women and muscled men in large, colorful, feathered costumes first come to mind. Often, people gloss over carnival's radical history based on anticolonial resistance, along with the gender-bending ole time mas, or folkloric masquerade characters. Despite carnival's contemporary perception, the festival has a long history that is not only politically transgressive but also genderqueer. In 2016, Peter Minshall, the legendary mas maker (carnival costume designer), designed *The Dying Swan: Ras Nijinsky in Drag as Pavlova* to set himself apart. Performed by Jhawhan Thomas, the mas calls back to masquerade traditions while simultaneously breaking customs. Supported by information from my exclusive interview with Jhawhan Thomas, I argue that *The Dying Swan* represents the queerness embedded in Trinidad's multicultural history with a simple, yet stylistically complex performance.

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The Carnivalization of *The Dying Swan*

At the 2016 King and Queen Competition in Queen's Park Savannah, Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago, Jhawhan Thomas vied for "Carnival King" as *The Dying Swan: Ras Nijinsky in Drag as Pavlova* (Figure 1).[1] Designed by Peter Minshall, *The Dying Swan* was one of the most simultaneously beloved and contested masquerades–hereafter referred to as mas–of the 2016 carnival cycle. Voluminous, sparkling costumes fit with smoke machines and flashing lights have become typical in a contemporary Carnival King. However, Minshall fuses the West African-derived moko jumbie dancer, a Russian ballet, and Carnival folklore to utilize Savannah's stage as a site of "performative fabrication and transgression" in a stripped-down style compared to his competitors.[2] I argue that performing masquerade, hereafter playing mas, allows the performer to powerfully assert their body by queering the oppressive societal norms that remain in the postcolonial nation.[3]

Playing mas dates to the late 18th century when the white French elite held masked balls to subvert their societal roles, often by mocking the assumed barbaric nature of those they enslaved.[4] Simultaneously, enslaved individuals held fêtes of their own, drawing from West African traditions along with their owner's behavior and dress by masking. Predating written history in Africa, masking involves a spiritual connection where the "wearers cancel or obliterate their personalities, changing into other human characters and spirits, so that they are no longer themselves."[5] Drawing on their spirituality, enslaved peoples queered the colonial masquerade to form the first iteration of mas as it is known today. Jhawhan Thomas' performance embodies this spiritual connection from head to stilted toe.

Stark white body paint covers Thomas' body while still showing a shadow of his dark skin underneath. His bright white costume and painted white nails contrast the darkened dramatic features of his black eyeshadow, eyeliner, mascara, and blush pink lipstick. A wide, satin headband sits on the dancer's dreadlocked bun with flowers on top that culminate into two bouquets of hand-crafted fabric petunias and cover each ear and side cheek. Tulle-lined straps cascade down his muscled biceps in a Cinderella-esque fashion. Cinched in a white cloth bodice, his off-white tulle flowers cover the boning which descends into an upside-down triangle that marks the beginning of a massive, exaggerated tutu. Designing this tutu with the swan in mind, Minshall drapes long, shining swan feathers made of a lightweight, white, opaque material under the stage lights. The glimmering plumage flows freely when Thomas makes grand movements in his performance.

Known as "supernatural scarecrows" who ward away evil spirits, moko jumbies in Trinidad are stilted figures usually dressed in brightly colored costumes while dancing flamboyantly to calypso music.[6] Fashioned to resemble a ballerina's legs en pointe, Minshall's stilts stray from the unadorned rectangular flanks of wood typically found on the moko jumbie. Instead, Minshall paints Thomas's stilts in a snowy white, narrowing them at the bottom to resemble calves and feet, and then affixes ballet slippers to solidify the illusion of a ballerina on the Carnival stage.

The inspiration for *The Dying Swan* came from Anna Pavlova's 1907 namesake performance choreographed by Mikhail Fokine.[7] Pavlova's rendition begins with controlled,

flowing movements of her pattering across the stage while irregularly folding her body towards the floor as the pain of the swan's last breaths takes over. When she stands, she moves with such speed and grace that her feet resemble a swan's legs swimming underwater while her arms mimic the bird's curving neck. The image of a healthy standing swan fades each time Pavlova falls to the floor as her movements slow drastically. Each time she rises again, she flails as she closes in on the swan's death. Right before the last moments of the act, Pavlova stands still, looks up, pedals for a moment, then takes her final fall to her death.

Jhawhan Thomas closely adapts his movements from the original *Dying Swan*. Much like Pavlova, his movements become more chaotic as the ballet progresses. He flails from the waist, grasping at the air just like Pavlova does before the swan's final breath. His dramatic height inhibits him from falling to the ground the way that Pavlova does, but his ability to portray such delicacy as a moko jumbie is sublime as he contrasts the moko jumbie's typical joyful, animated movements. Thomas begins the ballet facing away from the audience. As the accompaniment plays the first phrase of the melody, he takes his first minuscule steps and slowly turns to the audience. Mirroring Pavlova, the stilts move quickly in place while his arms move slowly through the air, and he begins flowing his arms up and down like a swan's wings as he looks up towards the night sky. His facial expression moves from relaxed to pained as he proceeds and his arm movements frequently contort as the swan inches closer to death. Thomas takes longer strides across the stage, convulsing his torso and arms slightly as if gasping for air, until the last moment of the piece when he lowers his grasping hand and lets his torso fall.

Minshall queers the musical accompaniment typical to this ballet, emphasizing the *The Dying Swan*'s multicultural theme. Camille Saint-Saëns's "The Swan" from his 14-movement suite, *Carnival of the Animals*, plays in the background for both the original and the rendition.[8] Saint-Saëns composed the piece for cello and piano during the French Romanticist period, and historically, arrangements have kept to this combination of a string instrument paired with piano accompaniment. However, Peter Minshall enlists musician Fayola Granderson to play steel pan, replacing the original piano part in "The Swan."[9] Minshall's choice to fuse both a classical European and a classical Caribbean instrument mirrors the fusion he creates between Anna Pavlova's classical European ballet and moko jumbie.

Much like Jhawhan Thomas's performance mirrors Anna Pavlova's movements, Granderson's pan instrumentation mirrors the stylistic intensity of the original piano part. In recordings of the performance, the audience begins to hear the quiet metallic sound of the steel pans and the gentle bowing of the cello playing softly as the spotlight shines on Thomas. At first, the pan may be easily mistaken for a piano because the tone in the higher register of both instruments are similar. However, as Granderson continues to play, the audience recognizes the sound of sticks-to-tin of the national instrument of Trinidad & Tobago.[10] In a video of the live performance, a C TV commentator describes *The Dying Swan* as an example of "an artist going beyond just the physical and the aesthetic of the art," alluding to the rhetoric that playing mas in recent decades has been reduced to a surface-level appreciation.[11] In an interview, Minshall describes the live pan as cementing the performance: "Just the sound of our steel; it really is a marriage, that's who we are. We can take India, sew it into the seams of Africa, embroider it with Europe and come up with something nobody else could do, a moko jumbie dancing en pointe on stage!"[12] Peter Minshall designs this to be a compositionally simple yet symbolically complex performance that reminds the viewer of Trinidad's multicultural history. Grounded through his spiritual connection to the orisha goddess, Oshun, Thomas' performance emphasizes the harmony of seemingly opposing cultures that can only thrive in a place like Trinidad.

Oshun's Intervention

In my interview with Jhawhan Thomas, he discussed at length the process of how *The Dying Swan* came together both physically and spiritually. Looking over the main stage at Queen's Park Savannah in preparation for carnival the next month, Thomas walked me through the process for his 2016 performance. He explained how many expert hands assembled the mas in a mere eight days. His stilts, typically unadorned on moko jumbies, were layered with styrofoam and papier-mâché then carved to emulate a ballerina's legs en pointe. Overall, he affectionately reflected on the amount of work that went into this mas in the remarkably short time frame.

Thomas discussed the impact of his orisha practice on *The Dying Swan* and his stilt practice. He is a practitioner of the goddess Oshun who represents the river, femininity, beauty, and warlike qualities. As a practitioner, Thomas is a devotee who engages in personal prayer and sacrifice to the goddess. Oshun most appreciates bathing in luxurious, fragrant soaps and oils in cool waters, and wearing multiple elegant outfits throughout the day which asserts her "uncompromising femininity."[13] However, when a worshiper does not adequately care for the goddess, she uses her powers to ruin people's livelihoods, stripping them of wealth and family.[14]

In *The Dying Swan*, Oshun provides a sense of balance to Jhawhan Thomas' performance in the same manner

that Yoruba spirituality provides balance to carnival overall. Just as in Yoruba religion, *The Dying Swan* emphasizes the coexistence of masculine and feminine properties in one. Thomas enters the stage with his painted white body, bold makeup, and white nails. Here, his overt whiteness simultaneously represents a connection between the masker and the ancestral world in Yoruba spirituality, as well as characteristically European femininity.[15] His muscles and dark skin pop beneath the body paint, representing characteristic masculinity that exists in harmony with femininity. Further, orisha powers come from both pain and pleasure, which Thomas reflected on regarding the preparation and performance. He conveyed that the intense nature of preparing for the performance took a physical toll on his body since he practiced each day for hours on stilts after a hiatus from his moko jumbie practice. Nevertheless, Thomas acknowledges his experience preparing for this piece as a rousing moment in his life, and the performance itself portrays sublimity amongst anguish. Oshun's presence permeates this piece to signify the cultural shift that Minshall is placing on Queen's Park Savannah's main stage. Honing in on the historical resistance within carnival, the next section discusses *Ras Nijinsky*, the drag name that honors a figure who effectively queered Europe's understanding of ballet.

Queer Authenticity in Mas

Vaslav Nijinsky, one of the most renowned ballet dancers of the 20th century, was known for his choreographic genius and displays of sexuality. Nijinsky was a prominent member of the Ballet Russes where he choreographed four ballets known to be the breakthrough for modernism in dance.[16] Most known for *L'Aprèsmidi d'un Faune* (1912), Nijinsky choreographed a ballet about nymphs with a finale that included a "masturbatory gesture" that outraged the audience.[17] Both on and off stage, Nijinsky queered the arts as he portrayed displays of subversive sexuality through ballets like *Faune* and androgynous gender-bending seen in promotional photographs taken of Nijinsky (Figure 2). Everything about Vaslav Nijinsky's public persona makes him the embodiment of early drag and queerness in Europe, which Minshall alludes to in *The Dying Swan*.

Performative cross-dressing has always been pivotal to playing mas. The festival's roots in the revolutionary parody of French masquerade led to the establishment of characters such as Dame Lorraine and Pissenlit. The former is still present today, but the latter is no longer prevalent. Dame Lorraine mocks the haughty behavior of French women, wearing coconuts and mock crinolines to accentuate her breasts and buttocks. Pissenlit, however, was a character played exclusively by men in mas. To play Pissenlit, women, and men cross-dressed as women wore a transparent nightgown with fake blood stains to indicate menstruation and gyrated their hips back and forth while yelling obscenities. This mas became more vulgar as years went on and was suppressed in the early 20th century.[18]

Literary theorist Rosamond S. King explains this phenomenon, calling it "backhanded re/presentation."[19] Characters that perform unconventional gender, defined by King as "any behavior, identity, or disposition that transgresses or threatens the heteropatriarchal order," are relegated to Jouvay.[20] Jouvay is the celebration at dawn on the Monday before Ash Wednesday where masqueraders often physically hide their identity with paint, masks, and clothing as they portray characters and spirits, simultaneously occupying space as both themselves and another being. According to King, North America and Europe have historically defined Caribbean gender and sexuality in a derogatory manner, so instead, she makes a case against using "transgender" in a Caribbean context. She states that colonial entities using terms neither created nor used by Caribbeans without addressing the etymologies and relationship to power is epistemologically violent and exemplifies "post-colonial imperialism," a term coined by cultural anthropologist Suzanne LaFont.[21] Calling back to cross-dressing's history in carnival, when Peter Minshall entered his King, *The Dying Swan: Ras Nijinsky in Drag as Pavlova*, in 2016, some raised their eyebrows at Minshall's word choice.

Under a YouTube video of an interview with Peter Minshall about his mas, most comments show positive reviews but not without critique. One user writes:

> "If we take a look at ancient civilizations, only men were allowed on stage. They acted out the roles that should have been played by women. *It is an insult to refer to the individual as being 'in drag.' The Dying Swan as portrayed by the man, is another art form. Our ancestors did not use terms like 'in drag.'*"[22] (emphasis added)

Another user writes:

> "Do we consider 'Dame Lorraine' drag? I believe *carnival has long broken those bounds without being a promotion of any alternate lifestyle other than that of 'playing mas* and [Minshall] has always pushed the envelope. . . . Seems like the spawning of [D]ame Lorraine and moko jumbie to me, LOL!"[23] (emphasis added)

Both comments actively support Peter Minshall's creation, yet contest using the term "drag." To them, inserting drag into playing mas strips mas of its authenticity, therefore disrupting the "purity" that defines Trinidad & Tobago's cultural nationalism. Historian and Gender Studies scholar

Antron Mahoney defines the nation's cultural nationalist structure as "a moral ideology that includes a vision for the nation, both internally and externally, but can be expressed by music, religion, or national symbols."[24] In this case, Mahoney argues that carnival aims to maintain culturally "pure" by relegating queerness away from the main stage. These homophobic and transphobic comments by users Domatilla and J Joachim confirm Mahoney's argument. By addressing Minshall's title, "*in drag*," as "an insult" to ancestors and promoting an "alternate lifestyle," they confirm that notions of queerness threaten carnival's reputation within the heteropatriarchal cultural nationalist structure.

In Thomas' words: "mas has no form."[25] On multiple levels, this mas resembles the balance between normative and non-normative aspects of carnival. Moko jumbies are deeply connected to carnival history and remain within the norm. In contrast, orisha practice and cross-dressing are no longer prevalent in carnival. Queering is indicative to carnival tradition, yet it is not the norm. In the 19th century, enslaved Africans queered French settlers' version of carnival to establish their autonomy through their own festival. With a history of resisting attempts to prohibit cross-dressing and promoting sexual liberation amongst racialized groups, *this* is the carnival that is celebrated on the island and replicated around the world, so we must honor and legitimize all facets of what makes Trinidad's carnival the mother of all carnivals.[26]

Conclusion

From its inception, Trinidad & Tobago's carnival has been queer. Enslaved by colonial oppressors, West Africans had large aspects of their tradition stripped from them but rekindled their agency by creating their own masquerade. By mocking French patriarchy and heteronormativity, enslaved Africans placed queerness at the center of their rebellion. As the centuries pass, the oppressor evolved from a physical occupant into colonial laws and social norms that push queerness to the background. Playing mas remains vital to this celebration because one's costume represents their defiance.

As a merging of classical Africa with classical Europe, *The Dying Swan* balances multiple cultures through spiritual guidance from Oshun, as Thomas alluded to in my interview. By combining the masculine and the feminine, the ballerina and the moko jumbie, French Romanticism and the steel pan, *The Dying Swan* highlights the coexistence of seemingly opposite entities. Thomas' performance utilizes Oshun to disturb the binaries present in carnival's cultural "purity." By putting normative aspects of the festival in conversation with non-normative aspects—a queer moko jumbie dancing to an arrangement of *The Swan* on steel pan—Minshall asserts Trinidad & Tobago's fluid multiculturalism and eternal queer presence in carnival.

Peter Minshall's groundbreaking design simultaneously remains true to tradition while subverting the festival's standards by bringing traditional mas into the foreground amongst commercialized mas. For Peter Minshall and Jhawhan Thomas, this defiance materializes as a reflective, somber performance that highlights the multifaceted history of Trinidad & Tobago and reminds the audience that queerness has always been central to carnival. *The Dying Swan* radically recognizes queerness and prompts the audience to reconsider carnival's founding purpose: to transgress.

Figure 1. ***The Dying Swan: Ras Nijinsky in Drag as Pavlova*****: A Mas by Peter Minshall and Jha-Whan Thomas. Photographed by Maria Nunes. 2016.**

Figure 2. *Nijinsky*. Undated. Promotional photograph from *Scheherazade*. United States Library of Congress.

Endnotes

[1] The author strongly suggests that the reader views the series of phenomenal photographs taken by Maria Nunes of *The Dying Swan: Ras Nijinsky in Drag as Pavlova* to further understand the process and impact of this mas. To view, visit this website: https://www.marianunes.com/p611484667.

[2] Charlotte Hammond, "Costuming Colonial Resistance in the New World," in *Entangled Otherness: Cross-Gender Fabrications in the Francophone Caribbean* (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 2018), 48–81, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv80cdk4.7.

[3] This article defines *queering* as marginalized groups making a shift in culture by redefining an event or concept that previously excluded them (usually regarding gender and sexuality) through mas.

[4] Emily Zobel Marshall, Max Farrar, and Guy Farrar, "Popular Political Cultures and the Caribbean Carnival," *Soundings*, no. 67 (Winter 2017): 34–49.

[5] Hollis "Chalkdust" Liverpool, Ph.D., "The Nature of African Traditions," in *Rituals of Power & Rebellion: The Carnival Tradition in Trinidad & Tobago 1763–1962* (Chicago, IL: Research Associates School Times Publications, 2001), 3–27.

[6] Nicholls, Robert Wyndham. *The Jumbies' Playing Ground : Old World Influences on Afro-Creole Masquerades in the Eastern Caribbean*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012. Accessed July 20, 2022. ProQuest Ebook Central.

[7] *Anna Pavlova as The Swan*, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tkFSBkl9mmo.

[8] Camille Saint-Saëns, *The Carnival of the Animals: Grand Zoological Fantasy for Eleven Players* (Dover, 1999).

[9] Paula Lindo, "Meditations on a Minshall Mas," February 6, 2016, http://www.guardian.co.tt/article-6.2.350666.0c7486b224.

[10] Read more history on the steel pan here: Desmond Waithe and Frank C. Worrell, "The Development of the Steel Band in Trinidad and Tobago," *Juniata Voices* 3 (January 2003): 41–47.

[11] *Peter Minshall's "The Dying Swan–Ras Nijinsky in Drag as Pavlova" Takes the Stage at the Queen's Park Savannah in Port of Spain.*, 2016. https://www.facebook.com/tttliveonline/videos/peter-minshalls-the-dying-swan-ras-nijinsky-in-drag-as-pavlova-takes-the-stage-a/10153850594970610/.

[12] Lindo, "Meditations on a Minshall Mas."

[13] Vanessa K. Valdés. 2014. *Oshun's Daughters: The Search for Womanhood in the Americas*. State University of New York Press. 9.

[14] Aisha M. Beliso-De Jesús. 2015. *Electric Santería: Racial and Sexual Assemblages of Transnational Religion*. Columbia University Press. 144.

[15] Hollis "Chalkdust" Liverpool. "Roots of the Carnival Tradition." In *Rituals of Power & Rebellion: The Carnival Tradition in Trinidad & Tobago 1763–1962*. Chicago, IL: Research Associates School Times Publications, 2001.

[16] Lynn Garafola, "The Vanguard Poetic of Vaslav Nijinsky," in *Diaghilev's Ballet Russes* (Oxford University Press, 1989).

[17] Ibid.

[18] Adanna Kai Jones, "Practicing Jametteness: The Transmission of 'Bad Behavior' as a Strategy of Survival," in *Carnival Is Woman*, ed. Frances Henry and Dwaine Plaza, Feminism and Performance in Caribbean Mas (University Press of Mississippi, 2020), 105–24, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvx5w9b2.9.

[19] Rosamond S. King, "The Caribbean Trans Continuum and Backhanded Re/Presentation," in *Island Bodies: Transgressive Sexualities in the Caribbean Imagination* (University Press of Florida, 2014), 20–62, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvx073vv.6.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Suzanne LaFont, "Very Straight Sex: The Development of Sexual Mores in Jamaica," in *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial Histories* (February 2001), quoted in Rosamond S. King, "The Caribbean Trans Continuum and Backhanded Re/Presentation."

[22] Domitilla10_, "C in Carnival: Minshall On The Dying Swan," Comment, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_zUS8WbHUmw.

[23] JJoachim5803, "C in Carnival: Minshall On The Dying Swan," Comment, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_zUS8WbHUmw.

[24] Antron D. Mahoney, "The Dying Swan: Cultural Nationalism and Queer Formations in Trinidad and Tobago," *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 21, no. 2 (2019 2019): 235–54, https://doi.org/10.1080/1369801X.2018.1547209.

[25] Jhawhan Thomas, Zoom interview with author, January 16, 2023.

[26] Lord, R. Cassandra. "Pelau MasQUEERade: Making Caribbean Queer Diasporic Space in the Toronto Pride Parade." *Transforming Anthropology* 28, no. 1 (2020): 74–89. https://doi.org/10.1111/traa.12169.

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Outside and Apart: Gloria Anzaldúa's Poetry of Exile

Victoria Canales, *The University of Texas at Austin*

Victoria Canales is a recent graduate from The University of Texas at Austin with degrees in English and Plan II Honors. Her research focuses on depictions of violence, geopolitics, and neocolonialism in Latin America, U.S.-Mexico border studies, and literature of exile and trauma. Victoria is currently serving with AmeriCorps as she continues her research and prepares to apply for a PhD in Comparative Literature.

Abstract

The works of Chicana theorist Gloria Anzaldúa are famous for her depictions of life and identity on the U.S.-Mexico border, but an aspect of her research that is not often engaged with is her exploration of trauma. Anzaldúa depicts trauma in both her creative and academic work, and in this paper, I will be conducting close readings on two of her poems, "Llorona Coyolxauhqui" (2003) and "Antigua, mi diosa" (1987), to explore themes of exile, alienation, and survival. Both of these poems either retell existing stories or create new mythology as a framework for traumatic experience. I argue that Anzaldúa's poetry applies not only to those with roots in borderlands, but also to those who have been uprooted, which has taken on new meaning within the last 18 years due to the increase in cartel and political violence in Mexico that has displaced millions.

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Esto es para ti, papá; tu fe inquebrantable en mí fue inspiradora, y todo lo que hago, lo hago para que te sientas orgulloso. Aquí está mi intento de comprenderte, de ir a donde ninguno de los dos puede regresar.

Introduction

For Chicana writer and scholar Gloria Anzaldúa, theory did not serve an additional or complementary role in the processing of trauma—it was the very essence of it. In her creative pursuits, Anzaldúa framed trauma in a way that most closely aligned with her experience of living on the border between the U.S. and Mexico as an in-between, a *nepantlera*. In her posthumously published book *Light in the Dark* (2015), Anzaldúa presents her idea of *conocimiento*, a process of grieving and "form of spiritual inquiry" made up of seven stages (*el arrebato*, *nepantla*, the Coatlicue state, the call, putting Coyolxauhqui together, the blow-up, shifting realities) that is fully realized through creative vision. *Nepantla*, the second stage, is the state of existence between two realities. Anzaldúa places *nepantla* in the context of alienation from both white-American and Mexican culture, a feeling of not-belonging in spaces that do not celebrate the contributions and lived experiences of Chicanas/*nepantleras*. However, Anzaldúa herself was born on the American side of the *frontera*, and her familial roots were deeply embedded in the borderlands. To her, the pain of *nepantla* came from external forces that did not find value in her Chicana perspective.

In the 20 years after Gloria Anzaldúa's death, the borderland between Mexico and the United States has changed profoundly, to the point of being unrecognizable from the *frontera* she was well-acquainted with. Today, for millions of immigrants and exiles, the pain of *nepantla* means having their Mexican identity ripped from them by a corrupt and brutal state. Now that is has been 17 years since Mexican President Felipe Calderon's initial declaration of war on drugs in 2007 and the subsequent wave of violence, there is a new generation of young Chicanas who have spent the majority of their lives in the United States but feel alien to it—a new generation who cannot find refuge in the label "Chicana" in the same way that Anzaldúa could. For this new generation, the border could not be more strictly defined, could not be less fluid. Though Anzaldúa did not witness this most recent surge in immigration from Mexico to the United States, her work remains ever more relevant as the definition of what it means to live in the borderlands shifts with the political landscape. Through close readings of two of her poems, "Llorona Coyolxauhqui" (2003) and "Antigua, mi diosa" (1987), this paper will explore themes of alienation and survival, ultimately proving their applicability, meaning, and relevance to those not only with roots in the borderlands, but, perhaps more importantly, those who have recently been uprooted from those same spaces.

"Llorona Coyolxauhqui"

"Llorona Coyolxauhqui," split into six distinct sections, opens immediately with a declaration of heritage: she is the daughter of the woman "que transnocha" [who stays up late], implying a familiarity with restless nights.[1] The speaker is resentful towards her "monstrous" existence, which she explicitly states is due in large part to her queer identity. Her choice of words here is telling; she compares her feelings of detachment from her culture to having been abandoned by a mother and "orphaned." The speaker in this poem vulnerably admits: "I feel alienated, feel as though I'm outside and apart from the world, homeless, lost." The dream sequence presented in the next few lines, which the speaker describes as leading her to "sink into trance," expands on this feeling of alienation—the world around her is "strange, peculiar, foreign, dream-like."[2] Anzaldúa then returns to her split-self and feelings of dissociation in the section titled "Nepantla" as she describes the feeling of "waiting while something, someone in me / behind me or from on the sidelines" contemplates how best to move away from her paralysis. Anzaldúa's Llorona is an exile who faces

rejection from every front; she exists as something ghostly "because exile . . . is fundamentally a discontinuous state of being." She is severed from her land and haunted by the violence that led her to this purgatory. Her spectral, amorphous existence is an embodiment of the victim/exile who must reside in a world separate from the one promised to them.

The section titled "Coyolxauhqui" leans heavily into the mythological groundwork that Anzaldúa lays for her Coatlicue state. The speaker retells the Aztec myth of Coyolxauhqui and Coatlicue, depicting herself as the murderous and treacherous daughter Coyolxauhqui. According to the legend, Coyolxauhqui rallied her 400 brothers together and led a charge against her pregnant mother, Coatlicue. During the attack, Huitzilopochtli sprung out from Coatlicue fully formed, beheaded Coyolxauhqui, and threw her head into the sky, where it transformed into the moon. Betrayed and turned over to Huitzilopochtli, the speaker "broke into pieces against the stone steps" of the temple. The image of the speaker's decapitation and dismemberment takes on a frightening new meaning with the rise in *decapitados* and *descuartizados* due to cartel violence (done with the passive approval of the Mexican government, which has created a state of near-absolute impunity, as 99 percent of violent crimes in Mexico do not result in a conviction). This symbol of a mutilated body, especially that of a woman, is all too familiar with this aforementioned new generation of Chicanas who have been driven out of their country to escape the ever-pervasive threat of kidnapping, torture, and murder. This mythological retelling points the reader to another facet of the Coatlicue state: "a dismantling of ideas acquired within a colonial mindset."[3] Anzaldúa takes creative liberty in the retelling of this myth, however, by eventually "putting Coyolxauhqui together," the fifth stage of *conocimiento* which refers to the processing of trauma through creative expression. The speaker has dismantled her previous way of living and is now "putting the fragments together" to build a new self with newfound agency. This most recent influx of exiles living in the United States must similarly grapple with the task of putting their own fragments together to try and get to a semblance of the truth that led them to this foreign and unwelcoming country; they must attempt to create a chronology of events and understand their a-legal and amorphosized life which has been reduced to a statistic, a body outside and apart from its memory.[4]

The last section of the poem, "El cenote / The Dreampool," is written mostly in prose and depicts a scene of rejuvenation and clarity, a stark difference from the hazy atmosphere that has defined "Llorona Coyolxauhqui." This is where the speaker is most explicit in expanding on her reverence for "ancestral information stored beyond the files of personal memory" that permeates through Anzaldúa's entire body of work. Using the archetypes and imagery of her ancestors, she is able to see the world with "new eyes," pulling her out of the fog of depersonalization. The liminal feeling of "living in either of two places," referring to both physical borderlands and to the space between her "body and . . .dream worlds," also mirrors Sergio Gonzalez Rodriguez's concept of friction and fog, existing in that space between war and peace, "anamorphosis incarnate." The line "My body's memory—that's what Coyolxauhqui symbolizes for me" legitimizes the utility of creation when it comes to processing trauma within an individual's body, turning their histories into something to be observed and understood. Gonzalez Rodriguez puts forth a similar sentiment in *Field of Battle* explicitly focusing on the lives of those affected by the ever-pervasive violence in Mexico:

> "The condition of the victim can only be overcome through a symbolic exchange with death. And even then, the victim reappears as an anamorphosis of their own memory; broken, deformed, overwritten with an incongruous representation of the familiar in which the personal has become distant, alien and unknown, their emotions overwhelmed by atrocity and cruelty at the hands of others. The world becomes an anamorphosis: a sinister design asserts itself. An oscillation between normality and anormality. And at the center of it all, the victim: their chronic experiences at the threshold of destruction."[5]

Above all, this final section, and "Llorona Coyolxauhqui" as a whole, emphasizes freedom and beauty—all the ways in which one can return to some semblance of a life unlived through the process of putting Coyolxauhqui together—that can be found in expression through art.

"Antigua, Mi Diosa"

Where "Llorona Coyolxauhqui" makes use of existing mythology, "Antigua, mi diosa" instead creates an entirely new mythos out of familiar stories, iconography, and language in order to engage with similar themes of alienation, trauma, and exile.[6] The goddess that Anzaldúa creates in this poem, Antigua, can generally be interpreted to be a mother goddess of survival.[7] She is benevolent and she is cruel; she is pain and she is pleasure; she is a moment and she is eternal; she is trauma and she is hope. The poem is formatted very much like a prayer, with heavy use of apostrophe every time the speaker refers to Antigua, generally at the beginning of each stanza. Anzaldúa's speaker, who moves "con paso de tortuga" [at the pace of a tortoise], tells Antigua that she "sacrifiqué las plantas de mis pies" [sacrificed the soles of her feet] for her. There is a sense of solemnity and martyrdom to this first stanza, as the

speaker's suffering brings her closer to her to Antigua. Antigua both cuts down the speaker and tends to her; Antigua caresses the speaker's face, but her fingers are "como espadas" [like swords], an admission that the process of healing itself leaves scars. As Antigua cuts drawings on the speaker's face, she enters her body through these open wounds, filling "el hueco de mi cuerpo" [the void in my soul]. The fourth stanza further cements the idea that Antigua is a part of the speaker's body through language reminiscent of harvest and fertility, returning to the motif of creation and destruction that was introduced with the mention of copal. However, the seeds that Antigua planted in the speaker's body lead to a harvest of "inquietud que se madura en agonia" [restlessness that hardens into agony]. This visceral imagery shocks the reader into feeling the discomfort and pain that comes with the speaker's transformation.

The speaker is resentful of the "tarea inacabable" [endless work] that Antigua has left for her to do; indeed, exiles typically feel some sense of resentment in regards to their forced displacement.[8] The fourth stanza is the first explicit mention of the speaker's relationship to Antigua, as she refers to Antigua as her mother. Childlike and helpless, the poem speaks of a desire and inability to "entregar a tu regazo" [return to her lap], though for the exile, there is an inherent inability to return home. The speaker is ashamed and unable to self-soothe, and she blames Antigua for this abandonment, these years of absence. The speaker cries out to Antigua, imploring her to remember *"tu hija errante"* [your wandering daughter] and, with all her body burning, to allow the speaker to know Antigua. For the exile, there is a sense of constant wandering, of endless work, and of unending yearning for their country, both in terms of spatiality (the physical land) and in spectrality (the life one could have lived).

Conclusion

As shown in the poetry of Gloria Anzaldúa, the artistic journey for an exile to regain agency of their displaced body and mind is comparable in many ways to the artistic journey of one who has spent their life—and over generations, several lives—living on borderlands between two cultures. After nearly twenty years of violence, migration, and trauma, millions of people who have been forcibly uprooted from their homes are reckoning with this in-between world that was not meant for them to inhabit. With that in mind, Anzaldúa's writings provide some sort of example for exiled artists to follow: write, create, never stop searching for that which you have lost. Reclaiming these stories means reclaiming culture, country, and body, which becomes ever more important as the violence in Mexico that has created so many refugees continues to worsen. For those faced with so much to grieve and so much to reclaim, *esta tarea inacable es el más importante que uno puede hacer*.

Endnotes

1 Anzaldúa, Gloria and AnaLouise Keating. *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 295–297.

2 van der Kolk, Bessel. *The Body Keeps the Score: Mind, Brain and Body in the Transformation of Trauma*. (London, Penguin Books, 2015), 102.

3 Hernández-Wolfe, Pilar. 2013. *A Borderlands View on Latinos, Latin Americans, and Decolonization*. (Jason Aronson, Incorporated), 43.

4 Gonzalez Rodríguez, Sergio. *Field of Battle*. (South Pasadena: Semiotext(e), 2019), 83.

5 Ibid.

6 Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. (San Francisco, Aunt Lute Books, 1987), 210–211.

7 Steele. *We Heal from Memory*. (Palgrave Macmillan Ltd, 2000), 143.

8 Said, Edward. "Reflections on Exile." Essay. In Reflections on Exile: And Other Literary and Cultural Essays. London: Granta, 2012.

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Deceitful *Despoinai*: The Feminine Economic Problem in Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* and Aristophanes' *Ploutos*

Bee Candelaria, *Carleton College*

Bee Candelaria is a senior Classics major at Carleton College, with a minor in Archaeology. She is a first-generation, Questbridge scholar from Georgia. She studies poverty in the Classical Mediterranean world. After she graduates, Bee plans to pursue a graduate degree in Classics or Ancient History.

Abstract

In Aristophanes's *Ploutos* and Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*, both authors depict the figure of the *despoina*, mistress, characterized as deceitful and unproductive. *Ploutos* depicts the impoverished farmer Chremylus, who intends to restore the god Wealth's eyesight and is opposed by the goddess Poverty. Xenophon, in *Oeconomicus*, recounts Socrates's discussion of private wealth with the elite Athenian Ischomachus, who describes his wife's role as household manager. The authors cast the abstract economic burdens of poverty, in *Ploutos*, and vice, in *Oeconomicus*, as *despoinai* who exploit men's labor. Both works feature actual *despoinai*, the Old Woman in *Ploutos* and Ischomachus's wife in *Oeconomicus*, who are also characterized as deceitful and unproductive. This paper argues that Xenophon and Aristophanes depict economic burdens as despoinai. Through this personification, the authors cast the contemporary economic distress caused by labor exploitation as a "feminine" problem by subordinating men under deceptive, unproductive *despoinai*.

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Introduction

After their defeat in the Peloponnesian War, Athens experienced intense social and economic distress. In the tumultuous moment of the 380s BC, two prominent Athenian writers, Aristophanes and Xenophon, penned works from disparate genres; Aristophanes wrote the comedy *Ploutos* (*Wealth*), and Xenophon wrote the philosophical work *Oeconomicus* (*Household Management*). Each work reflects the contemporary economic distress caused by labor exploitation and features the character the *despoina*, the mistress. The gendered dynamic that the *despoina* represents has been understudied in these texts, especially in conversation with the economic reality she reflects. This paper argues that Xenophon and Aristophanes both depict economic burdens as *despoinai*, mistresses, who the authors characterize as unproductive and deceitful. Through this personification, the authors cast the economic distress as a "feminine" problem, thus subverting the accepted patriarchal social order to elevate a world in which the *despoina* controls men through their labor and wealth.

Both works supply a view of the socioeconomic discourse of the 380s BC. Aristophanes' *Ploutos*, performed in 388 BC,[1] portrays the god Wealth and the goddess Poverty. Wealth's blindness must be cured by the protagonist, the impoverished farmer Chremylus, to restore a just wealth distribution where the god bestows plenty upon the productive and honest and little upon the idle and deceptive. Poverty opposes this because restoring Wealth's eyesight will end her rule over the impoverished. This play is a representative example of the genre of Greek Old Comedy, which satirized contemporary political persons and events to create humorous, yet provocative, reflections of popular culture and sentiment. In the same decade, Xenophon wrote *Oeconomicus*, a Socratic philosophical dialogue concerned with the management of household wealth.[2] Socrates discusses the nature of wealth, utility, and work, and he recounts a conversation with Ischomachus, an elite Athenian who describes his wife's role as household manager. Both works address private wealth's relationship to moral goodness by constructing an order in which productivity and honesty, traits characterized as masculine, determine wealth accumulation.

Although both works utilize the figure pejoratively, the *despoina* was essential to private Athenian homes. As the free female head of household, she managed the domestic labor of enslaved persons, children, and herself. She is not simply the female counterpart of the *despotes*, the male head of household. She operates within her own sphere of influence: taking care of the children, the sick, and the stores of possessions. While Classicists have examined Ischomachus' wife's embodiment of gender as a *despoina*, the abstract vices that Xenophon describes as *despoinai* have not been examined in this way.[3] Similarly, the gendered dynamics of Aristophanes' *Ploutos* are especially understudied.[4] This paper brings together these gendered dynamics and the economic distress the authors are in conversation with to argue that the *despoinai* are characterized as deceitful and unproductive.

Xenophon's and Aristophanes' works depict both abstract *despoinai*—expensive vices in *Oeconomicus* and the goddess Poverty in *Ploutos*—and actual *despoinai*—Ischomachus' wife in *Oeconomicus* and the 'Old Woman' in *Ploutos*—to cast the contemporary economic distress as a "feminine" problem. Xenophon and Aristophanes critique

the aspects of the economy that they identify as feminine, namely the unproductivity and deceit specific to labor exploitation. In both works, the abstract and actual *despoinai* may reflect a fear of a social organization where a *despoina* can rule over men. Murnaghan argues that this fear stems from the Athenian ideal that women are less self-controlled than men, causing economic strain on the husband's estate.[5] Moreover, this depiction draws upon a poetic tradition in Greek literature that casts women as deceptive and economically burdensome members of the household. Because Xenophon and Aristophanes interact with this poetic tradition, their audience may better understand their message.

Two illustrative examples from the history of misogynistic literature that Xenophon and Aristophanes are interacting with are Hesiod, writing in the 8th century BC, and Semonides, a century later, who both cast women as deceptive and unproductive. These women, though not called *despoinai*, operate in that capacity as wives and mothers, and they manage the responsibilities of the female head of household.[6] Hesiod describes the first woman, Pandora, as a "beautiful, evil thing," and claims she was sent to cause death to men, making her primary characterization one of dangerous trickery. Furthermore, Pandora's creation demonstrates her duplicitous nature; she was given a "dog-like mind" and "thievish character."[7] Hesiod describes her as the indolent drone bee who sits in the hive and eats but does not work.[8] Semonides also describes women by assimilating them to animals. The pig-woman, the donkey-woman, and the weasel-woman are all identified by their insatiable hunger and laziness.[9] The fish-woman appears pleasant and beautiful one moment, then ferocious and ugly the next,[10] thus testifying to her deceptive nature. Xenophon's and Aristophanes' portrayals of the *despoina* as deceitful and unproductive reflect this convention. A deeper reading of the *despoina* metaphor in each text reveals the complex interplay between private wealth and the role of *despoinai*.

Abstract *Despoinai*

To personify the strains which diminish a man's estate, Xenophon and Aristophanes cast abstract economic burdens as duplicitous *despoinai*. Socrates, in Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*, describes gluttony, lust, drunkenness, and foolish ambition as *despoinai* who pretend to be pleasures and rule over men who intend to make an income but nevertheless fail.[11] Employing the feminine *despoina* as opposed to the masculine *despotes* ("master") is not merely grammatical; each figure differs essentially. The masculine *despotai* are characterized by their productivity; they are forces that could cause others to work and produce wealth.[12] Socrates even claims an enslaver who is "good and noble" could make the enslaved more self-controlled and cause them to lead better lives.[13] The abstract *despoinai* are deceitful, unproductive, and exploitative of men's productivity.

Socrates details how *despoinai* extract labor from men for their own gain: the *despoinai* rule over men who are young and can work and force these men "to bring whatever they have earned by working and to spend it on [the *despoina's*] desire." Once the men cannot work due to old age, the *despoinai* abandon them to enslave another.[14] The men can see that they are under duplicitous *despoinai* who pretend to be pleasures but cannot escape them.[15] Therefore, men are enslaved to a vice and spend their income on that vice until they are too old to work. By casting the vice as a *despoina*, the men's agency is subordinated, not under a productive *despotes* that will cause him to be more self-controlled and lead a better life, but under an exploitative *despoina* who will extract all his labor until he grows old and cannot work.

Aristophanes depicts the goddess Poverty as a *despoina* over craftsmen.[16] While arguing with Chremylus, Poverty claims that she provides everything one needs by "sitting over the craftsman just like a *despoina*." She drives them by "need and poverty."[17] When Poverty argues that people will not work when they meet their needs and nothing will be produced, she describes herself as a *despoina*. In Poverty's characterization as a *despoina*, Aristophanes situates his depiction of Poverty within the poetic tradition of Hesiod and Semonides, identifying Poverty as deceitful and unproductive. Poverty attempts to show herself as a productive force. However, as a *despoina*, the audience expects deception in her speech.

Indeed, the word that Poverty uses to describe how she causes the craftsmen to work, *anagkazô* ("to force, compel"), is the word used by Socrates in the *Oeconomicus* to describe how the vices as *despoinai* exploit men's labor.[18] Therefore, Poverty and the other abstract *despoinai* appear to *act* similarly. Poverty's apparent defeat in her debate with Chremylus has puzzled scholars, leading many to read the debate ironically and argue that Aristophanes intended the audience to sympathize with the antagonist, Poverty, rather than the protagonist, Chremylus.[19] While Morosi argues against this, claiming that Poverty's similarities with philosophers and sophists cause her defeat, this paper argue that, by using Socrates's explanation of the manipulative abstract *despoina* as our framework, Poverty's characterization as an unproductive, deceitful despoina causes her defeat. Poverty forces craftsmen to work and spend their hard-earned income to appease her desires, evident in how she uses "need and poverty" as their motivators. Though Poverty claims she is productive, this lens shows that she is instead exploiting the labor of the craftsmen.

The abstract *despoinai* portrayed by Aristophanes and Xenophon rule by leeching the labor force of men for their own benefit. They are both unproductive by forcing others to work for them and deceitful for attempting to exhibit themselves as productive. Poverty argues that she produces everything one needs in her debate with Chremylus, who is unmoved by her argument and accuses her of lying.[20] The vices described by Socrates are "pretending to be pleasures," but they "become apparent that they are pains" to those whom the vices enslave.[21] Xenophon and Aristophanes subordinate men who, through poverty or vice, fail to increase their wealth under manipulative *despoinai*. In doing so, both authors cast abstract economic burdens as *despoinai* with the agency to profit from men's labor. This depiction is an inversion of the accepted social order, where the *despotes* dictated the labor of the *despoina* and all others in his household. This inversion characterizes the contemporary economic distress as the issue of idle and exploitative *despoinai* manipulating men to profit from their labor and wealth.

Actual *Despoinai*

While the abstract *despoinai* do not have the agency to manipulate men's labor, the actual *despoinai*, Ischomachus's wife and the Old Woman, could. Through the *despoinai*'s use of cosmetics, they are characterized as indolent and deceptive. Ischomachus, in his conversation with Socrates in the *Oeconomicus*, describes how he taught his wife to manage a household well by not acting as a feminine *despoina*, but acting like a masculine *despotes*.[22] Aristophanes portrays the 'Old Woman,' who, after Wealth's vision has been restored, comes to complain that her young, *nouveau riche* boyfriend, the 'Young Man,' has stopped visiting her. While Aristophanes does not explicitly call the Old Woman a *despoina*, she is rich, old, painted with cosmetics, and in a position of power over the Young Man. She gives the Young Man money for favors, namely his affection and companionship.[23]

Both actual mistresses use cosmetics, especially *psimuthion* (white-lead makeup). Xenophon and Aristophanes use this to claim that the *despoinai* are deceptive. Xenophon depicts the use of cosmetics as the work of duplicitous *despoinai* in Socrates's conversation with Ischomachus concerning the training of his wife. Socrates notes that Ischomachus's wife has a "manly mind."[24] Ischomachus agrees and explains how he trained her to be so. When he had found her wearing *psimuthion* to appear paler, Ischomachus questioned his wife, asking whether he ought to falsify his wealth.[25] When his wife denies that he would be right to do so, he equates this with wearing makeup.[26] Just as the male head of household could lie about his wealth, the *despoina* is deceitful by altering her appearance through cosmetics. Ischomachus's wife's use of cosmetics aligns herself with the disingenuous, costly vices. Her subsequent shunning of cosmetics is illustrative of her "manly mind." Now, instead of a *despoina*, she is instructed to beautify herself by acting just as a *despotes*–standing over the enslaved domestic laborers, taking walks outside, and exercising through her domestic labor,[27] all actions parallel by Ischomachus in the next chapter.[28]

The physical description of the Old Woman demonstrates the cultural norm for a duplicitous *despoina* from which Ischomachus steered his wife away. Chremylus ridicules her, "If that *psimuthion* gets washed off, you'll see the wreckage of her face in all its nakedness!"[29] This further characterizes the Old Woman as a disingenuous *despoina*. The removal of makeup could parallel the Old Woman's removal from her position as a *despoina*. As the Young Man and the Old Woman enter the house to meet Wealth, Chremylus reassures the Young Man that the Old Woman will not "forcibly enslave" him.[30] Despite keeping her deceptive cosmetic mask, she has been deprived of her position as a *despoina*.

Glazebrook points out that the cosmetics use is connected with economic indolence, a characteristic of *despoinai*.[31] In the *Oeconomicus*, Ischomachus warns that wives who often lounge around set themselves up for comparison with "women who are deceivers and wear makeup. "[32] Ischomachus's wife sets aside cosmetics and begins to beautify herself in the method of a *despotes*; therefore, she remakes herself to have the "manly mind" that Socrates claims she has.[33] Ischomachus reproaches the kind of women exemplified by The Old Woman.[34] Her lack of productivity is evident in her description of her relationship with the Young Man. He provides her with affection and companionship, and she gives him money. However, she does not produce anything. She is the *despoina* over the Young Man, who controls his labor until Wealth has restored sight and the Young Man can remove her from her position.

Conclusion

Xenophon and Aristophanes depict poverty and vice as abstract *despoinai* compared to the actual *despoinai*, the Old Woman and Ischomachus's wife. While Classical scholarship has addressed Ischomachus's wife's "manly mind" in the context of the contemporary economic distress, the role of the abstract and actual *despoinai* in the texts have been overlooked. This paper has argued that the dynamic of the unproductive, deceitful *despoina* and enslaved men casts the economic distress as a "feminine" problem where the *despoinai* diminish a man's estate by demanding his hard-earned income to pay for her desires.

Through personifying the distress as feminine, Aristophanes and Xenophon give poverty and vice the agency to exploit men's labor. Both authors attempt to configure a solution where manipulative *despoinai* cannot profit from men's labor. While Xenophon and Aristophanes share a common problem, they differ in methodology. To repair the feminine economic distress, Xenophon proposes to train *despoinai* to have masculine minds; Aristophanes champions a *despoina*-free society by ousting women from their positions of power in the private sphere. Murnaghan argues that a productive utopia where the feminine is assimilated into the masculine is constructed, in Xenophon's view, by educating women on the importance of self-control.[35] Ischomachus's wife is taught to conduct herself as a productive *despotes* would. Aristophanes achieves this goal by ridding the world of the ultimate feminine economic strain–the goddess Poverty. After Poverty's rule ends, the other *despoinai*, such as the Old Woman, cannot remain in their exploitative positions, evident in Chremylus's reassurance that the Old Woman will not forcibly enslave the Young Man. Through the metaphor of the unproductive, deceitful *despoina*, the authors are able to envision a solution to the contemporary economic distress caused by the manipulation of labor.

The feminine characterization of the contemporary economic distress that Xenophon and Aristophanes craft is not merely a literary tool, but it may also reflect a reality where women take a greater role in the economy. The legal speeches of Lysias and Demosthenes and inscriptional evidence attest to women conducting large transactions at the time Xenophon and Aristophanes wrote their respective works.[36] Xenophon's and Aristophanes' use of the *despoina* metaphor, and the fear of a *despoina*'s lack of self-control, may also be evidence for women taking a greater role in the economy. The systematic study of this metaphor gives insight into the cultural responses to changes in economic and domestic gender roles to better understand the status and perception of women in the ancient economy and home.

Endnotes

1 Sommerstein, Alan. H. 2001. *Aristophanes:* Wealth. Warminster, UK: Aris and Phillips Ltd. 1.

2 Pomeroy, S. B. 1994. *Xenophon* Oeconomicus*: A Social and Historical Commentary*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press. 7. Xenophon's contribution to the topic of household management is novel. Archaic authors such as Homer and Hesiod discuss households running well under a patriarch, but there is no such exegesis on *how* to run a household. Contemporaneous works such as Sophocles' *Antigone* and Lysias' *On the Murder of Eratosthenes* demonstrate the effects of a patriarch's mistakes on a household, while the orators Isaeus and Demosthenes do not discuss the role that a patriarch plays outside of ownership of the household wealth.

3 cf. Murnaghan (1988); Glazebrook (2009) *ad loc.*

4 Morosi, Francesco. 2020. "Staging Philosophy: Poverty in the *Agon* of Aristophanes' *Wealth*," *Classical Philology* (115) 402–423. Morosi explains that Poverty's characterization "could and should be more widely explored" (403). Morosi synthesizes the existing literature, none of which addresses Poverty's gender, which is also absent from Morosi's own analysis of the text.

5 Murnaghan, Shelia. 1988. "How a Woman can be More like a Man: The Dialogue Between Ischomachus and his Wife in Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*," *Helios* (15): 9–22.

6 Namely, Pandora's sole action is to open a *pithos*, the storage container where a family's wheat supply for several months may be kept. Her failure as a household manager is evident; instead of perfectly preserved wheat, Pandora opens the improperly sealed *pithos* and pests fly out, which become the world's evils.

7 *Works and Days* 77–83.

8 *Theogony* 592–602.

9 Semonides, *Women* (7). Translated by Diane Arnson Svarlien. *Diotima*. 1995. 2–5, 42–55.

10 *Semonides* 7 28–39.

11 Xenophon *Oec.* 1.22.

12 Ibid., 1.17.

13 Ibid., 1.23.

14 Ibid., 1.22.

15 Ibid., 1.20.

16 Aristophanes *Pl.* 532–534.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid., 533 "*epanagkazousa*"; Xenophon *Oec.* 1.22 "*anagkazousi*" The "*epi-*" prefix added in Aristophanes does not reflect any real difference in meaning.

19 Morosi (2020) describes this view best. In sum, the character who speaks first is most often the character who eventually loses the debate. Chremylus speaks before Poverty, but Poverty is the one defeated.

20 Aristophanes *Pl.* 535.

21 Xenophon *Oec.* 1.20.

22 Ibid., 7–10.

23 Aristophanes *Pl.* 975–986.

24 Xenophon *Oec.* 10.1.

25 Ibid., 10.3.

26 Ibid., 10.4–6.

27 Ibid., 10.10.

28 Ibid., 11.

29 Aristophanes *Pl.* 1064–1065.

30 Ibid., 1092.

31 Glazebrook 2009. 245–246.

32 Xenophon *Oec.* 10.13.

33 Ibid., 10.1.

34 Ibid., 10.13.

35 Murnaghan (1988).

36 cf. Schaps, David M. 1979. *Economic Rights of Women in Ancient Greece*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 52–55 for greater discussion of the economic implications of this evidence.

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Digitization as (Re)Birth: The Biography of a St. Lawrence Island Harpoon Socket

Travis Kanoa Chai Andrade, *Princeton University*

Travis K. Chai Andrade is Kanaka ʻŌiwi and was born and raised on Hawai'i Island. He is in the class of 2024 at Princeton University studying Anthropology and Archaeology with a focus on Indigenous studies. Travis is interested in the production of Indigeneity through museum spaces and how material culture contributes to Indigenous community, identity, and sovereignty.

Abstract

What happens to an object when it is rendered digital? Walter Benjamin argues that digitization, as a form of mechanical reproduction, strips an object of its uniqueness, authenticity, and aura. Contrary to Benjamin's argument, this paper suggests that digitization offers unique opportunities to (re)contextualize objects and thus enhance museumgoers' understanding of artifacts and their meaning. Moreover, I posit that this (re)contextualization is meaningful because an object's ability to bear witness to the past is dependent on viewers understanding the cumulative and additive meaning of an object's biography over time–not just its original context.

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Life on St. Lawrence Island, Alaska is not easy. Living in a place devoid of trees, save for the smaller-than-one-foot-tall Arctic Willow, those who reside on St. Lawrence rely on the currents of the Bering Sea for wood. Farming is near impossible due to thick layers of permafrost. For much of St. Lawrence Island's over 2,000 years of inhabited history, people there have primarily made their living through subsistence hunting.[1] Thus, in the culture of the Old Bering Strait (OBS)—an umbrella term given to ancient cultures surrounding the Bering Sea[2]—the harpoon becomes an object of the utmost significance.[3] The harpoon socket, a small piece connecting the shaft to the head, nearly always produced in the likeness of a polar bear head, is always distinguishable by the fangs, which can be carved either as a realistic or symbolic representation of the great beast.[4] There is an interesting relationship between the harpoon, its user, and its purpose: carved in the likeness of an apex predator, the harpoon allows people embarking on a hunt to metaphorically become the supreme hunter, the polar bear. The hunter's prey, typically walrus, will be food for life and its ivory fodder for another harpoon.

This narrative of hunting through the harpoon is quintessential to the life of St. Lawrence Islanders two millennia ago. Even today, some estimate that up to 80 percent of food eaten on St. Lawrence is gathered through subsistence hunting.[5] In modern times, the subsistence lifestyle has been extended to include subsistence digging—the practice of selling antiquities found in graves to make a living.[6] Some consider the artifacts found on St. Lawrence to constitute "the most lucrative legal market in archaeological artifacts in the world."[7] Though unfortunate because these artifacts are not always retrieved as gingerly as a trained archaeologist would with full documentation, this is how many relics of the OBS are retrieved and shared with the world.[8]

Thus, subsistence, in a multitude of forms, is the context with which Object 1998–482, "Harpoon Socket Piece Carved as a Polar Bear Head," comes to the Princeton University Art Museum (PUAM). Displayed as a single image on the PUAM's website, the Harpoon Socket has a complete art historical "tombstone" but much of its context that would help the modern viewer understand its meaning is not present.[9] While the tombstone describes the style of the object and estimates its date of creation, there is no indication of how walrus hunting was one of the only means of acquiring food, no mention of the harsh reality that has led to subsistence digging, no explanation that St. Lawrence island is 36km from the nearest other landmass and therefore isolated even in the vastness of Alaska.[10] In other words, the tombstone contains no reference to the original context in which the artifact once existed. Furthermore, the Harpoon Socket's digital representation loses its relationship to the harpoon head and shaft; since the photograph contains only the small socket, viewers may easily mistake this for the entire harpoon. This digital artifact thus stands in contradiction with the museum's mission statement to "affirm accepted meanings and suggest new ones."[11] Without context, how can the average digital viewer, who likely is unfamiliar with OBS cultures[12] be expected to grasp *any* meaning relevant to the object's contextual origins? The mission statement seems to demand context. Philosopher Walter Benjamin would claim that the Harpoon Socket, as an object reproduced via digitization, has lost its "aura," and thus the object is precluded from functioning as a window unto the past, but as this paper will show, digitization is in fact the solution to the absence of context and can provide an important boost to the problematic tombstone. By offering this additional context, digitization can actually provide layers of depth to a viewer's understanding of museum object's in a way that traditional physical labels cannot.

Figure 1. Okvik / OBS, Harpoon socket piece carved as a polar bear head, CE 100–400. Walrus ivory, 14.6 x 3.4 x 3.1 cm. Princeton University Art Museum, Bequest of John B. Elliott, Class of 1951.

Reluctance to creating copies or digital versions of originals is not new and is centered on the concept of authenticity. Benjamin situates objects within the context of their ritual use, granting them authenticity, or "the essence of all that is transmissible from [an object's] beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced."[13] In other words, the ability of an object to "transmit," or to speak, is reliant on context. In mechanical reproduction, such as digitization or a two-dimensional photograph of a three-dimensional object, Benjamin argues that objects are separated from their "dependence on ritual" resulting in a loss of aura.[14] Aura—what Benjamin associates with the "uniqueness" of an object[15]—is subsumed by reproduction. The copy is not the same as the original object, so it cannot teach the viewer context, and being a copy, it cannot perform ritual. An object's meaning is further complicated by Archaeologist Christopher Tilley who agrees that objects are endowed with metaphors by the ritual use of specific cultures.[16] Crucially, as an artifact progresses through time, these metaphors are retained by the material object itself. Specifically, objects are always connected to their "social condition[s] of existence."[17] Applying Tilley's framework to the Harpoon Socket, until recently its "social conditions" have always been about subsistence. When first created, it provided food to St. Lawrence Islanders. When unearthed, it provided money to subsistence diggers. When put on display,[18] its purpose changed, and the object adopted a new ritual use: one of an education that supports the learning goals of the university museum.[19] Under Tilley's perspective, then, the Harpoon Socket acts as a window through which pieces of the past come into view. Aura may be understood as this view through the window: the histories to which an object bears witness. Benjamin posits that the loss of aura vis-à-vis mechanical reproduction is akin to closing the curtains of this window. However, Tilley's framework is two-fold: meaning is made through metaphors, *and* meaning is stored in the object. If meaning is stored in an object, why is it lost in reproduction? Why is meaning just not reproduced? Archaeologist Jody Joy provides an alternative approach.

Joy recognizes that objects are "born" into cultures that confer meaning through ritual but claims that when an object enters a new sphere of relations, its meaning is "influenced by attitudes and perceptions of the past."[20] In other words, an object's meaning is "dependent upon how its past is perceived" in the present.[21] The onus of inferring meaning is on the viewer, and the more the viewer understands the contextualizing history around the object, the more meaning an object can convey. Conversely, if history cannot be understood, meaning is lost even if the object retains its authenticity. The museum visitor therefore plays a role in meaning construction; historical agency[22] is not limited to objects themselves. Tilley writes that "things create people just as much as people make them" but stops short of recognizing how this statement extends meaning beyond materiality.[23] Nevertheless, Tilley's statement shows that Joy's claim is not one-way. Indeed, one's perception of the past influences object meaning, but object meaning also influences one's perception of the past. If Princeton's Harpoon Socket is the only exposure to OBS culture an individual has, their perception of OBS culture is then

dependent on the object and its context as presented by the museum. The window to history an object provides means nothing if the person cannot interpret the nuances of that past. Context, then, acts as a mediator towards facilitating that understanding and becomes exceedingly important. Moreover, according to Archaeologists Gosden and Marshall, objects are not static; they are dynamic entities capable both of change and gathering their own histories.[24] As such, an object's meaning, in addition to being contextual, is additive, suggesting that context is not limited to the intended first use or the culture that made it. Gosden and Marshall's concept, object biography, thus bridges meaning and aura, directing these terms to a set of relationalities.[25] By focusing on relationality, one can consider not only the object's relation to its past but also to the patrons who interact with it today.

Clearly, the Harpoon Socket carries the potential to express great meaning. Why then does Benjamin claim its digital reproduction does not? At the Princeton University Art Museum, the digital Harpoon Socket is currently treated as an extension of the material Harpoon Socket. To Benjamin, this would mean that the Harpoon Socket no longer claims its relationalities and has lost its aura. This inhibits the digital Harpoon Socket's ability to teach the viewers about its origins in St. Lawrence Island. Just as a physical display, the singular image of the Harpoon Socket is akin to the showcase and the object it houses; the accompanying caption is akin to an information placard. Unlike the current digital display, the Harpoon Socket's physical presentation in the galleries made it easier to determine its importance. Surrounded by other artifacts of walrus ivory and hunting gear from Indigenous Arctic cultures, the Harpoon Socket was presented in its relationality through both word and representation.[26] Digitally, this context has been lost. Benjamin's theory of mechanical reproduction is then accordingly true; without context—a magnifying glass to the object's aura—the Harpoon socket may continue to bear witness to the past, but its aura is invisible to the contemporary viewer. However, presenting relationality in the virtual realm *is* possible, and it *can* be portrayed to a much greater extent. In fact, digitization offers a unique opportunity for (re)contextualization—a chance to treat digital objects as distinct entities. Rather than wholly losing aura when entering the digital world Digital Objects[27] generate new forms of ritual and can be presented in their own right. This is important for three reasons. Firstly, as the PUAM continues to undergo major renovations until 2025, the vast majority of its collection is only available digitally. Secondly, there can often be many barriers to visiting a museum in person: travel restrictions, costs, pandemics, general accessibility, and other obligations can make it difficult to interact with museum artifacts on display. Thirdly, remote and isolated places like St. Lawrence Island are difficult for people to easily visit, and accordingly, many people may only understand the history and culture of St. Lawrence Island through these museum artifacts. Thus, Digital Objects critically increase accessibility for both museum collections and contextualizing narratives of the past more generally.

Although most research on Digital Objects and replicas focuses on 3D models, there are relevant themes to inform the (re)contextualization of the Harpoon Socket. For example, Archaeologist Caitlin Chien Clerkin and Museum Studies Professor Bradley Taylor claim that 3D models are best understood as "authentic to themselves" rather than as "true surrogates" for the physical object they represent,[28] intentionally echoing Benjamin's concept of authenticity, and I posit this theory applies to 2D photographs as well. The high-resolution photographs available on the museum website are meticulous and intentional, allowing the viewer to zoom in on the finest details: they must have undergone a ritual of composition, lighting, and planning, and have therefore been endowed with meaning. The PUAM tasked someone with capturing the richness of the three-dimensional Harpoon Socket in 2D such that virtual patrons can zoom in to see the scratches and cracks that adorn the ivory now black from the stains of time. Whereas the wear-and-tear from frequent use may have been palpable to the naked eye in the physical museum, virtually, patrons can zoom in to see each fine line and wonder whether it is due to ritual use in the hunt or an intentional carving to empower the hunter. This detailed access heightens the viewer's awareness of the object's past uses: the artifact's scars are scars from humans past, signals of shared humanity. In a sense, the ability to zoom in constitutes a kind of virtual ritual in itself, which then increases relationality between the object and its viewer. The Digital Harpoon Socket then is rightly capable of possessing its own meaning, as it has its own rituals, yet it still references and maintains the meaning of the past physical Harpoon Socket. The object is neither born wholly new nor reiterated; it is both simultaneously. Benjamin claims that an object's aura and authenticity hinge on "never [being] entirely separated from its ritual function."[29] Digital Objects, rather than severing this connection, mandate new forms of ritual and tradition. While a high-resolution photograph generates some of these rituals, there must also be the necessary context for viewers to make sense of the pasts to which the Harpoon Socket bears witness. Digital Objects can and indeed do go further than what PUAM does today.

Recall the opening to this paper: the descriptions of St. Lawrence's arctic landscape, the connections of the socket to the assembled harpoon and its user, the cosmological significance of becoming an apex predator, the contemporary practices of subsistence digging. As a Digital

Object, new methods of display can be incorporated to make each of these contexts known to viewers. Curator Kyle Mathers explains that museums are often limited by space when designing physical exhibitions.[30] Further, museum educator Beverly Serrell shows that object labels should be short and concise partly due to the spatial concerns Mathers identified but also due to visitor attention spans.[31] A Digital Object can account for these two concerns with a traditional label bearing a conventional description of the object and its ritual use, but the digital label also offers opportunities to go further and (re)contextualize the object. For example, photos of St. Lawrence Island could help virtual patrons understand how the landscape mandated certain subsistence practices. Larger labels could be developed to explain the cosmological importance of walruses and polar bears and be hidden using a "show more" feature to avoid overwhelming digital viewers. The harpoon socket could be shown with the other harpoon parts to help people obtain a more complete vision of this important artifact and how it was traditionally used. Videos with contemporary Siberian Yupik peoples could attest to the economic, political, and cultural implications of subsistence digging today. All of these practices would bring the harpoon socket's aura back into view by creating moments to understand its role throughout time and space. These practices of (re)contextualization would ensure that mechanical reproduction does not erase or subsume the authenticity of an object's role as a window toward historical moments that need not oppose a traditional tombstone.

Digitization therefore offers new ways of interacting with cultural heritage. Rather than leading to the "liquidation of the traditional value of cultural heritage,"[32] digital methods expand the horizons of historical agency. Benjamin writes, "Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be."[33] However, this view neglects the possibility of a virtual world being a space unto itself. If we take as true Clerkin and Taylor's premise—a Digital Object is authentic to itself[34]—then aura and meaning become extended rather than foreclosed. The social conditions of our contemporary existence, material and otherwise, necessarily include the digital realm.[35] Rather than viewing digitization as a form of death-*cum*-mechanical reproduction, this approach offers a chance for new meanings and context. Presenting an object virtually becomes a new addition to the additive and cumulative object biography of an artifact, rather than a break from aura and authenticity.

Endnotes

1 Fitzhugh et al., *Gifts from the Ancestors*, 45.

2 Old Bering Strait (OBS) cultures are often used synonymously with Okvik culture, though some scholars posit that Okvik culture predates or follows OBS culture (Fitzhugh et al., 75). Today, St. Lawrence Island is inhabited by the Yupik, and they call the island Sivuqaq (Merlin Koonooka, "The St. Lawrence Island Yupik People and Their Culture.").

3 Fitzhugh et al., *Gifts from the Ancestors*, 75.

4 Ibid., 55.

5 Hollowell, "'Old Things' on the Loose*," 27.

6 Ljung, Discussion of Harpoon Socket.

7 Hollowell, "'Old Things' on the Loose*," 28.

8 Ljung, Discussion of Harpoon Socket.

9 "Harpoon Socket Piece Carved as a Polar Bear Head, A.D. 100–400."

10 New World Encyclopedia contributors, "St. Lawrence Island."

11 "Mission Statement."

12 Scholars themselves struggle to clearly define these terms: Fitzhugh et al., *Gifts from the Ancestors*, 75.

13 Benjamin, "The Work of Art," 51.

14 Ibid., 53.

15 Ibid., 52.

16 Tilley, "Solid Metaphor."

17 Benjamin, "The Work of Art," 40.

18 Though subsistence digging prevents a clear date for this object entering the sphere of private collectors and museums, it was likely in the first half of the 20th century (Ljung, Discussion of Harpoon Socket 2).

19 "Mission Statement."

20 Joy, "Reinvigorating Object Biography," 543.

21 Ibid.

22 I use *historical agency* loosely to mean the ability to both understand and portray history. Objects are endowed with historical testimony, but people must understand that testimony. Agency is not limited to object or person; it is shared between them.

23 Tilley, "Solid Metaphor," 76.

24 Gosden and Marshall, "The Cultural Biography of Objects."

25 Meaning to Tilley is about relation to metaphor and culture. To Joy, meaning is about the relationship to the viewer. Aura is about relation to history. Object Biography is about how these relationships change over time.

26 Ljung, "Discussion of Harpoon Socket."

27 Here I begin to use a capital "D" to note a distinct Digital Artifact. A lowercase-d digital artifact is used for the representation of physical artifacts digitally. Digital Artifacts are those that have been (re)contextualized.

28 Clerkin and Taylor, "Online Encounters," 170.

29 Benjamin, "The Work of Art," 52.

30 Mathers, "Gone Digital."

31 Serrell, *Exhibit Labels*.

32 Benjamin, "The Work of Art," 51.

33 Ibid., 50.

34 Clerkin and Taylor, "Online Encounters."

35 Here are some statistics from the Pew Research Center that corroborate the ever-increasing presence of the digital realm: In February 2023, roughly 22 million people in the United States work virtually from home full time with almost 40 million more working from home part time. In 2021, over 7 in 10 Americans use social media, and nearly 85 percent of Americans have a smart phone (Parker, "About a Third of U.S. Workers Who Can Work from Home Now Do so All the Time"; Pew Research Center, "Mobile Fact Sheet"; Pew Research Center, "Social Media Fact Sheet.").

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Sometimes I Want to Feel the Pain: Rilke's "Ninth Elegy" and Nietzsche

Hannah Anderson Contreras, *University of Southern California*

Hannah Contreras is a junior at the University of Southern California majoring in classics. She is currently researching the political language in poetry and material propaganda of the Augustan period. She is also interested in modern poetry and philosophy and writes personal essays in her free time. After graduation, she intends to apply to doctoral programs in Classics abroad.

Abstract

Rainer Maria Rilke's "Ninth Elegy" has been rarely talked about in English academic spaces, with others of the 10 poems in his work "The Duino Elegies" (1923) spotlighted more frequently. However, I will show that "The Ninth Elegy" is one of his most revealing poems because he very clearly lays out his own personal life philosophy within it. Rilke's poems have an opaque material focus that uses much natural imagery to tie his work into the here and now. Friedrich Nietzsche's work focuses on saying "yes" to life, especially his explication of the aristocratic valuation in *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887) and his repudiation of Christianity in favor of nature in *The Anti-Christ* (1895). His ideas in "The Dionysiac World View" (1870) of sublime, painful Dioynsian art can be applied to explore Rilke as an example of a Dionysian artist working to influence change among humanity. By using Nietzschean ideas as a framework and focusing on Rilke's specific word choices and tracing the development of "The Ninth Elegy," I will show how Rilke advocated for a radical acceptance of the present moment, eschewing both the future and the past to relish in the suffering and ecstasy of the material world and our earthly experiences as humans.

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Rainer Maria Rilke's "Ninth Elegy" has not received as much attention as it should in English-speaking academic spaces, with others of the 10 poems in his work "The Duino Elegies" (1923) spotlighted more frequently.[1] However, "The Ninth Elegy" is one of his most revealing poems because he very clearly lays out his own personal life philosophy within it. Life, he says, is a one-time thing. We live once, and then we die. So, we must use every day to the fullest and experience the deepest lows and most buoyant highs in equal measure. This aligns with Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy in many ways. Both authors, writing at roughly the same time in the same language, were exploring ideas that coincide more than one might think. Nietzsche's work focuses on saying "yes" to life, especially his explication of the aristocratic valuation in *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887) and his repudiation of Christianity in favor of nature in *The Anti-Christ* (1895). His ideas in "The Dionysiac World View" (1870) of sublime, painful Dioynsian art can be applied to explore Rilke as an example of a Dionysian artist working to influence change among humanity. By using Nietzschean ideas as a framework and focusing on Rilke's specific word choices and tracing the development of "The Ninth Elegy," I will show how Rilke advocated for a radical acceptance of the present moment, eschewing both the future and the past to relish in the suffering and ecstasy of the material world and our earthly experiences as humans.

Firstly, we must understand Nietzsche's philosophy of saying "yes" to life and embracing the will to power. Nietzsche was extremely anti-religious, but more than that, he was anti-modern values. Nietzsche believed in returning to a set of values that was far removed from his own—and Rilke's—time.[2] In *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche details his vision for that value set, saying that "The chivalric-aristocratic value judgements are based on a powerful physicality, a blossoming, rich, even effervescent good health that . . . contains strong, free, happy action" (17). Rather than the morality commonly found in his own time, one of pity, compassion, and empathy, Nietzsche wanted each man to seize the day and become the master of his own life. There would be no more looking out for others, but rather only a powerful, natural physicality that is based on activities that connect one with nature. No more books, no more religion, no more philosophy—only the moment. For Nietzsche, the aristocratic value set is founded upon the basis of saying "yes" to life, even in all of its suffering: "all noble morality grows out of a triumphant saying 'yes' to itself" (*On the Genealogy of Morality* 20). The strong man is able to deal with the sufferings of life because he is secure enough in himself to view the sufferings and joys of life equally. At every moment, the follower of the aristocratic value set will affirm their life. Nietzsche believed that all great and beautiful things for followers of the aristocratic value set stem from their satisfaction with their own worthiness. On the other hand, the follower of the priestly (i.e. religious, but not *only* religious) value set will look for something else to cling to in order to avoid dealing with the pain of life. Nietzsche claims that the weakest people—the followers of the priestly value set—have "thanks to the counterfeiting and self-deception of powerlessness, clothed . . . [themselves] in the finery of self-denying, quiet, patient virtue, as though the weakness of the weak were

itself . . . a voluntary achievement, something wanted, chosen" (*On the Genealogy of Morality* 27). Followers of the priestly value set cannot accept that they are weak and that they have no way to combat this weakness.

Therefore, they must trick themselves into thinking that their weakness was self-chosen and it is more noble than the physicality, happiness, and unselfconsciousness of followers of the aristocratic value set, who derive their view of life from self-satisfaction.

Nietzsche expands upon this idea of the conflict between religion and nature in *The Anti-Christ*. He says that "Once the concept of 'nature' had been invented as a counter to the idea of 'God,' 'natural' had to mean 'reprehensible,'—that whole fictitious world is rooted in a *hatred* of the natural (—of reality!—), it is the expression of a profound sense of unease concerning reality. . . . Who are the only people motivated to *lie their way out of* reality? People who *suffer* from it" (Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ* 13). Thus, Nietzsche gives a basis for the disconnect between man and nature; man yearns too much for God—for something to serve as a salve for the suffering of life—so nature must be seen as the enemy. If meaning can be found in nature, in life, in reality, then why do we need God? God must make nature His enemy, and since people make God, then it is people who cannot face the sight of a reality free from distractions. Pure, unbridled love for reality is both terrifying to humanity and a threat to God. The aristocratic value set praises reality and saying "yes" to life, thus it praises nature; it is comprised of strength and a will to power—a will to reality. These are the most important values to Nietzsche.

Consequently, it follows that Nietzsche also has a system for classifying art that springs from these values. In his essay "The Dionysiac World View," Nietzsche details the specifics of one version of art, Dionysian art, as the expression of these views of acceptance of life. He says that the Greek gods are examples of saying "yes" to life and committing to the present in all of its pain and joy because "What speaks out of them [the Greek gods] is a religion of life, not one of duty or asceticism or spirituality" (Nietzsche, "The Birth of Tragedy" 124). Dionysian art encourages the spectator—or, in our case, the reader of Rilke's poems—to embrace the excess of life. Nietzsche says that within Dionysian art there are "tones in which all the *excess* of pleasure and suffering and knowledge in nature revealed itself at one and the same time" ("The Birth of Tragedy" 128). This might be frightening to those who wish to distract themselves from reality, but it is a way of revealing the truth. There is no more putting things into boxes or making them pretty so they can be digestible to a sensitive audience, but rather a call to become a follower of the aristocratic value set and confront the excess of life head on and still say "yes" to it. In his essay, "Art, Tradition, and Truth," Walter Kaufmann, philosopher and Nietzsche scholar, states that, "Nietzsche and Rilke did not exalt prettification above sordid reality; they rejected bloodless stereotypes for a vision of magnificent terror" (19). Rilke's poetry is an example of Nietzsche's Dionysian art; it encourages a radical acceptance of reality—this "vision of magnificent terror"—so that one may live fully. Within both of their writings, one is encouraged to see the suffering of life as equivalent to the joys of life, for without the sufferings one is simply living in a one-dimensional caricature of life. Life *must* be accepted and it must be accepted *fully* in order to truly live as a human being; love, terror, happiness, despair, pain, ecstasy—all must be experienced in equal amounts to make the most of our short time here on earth.

"The Ninth Elegy" is one of Rilke's best examples of his own advocacy of the radical acceptance of life. "The Ninth Elegy" is an encouragement to reevaluate the priorities of human life; rather than exalting the afterlife and becoming miserable searching for some type of meaning beyond the present moment, instead one must connect deeply with the earth in a way that provides new meaning to the present moment and fulfills the soul. He opens the poem with a question for the reader to ponder: is human life inherently cursed with the search for meaning? He compares human life to the serene life of a laurel and laments: "why then / have to be human—and, escaping from fate, / keep longing for fate?" (Rilke 199). Humanity cannot simply *be* as the laurel can; humanity jumps through hoops and invents obstacles that get in the way of our happiness because we cannot deal with the pain of life. But, Rilke wants to impress upon the reader that human life has meaning because the earth needs us. There is no heaven or a beyond that needs us; it is only the present moment that needs us just this once. The third stanza is the thesis of the entire poem:

> But because truly being here is so much; because everything here apparently needs us, this fleeting world, which in some strange way keeps calling to us. Us, the most fleeting of all.
>
> Once for each thing. Just once; no more. And we too, just once. And never again. But to have been this once, completely, even if only once:
>
> to have been at one with the earth, seems beyond undoing. (Rilke 199)

The fleeting nature of life is tied to the meaning of life. The emphasis on "just once" is the heart of the poem. Similar to Nietzsche's ideas in *The Anti-Christ*, Rilke repudiates Christianity—or in general, any beyond or next life—in favor of nature. There is nothing material—nothing natural—that we can take with us into the next life, which is

the perpetual sleeping night of death. He says "Ah, but what can we take along / into that other realm? / . . . Nothing. / The sufferings, then. And, above all, the heaviness, / and the long experience of love,—just what is wholly / unsayable" (Rilke 199).

There is nothing beyond once one dies, so these lines taken along with the message of the rest of the poem indicate an implicit urgency to realize that the only opportunity we have to connect with nature is now. Humanity must connect with nature in this life; death is not a beyond, for we can take nothing material with us. Only emotions matter after death, and when do humans experience emotions? In life. Rilke's mention of the "other realm" is only to encourage man to think about what we would regret when we die. His mention of love gives even more context, as it encourages the reader to understand that the emotions we supposedly take with us are not actually our own emotions, but rather the feelings we inspire in others. One can connect with nature and humanity through living a life full of love and emotion.

Those feelings will last beyond death because they will live on in others—other humans, pets, perhaps even a beloved garden. Death gives meaning to life only in that it gives it an end. Within life, humanity must prioritize the minuscule time we have on earth and connect with the earth.

However, Rilke's world in "The Ninth Elegy" is not an ideal, far-off reality that he can only imagine in poems and dreams. "The Ninth Elegy" is a call to immediate action to tear the veil away from humanity's eyes and realize that one can begin living a full, intense, real life at once if one only knows how to connect with nature. Anthony Thorlby, professor of comparative literature, tries to make the argument that Rilke is writing toward an ideal world that is unachievable within this lifetime. He says that "The dying realize not so much how all human actions have been a plea (Vorwand), in any Christian sense of a pretext for salvation, but rather a screen (Vorwand), that has isolated them in their concern for individual past and future from the ultimate life everlasting in the present of Almighty Nature" (Thorlby 139). When looking at Rilke's words, this interpretation falls short. Rilke believes in the moment; he believes in "just this once." He is not interested in an everlasting bond with nature; instead he wants humanity to connect with nature during the fleeting time we are alive. For example, he asks the reader "Perhaps we are *here* in order to say: house, / bridge, fountain . . ." (Rilke 199). We are here just to give voice to the material moment. Rilke encourages us to exist so fully in this exact moment with the exact things with which we are existing that one is more present than anyone ever imagined they could be: "But to *say* them, you must understand, / oh to say them *more* intensely than the Things themselves / ever dreamed of existing" (Rilke 201). Humanity must exist in the present moment alongside the Things, not above them; alongside nature, not above it. There is an emotional resonance attached to Things, and Rilke invites us to experience this emotional connection by drawing attention to these simple Things rather than reaching for something grand which is, in the end, merely the fictitious world that Nietzsche rails against in *The Anti-Christ*.

"The Ninth Elegy" is all about change and acceptance; what may seem like a daunting prospect—the thought of life on earth just once—instead becomes an honor that we share with Things, learning how to change and grow with them as we move through life. As great Dionysian art, Rilke's poetry incites change within humanity. Nietzsche says that the goal of Dionysian art is to take the normally frightening aspects of life and twist them in such a way as to make them seem like something which we are able to undertake: "What mattered above all was to transform those repulsive thoughts about the terrible and absurd aspects of existence into representations with which it was possible to live; these representations are the *sublime*, whereby the terrible is tamed by artistic means" ("The Birth of Tragedy" 130). Rilke's art rests upon the Dionysian teaching of radical excess; life is hard because there is so much in such little time, but life is beautiful for the selfsame reason. Kaufmann says that within Rilke's work, "It is an ecstatically experienced world alive with all the glory of the mystics' God. In a letter (February 22, 1923), Rilke recalls how he once used to speak of God and adds: 'Now you would hardly ever hear me refer to him. His attributes are taken away from God, the no longer utterable, and return to the creation'" ("Nietzsche and Rilke" 12). The world must be experienced in full ecstasy—as an expression of one's belonging entirely, sublimely to the earth from the very moment one breathes their first breath—in order to fully appreciate it. As Kaufmann says, "it is an invitation to the most precarious life imaginable" and that life is one that will bring the most pleasure imaginable ("Nietzsche and Rilke" 21). Continual change over time is the impetus of a transformation of humanity toward a better life at peace and at one with the earth.

Rilke can be viewed as a Dionysian artist whose work inspires humanity to reach out and grasp reality as it truly is, instead of searching for meaning in a life beyond. He presents this reality as something that is readily available if one only has the guts to accept it, much like Nietzsche's explication of the aristocratic value set and saying "yes" to life. "The Ninth Elegy" is a guide on how to be fully content with one's life in the present moment. The reevaluation of humanity's priorities is at the forefront of Rilke's mind.

Life is a sublime experience that should be considered an honor rather than a punishment. Suffering is ecstasy and the littlest joys of life give it meaning. Once and for all, Rilke tells us, there is no God. There is no heaven. There is no beyond. We are here just once to plunge into life and live with vigor and passion. By accepting the beauty of the present, one will truly live life.

Endnotes

1 For examples, see Politzer (1957) and Abott (1987) on "The Fifth Elegy" and Weigand (1967) and Seyppel (1958) on "The Second Elegy."

2 Before explaining the chivalric-aristocratic value set, Nietzsche attempts to connect "nobility" with "goodness" and "plebeianism" with "badness" by using etymology (*On the Genealogy of Morality* 14–15).

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Queering Political Contestation in South Africa

Hlela Dyasi, *University of the Witwatersrand*

Hlela Dyasi holds a Bachelor of Arts in African Languages and Political Studies from the University of the Witwatersrand. They recently completed their Honours in Political Studies. For their Master of Arts, Dyasi plans to study the extent to which queer rights are mobilised for neoliberal and nationalist gains in democratic transitional processes in sub-Saharan Africa. Dyasi's research interests include nationalism, masculinity, queer theory, and queer International Relations.

Abstract

In this essay, I revisit South African feminist reinterpretations and critiques of the liberation struggle, the mobilising processes, and modes of political contestation. In this effort, I trace the ways in which political contestation has been gendered and made unsafe for queer identities. To illustrate this, I problematise masculinity in the liberation against apartheid in South Africa. I situate the African National Congress's (ANC) military wing and the Black Consciousness (BC) movement at the centre of this critique to understand assertions of masculinity. Finally, I look at the fallist movements (2015–2016) approaches in contemporary South Africa. In this regard, I try to conceptualise the improvement in the liberation space in South Africa. The fallist movements have been instrumental in being cognisant of group differences in their contestation and claims.

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KumaKhosikaz' alal'emzini kuf'ithokazi, ndiwunikezela kuni lo msebenzi.

Introduction

The fallist movement of 2015–2016 revitalised a student-led movement that called for the decolonisation of South African higher education. Starting with #RhodesMustFall (#RMF) and then the #FeesMustFall (#FMF) movements, the digital activism of fallism—which would pronounce itself through direct protest action—sought to disrupt the Western institutional culture of higher education which alienated Black students (Gouws 2022, 208). Students called not only for the removal of colonial symbols such as the statue of Cecil John Rhodes but they demanded an end to economic exclusion—a direct protest against high university fees. Twenty-five years before this, anti-apartheid movements protested through struggle and liberation movements against the racist regime of apartheid which had been legitimised by the National Party (NP). In this essay, I revisit both of these locations, the anti-apartheid struggle and the fallist movement. These are locations through which we can map the ways that political contestation is dominated by a masculinist discourse in the South African politics of the left. The masculinist discourse legitimises power and authority along the production of a political contestation that renders violence desirable and safe to be performed on Blackwomen and Blackqueer[1] subjects. In this regard, masculinity and violence pervade in the making of collective ideas and in the making of an imagined community. Put simply, the conceptual space through which there is a contest and conquest of ideas about the state of affairs is masculinised and embodied in violence.

It is in this regard then, that I describe political contestation as political practice inextricably linked to political ideological discourse. Political contestation takes centre stage in the public sphere. It is an amalgamation of organising ideas collectively and of contesting ideas through the production of consciousness. Georges Lavau in Jan Van Putten (1970, 785) characterises political contestation as an "action which totally denies the legitimacy of the most deep-seated and most tacitly accepted cultural models in the social system, and seeks to expose their true, oppressive nature." Here, political contestation serves as an action that calls for transformation in institutionalised political processes. This characterises, at times, violent protests where ideological discourse expands into conquest. In this essay, I examine political contestation in that realm of being consciousness that embeds itself in the pronouncing of a discourse into a language of conquest and conquering. Thus, violence is legitimised through processes of political contestation. In this regard, I explore violence and masculinity as oil that lubricates the machinery of making ideas and of organising liberation.

It is especially useful to delve into the politics of the left in South African history and contemporary reality in this lens, since it allows for the *queering* of these politics. Looking for the ways in which there is a fetishisation of violence and masculinity in political contestation allows for the naming, in a critical incisive way, of the exclusion of Blackwomen and Black queer subjectivities in liberation politics in South Africa. This lens makes a thread of the way in which violence and masculinity in political contestation never travels just alone, instead locates itself within a wider culture of further marginalising along the lines of gender and sexuality.

Violent Masculinities: The Making and Reclaiming of Manhood in the Public Sphere

How public discourse is composited is deeply unsatisfying. It is so undesirable for the interests and concerns of Blackwomen and Blackqueer people that even its fluency is what Pumla Dineo Gqola has once called "war talk" (Gqola

2015, 152). The public sphere is so saturated in violence and masculinity that it ceases to reason and relies on making phallic of what is seen. It takes control of the discourse in public sphere and resorts to legitimising claims through a language of machismo and conquest. This language makes a spectacle of other identities because conquest relies on competition and hierarchies.

It is somewhere in the need to assert masculinity in an effort to reclaim the nation and the Black man, that this perception finds itself. It is somewhere in the negation and muting of Blackwomen's resistance that these justifications are located. It is somewhere in the reassertion of masculinity as having been assaulted that homosexuality is regarded as a decadent of European systems—an 'imperial gift.' In this essay then, I recall this perception of African masculinity being "actually assaulted" to reveal its implications and its consequences in the consciousness of how political contestation is exhumed by African men. It is also crucial for this essay to actually reflect on the ways in which Black men's resistance was a form of adult agency and an assertion of dominance so that we can be able to spot the thread of justifications of the negation of Blackwomen and Blackqueer resistance.

Drawing from the ANC's military wing, uMkhonto WeSizwe (MK) and the formation of the Black Consciousness (BC) movement in the 1960s, their ideologies, respectively, were premised on a masculinist ideology. The MK's ideology and practice was centred on conquest and heroism. The language of heroic masculinity and politics of conquest and machismo are evident in the warrior tradition embraced in MK. The warrior tradition communicates a belief system that locates violence as necessary praxis for liberation. It is also within this tradition of conquest that there is praxis of self-authorising violence among the predominantly male-figured power structure of the MK and ANC. There is a readiness to "deploy violence where necessary, a readiness to die, and a capacity to wound or kill" (Suttner 2009, 231). This language of heroism makes it necessary for those who are in MK to desire being heroes as synonymous to being a man. This is also evident in the military training and the perceptions held that training for MK, is picking up *umkhonto/spear* from earlier warriors who had been killed in the last armed rebellion in 1906 (Suttner 2004). To pick up the spear, is to follow in pursuit of the established predominantly male iconography.

The rape of women in MK makes senses of the intimate historical relationship between combat and sexual violence. A female MK solider recalled "sexual intercourse with more than 20 commanders" (Mashike 2007, 367 quoted in Suttner 2009, 232). The facts of this account do not reveal whether the female soldier gave consent to the 20 commanders or if the use "sexual intercourse" is intentional. However, this scholarship reveals the access of some commanders to young women. The power dynamics at play here reveal militaristic tradition and legacy which renders the bodies of women safe to violate, to take advantage of and to be 'spoils of victory.'

Violent Masculinities: Sexualised Militarism, Over-sexed and Under-sexed Enemies

While BC had a strong basis of Black pride in their ideology, at times its ideology also seemed to be hostile to differences within the Black people within the framework of anti-apartheid movements. Its ideology pronounced hierarchies of oppressions, identifying racial oppression as the primary source of oppression. With an already established influence from the Negritude movement, Black Power and writers such as Frantz Fanon, Martin Luther King, Leopoldt Senghor and the Black Panthers (see Ramphele 1991 in Gqola 2001), BC had an established power structure that was masculine in nature. It demanded a united voice within the liberation for freedom. Criticism was perceived as divisive (see Gqola 2001). For BC, race was the only important means of mobilising Black people. Much like the ANC and other political movements, as painstakingly shown in Shireen Hassim's important scholarship (1991, 2004), these movements rendered a "second-class" (2004, 434) role to women as its members. Hassim (1991, 65) succinctly puts it:

> Opposition politics during the 1989s in South Africa has been dominated by organisations whose major objective has been to mobilise women for the national liberation struggle as opposed to mobilising them for women's liberation.

This is unsatisfying, in that it reinforces patriarchy. The secondary nature being associated with women is also evident in the assumption that feminist movements are divisive to the main oppression which is race. At face value, this is a direct hostility towards feminism, however, when deconstructed it is also a denial of women's experiences—whether as key role players in the liberation struggle or as being discriminated against on the basis of their gender.

In BC, the "idyllic golden age unaffected by white culture" descriptive nature of its ideology was "a desperate effort to portray a past unaffected by white values" (Gqola 2001, 136) which laid a foundation for the reading of class, women's, and queer issues as issues of no importance in the liberation of Black people. In this regard, feminist organising was regarded as an 'imperial gift' to borrow from Sara Ahmed (2017). Mikki van Zyl (2005) shows that even in women's organisations sexuality was regarded as a taboo

conversation. This co-opting of women's organisations for nationalist concerns pronounces an imagined community comprised of hardy men and dutiful daughters. Here is a construction of politics of respectability on women's sexuality. It is a rejection of "weak" men in place for hardy men who have access to women's bodies.

Elsewhere I have argued that these suggestions have implications for sexuality and politics:

> The ideology of imported gayness from capitalist labour systems rests on the premise that colonialism and apartheid emasculated and feminised men. In this alternative location of queerness to the *other*, the male subject is reduced to a phallic symbol . . . It also places the importance on male-identified bodies to assign themselves a masculinity that is steeped in conquest, machismo, competition and male aggression. At large, it conditions not only masculinity to look one way, but it posits African masculinity only to be imagined through the white male gaze. (Dyasi 2023, 31–32)

I affirm that the intense historical and modern connection between African manhood and violence and *othering* technologies in political contestation. Simply put, African manhood take up space in political contestation by reclaiming adult agency in a language that makes it obvious that its masculinity has been assaulted. The exercise of this reclaiming requires busy bodies to enact fear and power in the public sphere using rhetoric. The busy bodies are male in character since they have been assaulted by colonialism, apartheid and European capitalism in front of their 'dutiful women and daughters.' The busy bodies enact control and power in the public sphere. This control legitimises access over the female body. The busy bodies have a binary system of the 'outsider' and 'insider.' The outsider is the enemy and the insider is dutiful, heroic and honorary. The outsider does not conform to the binary system, they have no place. The outsider distracts the politics of respectability—here she is a radical feminist. The outsider puts a mirror on hyper masculinised identity—here they are *a* queer.

Fallisms and Intersectionality: #SayHerName

In democratic South Africa, the fallist movement of #RMF and #FMF quickly responded to attempts of patriarchy to masculinise the public discourse. Feminist interventions across university campuses were well aware of the ways in which the public sphere was beginning to look like that of the 1980s or anti-apartheid movements were women were rendered secondary class to the concerns that were regarded as too important to be distracted by feminist and women's concerns. Queer and trans activists disrupted efforts to sideline them.

Sandy Ndelu and colleagues (2017, 2) reflect that in #RMF and #FMF,

> sexism, heterosexism, homophobia and transphobia had emerged as characteristics that marred these movements, albeit unevenly, across various institutions. Cleavages emerged between students who identified as Black, queer, and tansgender feminists and sections of the movements who identified more explicitly with patriarchy.

Feminist mobilising intervened and called for an intersectional framework that should be adopted by the movement and by the larger project of decolonisation (see Mazibuko 2020).When a female student was raped "by a fellow activist in a university building during an all-night sit-in at the University of Cape Town" (Gouws 2022, 209), sexual violence had once again found its feet to the face of the public discourse in politics of the left. At Stellenbosch University, students invited students from other universities to help start a campaign against gender-based violence (#RUReferenceList: The fear of repercussion still lingers 2018). The campaign by the Unashamed movement in Stellenbosch, named Chapter 2.12[2] "would express that the rape culture in on our campuses was unconstitutional" (ibid). #Chapter212 posters would soon after be distributed and pasted in university campuses at Stellenbosch and Rhodes, renamed UCKAR.[3] This was followed by the R U Reference List which outed eleven male students as perpetrators of sexual violence. #EndRapeCulture soon emerged as a campaign of mobilisation against rape culture in university campuses. Amanda Gouws (2018, 2022) is cognisant that the campaign had fury and rage over colonial and current legacies of sexual violence "which rendered them voiceless in the public sphere" (209). Other campaigns would include the TransCollective at UCT, the #IAmOneInThree at Wits, and #KhangaUWC at the University of Western Cape.

I mention these movements and campaigns here so that they are never left unsaid in a discussion on violence and masculinity and the erasure of Blackwomen and Blackqueer people in the South African public sphere. Whether or not these campaigns are lessons to be learned for progressive left politics in South Africa for their intersectional approach, it is important to note them so as to shed light on the ways in which political contestation is rendered unsafe for certain bodies. I say their names here to show the extent to which intersectionality has been a much needed realm of political contestation in South African. In a country with high rape statistics and a long history of violence and masculinity pervading in the political contestation, intersectionality became an important framework which brought to the surface issues that had been previously held to no importance. It reflects on the ways in which forms of

discrimination have fed into one another to exacerbate inequality of access and of making claims. In this regard, the scripts of political contestation were disrupted, challenged, and re-imagined. This is important for the South African public discourse not only because it has been saturated in violence, but also because it holds a mirror up to political consciousness in the country and asks: Can we birth a public discourse that is not steeped in hypersexuality and pornography?

Endnotes

1 I write Black women and Black queer here, respectively, as one word to opine recognition of existing as both being Black and woman, and Black and queer. I borrow from Pumla Dineo Gqola's painstaking scholarship which writes 'Blackwomen' as one word. I take this position to write 'Blackqueer' here to underline a playful and serious recognition of indivisibility. The two cannot be separated into separate struggles.

2 This campaign was named after Chapter 2 12 of the Constitutions which guarantees rights to safety.

3 Rhodes University was renamed by students during the fallist movement as University Currently Known as Rhodes.

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Intersectional Coalition Building: Los Angeles Justice-Centered Grassroots Community Organizations Engage in Multi-Racial Movement Building & Cross-Cultural Solidarity

Irene Maria Franco Rubio, *University of Southern California*

Irene Franco Rubio is a recent graduate from the University of Southern California with a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and minor in Race, Ethnicity and Politics. A scholar-activist, writer, and community organizer of Guatemalan and Mexican descent from Phoenix, AZ, Irene has multifaceted experience as an intersectional movement builder. As a public thought leader and researcher, Irene continues to advocate for historically oppressed communities at the intersection of activism and academia as a catalyst for social change. In pursuit of a doctorate in Ethnic/American Studies, Irene will begin her PhD in Fall 2024.

Abstract

As a youth community organizer in Phoenix, Arizona during the era of SB1070, I noticed how grassroots organizations created movement silos—organizing in isolation based on social issue-area focus and operating within the confines of racial and ethnic lines. The legacy of cultural organizing in silos has embedded limiting frameworks within traditional community organizing spaces that have historically perpetuated varying forms of oppression, from anti-Blackness to anti-Indigeneity, among others. Rooted in grassroots community organizing and the importance of intersectional movement building among Black and Brown communities, this research seeks to address the importance of multi-racial, intersectional, and cross-cultural movements in pursuit of social and racial justice in Los Angeles. Through the Beloved Community, a multi-racial coalition of 20 Black- and Brown-led grassroots organizations reimagining justice in Los Angeles, we seek to answer the research questions: According to coalition members, why is there a need for multi-racial movement and cross-cultural coalition building among grassroots community organizations in Los Angeles? What specific practices and ways of thinking do they use to create and maintain coalitions? Through a participatory action research (PAR) design, community members became involved as equal partners in the research process, to ensure their perspectives and experiences were central to the study.

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Introduction

As a youth community organizer in Phoenix, Arizona, I began to notice how grassroots organizations created movement silos—organizing in isolation based on social issue-area focus and operating within the confines of racial and ethnic lines. My research interests emerged through my praxis as a community-engaged scholar informed by my positionality as a Latina growing up during the era of SB1070, also known as the "show me your papers" provision. This legislation authorized law enforcement to racially profile and criminalize communities of color, primarily those of Latine backgrounds in the American Southwest. In witnessing this anti-immigrant rhetoric as a daughter of Latine immigrants, I recognized how social institutions and state-sanctioned violence inform racial sentiments, with community organizers perpetuating similar forms of oppressive ideologies through colonial sentiments. The lack of racial diversity in social issue-specific and racially driven community organizing demonstrates the need for recognizing the interconnectedness of movements for justice and the critical framework intersectional movement building presents. Movements can often be falsely guided by individual interests, such as prioritizing the liberation of one oppressed group over another. The philosopher Nancy Fraser has discussed the phenomenon of "politics of recognition" and how it can create hierarchies within social movements. This framework suggests that when movements prioritize the interests of one oppressed group over another, it can reinforce existing power structures and inequalities, undermining solidarity and inclusive social change (Fraser, 2000).

Kimberlé Crenshaw, a prominent scholar and the originator of the concept of intersectionality, has examined how social movements can inadvertently exclude certain groups. Her work emphasizes the importance of recognizing and addressing intersecting systems of oppression (Crenshaw, 1989). Similarly, Angela Davis, a renowned scholar and activist, has written extensively about intersectionality and the need for solidarity among diverse oppressed groups and addresses the importance of recognizing the interconnectedness of various struggles (Davis, 2016). Together, both Crenshaw's and Davis' work provide a foundation for understanding the interconnectedness of various struggles among historically oppressed communities, the need for solidarity and intersectional movement building. As an activist and community-engaged scholar, I seek to expand upon this framework to inform contemporary social movements for justice.

In this study, I seek to answer the following research questions: According to coalition members, why is there a need for multi-racial movement and cross-cultural coalition building among grassroots community organizations in Los

Angeles? What specific practices and ways of thinking do they use to create and maintain coalitions? Through a participatory action research (PAR) design, community members became involved as equal partners in the research process. From this research, I found that establishing trust through relationship building was key to building multiracial solidarity and maintaining coalitional relationships and structure. I concluded that our liberation cannot be achieved if it is just for some, it requires a shared understanding that liberation and justice must be obtained for all oppressed groups.

Beloved Community

The Beloved Community is a multi-racial coalition made up of 20 Black- and Brown-led grassroots organizations reimagining justice in Los Angeles. During Fall 2020, the Beloved Community coalition formed as a carefully woven collective across L.A. County. Convened by Mike de la Rocha and Angela Rye, two social justice advocates and community leaders grounded in Black and Brown solidarity and multi-racial movement building, this coalition was created to develop authentic community relationships, reclaim community narratives, and build community-led power, a step that is imperative to advancing efforts to transform Los Angeles's justice system not just for Black and Brown Los Angelenos, but for all. The Beloved Community Coalition includes Los Angeles-based community organizations that focus on a range of issues, such as social and economic conditions, violence and gang prevention, and community-led services; organizations such as: Community Coalition, Champions in Service, Creative Acts, Dignity and Power Now, Healing Dialogue and Action, Homies Unidos, Brotherhood Crusade, The BUILD Program, Centro Cha, CD Tech, Impact Strategies (Convener), L.A. Community Action Network (LACAN), L.A. Youth Uprising Coalition, Prosecutors Alliance, Represent Justice, Revolve Impact (Convener), Tia Chucha's Centro Cultural TransLatin@ Coalition, Unite The People, Youth Justice Coalition (YJC), #YouAreEssential, and Athletes for Impact.

The coalition's work tangibly demonstrates what community-driven organizing and solutions look like and how the state could play a similar role in investing and providing critical community services. One of the projects this coalition undertakes includes Breaking Bread community distribution events, an initiative started in late March 2020 by Homies Unidos in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Los Angeles. Homies Unidos manages a humanitarian food distribution effort three days a week in communities across Los Angeles, including Koreatown, Rampart, Westlake, and South Central. Since the launch of the initiative, Homies Unidos and this coalition has collectively assembled a team of over 40 volunteers, including immigrant, at-risk, and formerly incarcerated youth and adults, to distribute free groceries and fresh produce to more than 5,000 families across Los Angeles. In an effort to demonstrate what community-driven solutions look like, the Breaking Bread activations revealed how the state could replicate this approach by centering community care through communal wellness.

Methodology

This study was conducted utilizing one-on-one in-depth interviews with members of the Beloved Community, specifically Executive Directors of community organizations participating in this coalition, to hear and learn from movement elders and leaders within the Los Angeles community that have been at the forefront of social movements. I intentionally pursued this approach as I sought to discover how their knowledge, values and leadership have evolved over time and how their multi-racial organizing practices have transcended from their initial interactions as organizers to experienced leaders. The following participants for this study were chosen from my involvement within this network.

Coalition Participants		
Name	**Organization**	**Description**
Alberto Retana	Community Coalition	CoCo has been working to transform the social and economic conditions in South LA that foster crime, violence & poverty.
Alex Sanchez	Homies Unidos	Homies Unidos seeks to end violence and promote peace through violence and gang prevention and intervention.
Sabra Williams	Creative Acts	Creative Acts is a Black-led organization that seeks to center incarcerated voices to heal trauma through the arts.

Participatory Action Research

The research was conducted using a participatory action research (PAR) framework to emphasize participation and engagement in the research process by coalition members. Also referred to as "progressive community-engaged research" (Pastor et al., 2013), PAR requires equal and collaborative participation of community members in the research process, involving the "community of interest" in the execution of the research project up to and including exploring research questions that emerge from the group itself (Walter, 2009). Their engagement is demonstrated by the development of the research question, "What does their [participants'] practice of coalition building and pursuit of

solidarity help us to better understand about movements for social and racial justice?" Developing research questions as it relates to their coalition goals and analyzing the data through community group discussions, the PAR process allowed for these community organizations to have a voice in the research and to ensure that their perspectives and experiences were central to the study.

Findings

Racial Unity in Pursuit of Collective Liberation

The purpose of this research was to investigate why there is a need for multi-racial coalitions rooted in racial solidarity in grassroots community organizing and to identify its potential to address social and racial justice in Los Angeles. In this study, organizations within the Beloved Community coalition demonstrated a clear alignment with the idea that racial unity in pursuit of collective liberation aims to create a society where racial justice and equality are achieved through the collaborative efforts of diverse racial and ethnic groups, dismantling oppressive systems, and ensuring the liberation of all individuals, and that this is abundantly present in the formation and ongoing engagement of the Beloved Community. Alberto Retana, Community Coalition's President and CEO, expressed his belief in the concept of racial unity as well and how it is integral to not only having and preserving coalitions, but to remaining grounded on the path towards liberation:

> Unity can exist without division, it can't be built without struggle. Unity is an acknowledgement of those differences. Whether in the Latino community there's difference, whether in the Black community there's difference, in the context of Black and Brown coalitions. Unity is not a natural state of things, conflict is a natural state of things, so you have to struggle to unite. If you struggle to unite, then you struggle for liberation. Unity is a concept I deeply believe in, it's a concept that I try to take in everything that we [CoCo] do. To assume difference, and not be afraid of it. To acknowledge it, to embrace it, and to work towards unity, not to ignore people's distinctions or unique histories; never at that, but to build power.

Retana's insight builds upon Patricia Hill Collins's work, affirming the important role of racial unity and multi-racial coalition building for collective liberation. Collins argues that in order to challenge and dismantle systems of domination, it is crucial for individuals and communities to come together, recognize their shared struggles, and work collaboratively towards social justice. It also involves acknowledging and respecting the unique experiences and perspectives of different racial groups while finding common ground to work towards a more equitable and just society (Collins, 1990). She highlights the concept of "interlocking oppressions" and provides theoretical insights into the dynamics of power and oppression but also offers practical strategies for building alliances across racial lines.

Further, Alex Sanchez from Homies Unidos shared the importance of working towards racial unity in order to achieve tangible racial solidarity. He provided an example of the racial tensions that emerged during the height of the Black Lives Matter movement during 2020 and how his organization's efforts to mitigate these tensions were necessary to achieve cross-cultural solidarity. As a Latino leader in collaboration with a Black movement elder in L.A., they brought together Latine and Black South LA. organizers that were in tension with one another to discuss the conversation of police brutality:

> Racial tension began to build between Latinos and Black organizers as Latinos were feeling left out on the larger conversation of police brutality. Latinos began to organize and folks started taking that as an anti-Black movement and rhetoric and it could easily be described as such. In response, we ended up bringing those Latino and Black organizers together to address those issues. One of the concerns that emerged was, "Why aren't BLM talking about how Latino street vendors are getting beat up by Black folks?" and while it was a valid question, they didn't know how to address their point without sounding anti-Black. The fact was we needed to bring these different communities together and so we organized a series of meetings.

Sanchez's on-the-ground approach to the planning of community forums, meetings with movement organizers and showcasing the importance of engaging in collaborative public discourse on racial tensions and issues that emerge within these groups as a movement elder revealed how racial unity is not just a matter of assuming everyone is on the same page. Instead, it became a matter of discussing the questions, concerns, and issues that are most pressing to each respective group and guiding organizers towards solutions. These notions reveal how Black and Brown community members view each other and coalition prospects, the critical role that a generational entropy of coalitions plays in revealing coalitional perceptions (Jackson et al., 1994).

Relationship Building Is Essential to Building Coalitions

Relationship building is essential to building coalitions as it forms the foundation for trust, collaboration, and effective collective action. Strong relationships in community organizing not only foster open communication, cooperation, and a sense of belonging, which are crucial for the success and sustainability of any coalition, but it allows for stronger, more intersectional and inclusive movements.

When asked about why she decided to join the coalition, Sabra Williams from Creative Acts shared:

> I always loved the idea of the Beloved Community, you know, from history. I also knew there would be integrity to it because of [the founder] and not the influencer culture that puts movements second. I knew it wouldn't be like that and I knew the people involved wouldn't be like that. So I knew it would be all good, I knew we'd be creating value.

Similarly, Alberto from Community Coalition shared:

> It's mission aligned, it's purposeful, these are our people. That's why, because it makes sense. It's people that are committed, that's why we're there. And because he [founder] asked. As much as this is about the values, it's about the person and the engagement. If you pull him [founder] out, we all have great values but that doesn't mean we're going to come together. You remove the organizer, you remove the cohesion. So that's why; it's the values and the person who organized.

In both interviews, they expressed their reason for being in the coalition and the ongoing driving force for remaining there is ultimately through the presence of the relationship of the organizer. They both addressed how this relationship became central and critical for their continued involvement and values being aligned in a manner that has allowed them to not only all be in a shared community together. Further, it is through the relationships themselves that a coalition forms, that the trust emerges and that the organizing and pursuit of justice occurs. Without a strong foundation, trusted relationships and collaboration, the formation and construction of a coalition could not be formed. Further, in suggesting that liberation is the end goal with everyday people having the ability to define their own futures, it requires internal work to be intentionally purposeful. Sabra Williams shared:

> The other thing I think that's urgent that I don't hear people talking about is, 'what work do we need to do to not become the next oppressors?' Because eventually we will have power, but it's the human condition to oppress others. So there's nothing special about us as Black people, Brown people, Asian people—there's nothing special about us. So if we really want change, we have to be prepared to do our own internal work, and that's the piece people don't want to do. Because when you're in a movement, it's very easy to not self-reflect because you're constantly pushing on the outside.

In answering the question of 'what does reimagining justice mean to you?' Sabra highlighted a particularly interesting finding in the goal to create a new vision of justice. In acknowledging the role that oppressive systems that have resulted in the desire of justice have had on communities of color, it becomes clear just how important it is to identify that we do not also become part of the problem and instead be part of the solution. Scholars note that it is necessary to acknowledge that every social movement is shaped by multiple intersecting inequalities and power dynamics (Roth, 2021). An intersectional perspective allows us to see whether multi-racial movements that mobilize for justice take into account how class differences intersect with race, gender, and other structures of inequality informs the increasing need for a multi-racial approach to movements.

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The Link Between Bilingual Education and Civic Engagement: The Case of Culver City High School

David B. Gómez, *Institution Whittier College*

David B. Gómez was a Mellon Mays Scholar at Whittier College, California. He graduated in Spring 2023 with a double major in Political Science (International Relations) and Spanish. He also double minored in French and Environmental Studies. He is completing an M.A. in Bilingual and Multicultural Education at Alcalá de Henares University while working as a teacher assistant for a High School in the Madrid Autonomous region. He plans to pursue a PhD in Education. As a Latino man growing up in California, he finds inspiration in the words of César Chávez: "Sí se puede."

Abstract

The U.S. Department of Education declares that "in our globally connected and competitive world, all students need an educational experience that prepares them to become effective global citizens, equipped for success in college, career, and civic participation." The relationship between a global education and civic participation must be explored because there has been a decline in civic/social participation over time, which has led to a lack of understanding, an increase in political tension, and a decrease in tolerance. The educational system's failure to prepare students for civic duties is to blame. Some scholars believe in the importance of teaching about "the spirit of service." Because bilingualism promotes learning about other cultures and experiencing community through the lenses of other groups, it could help children learn more about civic engagement. This study will aim to answer whether students who attended a bilingual program in elementary school are more likely to be civically engaged as seniors in high school.

Introduction

The United States Department of Education declares that, "in our globally connected and competitive world, all students need an educational experience that prepares them to become effective global citizens, equipped for success in college, career, and civic participation" (Boyle et al. 1). As the leading agency in developing educational policy, they seek to promote the comprehensive skills needed to shape an ideal student, described as a cosmopolitan citizen who is also engaged in local civic participation. In an increasingly interconnected world, one of the educational experiences that falls within the parameters of integrating the competences desired by the U.S. government is multilingualism. As U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and Assistant Deputy Secretary Libia Gil stated, this stance is based on the premise that, "dual language education promises to give students access to key 21st-century skills—namely bilingualism, biliteracy, and global awareness" (Boyle et al. viii). The push for this holistic and universal approach is predicated on the importance of incorporating language skills that students bring with them to school from home, and in that process, strengthening cultural ties within their communities. However, considering the aspirations of the U.S. Department of Education to produce civically engaged global citizens, it is important to note that concerns have been raised regarding the lack of overall community participation in the country. One of most recognized experts on the field, Robert D. Putnam, affirms that beginning in the last decades of the 20th century there has been a decline in deep social connections in the United States (25). For example, in 1992, three-quarters of the country's workforce considered that "the breakdown of community" and "selfishness" were extremely serious problems in America (25). Establishing a connection between civic engagement and education, authors like John Dewey estimate that this problem has been largely ignored or undermined since elementary school (49). In that sense, he argues that promoting a more proactive civic awareness pedagogy could not only enhance the students' chances of achieving academic success, but also better equip them for real issues in adulthood and addressing the shortcomings in civic participation in the educational system (Dewey 50–52). This deficiency in the curriculum has led to a lack of understanding between groups, an increase in tensions and violence, more prominent individualistic behavior, and selfish attitudes. Since research demonstrates civic engagement may be declining among the younger generations, perhaps there is a way to test whether different types of educational models encourage more civically engaged students. In that respect, my research will argue that bilingual education, because it promotes the learning of other civilizations, fosters an appreciation of one's own culture by establishing comparisons to other customs, and thus helping increase civic engagement among students from an early age.

The relationship between civic engagement and bilingualism benefits young students through a global approach to learning that will help them develop richer communication and a social cohesiveness in their diverse communities. Being bilingual aids to overcome these hurdles due to its intrinsic capacity to promote "cross-cultural understanding and improve communication skills" (Boyle et al. 97). This is necessary because when there is an absence of unity and understanding, society heads towards conflict and division, as individuals find themselves disengaged with civic issues in their community (Keeter 2). Societal progress has developed as a result of the cooperative ability to overcome universal troubles, such as plagues, famine, and conflicts. Even the creation of government and democracy has grown out of man's desire to resolve problems collectively, rather than individually.[1] Unfortunately, social cooperation seems to be irrevocably fading. A democracy, as Thomas Jefferson forecasted it, required its members to be

highly engaged in public service in the "respublica" for the interest of all. The system fails if the population is not earnestly solving communal problems, being politically active, or showing overall signs of tolerance. Nowadays, this Jeffersonian ideal is disappearing. The loss of connectivity is concerning for progress and mutual understanding. However, learning about other cultures and being involved in social issues in the context of a bilingual education could provide children with the tools to increase their awareness of transnational perspectives, learn about tolerance, and heighten the care for their local community. That is why some critics believe that "students need to be taught to participate in our democracy and different programs aim at different goals. We need to choose carefully" (Westheimen and Kahne 6). Choosing a program that will establish a vigorous educational connection between the global and the local is critical to promote civic participation because those selections will ultimately shape the upbringing of future generations.

A global education is crucial to instill a sense of universal citizenship. In order to achieve that objective, it seems necessary to infuse the curriculum with a "combination of an understanding of global ties, relations and connections, with various forms of participation driven by a commitment to a global collective good" (Torres and Nunzio 5). As students become influenced by their educational setting, they learn to appreciate their own milieu and attempt to improve it. In this sense, bilingualism and biculturalism allow students "to see the invisible ways that dominant narratives work to mask injustice, inequality, disenfranchisement, and neglect" (Gibson 18), and that is why "well implemented dual language programs can substantially overcome the negative effect of this [socioeconomic] variable" (Collier and Thomas 9). In addition, according to Patricia Gándara and Kahty Escamilla, multilingualism would be the most effective way to increase students' academic achievement and psychosocial wellbeing, making them the ideal candidates to "strengthen both their own labor market prospects and the economy of the nation" (10). To this extent, by helping themselves, the students help the nation. Taking that factor into consideration, the U.S. government is encouraging the implementation of bilingualism, believing that it will be paramount, not only for the students' educational benefit and welfare, but also for the country's interests to take advantage of this linguistic wealth. Hence, creating an education tailored to their environment could potentially lead to a desire to participate more eagerly in their neighborhoods.

As U.S. politics becomes more radicalized, the recipe for a global citizenship education is becoming increasingly attractive. For Jason Nunzio Dorio, Amy Pojar and Yuqing Hou, this type of curriculum rests upon four pillars. First, the development of a cross-cultural sensitivity that helps to understand internationally diverse groups. Second, attempting to understand public global issues by becoming informed about world events and the different groups of people and places where they take place. Third, participating in what they call "glocal service" in another country through participation in service and academic discussion that questions their assumptions about that culture. Fourth, promoting global justice by participating in the political process on topics that deal with equality and social justice (310). This multifaceted approach to local and global issues is critical to understand the link between bilingual education and civic engagement. Cultural appreciation promotes a higher concern towards accepting diverse communities, which are organically growing in American cities. According to Ofelia García and Angel Lin, when bilingual education serves the interest of these communities, it "then takes on a social justice purpose, reinforcing the idea that language is used by people to communicate and participate in multiple contexts and societies" (3). The lack of concern for what occurs in certain neighborhoods is vital to reviving positive relationships since, "it benefits the production of knowledge because the lenses to understand the world are expanded by incorporating different perspectives and epistemologies embedded in the linguistic and cultural practices of local communities" (García and Lin 11). In a world where the younger generation has become increasingly distant and less civically engaged, it would be noteworthy to discover if social participation could be revived by employing an educational approach that promotes bilingual/bicultural education.

Hypothesis

To test that question, I deployed a survey among high school seniors at Culver City High School in Culver City, California to measure their level of civic engagement. In order to test the hypothesis that bilingual education promotes civic participation, two populations were compared: students who received a bilingual education in elementary school, and those who did not.

The intention of this study is to discern if bilingual elementary education, via its global and cultural comparative approach, encourages students to be more civically engaged by the time they become high school seniors. Many authors, such as Joseph Kahne and Ellen Middaugh, believe that experiences in civic education are significant as an adult but, "are particularly important at the high school level" (38). From the findings of the poll conducted in May of 2022, among a total number of 105 Culver City High School senior students, it will be determined if bilingual education in elementary school is an indicator of participation in civic life as a teenager.

Null Hypothesis: High school seniors who went through a bilingual elementary school program will not be more likely to be civically engaged than those who went through a non-bilingual elementary school program.

Hypothesis 1: Bilingually educated students will be more civically engaged as high school seniors, as measured in H1a and H1b.

a) H1a: High school seniors who went through a bilingual elementary school program will show greater interest in engaging with the community than those who went through a non-bilingual elementary school.

b) H1b: High school seniors who went through a bilingual elementary school program will be more involved in political decisions than those who went through a non-bilingual elementary school.

The independent variables are high school seniors that went through the bilingual education program when they were in elementary school, (N=42 students) versus those who did not (N=63 students). The purpose of the study is to test if bilingual education has influenced the dependent variables, which are based on the participation and attitude young adults hold on the topic of civic engagement. A control variable was used, which are high school seniors, but no specific variable was utilized to determine the exact age or gender, for example.

Methods

For this study, two student groups are compared within the same school district. Culver City Unified School District contains five public elementary schools. One of them is bilingual (El Marino Language School), which is a nationally recognized K-5 grade school that uses a dual language immersion program in either Japanese or Spanish. Once graduating from elementary school, students continue to middle school, where they normally take Japanese or Spanish as one of their subjects. The same occurs in High School, with most students culminating their experience taking AP Spanish/Japanese Language and AP Spanish/Japanese Literature, the most advanced course possible in second language acquisition.

The study population consists of students who went to the Culver City USD bilingual elementary school El Marino, which is measured against the control group composed of students who attended non-bilingual elementary schools within CCUSD or other school districts. Since the independent variable values are in terms of "attended bilingual education" versus "did not attend bilingual education," they are classified as nominal variables because they can be divided into two different groups that are mutually exclusive rather than a ranking system.

Measurement

These questions are derived from standard indicators on political participation surveys.

Community problem solving is measured using the following questions:

1) Name any school clubs you are active in (If none, write "no")

2) How many hours of volunteering/community service have you completed throughout high school?

Political civic engagement is measured with the following questions:

3) Have you ever voted, or do you plan on voting when first able to?

4) Do you think politicians care about your concerns?

5) Have you ever contacted the media or a public official to protest for any political cause?

Community-based

	Attended bilingual elementary school N=42	Did not attend bilingual elementary school N=63
Yes	26 (61%)	33 (52%)
No	16 (38%)	30 (47%)

Table 1. High school seniors' being involved in any school clubs

Based on the results, it can be inferred that there is a slight trend indicating that students who attended a bilingual education program in elementary school seem to be more involved in school clubs by 61 to 52%.

	Attended bilingual elementary school N=42	Did not attend bilingual elementary school N=63
0–30 hrs		13 (30%)
30–60 hrs	26 (61%)	9 (21%)
Did not respond	16 (38%)	20 (49%)

Table 2. High school seniors' hours of volunteering/community service completed throughout high school

Based on the survey findings, 30% of students who attended a bilingual education program indicated that they had volunteered 0–30 hours, as compared to 17% of non-bilingual students. In the "30–60 hours" category of volunteering hours, 21% of bilingual students chose this answer, while 15% of non-bilinguals selected that choice. A high number of bilingual students (49%) and non-bilingual (68%), declined to answer.

Political Engagement

	Attended bilingual elementary school n=42	Did not attend bilingual elementary school n=63
Yes	39 (92%)	57 (90%)
No	1 (2%)	2 (3%)
Maybe	2 (4%)	4 (6%)

Table 3. High school seniors' plan on voting, if not already

Both groups of students show similar (high) expectations of political participation.

	Attended bilingual elementary school n=42	Did not attend bilingual elementary school n=63
Yes	12 (28%)	17 (25%)
No	30 (71%)	46 (73%)

Table 4. High school seniors' belief of politicians caring about their concerns

Students in both groups display very similar responses to the question of political efficacy, though bilingually educated students seem slightly more confident in elected officials.

	Attended bilingual elementary school n=42	Did not attend bilingual elementary school n=63
Yes	17 (40%)	25 (39%)
No	25 (59%)	38 (60%)

Table 5. High school seniors contacted the media or a public officiaL

Students in both groups display nearly identical behaviors regarding contact with media or public officials.

Summary

The hypothesis that bilingual education would have a significant impact on one's civic engagement is nominally supported across two dimensions. Bilingually educated students seem to be more active in school clubs (AVP, Mahjong, Human Rights Watch, Metha, Tolerance, Endangered Species, Robotics, Mock Trial, Journalism, Poetry, Black Student Union, Latinos Unidos, AVID, Unity and Diversity, Women Reproductive Rights) and as volunteers, but are similar in other respects. Even though the evidence is inconclusive due to the lack of statistical significance in the findings, in neither category did the students who attended non-bilingual programs prevail over the students who attended a bilingual program in regard to being more civically engaged. For hypothesis H1a in a comparison of individuals, high school seniors who went through a bilingual elementary school program were more likely to show interest in volunteering for community service and being involved in school clubs, although the small sample size does not provide conclusive evidence.

For H1b, in a comparison of individuals, high school seniors who went through a bilingual elementary school program were not more likely to vote, contact public officials, and felt that their voices were being heard by politicians rather than those who went through a non-bilingual elementary school. Although a majority of both students responded "no" over "yes" to this question, there were still slightly more students who had gone through a bilingual education that said "yes" than their peers who did not attend a bilingual program while indicating if they had plan to vote if not already, indicating the hypothesis might be borne out with a much larger sample. Thus, even though some aspects of the hypotheses were inconclusive, and the margins were slim; based on the poll answers, evidence suggests there is a positive correlation between bilingual elementary education and high school civic engagement. A larger sample size across more school districts with tests of statistical significance could provide more conclusive claims.

Further Research

Some factors that would complicate and enhance the interpretation of the findings might be the educational level, economic circumstances, and attitudes of parents who choose to send their children to a bilingual program; the languages spoken at home in the case of the students exposed to the target language versus the home languages of those who attend monolingual schools; differences in curriculum between the two types of schools; language study among the high school students who did not attend a bilingual elementary school, etc. The impact of each factor enumerated above might lead to various degrees of civic engagement and studying these circumstances will surely enhance our understanding of the link between civic engagement and education. However, the intention of this paper is to focus solely on how bilingual education could function as an equalizer that ameliorates the differences caused by external factors. Since these components will likely remain constant in the future, studying them will bring more light into the possibilities to promote civic engagement that bilingual education encompasses. The complexity of each of these factors requires an extensive investigation on its own. To fully comprehend the effects of bilingual education on civic engagement, a deeper, more nuanced study that addresses the gaps not filled in this preliminary study is necessary. The intention of this prefatory investigation is to serve as a beachhead to a more complete study that will consider how all these complex variables impact the student involvement in civic actions. Attention to such factors would be a valuable addition to the discussion of future research findings.

Endnote

[1] In the context of the American frontier, Daniel Kemmis explains the need for people working in harsh environments to forgo their individualism in order to work collectively for the sake of the community: "these people tended to turn to regulations (and bureaucracies) to preserve the possibility of a good life in hard country" (Kemmis 45).

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Black Farmers in the American Midwest: Post-*Pigford* Disillusionment

Chelsea Guzmán, *Northwestern University*

Chelsea Guzmán (she/her) is an interdisciplinary researcher with a bachelor's degree in Latinx studies and legal studies from Northwestern University. Her primary research interests consider how Latinx immigrants in the United States respond to and create their own forms of citizenship while operating within the strict constraints imposed by the U.S. immigration regime. Currently, Chelsea is working in the legal field and hopes to begin her PhD soon.

Abstract

Though *Pigford v. Glickman* is celebrated as a successful class action lawsuit because it promised to distribute civil rights settlement funding to Black farmers, it failed to do so and discrimination carried on into the early 21st century. Rather than taking the case outcome at face value, this project builds upon existing critiques to highlight how Black farmers in the Midwest have faced unique challenges in response to *Pigford*. By identifying where the case critically failed to protect marginalized farmers, this paper identifies why the number of Black farmers in the Midwest continues to dwindle.

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Introduction

As the false promise of "40 acres and a mule" continued to ring in the recent memories of Black Southerners, racist lawmakers in the Southern and Northern regions of the United States developed new strategic disenfranchisement tactics to limit Black landownership.[1] As credit became the target of several racist policies, Black farmers did not have equal access to United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) loan lending opportunities in the South and instead, some migrated north as they imagined the Midwest could represent a hopeful alternative to the Jim Crow South. However, despite this ambitious vision, Black farmers continued to experience nightmarish conditions as discriminatory policies rapidly extended across the nation and seeped into the core of the USDA, foreshadowing the plummeting numbers of Black farmers in the Midwest. In 1999, Black farmers legally challenged the USDA's discriminatory practices that had been plaguing Black agricultural businesses, resulting in the largest civil rights settlement in U.S. history. Importantly, *Pigford v. Glickman* (1999) included plaintiffs from 15 different states, however, only two of these states were located within the Midwestern region of the United States.[2] Thus, Black farmers in the Midwest were positioned uniquely as both aspirational in comparison to the South and underrepresented in the case of *Pigford*. Presently, the literature regarding the *Pigford* settlement consists of important analyses that demonstrate its ineffectiveness, testimonies of Black farmers who were failed by the suit, and broad critiques of the suit nationally.[3] This paper will build upon this critique, however it will do so by looking more closely at the lasting challenges specifically faced by Black farmers in the Midwest after limited representation in the *Pigford* case.

Historical Background

In 1999, *Pigford v. Glickman* successfully ordered that the United States federal government distribute settlement funds to Black farmers as a redress for the discriminatory practices that had occurred between 1983 and 1997.[4] To collect settlement money from this case, Black farmers were required to submit applications detailing how they had been impacted by discriminatory loan lending practices.[5] This suit succeeded a Raegan administration decision to eliminate the civil rights division in the USDA, prohibiting Black farmers from discussing discrimination with the USDA directly.[6] Subsequently, the USDA intentionally utilized the foundation of its colorblind loan lending policies to discriminate against Black farmers who had poor credit, largely due to racist lending practices and other exclusionary policies that had limited the expansion of Black wealth.[7] Importantly, *Pigford* found that the application of the USDA's application of its loan lending policies was discriminatory, not the policies themselves. In doing so, *Pigford v. Glickman* revealed itself as a superficial and temporary resolution to a longer legacy of racial discrimination in the United States. This is despite the fact that the first line of the *Pigford* case decision explicitly references the promise of "40 acres and a mule" to each freedman after the Civil War.[8] Though *Pigford* seemed to be a resounding condemnation of the behavior exhibited within the USDA, its impact was profoundly limited as settlement money was strictly protected which directly contrasted with the way Black farmers had been candidly discriminated against for the past several decades. In 2010, *Pigford v. Glickman II* promised to extend settlement money to applications that had been completed late after the original case. While *Pigford* represents a temporary solution, discrimination remains pervasive as Black farmers are still the most likely to have their USDA loan rejected amongst all race and ethnic groups in 2020.[9]

In the case of *Pigford* the law itself did not change, but rather the case resulted in a distribution of capital to compensate for the discriminatory administration of federal loans without implementing further reform within the USDA. This deep-rooted rejection for change has ensured Black farmers continue to face discrimination by the USDA, even in their dwindling numbers. For example, only 37 percent of Black loan applicants were approved by the USDA, which stands in stark contrast to the 71 percent approval rate for white loan applicants.[10] Since 1910, Black farmers have lost 90 percent of their land across the U.S.[11] In Illinois the number of Black farmers decreased from 890 in 1920 to just 188 in 2017.[12] The average loan value for Black farmers in 2020 was $76,000; however, the average loan value for white farmers was $147,000.[13] These statistics are extremely troubling considering how the USDA officially acknowledged their discriminatory behavior over 20 years ago when the *Pigford* case was settled in 1999. *Pigford*'s historic legacy lies in that it was the largest federal redress in American history, but the effect of these funds remains limited and temporary as targeted racial discrimination continues to affect Black farmers. In fact, Paul L. Friedman, the judge assigned to the *Pigford* case, made it clear in his written approval of the settlement that the USDA should not change its policies or structure in response to the settlement:

> The Consent Decree does not, however, provide any forward-looking injunctive relief. . . . In fact, the Consent Decree stands absolutely mute on two critical points: the full implementation of the Civil Rights Action Team and the integration and reform of the county committee system to make it more accountable and representative.[14]

Thus, *Pigford* knowingly stopped short in addressing the structural biases that allowed Black farmers to be targeted in the loan lending process. Though *Pigford* acknowledged the USDA's mistreatment of Black farmers as deliberately racist, this critical failure to advocate for change in response would result in the continued loss of land and loan rejection for Black farmers.

A Post-*Pigford* American Midwest

Many white farmers have mistakenly imagined *Pigford* as a successful solution to inequality within the agricultural industry, therefore standing in opposition to state legislation that promises to support "socially disadvantaged farmers."[15] Though not at the center of *Pigford v. Glickman*, Black Midwestern farmers suffered parallel levels of discrimination yet received even smaller amounts of legal redress. One contributing factor may be the limited number of lawyers and advocacy organizations in the Midwest in comparison to more longstanding Southern farmers' organizations.[16] In Nicodemus, Kansas, a historic Midwest hub for Black farmers, the last Black-owned farm was foreclosed in 2017, despite its several *Pigford* settlement applications.[17] The Kansas Black Farmers Association was formed in 1999 with 53 members total and the number had dwindled to 13 by 2021.[18] The executive director of the Kansas Black Farmers Association JohnElla Holmes stated few Black famers in Kansas received any federal support following their applications for *Pigford v. Glickman* settlement payouts.[19] Black Midwestern farmers were largely absent from *Pigford v. Glickman* as plaintiffs and face additional challenges due to the strict requirements established to submit a successful application. At the same time, however, Black Midwestern farmers in Illinois, Wisconsin and Minnesota are facing opposition from white farmers who do not believe Black farmers have experienced levels of discrimination warranting supplemental federal loans and additional assistance.[20] Though Black farmers in the Midwest received little support from *Pigford v. Glickman*, these Midwestern states represent half of the sites where white-backed opposition to Black farmers receiving federal assistance occurred.

Because the number of Black farmers in the Midwest have been dwindling at an alarming pace, Midwest states are attempting to implement legislature that would provide Black Midwestern farmers with supplemental financial assistance to sustain their businesses. In 1920, there were 892 Black farmers in the state of Illinois. In 2017, there was a total of 188 but this decreased to 59 in 2022.[21] Democratic State Representative Sonya Harper (IL-6) has introduced the Black Farmer Restoration Program Act, which would grant eligible Black farmers in Illinois up to 100 acres of land, however, the bill has garnered skepticism from white-led organizations and farmers.[22] In addition to the land grants, the proposed Illinois bill would organize a fund for Black people to buy farms as well as catalyze the creation of a program where young Black professionals could train to pursue careers in the agricultural industry.[23] However, Representative Harper has said if her bill moves forward in the legislative process, she is expecting opposition from white farmers who—on the national level—have already voiced their resentment towards federal and state distribution of financial assistance towards Black, Indigenous and Hispanic farmers.[24] Though this bill has not found success as of 2023, it is part of a broader federal effort to introduce legislation that would aid Black farmers in their mission of correcting historical discrimination imposed by the USDA. The Justice for Black Farmers Act of 2023, introduced by Congressman Alma Adams (NC-12) and U.S. Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ), seeks to accomplish the same goals as those listed in Representative Harper's state bill.[25] The federal bill has garnered support of over 100 organizations, however, of the seven cosponsors so far, the

only Midwest representation comes from U.S. Senator Tina Smith (D-MN).[26] While the introduction of these pieces of legislation has provided a precedent for other states, no Midwest region states have approved the implementation of these bills. This is especially concerning because Black farmers in the Midwest were less likely to receive settlement money after *Pigford*. Further, when considering Midwest farmers had limited representation in the *Pigford* case itself, it is important that representatives step up to support this bill and advocate for the unique challenges faced by Black farmers in the Midwest as their presence is quickly dwindling.

Farming coalitions and organizations have also voiced their opposition in response to Representative Harper's bill. During the bill's listening sessions, the Illinois Farm Bureau did not attend, nor did representatives from the larger umbrella organization: the American Farm Bureau Federation.[27] The American Farm Bureau Federation has argued it is a national voice for American farmers, but its 2022 Policy Book cites how the Federation opposes specific programs operating under the "guise of emphasizing ethnic diversity."[28] Though Black farmers continue to endure disproportionate inured discrimination from the USDA , many white farmers and national farming organizations have publicized their resistance to laws that might mitigate this discrimination. In Wisconsin, white farmers are similarly reacting to such state legislation arguing assistance programs would be discriminatory towards white farmers. White farmers believe this proposed legislation is racist because it only benefits Black farmers and other USDA-designated "socially disadvantaged farmers."[29] However, the interests of white farmers is being prioritized beyond borders of the farmland—Federal Judge William Griesbach of Wisconsin halted a proposed federal program that would forgive federal loans for non-white farmland owners.[30] He claimed this program would cause "irreparable harm" to white farmers and did not present sufficient evidence that non-white farmers had experienced discrimination.[31] His stance is largely hypocritical considering the USDA admitted to discriminatory behavior in 1999 through *Pigford I* and then again in *Pigford II* in 2008 when an additional $1.15 billion in settlement money was requested.[32] However, it reflects the way Black farmers have been silently phased out of the agricultural industry.[33] In addition to being strategically phased out of this industry, the manufactured challenges Black farmers have experienced is also being muffled, in part due to the largely publicized aspirations of *Pigford* in comparison to its lackluster effects. Black farmers have also noted their distrust of the USDA and its practices.[34] I argue the colorblind nature of these policies combined with the racist discretion used to disadvantage Black farmers in the Midwest has produced a generation of white farmers who fail to realize their interests have been amplified at the expense of Black farmers' livelihoods.

Conclusion

The number of Black farmers in the Midwest peaked in 1920 and has since experienced dwindled due to several waves of discrimination, both from the federal government and their white peers in the industry which has resulted in a staggering decline of Black farmers in Midwestern states. Though *Pigford v. Glickman* is perceived as a belated but impressive victory for Black farmers mainly in the South, it had a limited impact overall and an even smaller impact in the Midwest farmers who were largely not part of the class action lawsuit. This paper examines how this limited representation has contributed to a unique impact on Black farmers in the Midwest and subsequent representation in new bills meant to uplift underrepresented farmers. Further, some Midwestern state legislatures are attempting to support their Black farmers with state financial aid and other program support, however, due to the erasure of the struggle Black farmers have faced in the United States, white farmers and white officials who can stifle these attempts have expressed outspoken opposition to these advocacy efforts. Shrouded by beauracracy and white supremacy, the number of Black farmers in the Midwest continues to dwindle and those who remain are in dire need of state support, as this is the structural mechanism that could potentially revive their sector of the agricultural industry.

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Embodying Counter-Memory: Witnessing as Resistance to Institutional Erasure

Ramiro A. Hernández, *Swarthmore College*

Ramiro A. Hernández is a recent graduate of Swarthmore College, where he received a BA in Peace and Conflict Studies, Educational Studies, and Medical Anthropology. During his undergraduate career, he partnered with the Biden Transition Team to increase representation in political appointments, published an international reporting projectwith the Pulitzer Center that focused on deported U.S. immigrant veterans, and ran multiple national programs and policy work around increasing access and equity in higher education. Ramiro is currently an Ed.M. Candidate in Leadership, Organizations, and Entrepreneurship at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, concentrating in Identity, Power, and Justice. After graduating, he will be pursuing a doctoral program at the intersections of Anthropology and Latin American Studies.

Abstract

Institutions of higher education, as they exist under racial capitalism, often hold a monopoly over perceptions of truth. The voices and experiences of certain students–namely, student organizers who threaten this monopoly–are rarely included in official records, and the embodied knowledge they bring into and create within the institution is thus hidden and erased. This autoethnographic engagement with student organizing history at Swarthmore College reflects on how the act of witnessing can be mobilized through different technologies to create a counter-memory, resisting institutional erasure and reconnecting students to the memories they are separated from.

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Introduction

Like many students who come from under-resourced places, I arrived at Swarthmore College full of energy. I was excited. Freshman fall was the first time I had been on a train. It was the first time I had seen more than a couple hundred dollars in my own bank account. I joined God knows how many clubs at the activities fair, becoming a first-year intern for half of them within weeks.

As I navigated campus those first few months of freshman year Fall 2019, I remember occasionally hearing remnants of what had happened the semester before. After fraternity documents detailing racist, homophobic, and sexually violent behaviors were leaked, a group of student organizers, Organizing for Survivors (O4S), mobilized through sit-ins and other actions leading to the closing of the frats.[1]

I never really understood the whole story, though. In hindsight, my understanding of what had happened was very tangibly shaped by the monopoly Swarthmore, and other institutions more broadly, hold over what histories get remembered.

Though I did not officially start at Swarthmore until Fall 2019, I was on campus for Discover Swarthmore in September 2018 and for Swatlight in April 2019.[2] I now know that some of O4S's larger actions were taking place during this time; yet despite me being physically on campus, administrators did a really good job strategically scheduling events, because I did not witness any of the work of O4S while I was there.

Even when I was back home in Texas in May 2019, a friend who knew I was going to Swarthmore read an article about the frats and came up to me, saying that Swarthmore was full of rapists. In response, I defended the institution, saying something along the lines of "rape happens at all college campuses, at least my college responded and closed down the frats."

Aside from being disgusted at how my younger self responded at the time, when I reflect on that conversation, I find myself in disbelief. To think that I was not even an official student at Swarthmore yet, and the institution had already convinced me to defend its name by hiding all of the work O4S had done . . . and it was this line of thinking—wanting to comprehend how an institution could have so much influence over one's perception of truth—that led me to this research.

Searching for History

Years later, as I was entering senior year in Fall 2022, I found myself reflecting on how exhausted and broken I felt. My time at Swarthmore took me through a global pandemic, moving 2,000 miles away from home, multiple life-threatening surgeries, anxiety, depression, organizing, and a Student Government Vice Presidency that had taken a lot of my life force out of me. I had just lost multiple family members that past summer, too, and so I was starting the academic year carrying more harm in my body than at any time prior.

All around me, though, people kept moving a thousand miles an hour, rushing everywhere faster than they

could process the moment they had just left. Classes went on as normal. Exhaustion and burnout were verbally named in many of our check-ins, and yet we collectively seemed to pretend things were fine. I felt disconnected, detached, like I was experiencing life in the 3rd person.

. . . detachment. . .

Did other people reflect on how exhausted we were? Had others thought about the disconnect between their embodied experiences and the institution's persistent push for production of labor, knowledge, and academic rankings?

. . . exhaustion. . .

I was clueless about where to begin searching for answers. The College's version of history was of no use to me; there was never an explicit mention of the work student organizers had done. The creation of the Intercultural Center; the increased support systems for first-generation, low-income students; the move toward a more equitable pandemic grading policy; the College proudly boasted about these things in public, and yet it never shared the tears, exhaustion, and harm that so many student organizers had to bear in order to make those policies a reality. It quite literally felt like our experiences were being erased. . .

But how could I counter this?

Counter-Memory, Racial Capitalism, Alienation

In *Nietzsche*, *Genealogy*, *History*, Michel Foucault writes that genealogy seeks the singularity of events "in the most unpromising places, in what we tend to feel is without history—in sentiments, love, conscience, instincts (Foucault 2021, 139)." He also writes of employing a history "directed against truth," opposing "history as knowledge" and implying a use of history "that severs its connection to memory, its metaphysical and anthropological model, and constructs a counter-memory—a transformation of history into a totally different form of time (Foucault 2021, 160)."

. . . in sentiments, love, conscience, instincts. . .

What would it mean to look for answers beneath the boundary of my skin, in the cells, energy, and oxygen that coursed through my body? What would it mean to reconnect with our innate ability to learn and produce knowledge with/through the body, in a society that constantly urges the separation of body and mind, of logic and emotion? What would that genealogy look like? What would it *feel* like?

Asking myself these questions brought me fear; fully inhabiting my body was not easy. Alienating myself from the harm, pain, and wounds I carried was how I had survived for so long; to let myself feel was to let an ocean crash into me, wave after wave relentlessly calling forth everything I had so carefully locked away. . .

. . . alienating. . .

In one of his manuscripts, Karl Marx wrote that "a direct consequence of the alienation of man from the product of his labour, from his life activity . . . is that man is alienated from his species-life . . . from others . . . and that each of the others is likewise alienated from human life (Marx 2023, 145)."

Part of me wanted nothing more than to continue the illusion of safety alienation had brought me . . . and yet I also knew that if I wanted answers, I would need to let the ocean I had kept at bay for so long wash over me. In committing to this, though, I also needed to better understand how institutions functioned under the systems we live in.

. . . illusion. . .

In the Antipode Foundation film *Geographies of Racial Capitalism*, Ruth Wilson Gilmore reminds us that "racial capitalism—which is to say all capitalism—is not a thing, it's a relation," going on to describe how the institutions that govern our daily lives often reproduce the very inequality "capitalism requires" (*Geographies* 2020).

As an example, Gilmore talks about the people of Amora in Portugal. With none of their houses up to code, they risked losing their entire communities. The municipality had promised everyone a place in a social housing project elsewhere, but the people responded "No no no, you don't understand. We want to live here, this is our home. Not just the house, this is our home, this community's our home, we have people and resources here (*Geographies* 2020)."

They then "started to organize themselves, not only to save their houses," but to understand why "of all the people of greater Lisbon," it was them who were under threat of erasure. At the same time, they "developed study groups to understand not just about their local vulnerability or how the city government works," but also the history of "colonialism, the history of racism, the current history of citizenship in the E.U. as it has changed over time (*Geographies* 2020)."

. . . it's not a thing, it's a relation. . .

As I grappled with Gilmore's words, I felt my understanding of what I was experiencing at Swarthmore shift.

It suddenly made sense that I could not readily find any official College history centering the experiences of student organizers. It made sense that the only knowledge I

did have was stories passed down to me by upperclassmen in years prior, aching for those after them to remember the labor they had exhausted themselves into at Swarthmore. It made sense… because institutions, as they exist under racial capitalism, reproduce conditions of inequality not just by organizing and distributing material labor, but by alienating us from the memory of those who labored before us.

Like the people of Amora, whose place-based memories, connections, and relationships were at risk of being erased, Swarthmore was actively erasing the experiences its students had historically lived through. It was alienating us from each other; alienating us from our knowledge; alienating us from human life (Marx 2023, 144).

…history…

In the face of being erased from official history, erased from the material existence of the municipality they lived in, the people of Amora chose to create another source of memory, a "counter-memory," as Foucault called for—a history that centered the knowledge, awareness, and connection they had been deprived of, in direct opposition to the dismemberment of racial capitalism. That was their resistance . . .

. . . and if I wanted to find the answers I was looking for, I realized I would need to embody that resistance, too.

Witnessing as Countermemory

How was I to thread a countermemory, one that could move beyond space and time, connecting those before me with those who would come after me? How could I disrupt generations of dismemberment, disconnection, disembodiment? How could I heal beyond the harm of my own skin?

…space and time…

I knew, from experience, that student organizers at Swarthmore tended to document their movements through social media and *Voices*[3] articles… and so, early in the Spring semester of my senior year at Swarthmore, I told my advisor I was changing my entire thesis project to focus on these questions.

…documenting…

Facebook pages, websites, articles, videos… the digital remnants these students had left behind were testaments to the space they had occupied, the energy they had poured into their movements at Swarthmore. As I listened to their voices and read their words, though, I found myself with more questions than I had begun with.

What did these organizers feel? How were they able to transmit those feelings beyond their place and time? How did they use affective and subjective claims to truth as a way to mobilize people around them? What did it mean for me to witness their work years after their last Facebook post, outside of their time but within the same physical spaces they had once existed in? What did it mean for me to feel the pain, anger, frustration, and exhaustion they felt, very viscerally in my own body? How did their claims to truth differ from the "objectivity" of the institution?

…truth-making…

In *We Were There: Rethinking Truth with Midiativistas in Rio de Janeiro*, Raffaella Fryer-Moreira describes the work of midiativistas, "media activists who produced audiovisual testimony from the front lines of protests" during the popular uprisings in Brazil between 2013 and 2014. She argues that their reports "were grounded in their act of 'being there' and bearing witness," emphasizing the "affective encounters that their position made possible (Fryer-Moreira 2021, 18)."

Importantly, the general public perceived the work of midiativistas as authoritative because it was made by insiders who had "physical proximity to the site of action and relational position within the protest movement," which enabled them to produce first-hand accounts that were "situated, partial, and deemed more convincing because they rejected the mainstream media's claims to 'objective truth'" in favor of "situated truth, witnessed directly" (Fryer-Moreira 2021, 18–19).

…situated truth, witnessed directly…

As I read Fryer-Moreira's words, I came to yet another realization: those before me had already begun answering the questions I was asking. Though perhaps not consciously, the student organizers I was witnessing had already started the work of creating a counter-memory. Like the people of Amora, these organizers were intentional in remembering the voices the College forgot. They often leaned on these voices to strengthen their work, resisting dismemberment and erasure by explicitly demanding "Swarthmore, don't forget me (Dolch 2018)."

. . . and as I sat there, with tab after tab open on my laptop, scrolling through Facebook and Instagram and Tumblr pages, I also realized that it was these very digital spaces—posts, videos, images, published statements—that had allowed organizers to mobilize their counter-histories to begin with. That was how they had extended their claims to truth outside of the physical, immediate protest sites—by using digital technologies that allowed people who weren't present in that moment to witness what they were

witnessing;[4] to feel what they were feeling; to embody the knowledge the College tried so hard to erase.

. . . witnessing. . .

That was how their work had reached me across space and time . . . by calling me in to witness.

(Re)membering

Ruth Wilson Gilmore emphasizes thinking "locally in order to think globally," given that problems, "however particularly local they are, always have an international dimension (*Geographies* 2020)." This research, then, has to be understood as specific to the space, place, and time of Swarthmore; but it has implications far beyond that.

. . . place-making. . .

As racial capitalism evolves and adapts over time, its tactics of dismemberment will evolve and adapt with it. Institutions might shift toward an illusion of remembrance,[5] but we must always ask ourselves, What is being remembered? For what purpose? What is being left forgotten?

. . . (re)membering. . .

In many ways, this research has led me to become what Fryer-Moreira calls a "witness-by-choice." I've made a conscious decision to witness and re-witness my own harm, the harm of students generations before me, the love, joy, pain, and longing of so many people at Swarthmore. . .

. . . and as I let myself feel these things, calling forth reactions from the depths of my being, I'm realizing that to resist erasure, to work toward the creation of a counter-memory, inherently requires that we witness each other outside of the institution's gaze.

. . . embodying. . .

By virtue of belonging to an institution that exists under racial capitalism, institutional memory exists and operates within the scope of conditions that enable racial capitalism's reproduction. It will never (re)member the voices of students whose embodiment threatens institutional monopoly over perceptions of truth, because to do so would be to upend its entire existence.

Put simply, our *being* is more than a colonial institution can even begin to comprehend, yet alone (re)member.

… existing…

adrienne maree brown once wrote that "ending harm may be far off yet, even unimaginable, but [she] also believes that the future is already alive in each of us, because all the generations to come live within the bodies, cultures, dreams, and shaping of those alive today (brown 2021, 159)."

For me, then, this is the work of (re)membering; (re) membering the histories in places we have been told are ahistorical; (re)membering our wholeness before our dismemberment; (re)membering the futures that already exists within us.

Because that's how we create the counter-memories we long for; that's how we resist erasure: by witnessing our own remembrance.

Endnotes

1 For a more detailed history, you can visit *Voices of Survivors* at http://mariposas-mexas-thesis.net/. You can find the leaked frat documents at https://mariposas-mexas-thesis.net/phi-psi-historical-archives/. For relevant news articles, you can also search "Organizing for Survivors Swarthmore."

2 These two fly-in programs bring first-generation, low-income prospective students to visit campus, all expenses covered.

3 "*Voices* is a daily, student-run news and media publication that witnesses, teaches, and listens to the multiple truths of Swarthmore." https://swarthmorevoices.com/.

4 Here, I invite you to reference *Voices of Survivors* at http://mariposas-mexas-thesis.net/, specifically the sections titled "Why Swarthmore's Fraternities Must Go," "Takeover and Sleepover," and "We Support O4S (Again)."

5 You may reference the May 1st, 2023 "Facing the Past" announcement from Swarthmore President Valerie Smith, which details College history regarding Native American remains in 1899, at https://www.swarthmore.edu/presidents-office/facing-past.

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Be(Com)ing *Haitiano-Cubano*: *Haitianas* as The Undesirable (M)other in Alberto Pedro Díaz's "Guanamaca"

Marissa Joseph, *Harvard University*

Marissa Joseph graduated from Harvard University in May 2023 with a B.A. in History and Literature and a certificate in Latin American Studies. Her research examines historical and transnational connections between Haiti and the broader Hispanophone Caribbean focusing primarily on Haitian women's migrations, marginality, and agency. She hopes to apply to doctoral programs in History and Black Studies.

Abstract

Closely examining "Guanamaca," a 1962 state-sponsored ethnographic study of a Haitian settlement in post-Revolution Cuba, this paper traces how state cultural institutions characterized haitianas, women of Haitian descent, as bulwarks of ethnic difference, locating their embodied diasporic memory as an obstacle that restricted the realization of cultural homogeneity. It interrogates the conditions and limitations involved in being and becoming, be(com)ing, integrated members of Cuban society. Ultimately, this paper seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the historical and cultural dynamics surrounding the Haitian presence in Cuba. It provides insights into the discourses of cultural assimilation, the complexities of shaping national identity, and the categories of exclusion that emerged following the Cuban Revolution.

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Fiercely determined to foster social cohesion and national solidarity, in 1961 Fidel Castro launched a campaign to end illiteracy in Cuba, dispatching over 100,000 volunteers to teach the urban and rural peasant masses. Beyond eradicating illiteracy, the campaign's pedagogy intended to cultivate a nationwide revolutionary *conciencia* or consciousness, and as instructor Mier Fables recounted, forge "a common bond, a common spirit, and a common goal" across the various sectors of Cuban society.[1] Venturing into the eastern countryside, known as el *Oriente*, the brigadistas encountered isolated settlements of *haitianos*—people of Haitian descent. Throughout the 1940s, Haitian migrants established tight-knit communities across Oriente's hinterlands, living as "modern day maroons" to seek refuge from a growing anti-Haitian sentiment amplified by the Republican-era government.[2] During the decades prior, Cuba saw its greatest influx of Haitian migrants between 1910 and 1930 as nearly 8% of Haiti's population migrated to Cuba as *braceros* (sugar laborers) to cut cane on sugar plantations owned and operated by U.S. corporations.

Today, *haitianos* reside across Oriente as a tenacious ethnic category. Since their earliest arrivals, the Haitian diaspora in Cuba has shaped the historical development of *cubanidad*, the essence of Cuban national identity, by virtue of *haitianas*, women of Haitian descent, and their cultural labor. In her anthropological study of Haitian settlements across Oriente, "On the Margins," scholar Yanick Hume details how "to safeguard their continued existence," Haitian migrants crafted communities "physically and socially distant from the dominant cultural matrix" with many only speaking elementary level Spanish, if any at all.[3] As their primary teachers, homemakers, and caregivers, *haitianas* stewarded the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge and practices that were central to the survival and evolution of "haitiano" as a distinct ethnocultural identity. The Cuban Revolution served as a pivotal inflection point of cultural and social change for Haitians living in Cuba. Revolutionary leaders located the indigent living conditions, low literacy rates, and cultural obscurity present in Haitian communities as an opportunity to showcase the homogenizing potential of the revolution's social programs. Through their participation in social programs like the literacy campaign, revolutionary leaders aspired to render Haitian communities legible to the national collective, assimilable into the common spirit of the emerging socialist society, and eventually, culturally and genealogically indistinguishable.

To document the development of *haitianos* as they transitioned into *haitiano-cubanos*,—a social category marking their greater proximity to cubanidad—the revolutionary government-sponsored the first ethnographic studies on Haitians living in Cuba. Motivated by the supposition that "the economic and social changes achieved by the Revolution will produce, in turn, fundamental changes in the customs of our people," the Cuban Ministry of Culture established *El Instituto Nacional de Etnologia y Folklore* (The National Institute of Ethnology and Folklore) in 1961.[4] In 1962, researcher Alberto Pedro Díaz spent three months living and working alongside Haitians in *bateyes* throughout Guanamaca, an eastern village, and his resulting study, "Guanamaca, una comunidad haitiana," is one of the earliest ethnographic studies on Haitian settlements in Cuba.

Throughout "Guanamaca," Pedro Díaz illustrates the region's youth as increasingly mulato and culturally

assimilated, insinuating a nascent extinction of *haitianos* as a distinct ethno-cultural identity. The study's discursive imaginings of *haitianos* as gradually losing proximity to their ethnic customs and Blackness reveal a significant revolutionary narrative that elevated de-ethnicization and miscegenation as essential components in the interweaved processes of *being* and *becoming* a revolutionary citizen. This essay draws a through-line between Haitian women's social reproduction, guardianship, or *mothering* of ethnocultural difference and their marginalization and *othering* from depictions of *haitianos* as emerging revolutionary citizens throughout "Guanamaca." I argue that "Guanamaca" sought to engender a politics of revolutionary self-improvement that located *haitianas* as undesirable (m)others to the future generations of reformed *haitianos-cubanos* and prescribed the biological and social erasure of Haitian identity in Cuba. In doing so, Pedro Díaz signaled that Cuba's envisioned homogenous and mulato future afforded no margin for cultural polity and thus, characterized *haitianas* as bulwarks of ethnic difference, framing their reproduction of Haitian ethno-cultural identity as rendering them unsuitable to be mothers of the emerging nation.

Pedro Díaz's study materialized from an ongoing effort to promote national integration that grew amplified in 1959 after Fidel Castro declared "the fight against racial discrimination in work centers" a crucial tenant of the revolution.[5] Revolutionary leaders advanced a radical nationalism that aspired to transform the socially and culturally heterogenous national polity into a synthesized body composed of "the new man," the hallmark of revolutionary citizenship. In his manifesto, *Socialism and Man in Cuba*, leader Ernesto "Che" Guevara describes the creed of the new man as an abandonment of "the pipe dream that socialism can be achieved with the help of the dull instruments left to us by capitalism" and an embrace of new socialist values, structures, and attitudes.[6] Through the establishment of ethnographic and cultural institutions, the emerging socialist state sought to capture the birth and evolution of the national collective as social programs augmented their revolutionary consciousness and propelled them towards new manhood.

Historians such as Devyn Spence Benson and Alejandro de La Fuente have contributed groundbreaking works on race and citizenship in Cuba. De la Fuente offers that the revolutionary government's racial discrimination agenda and cultural institutions elevated visions of Cuba as a race-less and anti-racist space that recognized Blackness as an integral ingredient in the history of the mixed or mulato nation, but not necessarily its future.[7] Continuing this discussion, Afro-Cuban historian Devyn Spence Benson traces how Castro's social programs positioned the Black population as protégés who "needed to move beyond blackness and/or poverty to become citizens."[8] Within revolutionary discourses of self-improvement, whitening and homogenization co-constituted reproduction, matrimony, and maternity. In their 1988 study of Haitians living in Cuba, *Caidije*, Cuban ethnologists Jesús Guanche and Dennis Moreno note that within Marxist theory, ethnic assimilation is of "vital importance" and argue that to achieve cultural synthesis, "ethnically mixed marriages and endoculturation processes (raising a new generation) play a considerable role when the mother is part of the majority ethnos."[9] Building on this historiography of race, citizenship, and maternity, I conduct a more granular examination of revolutionary discourses of *mestizaje* or racial mixture. This essay foregrounds ethnicity to elucidate the ideological violence and erasure operating within the discursive strategies employed by the state to promote homogenization in their renderings of *haitianos*.

Throughout his study, Pedro Díaz magnifies Guanamaca's youth as the cornerstone of the Haitian diaspora's gradual enlightenment into revolutionary conciencia by noting their affinity for mainstream Cuban culture and aesthetics.

Figure 1. "Young descendants of haitianos. Central Brasil"

Describing the youth's fascination with urban clothing and hairstyles, Pedro Díaz writes "any afternoon in Guanamaca can remind us of certain corners of cities like Havana, Matanzas or Guantanamo, if we pay attention to the dress and listen to the speech of the different groups of young people who congregate. . . ."[10] Pedro Díaz clarifies that he utilizes the demarcation "youth" as "a very broad concept that has nothing to do with certain ages and rather alludes to Haitian descent in its different grades."[11] In his depictions of the youth, Pedro Díaz amplifies their perceived cultural assimilation as evidence of a commencing cultural synthesis initiated by the revolution's social programs. By drawing a parallel between generational distance from Haiti to cultural assimilation, Pedro Díaz implies an evolutionary basis of cultural integration, centralizing reproduction and youth as instrumental mechanisms through which *haitianos* can seek to attain inclusion within the national belonging.

As Cubans of Haitian descent grow increasingly distant from their national ties to Haiti, Pedro Díaz asserts that they will grow more culturally aligned with Cuban national identity and less reminiscent of their isolation in rural communities. The study laments that despite their familiarity with mainstream Cuban culture and proficiency in the local regional Spanish dialect, "expressions of contempt also reached our compatriots of Haitian descent."[12] In referring to Guanamaca's youth as "compatriots," Pedro Díaz suggests that being Cuban born affords the youth with a social identity removed from the geo-political memory and allegiances that defined the identity of previous generations. Instead, their identity is one rooted in principles of assimilation and, thus, in greater accordance with revolutionary nationalism and its discourse of new manhood. Thus, throughout his writings, Pedro Díaz distinguishes *haitiano* youth through the social category "*pichón*," a term used colloquially to describe those of Haitian descent born in Cuba. The designation delineates a shared understanding between the youth and the report's audience of white revolutionary intellectuals, distancing the new generation from the diasporic belonging that shaped the kinship networks and communal formations of earlier migrants.

Contrastingly, Pedro Díaz represents *codasos*, a term for *haitianos* born in Haiti, as ignorant and uncivilized linkages to the fading iterations of Haitian identity in Cuba. "Guanamaca" quotes an old sugar colony owner explained that the social categorization codaso arose as a pejorative to denote a *haitiano* or *haitiana* "who does not speak Spanish correctly, does not know how to shop, who knows nothing of our customs."[13] By counterposing the two categories, Pedro Díaz propagates a social hierarchy that maps cadasos as subscribing to "old," traditional, primitive behaviors and customs native to Haiti and the descending generations born in Cuba in closer proximity to the modern and normative. Presenting the dichotomy between the pichónes and the codasos, Pedro Díaz outlines a gradual disintegration of Haitian ethno-cultural identity on an individual, familial, and communal level as each generation grows more infatuated, influenced, and assimilated into Cuban culture.

Within the report's discursive frameworks, achieving the status of the new man hinged on the cessation of bloodlines and kinship networks that were separate from the dominant national mixture. Scholar Karen Y. Morrison argues that throughout Cuba's history the national sexual economy of race—the interplay between racialized notions of attraction or desire and sexuality—changes to reflect "submerged conflicts over the generational continuity of the nation and the social identities that comprise it."[14] Prior to the Cuban revolution, Haitians across generations, largely married within their communities due to a combination of motivations—isolation. societal stigma, desire, and necessity.

Figure 2. "Codaso married couple, Cuban residents since the 1920s."

However, "Guanamaca" spotlights the increasing prevalence of inter-ethnic marriages, noting that marriages occur between *codasos*, *codaso* and *pichón*, *codaso* and *cubana*, and *pichón* and *cubana*.[15] By identifying the heightened occurrence of exogamous marriages, Pedro Díaz hints towards a shifting sexual economy of both race and ethnicity. In his tracing of the developing marriage patterns, Pedro Díaz charts a sexual economy of race and ethnicity amongst Haitian men that is increasingly preoccupied with cultural mixture rather than safeguarding their ethnic and cultural customs. Men born in Haiti, according to Pedro Díaz, seek partnership with women in greater proximity to cubanidad. "Guanamaca" also omits observations of marriages between *pichónes* and instead notes that the male "pichón" finds his match amongst native Cuban women. Thus, the report characterizes marital behavior that promotes the genealogical and cultural dilution of Haitian identity in Cuba as a natural symptom of exclusively masculine progress across generational grades.

Pedro Díaz excludes haitianas, both pichóna and codasa, from his portrait of marital progress because as the socializing force of each generation, their transmission of Haitian customs and traditions operated as a culturally restorative mechanism. Accompanying the remarks surrounding the growing frequency of exogamous marriages, the report provides the caveat that interviewees and sources do not recall any prevalence of marriages between cubanos and codasas or pichónas.[16] By including this detail, "Guanamaca" amplifies the notion that Haitian men—in their aspiration to emulate and, eventually, become Cuban men—should not marry women of Haitian descent. In doing so, the report affirms the concept that endogamous marriage and its resulting preservation of ethno-cultural identity were matrilineally driven and reflective of old

behavioral patterns that hindered the realization of revolutionary conciencia and new manhood. Thus, the discussion of marriage in "Guanamaca" serves to legitimize a sexual economy that encourages Haitian men and their Cuban-born descendants to gradually diminish the matrilineal reproduction of Haitian diasporic identity in Cuba so that they may achieve acceptance into Cuban society.

Díaz's observations bespeak a hierarchy of desirability that located Black women, particularly *haitianas*, as custodians of otherness or low level of culture and thus, undesirable spouses and mothers due to their inability to produce new generations in greater racial and cultural proximity to whiteness. Throughout the report's photos, Pedro Díaz features the children of *codasos* couples in notable phenotypical distinct to children born from *codasos* and native Cuban women.

Figure 3. "A group of children, residents of Central Brasil. From left to right: the first three children have a father of Haitian descent and a white Cuban mother; the last two, descendants of haitianos."

"Guanamaca" features an image of young girls lined up along a color gradient, highlighting a gradual *blanqueamiento* or whitening as each generation descends farther away from the initial class of migrants. By placing the children on a gradient, Pedro Díaz evokes an evolutionary image that confirms the intention to characterize mestizaje and miscegenation as constructive and patrilineal consequence of social progress. In foregrounding young *mulata* or mixed girls, Pedro Díaz's images exalt exogamous marriage as a vehicle to assume the revolution's projections of an "ideal" mixed citizenry. By positioning the young darker-skinned girls born from Haitian mothers at the end of the gradient, the image symbolizes a rejection of Haitian women as suitable future mothers, wives, and spouses to the new man due to their womanhood, Blackness, and reproduction of ethnic difference—all of which were to be denied a place in the revolutionary future.

Through its prophesying, Pedro Díaz's "Guanamaca" demonstrates the complexities of the state's politics, which continue to reserve a place for *haitiano-cubanos* within the national belonging on terms that relegate their Haitian identity to realms of the past, ancestry, and folklore. Throughout its observations, "Guanamaca" implies the hyphen in the increasingly integrated "*haitiano-cubano*" to be a force that dissolves the Haitian into the Cuban rather than a bridge that distinguishes the two cultures that encompass the experience of the Haitian diaspora living in Cuba. However, *haitianas*, both cultural mothers and others, embody the true essence of the hyphen that both unites and reinforces the two cultures. As each generation embraces to the hierarchies of beauty, knowledge, and culture promoted by revolutionary narratives like "Guanamaca," Haitian women, designated undesirable, are left holding the banner of Haitian identity in Cuba and their cultural reproduction grows further entrenched in both alterity and resistance.

This essay constitutes a component of my ongoing scholarship that aims to honor how despite cultural representations that marginalized them as a societal other, *haitianas* persevered in their efforts to preserve the ethnocultural integrity of their communities, collaborating and confronting the state in dynamic ways. Although early revolutionary depictions presupposed the decline of Haitian culture across Oriente, Cuba's eastern region retains a palpably Haitian presence and influence because *haitianas* diligently preserved their diasporic heritage and established numerous cultural institutions dedicated to safeguarding Haitian culture in the years following the revolution. Haitian Kreyol remains the second largest language spoken in Cuba, Vodou lwas continue to receive their offerings, and *haitiano-cubanos* exist both *haitiano* and *cubano*—thanks to Haitian women who chose themselves, their communities, and their cultural legacy.

Endnotes

1 Alexandra Keeble and Ocean Press (Melbourne, Vic.), eds., *Con el espíritu de los maestros ambulantes: la campaña de alfabetización Cubana, 1961* (Melbourne; New York : Chicago, IL: Ocean ; Distributor, U.S. and Canada, LPC/InBook, 2001), 23.

2 M. C. McLeod, "Undesirable Aliens: Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism in the Comparison of Haitian and British West Indian Immigrant Workers in Cuba, 1912–1939," *Journal of Social History* 31, no. 3 (March 1, 1998): 614, https://doi.org/10.1353/jsh/31.3.599.

3 Yanick Hume, "On the Margins: The Emergence of a Haitian Diasporic Enclave in Eastern Cuba," in *Geographies of the Haitian Diaspora*, Routledge Studies on African and Black Diaspora 3 (New York: Routledge, 2011), 77. Cuban-born *haitianos*, albeit illiterate, commonly spoke a combination of Spanish and Kreyol know as *patois cubano*.

4 Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado, "Creación Del Instituto Nacional de Etnología y Folklore," *Actas Del Folklore* 1, no. 12 (1961): 373.

5 "No Hope For Counterrevolution," *Live Speech by Premier Fidel Castro at Havana Labor Rally* (Havana: Havana Radio Progreso, March 23, 1959), Castro Speech Database, http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/db/1959/19590323.html.

6 Che Guevara and Fidel Castro, *Socialism and Man in Cuba*, 3rd ed (New York: Pathfinder Press, 2009), 156.

7 Alejandro de la Fuente, *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth-Century Cuba*, Envisioning Cuba (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

8 Devyn Spence Benson, *Antiracism in Cuba: The Unfinished Revolution* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 49, 2016.

9 Jesús Guanche and Dennis Moreno, *Caidije* (Editorial Oriente, 1988), 5.

10 Alberto Pedro Díaz, "Guanamaca, Una Comunidad Haitiana," *Etnología y Folklore* 1 (1966): 29.

11 Ibid., 30.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Karen Y. Morrison, *Cuba's Racial Crucible: The Sexual Economy of Social Identities, 1750–2000* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), Introduction.

15 Marriages occur between men and women born in Haiti; men and women of Haitian descendent born in Cuba; men born in Haiti and native Cuban women; men of Haitian descendent born in Cuba and native Cuban women.

16 Pedro Díaz, "Guanamaca," 32.

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Spectacular Blackness in the Gene Scene: Disruption of the Private

Bethany Keith, *Hunter College*

Bethany Keith is a junior at Hunter College studying art history and computer science. Her research centers on visual representations of Black people in late nineteenth-century American art. She is particularly interested in developing nuanced understandings of the artistic works that exist outside of minstrelsy and caricature.

Abstract

This article examines representations of Black private life in postbellum genre paintings, specifically by artists Richard Norris Brooke, Thomas Eakins, and Henry Ossawa Tanner, in connection to the liminality of late nineteenth-century Black status. Despite the end of the Civil War in 1865, legal rights for the formerly enslaved Black person were not necessarily realized socially. In other terms, his transition from object (chattel) to subject (citizen) was incomplete. I consider the postbellum genre artist's figuring of Black subjects in private according to white racial discourse as a perpetuation of Black objecthood and a visual translation of such liminality. I argue that spectacular constructions of Black private life specifically made for white viewer consumption evidence America's inability to imagine full citizenship and subjecthood for the emancipated.

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Spectacular Blackness in the Genre Scene: Disruption of the Private

In 1899, white American sculptor Charles Calverley returned to *Little Ida*, a low-relief plaster cast he completed over a decade prior. Calverley had pictured Ida, a middle-aged Black woman, in profile. Untucked curlicues peek from her knotted headscarf. Her collar is unbuttoned. She is delicately adorned with a beaded earring and necklace. Such individuation dissipated with Calverley's 1899 revision, which included the inscription "THE RACE JOHN BROWN DIED FOR" directly next to Ida in relief.[1] The transformation of *Little Ida* into a metonymic, rather than individual portrait, raises an important question: about whom has this work become? The title and work itself present a visibly Black individual. The inscription, however, diverts our focus to white John Brown's martyrdom. He has died, not for this subject specifically, but for the race to which she happens to belong. It is not Ida who is intended to dominate our attention, but her blackness. What, then, do we make of the "blackness" being represented? Pre-inscription, the work was perhaps more intimate. It invited the viewer to examine a woman's unique features. Reworked, *Little Ida* presents the viewer with a wholly different invitation. The inscription is a proclamation: *Come, behold blackness, defined and made visual.* Its subject thrust into a concept larger than herself and made a specimen of her race, *Little Ida* is a spectacle.

Blackness is similarly spectacularized in genre paintings of the same era. While this is done in *Little Ida* through the addition of an inscription, genre painting does so primarily through visual, not textual, cues. Artists construct their genre works by translating social and political discourses into visual figurations that represent ordinary life. That is to say, each subject within a work is shaped by a deliberate presentation of beliefs and symbols the audience may hold and expect—a farmer, for example, may be identified by his scythe, or positioned within a dreamy grassy expanse as an ode to simpler, pre-industrialized life. The legibility of a work rests upon the typing, or explicit visual definition, of each subject. Just as a genre artist may construct the farmer as a type using visual cues derived from ideological discourses outside of a work, he may construct blackness as a type. In a nation reeling over the Black person's legal transformation from object to citizen, the artist was in a position to reconcile what was once expected by a white audience (Black objecthood) with the new and peculiar (legally, though not always socially, recognized Black personhood). This would explain Calverley's muddling of object and subject in *Little Ida*; abject, spectacular blackness as a subject is more readily digestible to a white nineteenth-century audience than the subject herself.[2] The Black genre subject likewise sits uncomfortably in a form characterized by explicit definition.

I investigate white artists' figurations of Black genre subjects in the postbellum period with an eye for the possible spectacularization of blackness. I interpret spectacular blackness in the genre scene as the presentation of blackness as a public performance for the viewer, as opposed to the depiction of Black subjects not expressly for white visual consumption. What I call spectacular genre scenes are those more concerned with mediating white anxiety over the legal transmutation of the Black person from object to citizen-subject than the form's traditional concern with capturing the ordinary. In such scenes, the representation of privateness in the domestic sphere is disrupted by evocations of white public racial discourse. I am not discounting the inherent spectacularity of all depictive forms (subjects, objects, and settings are consciously figured by artists for

our viewing), rather, I am particularly interested in a type of spectacle that operates as a mediator of racial discourses happening outside of a work. As a dimension of the institution of slavery was the deprivation of private life (those considered ownable objects were not entitled to privacy), the late nineteenth century white artist's inability to construct an undisrupted private for his Black subject evidences the nation's collective inability to imagine the Black person as a full-fledged citizen-subject in the aftermath of slavery. White genre painters Richard Norris Brooke and Thomas Eakins, and Black genre painter Henry Ossawa Tanner, all attuned to their country's sociopolitical happenings, navigate and contemplate the implications of Black citizenship and subjecthood. I examine their negotiations of "public" and "private" blackness in *A Dog Swamp*, *A Pastoral Visit*, *The Dancing Lesson*, and *The Banjo Lesson*. I argue that the presentation of Black privateness in the genre scene as public-facing and blackness as a spectacle for viewing attests to unrealized Black subjecthood in the postbellum era. While scholars such as Martin Berger and Lacey Baradel[3] have discussed translations of late nineteenth-century sociopolitical phenomena into genre painting, an investigation into "stagy" figurations of Black private shifts our understanding of Black citizenship during this period.

Impermissible Leisure

Richard Norris Brooke produced companion pieces *A Pastoral Visit* and *A Dog Swamp* in 1881, works which he claimed "fixed [his] reputation as a painter of negro subjects."[4] Brooke felt obligated to render Black subjects seriously and uncaricatured, which he himself communicates in a letter to the Corcoran Purchasing Board about *A Pastoral Visit*:

> It must have struck many of you that the fine range of subject afforded by Negro domestic life has been strangely abandoned to works of flimsy treatment and vulgar exaggeration. That particular humor which is characteristic of the race, and varies with the individual, cannot be thus crudely conveyed.[5]

Evidently, Brooke's goal is to capture what he considers "that particular humor" of blackness within his work. The subjects of *A Pastoral Visit* and *A Dog Swamp* are modeled after elderly "George Washington" and middle-aged "Daniel Brown" and his family, all real-life acquaintances of the artist. In *A Dog Swamp*, Brooke places his subjects outside of a house's dilapidated façade. A woman and three children stand in the doorway. An elder and middle-aged man sit on wooden chairs in the foreground, two dogs seated placidly at each of their feet. The elder subject and the dog adjacent to him are turned to look at the younger man on their right, who, unlike the other, more shadowed subjects, is fully washed in light. We are impelled to look at him, the likely breadwinner of this household. He dozes in repose with his chair tipped and a pipe hanging loosely in his mouth.

Figure 1. 1866, woodcut on wove paper, 45.5 x 58.1 cm, Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-40764.

Figure 2. Engraving reproduction of William Sidney Mount's *Farmer's Nooning*, Alfred Jones, ca. 1843, engraving, 47.7 x 55.5 cm, Library of Congress, LC-DIG-pga-03384.

A historical and overfamiliar racial trope, the loafing middle-aged Black man is an ideologically charged visual subject. He is a reaction to the various threats allegedly posed to the white man by Republican progressivism: loss of political, economic, and social control. Representations of the loafer vary contextually, though are conceptually identical, from work to work. He may be a perpetuator of white anxiety or a subject for white viewer ridicule. A poster (Figure 1) from Pennsylvania's gubernatorial election of 1866 presents the former; it is a call to action against Congress's enabling of Black "idleness at the expense of the

white man" via the Freedman's Bureau. A Black man, heavily caricatured and dressed in tatters, is pictured relaxing on grass as white men do hard manual labor in the distance. The loafer, in this instance, is intended to galvanize the viewer, both into voting for a specific political candidate (Pennsylvania Democrat Hiester Clymer) and into watchfulness over the Black man's encroaching civil progress.

Similarly, critics have repeatedly discussed William Sidney Mount's *Farmer's Nooning* (1836) (see an 1840s engraving reproduction in Figure 2) as a visual translation of public discourse on Black idleness. Art historian Martin Berger, for instance, argues that the placement of Black and white figures in the same space "[cues] the [viewer] to invoke a series of binaries" with regard to civic competence.[6] While the leftmost white subject hones his tools at break time, the Black subject (placed front and center) naps. A young boy tickles the sleeping man with a piece of straw, both for his amusement and the viewer's. Mount's scene works to assuage white anxiety over the Black man's potential inclusion into the American body politic; he is perceivably less competent and industrious than the white man and is thus represented as inapt for citizenship.

Although *A Dog Swamp* is comprised of only Black subjects, I argue that it is conceptually in line with the racial politics of *Farmer's Nooning*. The representation of the middle-aged man, relaxed and non-threatening, is calculated to diffuse white viewers' concerns over their vulnerability to the Black man. The elder is noticeably amused by the younger man's napping. He, the subject of an older generation of whom a deferential attitude was expected, panders to white perspectives over the younger generation's inferiority. Brooke arranges a very public scene, both in the way his subjects are posed, and the trope he chooses to set forth. The figures face the audience as if on a stage. They are being offered up for our inspection, and the spotlighted man, the expected authority figure of this household, proves unworthy of the rights ostensibly enabled by citizenship. This entire production is arranged in a domestic space, convoluting any notion of what is public and what is private. External discourse that flags idleness as a signifier of the Black man's unsuitability for citizenship prohibits the middle-aged man from being read merely as a person at leisure in front of his home. Brooke forces the Black subject into a larger, racially charged context, breaking up the conventions of genre painting's established form by casting the seemingly quotidian into the spectacular.

The Banjo as an Object of Slavery Nostalgia

Brooke moves George Washington and the Brown family to the interior of a home to model for A Pastoral Visit (Figure 3), in which racial trope, now the banjo, makes another conspicuous appearance. The elder man sits at the head of a dining table in clerical garb; he has taken on the role of a pastor. He ministers to the younger man, who sits at the foregrounded side of the table and listens intently. A small girl, barefoot and in a faded dress, leans on the younger man's leg. A banjo, perhaps just put down, occupies the seat next to him. It is unsophisticated and made of plain wood: distinctive against the trends of the period. The banjo saw great reform in perception and physical appearance in the late nineteenth century. Banjo music and playing had become a fad among white members of high society, marking a shift from its exclusive association with Black people and minstrelsy. Compared to modernized, 'civilized' banjos made of various types of metals and with higher string pitches, old-style banjos like the one Brooke pictures were "crude plantation [devices]."[7]

Figure 3. Richard Norris Brooke, *A Pastoral Visit*, 1881, oil on canvas, 119.38 x 167.16 cm. Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington.

Just as Brooke illuminates the middle-aged man in *A Dog Swamp* to fix the audience's attention to his contemptible loafing, Brooke beckons the audience to behold this relic. As if the banjo's placement in the center of the canvas was not enough to capture our gaze, Brooke positions a subject in front of it, her body directly angled toward the instrument's body. Given that this particular type of banjo is marked within the American public consciousness as an object of the plantation locale, Brooke knowingly suffuses his work with a potent slavery nostalgia. Like its partner piece *A Dog Swamp*, *A Pastoral Visit* endeavors to lay white anxiety over a shifting sociopolitical atmosphere to rest. In this instance, Brooke is directly attaching his Black subjects to slavery, an era during which their status as objects was legally fixed. It is this very attachment that disrupts the privateness of the depicted domestic space and transforms the work into spectacle.

Thomas Eakins's *The Dancing Lesson* (1878) (Figure 4) also interacts with politics surrounding the banjo, as the painter's Black subjects are engaged in a musical performance at their home. The top hat and cane subtly placed upon a chair in the background signal that this is perhaps a minstrel performance. A framed photograph of Abraham Lincoln and his son Tad reading a book hangs in the top left corner. Though barely visible, it plainly signals the work's central theme of father-son dynamics. Art historian Alan Braddock contends that this is "mixed" signaling; Eakins presents an "educational program of two unequal spheres."[8] In the Lincoln household, there is an apparent connection between learning and literacy. Eakins represents Black education in this household, not as learning to read, but as learning to perform. The youngest figure is the learning dancer, his bare legs visible as he prances. An adolescent sits opposite him, strumming a banjo. An elder father figure watches the child dance with a scrutinizing gaze. Though in a private space, Eakins's subjects seem to be aware that their actions are being evaluated and operate as if they are under high stakes. They are performing, and if there is any question as to whom this performance is for, the bare staginess of the room is, without doubt, a clue. The photograph of the Lincolns in the corner is an attempt by Eakins to shape the image into one that reflects an intimate and affectionate bond between father and sons, but it is unsuccessful. This interaction is, in fact, a stiff and public production for audience consumption.

Figure 4. Thomas Eakins, *The Dancing Lesson*, 1878, watercolor on off-white wove paper, 45.9 x 57.3 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Fletcher Fund, 1925.

Potential in Privateness

Little Ida and works within the same artistic landscape, drawing upon white racial discourse and the incompleteness of Black citizenship, maintain the unfathomableness of the free Black subject and eschew any opportunity to represent him separate from this discourse (What else could have driven Charles Calverley to add his inscription onto *Little Ida*? What else could have driven Richard Norris Brooke to rely on a white conception of Black privateness when he knew his Black models personally?). Artists concerned with actually representing Black private life do not construct their work as translative representations of public discourse, but as visionary representations, imagining a Black subjecthood that does not yet exist within the mind of the white nineteenth-century viewer.

Such is true for Black genre painter Henry Ossawa Tanner's *The Banjo Lesson* (1893). If scenes like Eakins's *The Dancing Lesson* are stage-lit, we squint to view *The Banjo Lesson* through a peephole. In a dimly lit room, a boy learns the banjo on an elder's lap. Both hold the fretboard and focus on the younger's strumming, the elder perhaps waiting to voice a piece of guidance on technique. While still a relic reminiscent of slavery, the banjo is not the intended centerpiece of the work. The banjo in this representation, argues Albert Boime, "should be read not simply as a prop or stereotyped accessory but as a metonym for education generally."[9] *The Banjo Lesson*, unlike the ineffectually placed Lincoln photograph in *The Dancing Lesson*, works to reflect a pedagogical interaction unconcerned with an audience. While we may discuss Tanner's ability to preserve or more reliably represent the private as a result of his unique identity as a Black genre painter in the nineteenth century, I am less interested in his identity than I am in his ability to work the genre form as a medium of potential. If Calverley is inviting the presumably white viewer of *Little Ida* to behold blackness, defined and made visual, Tanner is inviting the curious viewer to behold that which is absent from the white American public consciousness: Black life and Black subjecthood, plain and unspectacular.

Endnotes

1 Lauretta Dimmick, Donna J. Hassler, and Thayer Tolles, *American Sculpture in the Metropolitan Museum of Art: A Catalogue of Works by Artists Born Before 1865*, (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1999), 160–61.

2 Charmaine A. Nelson, "White Marble, Black Bodies and the Fear of the Invisible Negro: Signifying Blackness in Mid-Nineteenth Century Neoclassical Sculpture," *RACAR: Revue d'art Canadienne / Canadian Art Review* 27, no. 1/2 (2000): 88. Wilson argues that in order to be legible to a white nineteenth-century audience, Black female subjects depicted in white marble were made abject subjects. Artists mark the Black woman's 'otherness,' either through representing her disenfranchisement or sexuality, to clarify the ideological paradox of a 'white negro body.'

3 See Lacey Baradel, *Mobility and Identity in the U.S. Genre Painting: Painting at the Threshold*, (New York: Routledge, 2021) and Martin A. Berger, Sight Unseen: Whiteness and American Visual Culture (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

4 Richard Norris Brook, "The Pastoral Visit," (1880), 26, quoted in Walt H. Sirene, *Richard Norris Brooke—Artist—Record of Work*, (Warrenton: Fauquier Historical Society, 2020), 37.

5 Guy C. McElroy, *Facing History: The Black Image in American Art 1710–1940*, (San Francisco: Bedford Arts, 1990), 93.

6 Berger, 12.

7 Karen Elizabeth Linn, "The 'Elevation' of the Banjo in Late Nineteenth-Century America," *American Music* 8 no. 4 (1990): 448.

8 Alan C. Braddock, "Eakins, Race, and Ethnographic Ambivalence," *Winterthur Portfolio* 33, no. 2/3 (1998): 146.

9 Albert Boime, "Henry Ossawa Tanner's Subversion of Genre," *The Art Bulletin* 75, no.3 (1993): 423.

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"The Freedman's Bureau! An agency to keep the Negro in idleness at the expense of the white man. Twice vetoed by the President, and made a law by Congress. Support Congress & you support the Negro Sustain the President & you protect the white man," 1866. From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2008661698.

The Valorisation of the Heterosexual Family Unit: Undoing and Challenging the Imagined Community in Chinelo Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees* (2015)

Xuma Mabunda, *University of the Witwatersrand*

Xuma Mabunda is an honors student at the University of the Witwatersrand studying towards a joint honors degree in African Literature and Publishing Studies. Her research interests are in the area of Sexuality, Gender and Masculinity Studies. In the near future, she plans on exploring the concept of epistemology and its many violences from the level of the personal, to patriarchal and otherwise political systems.

Abstract

When it comes to queerness as it relates to Africa, what has found a resting place at the heart of its grappling with homophobia has been the idea of the family unit. In this paper, I consider the work of Chinelo Okparanta in her writing of queer narratives as a way of speaking against this imposition of structure within the nuclear family that exists as a large characteristic of the nation. I am primarily concerned with the motivations behind this specific structure and the harmful ways it performs the act of othering and isolating bodies that do not follow it. The idea of the heterosexual family unit is challenged and in this way; reinscribed into the African consciousness and imaginary through the understanding of alternative and complex modes of being as well the embracing of them.

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Introduction

"Man and wife, the Bible said. It was a nice thought, but only in the limited way that theoretical things often are" (Okparanta, 258). Post-colonially, many African countries, such as Nigeria and Uganda, have exhibited a large preoccupation with the heterosexual family unit, which has problematised the African narrative in various ways, thus exposing its limitations and contradictions. Not only have these countries used the family unit as a weapon to determine who does and does not belong, but their tight grip on the family unit has reflected the work of patriarchal powers as another avenue used to hold onto their control over women as well. This has called for a need to reconfigure the family unit structure by various writers of African literature. By focusing on the reconfiguration of the nuclear or heteronormative family explored in Chinelo Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees* (2015) as a foundational text, in this paper I aim to explore the ways in which queerness offers new alternatives into the African consciousness and imaginary. By challenging the heteronormative family unit, I will also shed light on the ways in which I believe this idea is valorised by African social and political structures in order to solidify ideas around the nation as well as the post-colonial preoccupation of contributing to it for the advancement of an imagined community.

Background

Fresh out from under the thumb of colonialism, many countries across the African continent had to deal with the remnants of a fragmented national identity. To remedy this, they began being attracted to the idea of African nationalism for its potential to restore the nation. In this process, heterosexual relationships became one of the driving forces of a project African leaders believed would help restore Africa to its 'former glory' through a reclaiming of its identity and stature (Ndijo 626). These relationships were "imagined as an efficient means of achieving the nationalist project to increase the number of the African population. All this sexual governmentality has led over time, to the authoritarian heterosexualization of African sexuality by post-colonial nationalist leaders" (Ndijo, 626). Preoccupied with the idea of the nation and its reconstruction within what is believed to be authentic to Africanness, any entity that did not have the capacity for reproduction threatened this project supported by these leaders and was therefore immediately othered and isolated. This repression of other sexualities created social and political borders around what the nation should look like. It is important to note that these borders were quite solid and unwavering and without any chances for the acceptance or inclusion of any entity that is not the heterosexual married couple. The backbone of the nation is the heteronormative family unit. This belief made it easy for this specific unit to be seen as the most superior when compared to other family structures such as those founded upon queer desire. Many of those in power valorised it in this way. This did not leave much room for other alternatives or choices due to the existence of this set-up which existed at the core of the nationalist project. This issue has been reflected in various societies across the African continent, the Nigerian society being among them.

The Novel

The Nigerian society in Okparanta's novel *Under the Udala Trees* reflects the insecurities felt surrounding sexualities that deviated from the supposed norm; this society views same-sex relationships as an object of scandal and

they are largely contested on the basis of religion and politics. The novel is centred upon the narrative of a young queer girl, Ijeoma. Living in a society that deems queerness as an immoral and illegal practice, she grapples with forming her identity as a young queer woman to the point where she marries a man, not out of love or attraction, but as an act of societal conformity. Set in the 1960s and commenting on the Nigerian Biafran war (1967–1970), this novel is significant due to the ways in which it influenced and shaped national identities at a time when Nigeria was in its infancy stage of independence. During this time there was a lot of turmoil and chaos within the nation, causing much confusion and mixed feelings surrounding the many categories it has always embraced and believed to be of importance as well as its negotiations of them. These categories are represented in the book mainly by ordinary citizens (such as the nuclear family), the government, and society at large. They include normal heteronormative desire, family, and ethnicity, which become foundational to the idea of the nation due to their importance. However, the introduction of lesbian desire in the novel through the protagonist's relationship with women challenges these foundational categories in various ways. Although this is done significantly, it is important to note that these relationships are characterised by various forms of resistance; both internal and external.

We see this kind of resistance through Ijeoma's mother's repeated emphasis on the expected structures of marriage: man and wife with no room for anything else-" Marriage is for everyone! Remember a woman without a man is hardly a woman at all" (Okparanta, 223). This society believes queerness to disturb the supposed natural order of things as related to the face of nation-building. With this, lesbian desire *queers* this idea surrounding the nation by adding a different category to the dimensions of sexuality, in its own realm of expression. Seeing that the word 'queer' is an umbrella term for sexual identities that do not fall under the labels of heterosexuality or cisgendering as a way of accommodating various pathways of sexual desire and expression, I use the term as a verb. This allows us to understand the idea of 'queering,' a subject through the ways in which it offers different ways of engagement that embrace alternative modes of being and thinking about subjects holistically through sexuality.

The normative ideas around sexuality that had been carried and embraced by the nation are being *queered* through the challenging of their core tenets. Here, Okparanta is offering alternative and new forms of sexuality as well as the negotiation of desire through Ijoeoma's decision to leave her husband for a woman and create her own kind of family structure with her as they raise her daughter together. Here, she chooses a partner for herself over who society has chosen for her initially. Desire is no longer expected to be packaged in a certain way or to be exercised by people of a particular gender that speaks to male sexual supremacy, but has become subverted. This subversion is propelled by re-established sexual conventions.

Blackness has always been tied to heteronormative tropes and with this, comes the expectation of reproduction. Basile Ndijo refers to this ideological and racialised framework as: "the essentialization and racialisation of the sexuality of native Africans, generally imagined as fundamentally different from the Western *ars erotica*" (610). From this, Ndijo makes it clear that for white people, sex is a form of artistic love-making. For black people, it is more erotic and laborious and from this specific racialised act, there must emerge children. This can be linked back to the event of slave masters forcefully having children with their female slaves and therefore adding to their work capital, or possessions. This is a genealogical imperative that has been made synonymous with the black female body and has far extended itself to the postcolonial era where the responsibility or obligation towards the nation was one of reproduction carried by women, hence the scrutiny placed on their bodies and what they do: "Historically, black women's bodies have often been the subject of voyeuristic practice" (Lewis, 15). According to the nationalist project, sex was meant for reproduction and nothing else. Heteronormative tropes surrounding blackness are therefore questioned by reconfiguring the ideas surrounding sex and the reproductive expectation of it which has been challenged by sexual relations, such as non-heteronormative sex that cannot yield to new members of the nation.

Not only do political structures promote heteronormative tropes of sexuality, they also forcibly prescribe them onto the nation. African leaders valorise the heteronormative family unit to the point of some believing that it ought to be protected from entities that could threaten its growth and benefit to the nation: "The heterosexualisation project of nation building is further facilitated through legislation or re-legislation (Nigeria—same-sex marriage bill, Uganda-anti-homosexuality bill). Heterosexuality is consolidated as the only accepted basis for citizenship and the establishing/re-establishing of order and preventing / ending chaos brought about by sexual/social deviancy of the queer imposition" (Ekine, 81). These leaders have believed these entities to be queer people as well as "men who sleep with men and women who sleep with women" (Macharia, 286). They are regarded as enemies of the nation whose sexuality or sexual choices disrupt the neat binary upon which the nation rests. Representing patriarchal structures, they have deemed the kind of sex they have wasteful because it does not yield to something the nation can grab a hold of and claim as its own or benefit from.

However, I argue that sex can still be sex without anything coming out from it. This enables one to look at blackness "without anchoring it to a genealogical imperative" (Macharia, 4). *Under the Udala Trees* generates new forms of normativity through the reconfiguration of what lies at the basis of the family unit; heteronormative sex and thus undermines reasons for its valorisation through its creation of alternatives.

Ijeoma's relationship with her lover, Ndidi, *queers* the family set-up in various ways. Firstly, when she leaves her loveless marriage with her husband, Chibundu, and gets back together with Ndidi, we see her choosing alternative modes of being within the framework of love and family. The decision she makes disrupts the ideal family set-up which is founded upon heteronormative expectations of man and woman being together. She not only splits up her family when she leaves Chibundu, but further complicates this construction of family by leaving him to be with a woman. Here, layers of decisions are made which unsettle the heteronormative family unit as well as the expectation of its eternal life and expansion. When she and Ndidi have gotten back together, they become life partners and raise Ijeoma's daughter, Chidinma, together.

According to heteronormative ideals and the expectations of their society, a child is raised by both parents. In the event of this not being possible with the end of the parents' relationship, an alternative father figure would be introduced in the form of a stepfather. Ndidi is however only Ijeoma's lover and a woman thus ruling out this idea of an alternative father figure within the household. Chidinma is not raised by both her father and mother, but by two mothers. Through this, Ijeoma and Ndidi's lesbian desire for one another *queers* the idea of family because of the new dynamics the relationship creates within the family set-up. Their relationship fosters a different 'face' to the look of family and seemingly rejects that of normative ideals that are largely founded upon the genealogical imperative previously discussed. Dobrota Pucherova reinforces this: "Thematically, this re-signification of Nigerian femininity in twenty-first-century queer Nigerian fiction is not complete without redefining the traditional, nuclear African family and heterocisnormative African society" (109). Chidimna is raised by two mothers as well as her grandmother. This is a new family futurity she is living within. It is important that the transference of queer futurity happens among women in order to introduce a different view of family under queerness. It complicates the idea of motherhood which the reconstruction of the nation relies upon. Motherhood forms an integral part of the novel through the ways in which Okparanta questions the value it has been given in society.

The title of the novel, *Under the Udala Trees*, makes reference to a very famous Nigerian folktale. According to this folktale, it is believed that young girls should sit under an udala tree and count to 100 as a way of beckoning fertility into their lives and thereby be able to produce many children for their husbands. Ironically, Ijeoma and Amina both meet each other one day when Ijeoma is seated under the tree and later on, they become lovers. Suppose Ijeoma believed in this folktale and the workings behind the udala tree, she can do nothing with her fertility while in a relationship with another woman. Surrounding the idea of family is that of fertility; one's ability to produce children. By being in a relationship, they cannot have a child together (in this age where reproductive technology has not yet advanced), which poses a threat to the conditions and aspirations of the idea of family. Here, we witness *a queering* of these sensibilities and discourses of feminism and motherhood. On this, Adriana Navas writes: "On the contrary, lesbian desires and needs are fully recognised and explored in contemporary African fictional works, and lesbian characters may as well oppose the idea of aligning their personal desires and aspirations with the making of a conventional family" (117). When Ijeoma does have a child, she chooses the type of family dynamic she would like to adopt and raises her child within a family set-up that will not enable the conception of more children. These two events within the novel are founded upon lesbian desire as well as what comes within this package which ultimately *queers* the idea of family by introducing other faces to it and other ways of negotiating with it. Challenging a core tenet of the nuclear family such as motherhood is important due to the ways this sets up the nation to reconsider its national values that exist from its core.

Conclusion

The idea of the nuclear family or the imagined family has been problematic due to the advancement it has allowed and embraced over the decades within Africa. Existing at the core of the imagined community, it has demarcated which bodies are deemed acceptable and which are thrown to the outskirts of society based on the basic expectation of reproduction. This has manifested in unspeakable rejection and the othering of individuals that do not fit into the binaries created by this structure. Novels such as *Under the Udala Trees* have been one of many attempts at the challenging and reconfiguration of this structure as well as the exposure of the various pitfalls and inconsistencies that have accompanied it. This family unit has been valorized for the kinds of meanings African leaders have been able to attach to it, as well as what they believe it has made possible for the rebirth of many nation states. However, an important aspect has been ignored—the limitation it presents concerning representation. This idea, so

tightly hung onto, represses any ideas and possibilities of the multiplicity that surrounds sexual desire, sexual expression, pleasure as well as the nuances of the African narrative, such that its ignorance has failed to affirm, but instead continues to wash down and oppose.

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Through the Pages: Embarking on the Path of *Conocimiento* in the Young Adult Novel *Summer of the Mariposas* by Guadalupe Garcia McCall

Guadalupe Martinez, *CUNY Queens College*

Guadalupe Martinez (she/her) is a senior at CUNY Queens College and is currently pursuing a major in English and minoring in both Spanish and History. She is deeply interested in Latinx Literature, Chicana Literature, Young Adult Literature, and Third World Feminism. In addition to being a Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellow, she is part of The Leadership Alliance Summer Research Early Identification Program and an alum of The Rutgers English Diversity Institute (REDI).

In this paper, I focus on how Guadalupe Garcia McCall, award-winning author of several young adult novels, reinvents La Llorona in her novel *Summer of the Mariposas* (2012), as a woman of discord who ruptures the status quo and creates change. In McCall's reappropriation of the story, the myth of La Llorona ceases to be a passive victim and emerges as a symbol of resistance against misogyny. My analysis of McCall's work will be based on a discussion of Gloria Anzaldúa's theory of *conocimiento*. According to Anzaldúa, there are seven stages of higher consciousness when processing information that challenges our set of beliefs. By reading McCall through the lenses of Anzaldúa, I will show how McCall's text provides a roadmap through which to retell or confront one's own history: La Lorona's wailing becomes a symbol of female empowerment and the drowning of her children, an act of liberation from traditional truths. By inserting her work firmly within the structure of La Llorona, Garcia McCall not only creates a new myth of female emancipation, but also reclaims Mexican ancestry for young Mexican Americans.

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In 2002, Gloria Anzaldúa and AnaLouise Keating published the anthology *This Bridge We Call Home* with the goal of creating a space where women of color could express a new vision of consciousness for the twenty-first century. The closing chapter "now let us shift . . . the path of conocimiento . . . inner work, public acts" written by Anzaldúa, introduces readers to the theory of *conocimiento* and gives a first-hand account of Anzaldúa's journey to achieving *conocimiento*. As she goes on to explain, "often nature provokes un 'aja' or 'conocimiento' one that guides your feet along the path, gives you the ánimo to dedicate yourself to transforming perceptions of reality and thus the conditions of life" (Anzaldúa 540). An example of this moment takes places in the first chapter of the young adult novel, *Summer of the Mariposas* (2012) written by Guadalupe Garcia McCall, in which five Chicana sisters find a corpse in a pond that has served as a safe haven for them. The chapter closes with:

> "It was a magical time, full of dreaminess and charm, a time to watch the mariposas emerge out of their cocoons, gather their courage, and take flight while we floated faceup in the water. And that's exactly what we were doing the morning the body of a dead man drifted into our swimming haven" (McCall 4).

This scene becomes the catalyst that leads to several other moments where McCall positions her protagonists to question what they know as the truth, where a different version of history can be told and reclaimed. At its core, *conocimiento* is about challenging oppressive epistemologies by acting on different ways of knowing. There are seven stages in the path of *conocimiento*, but Anzaldúa explains that *conocimiento* is never a linear process. An individual may jump from one stage to another on any given day or throughout a lifetime.

In what follows, I argue that this novel can be read as a road map of all the different stages to *conocimiento*, specifically through the rewriting of La Virgen de Guadalupe, La Llorona, and the presence of a still thriving Tenochtitlan. Furthermore, *Summer of the Mariposas* shows the ways in which McCall herself expands the theory of *conocimiento* by having La Llorona serve as both the confronter of the truth and a guide through each stage in the path to *conocimiento*. Throughout the book the five sisters each experience different stages of *conocimiento*, but it's the oldest sister Odilia who gets to experience all seven stages. By the end, the sisters create a different version of history for a new generation of matriarchal storytelling.

According to Anzaldúa, the first stage in the process of achieving *conocimiento* is the *arrebato*. The *arrebato* is a moment of trauma. More specifically through "a violent attack, rift with a loved one, illness, death in the family, betrayal, systematic racism, and marginalization" (Anzaldúa 546). The sisters experience a multitude of *arrebatos*; the first one is when their father leaves them without any explanation. Their father's abandonment changes the dynamic of

their family. Odilia becomes the stand-in mother in the household while their actual mother works full-time trying to make ends meet. About this stage Anzaldúa states "cada arrebatada (snatching) turns your world upside down and cracks the walls of your reality, resulting in a great sense of grief . . . leaving behind dreams, hopes, and goals. You are no longer who you used to be . . . letting go of former positions, you feel like an orphan, abandoned by all that's familiar" (547). Odilia and her sisters can be classified as orphans because there's no parental figure to take care of them. This becomes more evident when the national news declares them as missing children during their adventures in Mexico.

The opening chapter, when the sister find the corpse in the pond, is another example of an *arrebato*. Odilia believes that due to the systematic racism within the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, customs agents would not take care of the body. She remembers hearing from neighbors who "whispered about unclaimed bodies in sacks and shallow unmarked graves" (McCall 12). This confrontation with the systematic racism leads the sisters to return the corpse themselves to Mexico. In this moment the sisters have embarked on the path of *conocimiento* and this is one of many confrontations that the sister will have to face.

While all of this is going on, Odilia thinks she sees La Llorona. In most traditional folk versions of La Llorona she takes children away from their parents if they either do not behave or are out late at night. McCall reverses this familiar pattern of La Llorona and she only becomes visible to kids who come from Aztec bloodlines and have a kind heart. By doing this, McCall repositions La Llorona as a trusted figure women can look to for guidance. Previously she had been used "to socialize women into traditional roles, control their conduct, and define what constitutes Mexican femininity" (Blake 49). By reclaiming La Llorona's ancestry, McCall removes her from a Western, male-dominated worldview and restores her within Aztec culture to create an empowered female personage for a new generation of Chicanxs. Most importantly, La Llorona becomes a guide for the Garza sisters while they undergo the different stages of *conocimiento*. McCall expands on Anzaldúa's theory of *conocimiento* by suggesting that one does not have to go through the different stages alone, but La Llorona will be there to provide you with clarification.

La Virgen de Guadalupe is another figure that gives Odilia a different version of history. McCall establishes a positive relationship between La Llorona and La Virgen when usually in Mexican culture they are seen in opposition of each other. Traditionally, La Llorona was used as an example of what happens when women do not confine themselves to their traditional roles, they're forever condemned and seen as careless mothers, versus La Virgen de Guadalupe who sets the standard for what it means to be the perfect woman and mother. In addition, McCall establishes a genealogy for La Virgen that gives her ancestral ties to Tonantzin, the Goddess of Sustenance. Tonantzin was an Aztec mother goddess who later became associated with the image of the Virgin Mary during the spread of Christianity after the fall of Tenochtitlan (the capital city of the Aztec Empire). At the beginning Odilia cannot seem to accept this truth and only calls the goddess La Virgen, but towards the end of comes to accept this truth and switches between La Virgen and Tonantzin when calling on Tonantzin.

La Llorona appears in the novel every time Odilia looks for guidance or needs help getting out of a predicament. Their relationship creates an invisible realm where La Llorona can tell her version of the story while also allowing Odilia to question the basic ideas she inherited from her family. This invisible realm that the two characters mirrors, Anzaldúa's *nepantla* stage—the second stage in the *conocimiento* path. The *nepantla* stage can be seen as "the site of transformation, the place where different perspectives come into conflict and where you question the basic ideas, tenets, and identities inherited from your family, your education, and your different cultures" (Anzaldúa 548). In the novel, La Llorona makes her first appearance to Odilia by putting her on trial to see if she would save her children from falling off a cliff into the Rio Grande. As a result, Odilia jumps as well into the Rio Grande trying to save the two children but ends up drowning with them:

> The roar and chilliness of the dark water awakened my senses, and my heart constricted in my chest as I came up for air. I had to fight the undercurrent to keep from being swept away. But my efforts were in vain. The water rose over my head and swirled around me like a whirlpool, dragging me deeper and deeper. . . . My lungs ached with the pressure of unreleased air (McCall 47).

Water plays an important role in the tale of La Llorona for two important reasons: she drowns her children in a river, and she is forever condemned to cry as she searches for her children. Cultural anthropologist and theorist Jose Limon has argued that inscribed within the La Llorona narrative is the possibility of her recovering her lost children "because their death by water is ambiguous, for it is also the water of rebirth" (426). The possibility of rebirth is crucial because it allows for McCall and other Chicanxs writers to rewrite La Llorona's story.

By positioning Odilia to drown alongside La Llorona's children, McCall is foreshadowing Odilia's own rebirth of her cultural history and identity. Odilia's first confrontation with her cultural history is when La Llorona

tells her side of the story. As Chicana scholar Christina Herrera states, "La Llorona speaks as a way to model to Odilia the need to possess language to refute patriarchy . . . learning that women's stories are silenced and revised to fit within a system of patriarchy" (103). Odilia does not fully understand this until the middle of the book. Even in their first encounter, Odilia's preconceived ideals come to the surface—right away fear enters her body, she's unable to speak, not wanting to mistake the woman that stands in front of her as La Llorona because she's aware of the negativity around being associated with that name. Lastly, she is aware of an escape route just in case La Llorona does try to take her.

Unconsciously, Odilia drags herself back into the *nepantla* stage when these two beliefs compete against each other to win her over. As Anzaldúa explains "you can't stand living according to the old terms—yesterday's mode of consciousness pinches like an outgrown shoe. . . . Even as you listen to the old consciousness's death rattle, you continue defending its mythology of who you were and what your world looked like . . . just when you're ready to move you find yourself resisting the changes" (549). In this sense, Odilia hears of a counter history defined by an empowered female personage, but there's still a struggle within herself to accept it. The main reason being that what she knew of her culture before meeting La Llorona had been passed down from her mother, and she's not yet willing to let go of those ideas. This leads her into the third stage in the path of *conocimiento*—the *Coatlicue* state.

Critics often describe the *Coatlicue* state as a "call for action." While Odilia and her sisters never actually experience depression there is one scene in the book that's haughtily similar to it. Anzaldúa describes this stage as "feeling helpless, you draft the script of victimization and retreat from the world, withdraw from your body, losing kinesthetic consciousness" and "to escape emotional pain you indulge in addictions. These respites from reality allow you to feel at one with yourself and the world" (550). This happens when the sisters meet Cecilia who soothes them with kind words and sweets in order to make them forget about their journey of learning more about their cultural heritage and fully accepting this new version. The more sweets that the sisters eat the easier it becomes for them to remove themselves from the exhaustion and emotional pain of fighting with each other on trying to figure out whose side of the story to believe. Odilia confesses to herself that "maybe it was just us, because we sat there and ate every last petit four offer to us as we looked guilty at each other for eating so greedily while everyone worried about us back home . . . all I could think is that we were so emotionally drained from listening to the news, so we drifted into the deliciously dreamy stage before falling completely asleep" (McCall 139). A small part of Odilia is aware that staying with Cecilia is not a permanent solution, but she continues to indulge in this addiction of eating sweets because it helps her forget about the journey that awaits her and her sisters. When Odilia is finally able to admit this to herself, she prays to La Llorona for help. She says "'La Llorona?' I called out in a breathless voice. 'Can you hear me, Llorona? Something's wrong. Llorona. . . please. . . help me'" (141). This is how she is able to come out of the *Coatlicue* state and enter into the fourth stage—*El compromiso*.

Gloria Anzaldúa describes *El compromiso* as "the bridge (boundary between the world you've just left and the one ahead) is a barrier and a point of transformation. By crossing, you are inviting a turning point, initiat[ing] a change . . . trusting that your inner authority will carry across the critical threshold" (557). When La Llorona answers Odilia call for help, she reminders her to have faith in herself and tells her "you come from a long line of curanderas, healers of people. When the time come, you'll know exactly what to do . . ." (McCall 148). This allows Odilia to remember that her grandmother taught her the properties that different herbs hold. Drinking the yerbabuena (a plant from the mint family) becomes the push that Odilia needs to cross the bridge and accept the counter history that La Llorona has present her with. Anzaldúa writes that "you must make the leap alone and of your own will" (557), but that's not for Odilia whose needs La Llorona to be able to make the crossing.

By the end of the novel, Odilia and her sisters achieve *conocimiento* by accepting and believing in a new version of La Llorona that is wise, empowering, trustable, and indigenous. Odilia takes this information and shares it with her mother and grandmother altering the discord of future matriarchal storytelling. By viewing *Summer of the Mariposas* as roadmap to the different stages in the path of *conocimiento* it shows the ways in which the theory of *conocimiento* can happen at any stage of one's life—whether that's middle childhood (6–12), adolescence, or adulthood. McCall is able to introduce young adults to a practice that allows them to take in and contemplate the information that their being given from higher authority or even formal education.

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"This Is a Place of Healing": Reclaiming the Black Agrarian Tradition in Northeast Ohio through the Radical Interior of Black Women Farmers

Kai Vera Menafee, *Oberlin College*

Kai Vera Menafee (they/them) is a senior at Oberlin College majoring in Africana Studies and Dance, with minors in Environmental Studies and Education. Originally from Dayton, OH, they are also a published poet and have traveled to Namibia, South Africa, The Gambia, and Senegal to study farming practices, land-based resistance, and postcolonial reparations on the continent of Africa. After graduating, Kai plans to live abroad and work with Black- and Indigenous-led organizations to continue learning about the sacred relationship between farming, gender rights, and environmental justice.

Abstract

The Black agrarian tradition precedes and transcends the history of enslavement or sharecropping in the United States and defines how Black people have cultivated community ethics and sense of identity through farming. Based in interviews with Black women farmers from Northeast Ohio, this project declares the everyday practices of Black women farmers as radical acts of self-making, community-building, and Black agrarian values. Guided by the concept of "Ecowomanism" and feminist ethnographic practices, I argue that in contrast to Black women historically being assumed homemakers and caregivers, Black women's role in agrarian community-building embodies an ecowomanist praxis, which embraces intentional spirituality, healing, and relationality. Further, I argue that this ecowomanist praxis originates from an inner consciousness of self-worth and agency—which I have termed the "radical interior." This is part of a larger oral history project to illuminate the environmental, historical, and cultural landscape of Black agrarianism in the American Midwest in order to restore Black ecological connection and right relationship with the Earth.

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> "When we love the Earth, we are able to love ourselves more fully."
>
> —bell hooks, from *Belonging: A Culture of Place*

Introduction: Legacy of Black Agrarianism Since the Great Migration

During the Great Migration, although Black sharecroppers[1] migrating from the South were leaving behind harsh working conditions and the threat of white supremacist vigilante violence[2], they were also leaving behind the familiar landscape of their homes in the South and brought with them a collective memory of Southern culture, along with robust agricultural knowledge, to northern industrial cities. Because the dominant narrative and depiction of the "American farmer" is most often associated with rural white farmers—i.e. the notable painting, "American Gothic," by Grant Wood—Black women are largely written out of the history of American agriculture.[3] This is why it is crucial to retrace the lives of Black farmers who are women and those of other marginalized genders[4] because of the particular intersection of oppression[5] that they face and the unique potential that they hold for resisting historical erasure.

The historical fact of Black women's agricultural contributions and knowledge[6] in the United States has been unveiling over the past thirty years due to the growing field of Black agrarian scholarship, rooted in a deep tradition of Black community-based story-telling and activism.[7] Contemporary Black women scholars, writers, and food justice activists such as Leah Penniman, Monica White, Dara Cooper, and Ashanté M. Reese have been reclaiming the tradition and prevalence of Black feminism/womanism[8] in Black agrarian history. These authors are revealing the stories of Black women farmers like Civil Rights activist, Fannie Lou Hamer of Freedom Farms and the contemporary Black women-led farming organizations reimagining the vision for Black liberation based on land such as Soul Fire Farm in Grafton, NY or D-Town Farm in Detroit, MI (Penniman 2018; White 2012; White 2018). Despite this growing recognition of Black agrarianism, there has been less research on the experiences of Black women farmers in specifically Ohio, within the context of the Great Migration.[9] Therefore, this essay intentionally engages a feminist ethnographic approach in order to understand how Black women farmers in Northeast Ohio—specifically those who are the children of Black agricultural workers who relocated during the Great Migration—have come to understand their own relationship with land, the environment, and farming.

Methodology and Positionality as Researcher

My research methods for this project include literature review and critical racial, socioeconomic, and geographic analysis, as well as experiential, community-based Participatory-Action-Research (P-A-R) on Black-owned gardens and farms in Northeast Ohio. Through partnerships with community members in primarily Lorain, Oberlin, and Cleveland, OH, I apply a mixed methodology of oral history and ethnographic observation rooted in the practices from the book, *Feminist Ethnography* (Davis & Craven 2016). This includes gathering field notes and audio-recorded interviews to collect Black women farmers' oral histories. Feminist Ethnography upholds the standard feminist teaching that *the personal is political*; for this reason, my interview questions focused on the personal experiences of each narrator and their everyday relationship with the Earth to understand the larger racial, gender-based, socioeconomic, and cultural interactions between community members and their spatial environment.

As an undergraduate student attending an endowed private institution for only four years, building trust is incredibly important to me during the interview process. Therefore, I have dedicated myself to intentionally building a lasting, reciprocal relationship with each oral historian, rooted in consistent communication and care. The institution of research in academia has a history of exploiting nonwhite communities, with little to no consideration of a racial minority group's humanity and agency. However, Black, brown, and Indigenous communities are valuable beyond our pain and do not require academic validation to be considered important. While the history and reality of racial trauma related to farming for Black women are aspects of my research, they are *not* the center. Instead, I am seeking to illuminate how Black women farmers in Northeast Ohio have been able to cultivate community agency and healing against the backdrop of anti-Blackness and white supremacist patriarchal capitalism.

Literature Review: Defining Ecowomanism and the Radical Interior

Building upon Alice Walker's concept of womanism, the term "Ecowomanism"—first used by Shamara Shantu Riley in her 1993 essay, "Ecology Is A Sistah's Issue Too" and expanded upon by scholar, Melanie J. Harris—declares Black women's understanding of self and community as being *connected to*, not separate from, their relationship with the Earth. Alice Walker, the founder of the term, "womanism," posted a transphobic comment in an essay on her personal website in March 2023, but this in no way aligns with how I am using the word "ecowomanism" in this essay and my analytical approach includes the experiences of trans women into my framework of Black environmental connection. In the words of Melanie J. Harris, ecowomanism describes "the interconnection of black women's bodies to the body of the earth" (Harris 2016). Therefore, ecowomanism asserts Black women's connection with the environment as a way of healing from white supremacist patriarchal capitalist violence enacted simultaneously against both Black women and the Earth.

In their collaborative essay, "Womanism as Agrarianism: Black Women Healing Through Innate Agrarian Artistry," Kirtrina Baxter, Dara Cooper, Aleya Fraser, and shakara tyler—four contemporary Black women food justice activists—expand upon the ecowomanist legacy set by Black women farmers, gardeners, seed-/cultural-keepers, and healers. Through the narrative of twelve interviews with Black women farming organizers, the authors discover that Black women's leadership qualities come from a place of "innate" understanding that their life is intrinsically connected to that of the environment and their community (Baxter, Cooper, Fraser & Tyler 2017). The presence of ecowomanism in Black agrarian life is further described in Ashante Reese and Dara Cooper's essay, "Making Spaces Something Like Freedom," as they trace Black feminist/womanist practices within farming spaces such as "relational leadership, responsible stewardship of the earth, and reciprocal caregiving" (Reese & Cooper 2021, 452). The authors argue that these qualities arise from a sense of agency and choice, rather than mere societal expectations of homemaking or community caretaking that have historically been placed onto Black women and matriarchs. Therefore, the role of Black women in becoming leaders in their community is grounded in intention and manifests as radical care for both their community and the Earth.

Rooted in the theoretical framework of ecowomanism, the "radical interior" is a term I have coined to define the everyday decisions and practices that Black women farmers make through the act of simultaneously keeping agricultural practices alive while caring for themselves and their community. The choice of the word "interior" is influenced by Saidiya Hartman's concept of "critical fabulation" and Toni Morrison's essay, "The Site of Memory," which references the "interior life" of enslaved Africans—especially those who were women, trans and gender non-conforming—expunged from archives (Hartman 2008; Morrison 1998). The radical interior encompasses the imaginative power of Black women farmers to create alternative food realities beyond the present system of oppression and exploitation, originating from an inner sense of self-worth and personal agency. Again, influenced by feminist ethnographic methods, the radical interior claims the domestic and emotional inner lives of Black women as a

valuable and valid site of inquiry. In the next section, the radical interior and ecowomanism will be analyzed through the lens of one of the three oral history interviews I have conducted thus far.

Analysis of Interview with Shontae Jackson: "This Is a Place of Healing"

The title of this essay comes from an interview conducted in August 2022 with Ms. Shontae Jackson, the founder of Steel Farm and Gardens in Lorain, OH and daughter of Ms. Sarah Jackson, who grew up as a sharecropper picking 200 bales of cotton in Myrtlewood, AL, and moved to Oberlin, OH during the 1960s. Ms. Shontae shared profound experiences and reflections on being a Black woman farmer and her relationship with land, the environment, and community. When Ms. Shontae founded her farm, Steel Farm and Gardens, she shared that "for 15 years, it's been [her] vision to get property here," meaning this was not a spontaneous decision, but rather meticulous and intentional—envisioning that what she desired for herself and her family would one day be realized (Jackson 2022).

Describing the act of farming and consistently growing food, Ms. Shontae stated that the act of caring for her acreage and placing her hands in the soil makes her feel "rejuvenated." She further explained: "That means that my vision of being an intricate part of change is happening even in the natural [world]." In this reflection, her farm becomes a place of inner and exterior transformation reflected through the consistent attention and cultivation she offers her crops and surrounding environment. She is describing a personal relationship with nature and the Earth—which is most often treated as being inanimate or lifeless, but this could not be further from the truth. The organic matter and energy that exist in soil and the natural world holds life, and in Ms. Shontae's analysis: holds the power to heal.

Ms. Shontae spoke consistently of the power of food to not only feed, but *heal* herself and her community. Her vision was "to create an oasis for us somewhere where we are learning, growing, eating healthy, smiling, laughing, doing art. This garden and farm is not just about food, it's about our whole healing process . . . .This is a place of healing." The "us" she is referring to encompasses not only her direct family, but also the surrounding community in Lorain, OH. This reflects the practices of ecowomanism and Black feminist food organizing, such as "relational leadership," because her vision of cultivating personal health is directly related to wanting to create a healthy environment for the surrounding community (Reese & Cooper 2021).

During the interview, Ms. Shontae referenced her paternal grandmother, Annie Lee, as an important ancestor guiding her desire to farm. Recounting her family's experiences in the South before traveling during the Great Migration, she shared this story about her grandmother:

> "My grandmother Annie Lee, [had] to walk to the store, having to, to be on one side of the street with my dad . . . and wait for 'proper food,' proper food that wasn't even proper. Some of them may be rotten . . . but you know what they did? They took the seeds from that food and created their own gardens from the food that they gave them that was not the best." (Jackson, 2022)

Ms. Shontae's grandmother made the distinct choice to refuse the rotten food available to her family and community at the time, and instead brought those seeds to her home garden and replanted them to create fresh food that was safe for her family to eat. This is an everyday expression of ecowomanism by refusing the white supremacist food system at the time and affirming her own sense of worth and that of her family.

Speaking about her everyday motivation to farm, Ms. Shontae declared, "I believe in healing Mother Earth the best that I can and doing my part so that my great, great, great, great, great great greats can have something to look forward to." Ms. Shontae is describing an explicit sense of responsibility that she feels for taking care of the Earth in order to preserve the longevity of her descendants. She embodies the praxis of ecowomanism by embracing the interdependence between a healthy self, healthy environment, and a healthy community. This sense of protecting her future descendants mirrors the forethought of her grandmother, Annie Lee, taking the seeds of rotten food to make something better for her children: reaching into a future beyond the present conditions of white supremacist capitalism and racism to create an alternate reality of what her family truly deserved. This is at the heart of the "radical interior" in practice: acting upon an inner consciousness of self-worth and agency, rooted in intention, the refusal of oppression, and the ability to transform one's reality.

Conclusion: The Power of the Radical Interior

Despite being excluded from the dominant narrative of farming and agrarian identity in the United States, Black women have not only left an undeniable mark upon the U.S agricultural system, but they have cultivated a community-based ethic of joy, resistance, and interdependence. This has been recorded by Black women scholars and historians employing a feminist ethnographic approach, like Melanie J. Harris, dedicated to making sure these stories do not remain silenced. Ecowomanism and the radical interior rejects, as Harris argues, "normative practices of white supremacy, hierarchical dualism, and patriarchy by

validating and starting with black women's earth stories," which is the lifeforce of this essay (Harris, 2016). The frameworks of ecowomanism and the radical interior provide a way of resisting the ongoing degradation of Black women's humanity that has become normalized in the same way as the degradation of the environment and Earth—exampled in the questioned value of Black women's lives, similar to debates over the validity of climate change.

Although the radical interior is a physically intangible place by definition because it exists within spiritual and emotional reflections in the mind, it holds the power to influence the outcomes of one's reality, shown in Ms. Shontae Jackson's own life. Steel Farm and Gardens is the actualization of a vision created from her internal sense of agency, relationship with nature and commitment to healing: which is where the radical interior blossoms. This is how acknowledging the inner lives of Black farmers who are women and those of other marginalized genders has the power to reclaim the true *herstory* of Black agrarianism and restore the lineage of Black ecowomanist environmental connection.

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Against History: On How Boom Authors Introduced the Latin American Novel to Central Europe[1]

Marcos Padrón-Curet, *Haverford College*

Marcos Padrón-Curet is a Haverford College alumnus who majored in French and Francophone Studies, Spanish, and Romance Languages. Although he has various academic interests including 20th-century art, film, and theatre, most of his academic writing focused on transnational 20th-century Latin-American literature. Marcos is currently a Graduate Scholar of the Embassy of France in the U.S. and an Ampère Scholar at the École Normale Superieure de Lyon, where he is pursuing a Master's in Lettres modernes.

Abstract

This article explains the political and poetical implications Julio Cortázar, Gabriel García Márquez, and Carlos Fuentes's sojourn in Prague in 1968. During the 1960s, Latin American Boom authors cultivated a political novel exploring the cultural diversity of Latin America as it reexamines the historical narratives imposed by Europe. By traveling to Prague, a city that reunites both Eastern and Western European sensibilities, histories, and tragedies, Boom authors introduced Central European writers with an innovative approach to the novel that simultaneously serves as an exploration of folkloric aesthetics and a vehicle for political resistance. Through the novelistic landscape, both Central European and Latin American authors deconstruct the myth of Europe as an ideal and displace their desires onto their geographies and imaginaries.

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In December of 1968, three Latin American authors embarked on a night train from Paris to Prague, crossing the then-divided Germany. Milan Kundera, through the Union of Czech Writers, invited Gabriel García Márquez, Julio Cortázar, and Carlos Fuentes to participate in a cultural program seeking to reinforce the values fostered during the Prague Spring in the face of the Soviet invasion of August. Although this sojourn has been overlooked by Latin American Boom scholars, a deeper understanding of these novelists' politics and poetics unveils how it established a dialogue between intellectuals from peripheric geographies, allowing Boom authors to introduce the Latin American novel into the Central European literary landscape. Considering that this innovative approach to the genre seeks to resist hegemonic national narratives, a nuanced approach to the Czech, and consequently Central European, creative projects of the sixties exposes how Central European novelists dispose of a literary medium to revisit national Histories, dismantling historical discourses enforced by Eastern and Western European hegemonies.

During the 1960s, Gabriel García Márquez, Carlos Fuentes, Mario Vargas Llosa, Julio Cortázar, José Donoso, and other Boom novelists developed an innovative approach to the novel, conceiving it as a landscape to resist European cultural hegemony in Latin America. These authors based their literary movement on Latin American Modernism, which "representou uma ruptura na soberania literária que [Espanha] exercia" (Cândido 152)[2] by rejecting the French aesthetic and stylistic conventions of 19th and early 20th century Latin American authors voluntarily imposed on regional literatures.[3] This approach to the novel sought to authentically represent Latin America for a Latin American audience by reproducing the polyphonies of the region through writing. In "Literatura e subdesenvolvimento," António Cândido explains how the novelistic craft of Boom authors disregard the French Realist novel to produce texts encompassing Latin America's realities while digressing from European conceptions of space, time, and *logic*.[4]

> Descartando o sentimentalismo e a retórica; nutrida de elementos não-realistas, como o absurdo, a magia das situações; ou de técnicas antinaturalistas, como o monólogo interior, a visão simultânea, o escorço, a elipse—ela implica não obstante em aproveitamento do que antes era a própria substância do nativismo, do exotismo e do documentário social. (Cândido 161)[5]

Boom authors employ the novel to ironically mimic the European, anthropological, and exoticizing gaze on Latin America through avant-garde stylistic conventions. The novel thus becomes a cultural product that deconstructs colonial tropes and manifests Latin American worldviews and identities through folkloric perspectives.

As Carlos Fuentes explains in *Valiente mundo nuevo*, the Latin American novel contests the approach not only to literature but to Latin American reality itself.

> La novela [es] un producto cultural que traduce dinámicamente los conflictos de la relación entre el ser propio y el ser ajeno, el individuo y la sociedad, el pasado y el presente, lo contemporáneo y lo histórico, lo acabado y lo inacabado, mediante una constante admisión de lo plural y diverso en el lenguaje y en la vida. (Fuentes 38)[6]

Through the Latin American novel, authors explore modern political concerns and colonial traumas, abandoning the narratives and values Europe assigned to Latin America since the colonization of the region. Novelists excavate and center indigenous, Black, *criollo*, and other historically excluded perspectives on Latin American history that were excluded from the region's canons. As Fuentes explains, the Latin American novel "[da] cabida a su pasado, su presente, sus aspiraciones, su latitud de tradiciones, su heteroglosia: los lenguajes en conflicto—europeos, indígenas, negros, mestizos—del continente" (Fuentes 263).[7] By incorporating marginalized counternarratives, this novel archetype becomes political as it reimagines the aesthetic literary landscape while challenging the long-term cultural, environmental, psychological, physical, and spiritual damages of centuries of extraction and colonization. The Latin American novel thus represents a key element in contending hegemony in national historical narratives.

According to Fuentes, History bestows the Boom novelist with the urge to produce literature that considers both aesthetics and politics, to prevent indigenous, Black, and other marginalized voices from being obliterated by hegemonic European narratives.

> Todo escritor nombra al mundo. Pero el escritor indo-afro-ibero americano ha estado poseído de la urgencia del descubridor: si yo no nombro, nadie nombrará; si yo no escribo, todo será olvidado; si todo es olvidado, dejaremos de ser. [. . .] [N]uestra literatura moderna creó una tradición: la de unir, en vez de separar, los componentes estéticos y políticos; la de ocuparse simultáneamente, del *estado del arte* y el *estado de la ciudad*. (Fuentes 279)[8]

The Latin American novel fuses the region's plurality of worldviews to create a cultural product that is simultaneously political and aesthetic while resisting cultural relationships with Europe that mimic colonialism. As Carlos Fuentes adds in "Milan Kundera: el idilio secreto," the Latin American novel offers "una manera de decir las cosas que de otra manera no podrían ser dichas" (Fuentes 121).[9] It is a vehicle of resistance and recreation of national identities that have been represented through a singular hegemonic narrative when, certainly, they have been nurtured and strengthened by a plurality of voices and experiences since their inception.

When Gabriel García Márquez, Carlos Fuentes, and Julio Cortázar crossed the Iron Curtain in December of 1968, they imported the Latin American novel to Central Europe, which underwent major shifts of national identities during the Cold War. In *Un occident kidnappé*, Milan Kundera explains how, until the First World War, European national identities were based on religious and imperial affiliations. However, during the interwar period, they were based on culture, and after the Second World War, on political and economic models.

> Sur quoi, en effet, repose l'unité de l'Europe? Au Moyen Âge, elle reposa sur la religion commune. Dans les Temps modernes, quand le Dieu médiéval se transforma en *Deus absconditus*, la religion céda la place à la culture [. . .] Or il me semble que dans notre siècle un autre changement arrive, aussi important que celui qui sépare l'époque médiévale des Temps modernes. De même que Dieu céda, jadis sa place à la culture, la culture à son tour cède aujourd'hui la place. Mais à quoi et à qui? [. . .] [À] la politique? (Kundera 66)[10]

After the Second World War, European nations that founded their identities in cultural expressions came to establish new forms of national identities based on two economic and political ideologies: feudal Capitalism and industrial Communism. Europe became divided into West and East. This polarizing model completely disregarded the cultures, sensibilities, histories, and geographies of nations, thus creating hybrid spaces, such as Prague, that share a cultural identity with Western Europe and an economic-political model with Eastern Europe. Milan Kundera remarks that these nations with conflicting identities—Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Eastern Germany, Romania—are geographically located in the center of the continent, thus creating Central Europe, a liminal imaginary landscape that "[est] culturellement à l'Ouest et politiquement à l'Est" (41).[11] Central European nations, as explained by Kundera, oscillate between a cultural and political vacuum that is neither Western or Eastern European, and Central European capitals, such as Prague, exemplify the region's liminality.

As Mariano Siskind describes in *Cosmopolitan Desires*, further than being urban conglomerates, cities represent the trajectories of writers, books, and ideas. Situated in the heart of Europe, Prague represents the intersection of Central, Western, and Eastern European geographies, which grants it a privileged position within the literary European imaginary.[12] Prague symbolizes the displacement of books and authors proceeding from Eastern, Central, and Western European capitals such as Moscow, Budapest, or Paris. The city's cosmopolitanism illustrates, as Kundera remarks, "une image condensée de l'Europe et de sa richesse variée, une petite Europe archi européenne des nations conçue sur la règle: le maximum de diversité sur le minimum d'espace" (Kundera 47).[13] Prague's status as a cultural borderland implies that it suffered from all European tragedies of the 20th century, such as the Shoah and Communist totalitarianism. Having endured foreign political domination from Western (Germany) and Eastern (the Soviet

Republic) Europe, Prague participated in the anti-globalization, anti-hegemonic resistance movement of the year 1968, when Czech president Alexander Dubček adopted state-wide reforms to promote freedom of expression through the arts, de-Sovietization, and international political, cultural, and economic cooperation. In 1968, Prague came to exemplify anti-imperialist ideals for Latin American and Western European politically engaged intellectuals. However, on August 21, 1968, the Armies of Warsaw Pact nations invaded Prague, installing Gustáv Husák as the state's leader and promoting severe Sovietization in the state. The Latin American Boom author's visit to Prague in December 1968 did not occur in a vacuum—the Union of Czech Writers organized it as part of a cultural program to reaffirm Prague's cultural independence. By inviting Gabriel García Márquez, Carlos Fuentes, and Julio Cortázar—three novelists with anti-hegemonic poetics and politics–both Czech and Latin American intellectuals denounce Soviet imperialism while reaffirming a nation's right to write their History. Therefore, through Prague, a city that exemplifies Central European liminality and tragedy, Boom authors introduce their poetic approach to the novel to Central European novelists, enabling them to explore their national History and realities as they confront the narratives imposed by the Soviet Union.[14]

For Milan Kundera and Carlos Fuentes, the poetic aspect of the Latin American novel is pivotal to resisting hegemony, as they conceive poetry as an extension of revolution. In "Milan Kundera: el idilio secreto," Fuentes explains Kundera's approach to the poetic:

> La poesía es el territorio donde toda afirmación se vuelve verdad. La revolución también: es la hermana de la poesía. [. . .] Poesía y revolución son dos absolutos; los jóvenes son "monistas apasionados, mensajeros del absoluto." El poeta y el revolucionario encarnan la unidad del mundo. (Fuentes 134)[15]

Poetry thus becomes synonymous with revolution, the poet, with a revolutionary. The Latin American political approach to the novel, which relies on poetry, inherently renders it a revolutionary intellectual means of resistance. According to Kundera, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez, the most prominent Boom novel, should be considered a poetic exploration of Latin American history. In *Le rideau*, Kundera explains,

> J'ai pensé à l'anathème que le surréalisme avait jeté sur l'art du roman, qu'il avait stigmatisé comme antipoétique, fermé à tout ce qui est imagination libre. Or le roman de García Márquez n'est que de l'imagination libre. L'une des plus grandes œuvres de poésie que je connaisse. (Kundera 90)[16]

This novel freely explores the Latin American cultural landscape without constraining the diegetic world to European aesthetic and *logical* norms. By insisting on the novel's poetic quality, Kundera attributes revolutionary characteristics to *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and recognizes how García Márquez employs the novel to challenge the Latin American historical narrative imposed by Europe. In *Le rideau*, Kundera laments that a novel similar to *One Hundred Years of Solitude* seeking to explain Czech reality through autochthonous Czech imaginaries does not exist. He writes, "peut être un grand roman, aurait-il pu me faire comprendre comment les Tchèques d'alors avaient vécu leur décision. Or un tel roman n'a pas été écrit. Il est des cas où l'absence d'un grand roman est irrémédiable" (Kundera 161).[17] In recognizing the political and artistic significance of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Kundera introduces the Latin American novel into the European canon, as Prague represents a crossroads of European literature and ideas. Belonging to the European canon, the Latin American novel becomes essential to understanding the political landscapes of Central European nations and to resisting the forced identities based on economic-political models.

Besides resisting European aesthetic and historical impositions, the Latin American novel dismantles the notion of Europe as a set of values, morals, and worldviews. Carlos Fuentes suggests that he and Kundera share "una cierta visión de la novela como un elemento indispensable, no sacrificable, de la civilización que podemos poseer juntos un checo y un mexicano" (Fuentes 121).[18] Although it might seem that Central Europe and Latin America do not have a shared history, intellectuals and artists of these two regions conceived Europe as a destiny. After the Second World War, Central European intellectuals recognized they believed in a fallacy. In *Un occident kidnappé*, Kundera recalls how the Hungarian Director of Press broadcast a telegram stating "nous mourrons pour la Hongrie et l'Europe"[19] before being murdered by Red Army in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. For Kundera, this gesture illustrates how Central European nations based their resistance to Sovietization on their *European* identities. He writes, "le sens profond de leur résistance, c'est la défense de leur identité; ou, autrement dit: c'est la défense de leur occidentalité" (Kundera 52).[20] Throughout history, Central European intellectuals and leaders believed in Europe as a symbolic horizon and desire. Similarly to Central European intellectuals who assigned values to Europe, Fuentes explains in *Valiente nuevo mundo* that Latin American nations disregarded their endemic realities to adopt European ones. He explains, "la América independiente negó al pasado, al indio, africano e ibérico, identificado con el retraso denunciado por la Ilustración; adoptó las leyes de [la] civilización" (Fuentes 43).[21] Both Central European and Latin American

intellectuals projected their desires onto Europe, which represented a symbolic horizon representing culture, democracy, progress, history, and heritage. However, Europe was never a destiny.

According to Fuentes, with the Conquest of the Americas Europe erected a Utopia of abundance, where it projected its Renaissance desires, to later destroy it (Fuentes 58). He explains, "entre 1492 y 1640, la población indígena de México y de las Antillas desciende de 25 millones a un millón, y la de América del Sur de tres millones y medio a medio millón. [. . .] La utopía murió" (Fuentes 64).[22] Boom authors reconcile with these traumas beginning in the late fifteenth century by eradicating the region's artistic and ideological dependence on Europe. The novel allows Latin Americans to revisit and deconstruct the region's historical, violent relationship with Europe, the symbolic horizon. However, for Prague and other Central European geographies, Europe constituted a symbolic cultural horizon plagued by nostalgia for the prosperous Interwar period. But, after Auschwitz, Europe cannot represent an ideal; after the Second World War, Europe cannot represent a desire. As Kundera explains in *Un occident kidnappé*, referring to the *tragedy* of Central Europe, "sa vraie tragédie n'est donc pas la Russie, mais l'Europe. [. . .] Derrière le rideau de fer, il ne se doutait pas que les temps ont changé et qu'en Europe l'Europe n'est plus ressentie comme valeur" (Kundera 77).[23]

In 1968, Boom writers imported the Latin American novel to Central Europe on a trip to Prague, where they engaged with literature as a weapon against imperialism. Their engagement in Prague, a European city, nuances their anti-hegemonic engagements, as it demonstrates that it does not stem from a political ideology but from humane and artistic ideals. By introducing the Latin American novel to Central Europe, they extend their anti-imperialism to a liminal imaginary geography, allowing its authors to excavate their histories and heal their traumas of the concentration camps and gulags, of Nazis and Soviets, of their tragedies induced by both Western and Eastern Europe.

Endnotes

1 This paper is adapted from a chapter in the thesis *Cosmopolitas contra el imperio: algunos trazos de Praga en la geografía cultural del Boom latinoamericano*, submitted to the Spanish Department at Haverford College in 2023. This thesis seeks to reimagine cross-cultural literary forms of hegemonic resistance by exploring a nearly unknown episode in 20th-century literary historiography.

2 Represented a rupture with the literary hegemony of Spain. [Unless otherwise noted, all translations were made by the author.]

3 Although Modernism represents a rupture with Spanish literary norms, we cannot consider it the first Latin American literary movement born in the region, as it is a reinterpretation of French Modernism. In *La diffusion de la littérature hispano-américaine en France au XXe siècle*, Sylvia Molloy explains how Modernist writers developed a literary relationship between France and Latin America (Molloy 18), drifting away from colonial imaginary relationship with Spain. Writers from the Hispanic Americas came thus to mimic French aesthetics and imaginaries while disregarding their national ones. Previous to the literary Boom in the 1960s, Latin American authors appropriated French literary conventions by producing texts that solely presented European worldviews to European, or European-educated, audiences (Cândido 148). The Boom–which is the literary movement cultivated by the novelists mentioned above–opposed the Modernist approach to literature as its authors consciously wrote novels for a Latin American audience that considered national aesthetics and referents.

4 The term *logic* alludes to *the subjectively perceived natural order of things*. Many Latin American authors adopt Black, *criollo*, and indigenous cosmologies where events that could be considered "supernatural" or "implausible" according to European *logic* are seen as possible and quotidian in a Latin American context. For example, pre-Boom author Alejo Carpentier describes in his novel *El reino de este mundo* how the Orisha deity of war Shangó possessed Mackandal, a Maroon voodoo priest, and sparked the Haitian Revolution. Many Haitians who currently believe in Voodoo understand the Orisha deity prompted the Haitian Revolution. This approach to Haiti's history, which is reappropriated by Carpentier in his novel, is equally valid yet antagonistic to the European *logical* perspective on reality and history.

5 Disregarding sentimentalism and rhetoric; nurtured by neo-realist elements such as the absurd, the magic of everyday situations; or by anti-naturalist techniques such as interior monologues, simultaneous visions, foreshortening, ellipses—[the novel] implies the appropriation of what was previously considered the substance of nativism, exotism and social documentary.

6 The novel [is] a cultural product that vigorously translates the conflicts of the relationship between oneself and the Other, the individual and society, the past and the present, the contemporary and the historical, the finished and unfinished, through a constant admission of the plurality and diversity in language and life.

7 Accommodates its past, present, aspiration, latitude of traditions, its heteroglossia: the languages in conflict—European, Indigenous, Black, Mixed—of the continent.

8 Every writer names the world. But the indo-afro-Iberoamerican writer has been possessed with the urge of the discoverer: if I do not name, no one will name; if I do not write, everything will be forgotten; if everything is forgotten, we cease to be. [. . .] [O]ur modern literature created a tradition: the one that unifies, instead of separating, the aesthetic and political components; the one that is simultaneously preoccupied with the state of art and the state of the city.

9 A way of saying things that could not have been said any other way.

10 What is the base of European unity? During Medieval times, it was based on a common religion. In Modern Times, when the Medieval God became Deus *absconditus*, religion paved the way for culture [. . .] It seems that during our century, another change occurred, as important as the one that separates the Middle Ages from Modern Times. As God gave its place to culture, culture cedes its place. But to what and to whom? [. . .] [To] politics?

11 Is culturally in the West and politically in the East.

12 In "Milan Kundera, el idilio secreto," Carlos Fuentes alludes to various Czech writers such as Rainer Maria Rilke and Franz Werfel, who he considers to have developed a cosmopolitan, European oeuvre that stems from their artistic upbringing in Prague. In his poetry, the Czech poet Rainer Maria Rilke concocted the French, German, Scandinavian, and Russian literary traditions he discovered during his sojourn in cities such as Paris, Munich, and Berlin. Franz Werfel, who lived his life between Prague, Vienna, France, and the United States, proposed the *Weltakademie der Dichter und Denker*–the World Academy of Poets and Thinkers. Through both their poetic and artistic projects, Rilke and Werfel cultivate a vision of literature encompassing the three European imaginaries. This exemplifies why the city of Prague is important to European literature, as its authors digest, in their work, the literary movements from the three European geographies.

[13] A condensed image of Europe and its diverse richness, a small, "arch"-European Europe conceived under the rule: the maximum of diversity in the minimum space.

[14] The trip of the Latin American Boom novelists to Prague allowed them to import their notion of the novel to Central Europe. However, we should note that Yugoslav author Danilo Kiš, who cited Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges as one of his inspirations, utilized his novels to re-write European and Yugoslav history since the 1960s. Kiš, influenced by Borges (who also shaped the aesthetics and politics of the Boom), affirms in *Homo poeticus* (1983) that writers who cultivate "peripheric" literatures are inherently political in their poetics, an approach to literature that resonates with the Boom.

[15] Poetry is the territory where every affirmation becomes reality. So is Revolution: it is the sister of poetry [. . .] Poetry and revolution are two absolutes; the young are composed of "passionate absolutists, messengers of the unequivocal." The poet and the revolutionary incarnate the unity of the world.

[16] I reflected on the anathema Surrealism placed on the art of the novel, which it had stigmatized as antipoetic and as closed to everything that suggested freedom of the imagination. Gabriel García Márquez's novel is nothing but the freedom of imagination. It is one of the greatest works of poetry I have ever read.

[17] Such a novel might have made me understand how the Czechs constructed their nation through their past decisions. But such a novel was not written. This is one of those cases where the absence of a great novel is an irretrievable loss.

[18] A certain vision of the novel as an indispensable, non-sacrificable, element of civilization that only a Czech and a Mexican can possess.

[19] We die for Europe and Hungary.

[20] The profound sense of their resistance is the defense of their identity; alternatively said, the defense of their Western-ness.

[21] The newly independent Americas negated the Indigenous, Black, and Iberian past which was identified as backward during the Enlightenment, adopting the laws of civilization.

[22] Between 1492 and 1640, the indigenous population of Mexico and the Antilles plummeted from 25 million to one million, and that of South America, from three and a half million to half a million [. . .] Utopia died.

[23] Its true tragedy is not Russia, but Europe. [. . .] Behind the Iron Curtain, we did not doubt that times had changed and that in Europe, Europe was not understood as a symbolic value anymore.

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Analyzing Representations of Torture Through Augusto Boal's *Torquemada*

Sally Parampottil, *The University of Texas at Austin*

Sally Parampottil is a junior at The University of Texas at Austin, majoring in History and English and minoring in French and Asian American Studies. In addition to her Mellon Mays project focused on the South Asian diaspora, she has also conducted research on Brazilian protest theater and anti-Critical Race Theory legislation. Sally has experience with archival research, interviews, and oral histories. She plans to apply to a doctoral program in History, American Studies, or Asian American studies.

Abstract

This paper studies the ethics of portraying torture in media through Brazilian theater practitioner Augusto Boal's 1971 play *Torquemada*. An examination of letters and reviews reveals how the play served the director as a victim of state-sponsored torture and as a political activist. Boal, who was imprisoned under Brazil's military regime for subversive materials, actively spoke out against the regime following his release and exile. *Torquemada* serves as a form of testimony to what he experienced, including scenes of torture, which are explicitly acted out on stage. By analyzing Boal's relationship to the subject material of the play, this paper aims to add nuance to discussions about ethical depictions of torture, the pornography of pain, and the effectiveness of theater as political activism.

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> April 30, 1976
>
> Dear Mr. Miller,
>
> I am acused [sic] of being an artist. That's monstrous, that's hideous! But that's the way it is.
>
> —Letter from Augusto Boal to Arthur Miller[1]

Brazilian theater practitioner Augusto Boal was no stranger to monstrosity. Brazil's 1964 military coup, which initiated a 21-year dictatorship, also unleashed a long period of artistic repression. Military members imprisoned, interrogated, tortured, and sometimes even killed political dissidents. This persecution was not limited to protesters on the streets and armed insurgents; many times, artists whose work threatened the regime's image or power were also targeted.[2] Electric shocks and beatings were just a few of the torture methods during harsh interrogations that turned countless students, activists, intellectuals, artists, and civilians into victims.[3] This threat and the strict censorship of multiple forms of art, such as music and movies, limited artists and prompted many to flee.

Boal, an internationally known director, playwright, and activist, was one of these artists. Some experimental forms of theater he practiced placed a target on his back, and in 1971, he was arrested, imprisoned, and tortured by Brazilian military police for his activism and subversive theatrical work.[4] Theater practitioners from around the world, such as Arthur Miller, rallied for his release, which was granted later in 1971. Boal would not return to Brazil until 1986.[5]

After his release from prison, Boal produced two notable works during his exile to Argentina: the 1971 play *Torquemada* and *Theatre of the Oppressed*, which was a book detailing his new school of theater emphasizing audience engagement. *Torquemada* strongly critiques the Brazilian military regime and explicitly depicts some of the human rights abuses that Boal himself experienced.

This three-act play, analyzed in this paper through Boal's self-translated, unpublished, English script (including annotations), is set during the Spanish Inquisition and features the titular Tomás de Torquemada as the Grand Inquisitor and mastermind of the regime. His methods of torture, combined with bourgeois support, created a system of mass oppression that ultimately achieved his goal of complete domination. The inclusion of explicit torture scenes throughout the play, however, places *Torquemada* in the realm of depictions of violence that have come under scrutiny in recent decades. Questions have been raised by scholars and general populations alike on the ethics of portraying torture: whether such a portrayal desensitizes an audience or even sensationalizes the suffering of its subjects. The exploitation and profiting from traumatic experiences from various media (such as video game violence, bloody action scenes, and sensually gory horror movies) have led to debates on whether torture is ethical to portray to a mass audience.[6]

However, some people like Boal consider representations of torture as an effective method of social change, a medium that prompts viewers to act against such injustices happening around them. This essay aims to place Boal's work, specifically *Torquemada*, against these critiques and analyze how his personal connection as a torture victim to the content being portrayed engages with these claims to add nuance to the discussion of representing pain in media.

How can Boal's relationship to the subject material alter the way it might challenge perceptions of exploitation? What ways can theater be used as a cathartic form of expression, and to what degree does Boal utilize this medium? And how did audiences react to this work of political theater (torture scenes and all) in the context of resisting regime?[7]

Catharsis and the Psychology of Trauma-induced Theater

> They are calling me dangerous (peligroso!) and things like that. . . . It doesn't matter. I'm fighting and will go on fighting up to always, ever! I have the right on my side. And that makes me feel good.[8]

Boal wrote this description to Miller in 1976, still in conflict with the Brazilian government years after his release and expulsion. Refusing to renew his passport, the government stranded Boal in Argentina. Their reasoning, according to Boal's lawyer, was that he denounced Brazil's censorship as he traveled abroad. The government claimed that there was "all freedom of expression possible"[9]—an irony not lost on the director. "Something similar to that had already happened when they were torturing me because I had dared to say that in Brazil they used torture against political prisoners," Boal writes. "They could not see that they were torturing me. Now they can't see that they are limitating [sic] my freedom of expression."[10]

This experience of torture was documented in the opening scene of *Torquemada*, featuring the character Playwright. A stand-in for Boal, Playwright suffers through an interrogation where his torturers use the *pau de arara* (parrot's perch) torture method of hanging the victim by their knees and elbows. As the interrogation continues, Playwright is subject to electric shock torture at increasing levels until he is finally released, after which according to the stage directions: "He is on the floor, very bad."[11]

There are chilling similarities between Boal's lived experience and theatrical performance. Joanne Pottlitzer, founder of theater of Latin America Inc., describes meeting Boal, who was suffering from short-term memory loss attributed to electroshock torture.[12] The elements of his testimony to Pottlitzer—the Parrot's Perch, his fingers becoming swollen and blue, being splashed with water and shocked—are present in *Torquemada*'s prologue. Yet there were still critiques of the play, notably Mario Escobar's 1973 review: "*Torquemada*, in Augusto Boal's version, is a kind of 'document' theater, but it is not fulfilling the function it should perform because it is extremely defeatist, and in the end, it gives the feeling that all the Brazilian people allow themselves to be tortured and killed, bowing their heads."[13] His column "Carlitos en la onda" was a regular in *La Patria*, based in Bogotá, Colombia.[14] Escobar, an artist himself, followed the *nadaísmo* (nothing-ism) counterculture movement, which took a strong stance against the Colombian government. Decades after his death, Escobar is remembered in the context of Latin American revolution and art. Yet, in contrast to the image of Boal continuously fighting the Brazilian regime years into his exile, Escobar paints the playwright and his work as passive. Censorship and persecution often influenced who was able to watch the play in multiple Latin American countries, as well as how they were received—yet many reviewers, often those sympathetic with anti-regime sentiments, reacted more positively towards the show. Why then did Escobar hold this opinion of *Torquemada*?

Despite knowing the fact that Boal is a victim of state-sponsored torture, Escobar claims Boal's work "is an exaltation of torture, and it almost mythologizes it."[15] Though he concedes the play prompts some critique of the regime, he insists that it loses focus towards the end and becomes too showy. One of his suggestions is to "put more realism in the scenes of the four tortures."[16] In short, Escobar's critiques seem to revolve around the idea that Boal did not do *enough* to show torture as a negative action.

To address this, one can look to Elaine Scarry's ideas presented in *The Body in Pain*. Experiencing torture "destroys a person's self and world.[17] As displayed in *Torquemada*, Boal's interrogations stripped his power and agency. Torture creates a reality in which "world, self, and voice are lost, or nearly lost[18] under the immense pain. The psychological impacts of torture on a victim and the difficulty of expressing their experience through words prompts a "reversion to a state anterior to language, to sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned.[19] How then does one realistically portray their experience of torture and pain when words are not even used in the moment to express the sensations they were feeling? If Escobar were to ask this task of Boal, we must understand if such realism is even possible.

With a closer look at Boal's positionality, the layers of personal and professional life mesh together. As an artist, Boal uses his plays to express his beliefs and opinions of society. As a victim, Boal carries trauma that directly impacts the content of his material. With his post-imprisonment artistic endeavors, Boal was in the difficult situation of reconciling his own pain with his medium.

Clara de Andrade analyzes the influence of torture on Boal's productions by pulling from his memoir, *Milagre no Brasil* (1979), examining the way in which *Torquemada* served as a processing mechanism for his trauma. As Boal noted, "I directed Torquemada. I couldn't believe what had happened to me. I needed to see it happen outside of me, on

stage, so that I could see myself, separate myself from me. Me and the word, me and the actor. Only then would I understand myself.[20] Serving then as a form of catharsis (the process of releasing pent up emotions, such as grief, frustration, and anger), *Torquemada* aided Boal on a personal level, rather than just in the spheres of politics. Boal as an activist was able to disseminate information and push his agenda of protesting these human rights abuses and the regime as a whole; Boal as a victim was able to reclaim the voice that was stripped from him during his imprisonment and work through the trauma in a medium he was comfortable with. *Torquemada* is more than just political theater, it serves as a victim's testimony akin to those in Amnesty International's reports on human rights abuses in Brazil. This understanding of the play's function and relation to the playwright adds nuances to discussions of its potential shortcomings as a piece of literature.

Despite the difficulty in reclaiming narrative power, Boal did so through *Torquemada*. Escobar, in his critiques of lacking realism, fails to comprehend the psychological turmoil behind such an expression and report of torture. Escobar acknowledges the fact that Boal was tortured, but his review treats him as purely a director and creator, seemingly independent of the history he brings to the table. To understand *Torquemada*, one must see it as more than just an artistic push against the regime's infliction of torture; one must see it also as a cathartic experience for a victim and personal expression of processing mental and physical violation. *Torquemada* operates almost as a case study for debates on separating art from their artists. This work cannot be detached from its creator and his past—the historical context in which Boal existed and produced—and Escobar's critical stance lacks a deep understanding of this crucial intertwining.

Escobar's review also underestimates the power of the audience, claiming that "spectators who are not politically prepared may fall into the trap set by the play."[21] This implicates viewers as passive spectators lacking in critical thought and empathy. *Torquemada* ends with the titular character proclaiming the success of his regime ("if it has worked for our country it sure can work for yours![22]) in an extended monologue before exiting. While it is easy to write off Escobar's concerns with the fact that *Torquemada* does not hide its namesake's hypocrisy, irony, and inhumanity, his earlier claims of the glorification of torture imply the play may fall into the pornography of pain. If this is true, the critique of Boal's work goes past a lack of realism and rather questions the nature of the torture scenes. Is the audience desensitized to the actions onstage? Is torture sensationalized or exploited in this production? The play may serve Boal's needs as a victim, but when it comes to being a work of political activism, one must analyze what the inclusion of torture scenes means for audiences who watch it.

Even when not presented to an audience, torture is inherently a show. Scarry illustrates torture as a spectacle, a "demonstration and magnification of the felt-experience of pain.[23] Torture indulges the power of the torturer at the painful expense of the tortured. The pornography of pain comes when the audience identifies with the torturer, deriving pleasure from the idea of exerting violent power over another, or with the tortured not out of empathy but out of masochistic rapture. The question then is whether audiences experienced this voyeuristic thrill while watching *Torquemada*.

The show ran at New York University between 1971–72, performed for Americans who were slowly learning of the human rights abuses in Brazil. Work such as the documentary *Brazil: A Report on Torture*, The American Friends of Brazil's "Brazilian Information Bulletin," and protests when then-Brazilian President Emílio Garrastazu Médici visited the White House had all drawn public eye in the year prior.[24] *Torquemada* may not have been audiences' first engagement with the happenings in Brazil, but it was likely their closest experience to seeing the action unfold mere feet away from them.

Those New York audiences would wince when the character Vera is tricked into exposing her friends and arrested, showing the regime's ruthless methods of intel gathering. They would see the gender nonconforming Christine face verbal, physical, and implied sexual abuse from both other prisoners and guards, showing marginalization within already targeted populations. They feel a rise of adrenaline and subsequent heart drop when the prisoner Zeca believes he's to be freed, only to learn it was another prisoner who would be let go. His departing words, "hasta la victoria siempre,"[25] echo with the collective knowledge that he will never return onstage alive. Even when Paulo, the falsely accused bourgeois, is extensively tortured via electrocution, audiences feel sympathy for him just as every other victim of the fictionalized-yet-based-on-real-life regime.

"It's graphic. It hurts," writes reviewer Arthur Sainer.[26] Rather than enjoying each character's pain, he finds "the screams [that are heard] intermittently throughout the performance"[27] to be disturbing. Candida McCollum, another NYU reviewer, writes of *Torquemada* as a "forceful exposure" and "cruel and furious report" of Brazil's injustices.[28] This "painfully artistic creation,"[29] as McCollum puts it, did not seem to distract her or Sainer from the political implications of the play nor the gravity of the situation they beheld.

Other performances across the globe elicit similar reactions. One Argentinian reviewer remarks, in a manner starkly different than Escobar, that "Boal's narrative allows reality, all reality, to burst upon the viewer in a deliberately brutal way, the only valid way to deal with a subject of this nature" and that it was the "the most courageously realistic work and politically committed drama to premiere in Buenos Aires in recent years.[30] Many of these reviewers would go on to discuss the political realities and ramifications of the play, such as McCollum whose concluding takeaway was that *Torquemada* "clearly shows the need for an international defense effort to free those in Brazil's prisons."[31] She and other viewers advocate for international pressure to end these practices of torture, as well as show broader resistance to Brazil's military regime, through their columns, revealing the critical capabilities of those who watched the show. Escobar's fears of an ignorant audience seem to melt away in light of these reviews, and the work he called more dangerous than actual pornography appears to have drawn the reaction Boal desired.

Concluding Thoughts and Further Questions

> Besides fighting, I'm writing too. . . . I'm almost finishing a novel (spy story—the story of a coup d'Etat in that technique). . . . It's very funny. And tragic. I wish so much you could read it.
>
> Well, that's enough for today.
> All my very best to you,
> Augusto Boal[32]

Even after Boal's death in 2009, his legacy as a revolutionary theater practitioner stands strong. As a writer, he blurred the lines between his art, his battle with trauma, and his political goals to create a transformative work that spread information about state-induced violence and drew empathy from international audiences. While his experience was formative in the creation of *Torquemada*, he did not stagnate as a creator; Boal moved on, wrote more, and developed a following in which people still practice elements of Theatre of the Oppressed today.

However, the gradual decline in the popularity of live theater raises questions of the future effectiveness of such schools of theater. As new forms of media consumption, such as on-demand streaming services, further influence modes of production, are stories less connected to their creators and more commercialized? Boal himself, towards the end of his life, grew less confident in theater as a catalyst for social change.[33] As methods of information consumption change with the rise of social media, the effectiveness of other methods of expression may be altered or diminished. While the modern-day role of political theater may be different, the context in which *Torquemada* was created and utilized captured the horrors of authoritarianism, both for Boal and, presumably, many audiences in the 1970s. This piece, both as a historical record of one victim's experience and as a spur for resistance, reveals how theater as a medium can be used for personal and sociopolitical needs.

Endnotes

1 Augusto Boal to Arthur Miller, 30 April 1976, Manuscripts Collection MS-02831, folder 8.11, Arthur Miller Papers, Manuscripts Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.

2 James Green, *We Cannot Remain Silent: Opposition to the Brazilian Military Dictatorship in the United States* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 118.

3 James Green, "Clerics, Exiles, and Academics: Opposition to the Brazilian Military Dictatorship in the United States, 1969–1974," *Latin American Politics and Society*, vol. 45, no. 1 (2003): 87–117.

4 Green, *We Cannot Remain Silent: Opposition to the Brazilian Military Dictatorship in the United States*, 298.

5 Britannica, s.v. "Augusto Boal," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, March 12, 2023. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Augusto-Boal.

6 Gabriela Nouzeilles, "Theaters of Pain: Violence and Photography." *PMLA* 131, no. 3 (2016): 711–21. Further notes on the *Torquemada*: Characters the audience would sympathize with (Playwright, Vera, Christine, and multiple unnamed prisoners) are tortured and oftentimes killed. Even those in power fall victim to the system of torture, such as the bourgeois Paulo, who is falsely accused of subversion, imprisoned, tortured, and killed. Though his fellow bourgeois had the opportunity to free him if they took his place, they instead turned on Paulo due to lack of faith in the judicial system. After a series of tortures and executions, the only winner in this political system is Torquemada himself—who proudly advertises his method for other countries to adopt in the show's closing monologue.

7 This paper aims to build on the work of scholar James Green, who places Boal in the context of other artists protesting against the Brazilian military regime, and scholar Clara de Andrade, who analyzed *Torquemada* as a cathartic experience for Boal. This paper synthesizes their arguments while adding new dimensions with archival material from the Augusto Boal Institute and the Harry Ransom Center and with an analysis of critic Mario Escobar's review of the play. With a focus on the torture scenes specifically, this paper contributes to ongoing conversations about political theater, the potential exploitation and sensationalizing of pain in media, and whether art can be separated from its artist and context.

8 Boal to Miller, 30 April 1976, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

9 Augusto Boal to Arthur Miller, 6 April 1976, Manuscripts Collection MS-02831, folder 11.6, Arthur Miller Papers, Manuscripts Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.

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11 Boal, *Torquemada*, 4.

12 Joanne Pottlitzer, "Poets, Politics and Lovers," (in "Conference 2000," Arcata, California, 2000), 4.

13 Mario Escobar, "Carlitos en la Onda," review of *Torquemada*, written by Augusto Boal, staged by Centro Libre de Experimentación Teatral y Artística da Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (CLETA-UNAM), Bogotá, Colombia, translated by Nicolas Silva, *La Patria*, 1973, Exile series, O Instituto Augusto Boal, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

14 Rafael Zuluaga Villegas, "En Ferias Y Hasta El 30 de Enero, Abierta Exposición de Mario Escobar," Eje21, January 6, 2014, https://www.eje21.com.co/2014/01/en-ferias-y-hasta-el-30-de-enero-abierta-exposicion-de-mario-escobar/.

15 Escobar, review of *Torquemada*, 1973.

16 Ibid.

17 Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) 35.

18 Ibid. .

19 Ibid., 51.

20 Augusto Boal's *Milagre no Brasil* (1979), quoted in Clara de Andrade, "Torquemada de Augusto Boal: Uma Catarse do Trauma," translated by Lana Sendzimir and Ralph Yarrow, *Cena*, no. 11 (October 30, 2012), 11 https://doi.org/10.22456/2236-3254.24098. Note: Boal's quote, while taken from and in the context of de Andrade's argument, was translated in Birgit Fritz's *The Courage to Become* (2016) by Lana Sendzimir and Ralph Yarrow. Their Portuguese to English translation is used in this paper.

21 Escobar, review of *Torquemada*, 1973.

22 Boal, *Torquemada*, 23.

23 Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 27.

24 Green, *We Cannot Remain Silent: Opposition to the Brazilian Military Dictatorship in the United States*, 260–278.

25 Boal, *Torquemada*, 13.

26 Arthur Sainer, "Theatre Belongs to the People," review of *Torquemada*, directed by Augusto Boal, New York University, New York, *The Village Voice*, 1972, Exile series, O Instituto Augusto Boal, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

27 Ibid.

28 Candida McCollum, "Torture in Brazil," review of *Torquemada*, directed by Augusto Boal, New York University, New York, *In Review*, 1972, Exile series, O Instituto Augusto Boal, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

29 Ibid.

30 Unsigned review of *Torquemada*, written by Augusto Boal, Buenos Aires, Argentina, translated by Nicolas Silva, *Analisis No. 590*, 1972, Exile series, O Instituto Augusto Boal, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

31 McCollum, "Torture in Brazil," 1972.

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33 Diana Taylor, "Augusto Boal 1931–2009," *TDR: The Drama Review* 53, no. 4 (2009).

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The Wars of Suburbia: A Selection of *Testimonios* on Mexican American Military Service from the *Veteranos Dobles* of Southeast Los Angeles and the San Gabriel Valley, 1940–2000

Stephen Pearson-Ocaña, *University of California, Los Angeles*

Stephen Pearson-Ocaña is a first-generation, low-income transfer student and recent alumnus of the University of California, Los Angeles, and a first-year PhD student and Chancellor's Fellow in the History Department at the University of California, Berkeley. He graduated with Latin honors as a Chancellor's Blue and Gold Scholar and a LINK program scholar in the Department of Chicana, Chicano, and Central American Studies at UCLA. He earned his BA in Chicano Studies with a Central American Studies minor after having transferred from East Los Angeles College. His work focuses on Mexican American oral histories in 20th-century Southern California, with an emphasis on interwoven communal issues such as racial capitalism, suburbanization, the carceral state, gang culture, military service, the military-industrial complex, cultural heritage, daily life, and social expression in the Chicano barrios of Southeast Los Angeles, East Los Angeles, and the San Gabriel Valley.

Abstract

Mexican American men served disproportionally in the military and within military-industrial complex-related labor in greater Los Angeles during the mid- to late-20th century. Coming from multigenerational, often monolingual English-speaking families in some of the oldest Chicano barrios, many men negotiated a trade-off between generational poverty, incarceration, street life, and trying to make by as heads of household through military service and working honest jobs. Based on three interviews, I found that Mexican-American veterans achieved socio-economic mobility through their military service. Although I initially thought there would be more negative stories for many, there was a consistent sense of positive reflection in serving, even in the face of discrimination and hardship. I call this historical assimilationist phenomenon the Veterano Doble (Double Veteran) effect, a framework that positions marginalized Chicanos as members of a defense-related labor class. These men fit such descriptions in the duality sense of being military veterans and veterans of surviving poverty and street life by finding ways to avoid the pitfalls of gang culture and the carceral system.

Acknowledgements

To my family, I love you and hope you're proud. I am eternally grateful to my parents, late abuela, and my tias. Special thanks to those in higher education who made this possible—Carlos Centeno at ELAC, Dr. Jason De Leon, Santi Bernal, Ellie Gonzalez, Dr. Lesly Abrego, and MMUF at UCLA. Thank you to the veterans and their families I interviewed during this project. I dedicate this to them, my family, Pico Rivera, and all the Old-School Raza who understand these realities. I've always worked to honor and champion all of you with this paper and the ones to come when I'm at UC Berkeley getting my MA and PhD.

Historical Context

The veterans I've interviewed hail from Pico Rivera and South San Gabriel, two of the oldest Chicano settlements in Los Angeles County. Two of them, Rudy and Bob, are Navy Veterans, and one of them, Johnny, is a Marine Veteran. They chose service as an alternative to poverty and street life, out of a sense of patriotism and the viability of the military for socio-economic mobility and the legacies of service in their family. For many Chicanos, especially between 1940 and 2000, this was often the only possible route for them to gain status, advance their careers, avoid street life, and join in the rapid suburbanization of the mid-20th century.

Mexican American suburban settlement in Los Angeles is not a new phenomenon and dates to the initial growth of the region following its annexation by the United States.[1] In the previously agricultural zones of Los Angeles, segregated communities known as Colonias[2], self-designed to house Mexican immigrant laborers and their families with near-total self-sufficiency and autonomy, sprang up in the late 19th and early 20th century, existing until a period of post–World War II development booms spanning from 1945 to 1970, before total integration or destruction by incorporation, annexation, or removal.[3]

Many Colonias still exist, integrated into incorporated cities or remaining as unincorporated settlements within the greater landscape of Los Angeles.[4] However, these barrios are far different than the typical intercity Latino neighborhood due to assimilation[5] and the military's role in the settlement process.[6] In communities like Pico Viejo, which my Mom's family has called home for generations, many residents are primarily English-speaking and staunchly assimilated, typically being at least third to six-generation lifelong residents.[7] Often, these are the descendants of the original immigrants who came a century ago and, more frequently, families like mine who arrived from East Los Angeles, purchasing homes with G.I. Bills and finding employment in emerging factories and service work in the early 1950s.[8]

These communities were home to Palomillas, the earliest forms of Mexican-American youth culture in Southern California, acting as social clubs for mutual aid and fraternal association.[9] The Colonias transitioned to Barrios and the Palomillas turned into Varrios in a gradual process throughout the mid-20th century, fueled primarily by the decline of industry, limited opportunities for

employment and education, and a lack of options that the early Palomillas provided to marginalized youth.[10] In such communities, there is a clash between the representations of American suburb and the consequences of the carceral system, militarized policing, racialized capitalism, and structural racism[11]—reflected in the sheer numbers of incarcerated bodies and costs of police enforcement in communities such as Pico Rivera, all while having some of the highest rates of living residents who are military veterans from conflicts in the 20th century.[12] With a brief understanding of the context behind my research interests, this paper will explore three interview sessions involving three veterans and their experiences balancing social mobility and avoiding incarceration, street life, and suburbanization.

Methodology

During my research, I sat down with three Chicano veterans ranging in age from 48 to 96 years old, holding 30 minutes to 2-hour long discussions under the platica and testimonio methodologies of Chicana/o oral historical documentation,[13] rooting my work under the LatCrit subfield of Critical Race Theory, with consideration for established Mexican American historical documentation[14] alongside Cedric Robinson's Racial Capitalism[15] and Wei Li's Ethnoburb concepts.[16] I collected these interviews into a completed 72-page bachelor's thesis alongside a literature review, historical background investigation, and a reflection and critique of ideas in my field about how such stories have been studied and observed.

Interviews were conducted in a casual conversation, which was recorded and transcribed, with 40 questions and compensation, with the project having been approved for a qualitative study by the Institutional Review Board. Lastly, interviewees were given the option to remain named or be anonymous, as well as security in transcript review and withdrawal of participation upon request.

Findings

My findings contradicted the previous negative portrayals, which argued that many of these men were traumatized and motivated to fight due to their machismo.[17] I discovered that they were all English-monolingual, except for one, and identified as Mexican Americans of at least third generation at the most recent, with extended family currently in the military. I also found that the interviewees did not focus on theoretical ideas on Chicano identity and masculine expression, which I address in reflections on how historians and social scientists working with communities of color must navigate and negotiate our biases and privileges as emerging scholars.

"Bob"

Bob, age 96, is a WWII veteran from East Los Angeles and a current resident of Pico Rivera, who served as a member of the USN Construction Battalions, or Seabees, in the Alaskan theater and the occupation of the Japanese Home Islands. Bob is a self-reported third-generation Chicano who joined the Navy upon the outbreak of WWII, lying about his age to enlist. Bob served in the Aleutians' campaign, building oil drilling sites and defense fortifications. He eventually transferred as part of the occupation force tasked with building a base in Sasebo, Japan.

Spending his time in construction and later as a mechanic and barber, Bob immersed himself in military service before returning to California in 1946, where he left the military and began working as a baker in his family's Panaderia. While it provided him with the income necessary to buy a home in Pico Rivera and allowed him to meet his wife during his trips to the Central Valley and Coast, he wanted to make a change as he grew older. With the encouragement of his cousin, who owned an auto shop in East Los Angeles before passing due to a motorcycle accident, Bob wanted to pursue his passion for cars, leaving his past career as a baker to pursue auto upholstery using techniques he learned in the Seabees.

Bob went on to become one of the most iconic custom interior designers in the lowrider scene, earning a spot as the first craftsman inducted into the Lowrider Magazine Hall of Fame for his work as Bob and Son's Upholstery,[18] where he, his son Robert, and their family dedicated space in their garage to working on award-winning show cars, always keeping humility and integrity in their work, he would often provide space for people from as far away as Texas, the Bay Area, New Mexico, and Arizona, just as he would work on the cars of kids from the barrio who'd knock on his door, asking if he could stitch velour and velvet onto the seat covers of their ranflas. At 96 years old, he has lived a remarkable and accomplished life, cementing his legacy as a lowrider legend, a Seabee veteran, and someone unrivaled in his field.

"Rudy"

Rudy, age 48, is a veteran who served in the United States Navy as a firefighting aviation specialist aboard the U.S.S. *Carl Vinson* aircraft carrier. Hailing from Pico Rivera, Rudy attributes his journey into the military and back to civilian life as part of a transformative process to support his family and avoid the pitfalls of gang violence and incarceration that became a part of everyday life for many young men in his hometown. Rudy grew up during the height of gang wars in the 1980s and 1990s, when the six major gangs in the city were locked in wars with themselves and neighboring varrios. This cycle continues today as Pico Rivera remains one of the most criminalized cities in Los Angeles

County, simultaneously being perhaps the most assimilated barrio in the county.[19]

Attributing his avoidance of gang life to family structure and his strict father, Rudy graduated from El Rancho High School and began attending Rio Hondo Community College, earning an associate degree in firefighting science. Rudy found himself joining the Navy to gain work experience and attributed his time in the service as part of a process that transformed him and gave him a newfound ability to collect and control himself, expose him to new places and cultures, meet new people, and reevaluate his life as he started a family with his wife, Christine.

Upon leaving the Navy, Rudy took his G.I. Bill and bought a home in the middle-class suburb of Covina. Currently employed as a local bus driver, he attributes his calm demeanor, way with words, and financial and emotional stability to the military, which has allowed him to be a homeowner, support his wife as she moved into a new career, and provide both of his children with the education necessary to build their careers.

"Johnny"

"Johnny," age 58, is a Marine Corps veteran who served in logistics on base in Okinawa, Japan. Johnny is also a lifelong resident of South San Gabriel, a barrio experiencing rapid gentrification and demographic change, shifting from a predominately working-class multigenerational Chicano suburb into an emerging upper-middle-class Chinese immigrant community. Johnny grew up in a multigenerational family, with his grandfather having served as a Doughboy in World War One, returning to Mexico and then back to the United States with his children, and settling in South San Gabriel, where Johnny's mother married his father, a Mexican immigrant, and raised them in a house purchased for $12,000 in 1968, now valued around $1,000,000–1,500,000 based upon offers he has received. Despite the changes in the neighborhood and the money being offered, he is adamant about staying in his hometown barrio.

Johnny was motivated to join the Marines not because of relatives who served in WW1, WW2, Korea, and Vietnam but due to a sense of patriotism from watching the news of the 1983 Beirut Barracks Bombings; driven by this anger, he enlisted as a Marine. In the time he spent in the military, he worked on the base in Okinawa, where he met his wife of 38 years, a Thai national working on the island, and had his son before returning to California. After receiving orders to report to Tustin Air Station for stop-loss deployment in the First Gulf War and being turned away, Johnny began returning to civilian life.

Reflecting on his time in the military, Johnny missed the sense of freedom and security that came with not being present at home during the era of gang violence that took so many of the friends he grew up with. Serving in the Marines gave him a chance to support his family, even though it came with experiencing profound ignorance and racism from many of his peers, which offended Johhny, a monolingual English speaker whose immigrant father taught him to identify exclusively as an American rather than a Mexican.

Johnny returned home, with him and his wife being one of the only interracial coupes in their barrio, to find the neighborhood changing. He convinced his parents to stay in the house instead of moving to Texas after promising them he would rebuild the house, modernize it, and put a second story for him and his family to live upstairs and care for his parents, a promise he's kept even after their passing. After losing a longtime job, Johnny went to the Veterans Affairs Department to get an I.D. In time, he secured disability compensation and job training to become a truck driver and reports being able to keep his home and provide for his children and grandchildren.

Reflections

Ultimately, I found that the interviewees viewed the military as a positive, transformative experience, which ran contrary to my initial perspectives as something that was forced upon them as a necessity or as a possible result of conscription mandated by court orders, as I often heard from many veterans growing up.[20] I could not find or secure an interviewee who was a combat veteran while conducting this research as an undergraduate.[21] Still, the experience has taught me a valuable lesson in adopting a correct mentality on approaching community-based research instead of taking the position of Chicana/o academia, which assumes they understand how working-class Chicanos think and conceptualize themselves.

Consequently, my research taught me the value of researching with, rather than researching on, communities like mine. I believe that Chicana/o historians and social scientists must work to engage our communities and interviewees rather than focus on a fixed understanding. I feel that the most valuable lesson to come from my research wasn't confirming my suspicions about the generational legacies of communities like mine or the nature of how Chicano labor is racialized into military and industrial capacities but to approach and direct inquiry within one's community without being stubborn, pedantic, or condescending.

In conclusion, while I confirmed my theories on historical settlement, employment, and community formation,

my work made me realize that historians of color, working within our communities, must work with, and not on, the communities we call home. Furthermore, I anticipate expanding my research with a readjustment to broader studies on the Chicano community and historic social life and a stronger emphasis on aspects of life beyond conflict, poverty, and social navigation, providing a platform to tell untold, unheard, and ignored voices. Ultimately, I want to expand my work into a broader regional perspective outside of Southern California and see myself focusing on the whole notion of Chicana/o historical identity and experience while allowing for my work and the models I use to inspire other Latina/o historians to document their own communal stories by working to develop a new framework.

Endnotes

1 This statement is based upon communally transmitted knowledge, with multiple pieces of academic support stemming from Judy Vallejo's "Barrios to Burbs: The Making of the Mexican American Middle-Class," George Sanchez's "Becoming Mexican American," Jerry Gonzalez's "In Search of the Mexican Beverly Hills: Latino Suburbanization in Post-War L.A.," and Gilbert Gonzalez's "Labor and Community: Mexican Citrus Worker Villages in a Southern California County" all being points of reference that documented and confirmed the Colonia phenomenon.

2 The name Colonia, translated as Colony, referred to company towns and agricultural makeshift villages inhabited by segregated Mexican American and Mexican immigrant residents. This was a statewide occurrence, though it seems to have been centered largely in Southern California.

3 Scholars such as Jody Vallejo, and most recently Erik Avila, through his book, "Folklore of the Freeways: Race and Revolt in the Modernist City," documented the ways in which local, county, state, and federal officials would destroy and remove colonias and barrios by way of infrastructural projects.

4 As found in "Barrios to Burbs" and "In Search of the Mexican Beverly Hills," many colonias are well-documented and were transitioned into barrios, or intercity and or suburban, neighborhoods. Most of the colonia names live on as the names for the local gangs, formed primarily from multigenerational residents and often descendants of founding members of the area's palomillas, or male youth group at the turn of the century. Local examples include the destruction of colonias present in the city of South El Monte, such as Canta Ranas (unrelated to the modern name of the Flood Ranch colonia) and the Hoyo section of the Jimtown Colonia in West Whittier, as documented by Cecilia Rasmussen of the *L.A. Times* (1997).

5 This claim is anecdotal based upon my own lived experiences and those attested by numerous neighbors, residents, and my interviewees. Supporting this claim is statistical evidence from the Mapping L.A. Project, which shows that Pico Rivera and nearby cities with similarly high Latina/o demographics lag behind in Spanish spoken as a first language or primary language at home, immigrant by birth rather than natural citizenship, and even news stories such as one published by the *L.A. Times* in 2008, which noted local residents as having complained over the Pico Rivera Newsletter electing to maintain and publish a Spanish language section.

6 Gonzalez, Jerry. "In Search of the Mexican Beverly Hills: Latino Suburbanization in Post-War L.A." (2017).

7 Ibid., in addition to supporting evidence from Mapping L.A. (2010).

8 This claim refers once again to Vallejo and Gonzalez, and includes further evidence based upon the industrialization documented by scholars such as A.J Scott, who wrote extensively on Los Angeles's role in the automotive and aerospace industries, as well as Villa, Raul Homero's "From Military-Industrial Complex to Urban-Industrial Complex: Promoting and Protesting the Supercity" (2000) and Curtis, James R. "6. Barrio Space and Place in Southeast Los Angeles, California" (2004).

9 Vigil, James Diego. "Chicano Gangs: One Response To Mexican Urban Adaptation In The Los Angeles Area." (1983). In addition, Much of Diego Vigil's work deals with the study of Mexican American gang culture and assimilation.

10 Based upon communal histories as well as the work documented by Anthropologist Diego James Vigil, the Palomillas concept was a response to discrimination and never came with the inherent origin of becoming gangs. They fielded sport teams, had club jackets, sometimes even membership cards, and were more akin to Boy Scouts or juvenile cliques. While many became varrios, or gangs—it is important to stress that this was never the design.

11 Estrada, Leobardo. "Hispanic Suburbanization in Los Angeles: Social Arrival and Barrio Formation." (1987).

12 This claim is supported by evidence from the Mapping L.A. Project, conducted by the *Los Angeles Times*.

13 These methodologies refer to an interview process pioneered by Chicana feminist scholars like Dolores Delgado Bernal, who detailed them in "*Vamos a La Platica*"—I have adopted their usage as a historian to create and set up culturally affirming interview spaces and styles, which I believe has yielded me the best results possible.

14 While my research is centered upon historically understudied areas in Southeast Los Angeles and the San Gabriel Valley, I must acknowledge that a multitude of scholars have covered similar interests or topics or addressed their own studies into these subject matters in the context of their own home regions and zones of scholarship.

15 Robinson, Cedric J. "Black Marxism, Revised and Updated Third Edition: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition." (1983).

16 Li, Wei. "Anatomy of a New Ethnic Settlement: The Chinese Ethnoburb in Los Angeles." (1997).

17 Machismo refers to the concept of hypermasculinity in Latino, and in this case, Mexican American, culture. As scholarship emerges more on the gendered narratives of feminine and masculine roles in my community, I wanted to address this aspect as the question always came up due to working within an otherwise male-dominated career field. The question of masculinity is brought up as this topic relates to such a male-dominated field of employment.

18 *Lowrider Magazine*—2005. Not only was I able to confirm this with the interviewee and his family, but I found a 2007 article from Motor trend (the parent company of *Lowrider Magazine*) that confirmed his induction as part of the first class of the Lowrider Magazine Hall of Fame.

19 This is anecdotal based upon my own life, as well as popular assertions amongst Mexican Americans in the region. Though some news articles, such as the one I mentioned from Quinnones, have brought attention to how Americanized the perception of the City of Pico Rivera has become for many Latina/os.

20 I often heard directly from former and active gang members, as well as those who have been impacted by the carceral system—that they were essentially press-ganged into the military due to juvenile court dealings offered as an alternative to incarceration. While I have studied, and documented several instances from media and military rulings and regulations that support these statements in my main thesis—none of my interviewees experienced this situation when they joined the military.

21 While there are plenty of Mexican American combat veterans, within the span of my research interview period—I was unable to secure an interview with one. I attribute this largely due to the interpersonal connections and communal dynamics that played into finding this project's interviewees. I feel there is a possibility of a skewed response to my study that might be attributed due to a lack of in-field combat veterans that limited the possibility of different experiences and narratives from historic conversations. I believe if I had included combat veterans, this paper would likely have different stories, including some with otherwise negative outcomes such as those I heard growing up.

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The Impact of Heritage Spanish Instruction on the Linguistic and Social Anxieties of Heritage Spanish Speakers

Marco Adrián Pevia, *The University of Texas at Austin*

Marco A. Pevia is a senior at The University of Texas at Austin, double majoring in Spanish and Linguistics and minoring in Portuguese. Inspired by his personal struggles with bilingualism and biliteracy, Marco's research focuses on the experiences and challenges of Heritage Spanish speakers when using Spanish in their everyday lives. After he graduates, Marco plans to attend a doctoral program in Hispanic Linguistics.

Abstract

Texas has approximately 7.25 million Spanish speakers. A portion of them are Heritage Spanish speakers. Heritage speakers grow up in Spanish-speaking homes or communities but have a different dominant language. Much foreign language learning anxiety research focuses on second language learners, including the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale; less research focuses on Spanish as a Heritage Language (SHL) learners' anxieties. Research focused on heritage learners' anxiety often involves comparing heritage students in L2 and SHL classrooms to see the effects of both types of instruction. The present study focuses on SHL learners in SHL classrooms and investigates when they feel anxiety and how they change throughout a semester. Data is collected through a two-part survey distributed to college students enrolled in SHL classes. Data from the first survey show that students' anxieties are based on social and linguistic factors. By investigating linguistic and social anxieties, we aim to validate the diverse experiences of Heritage Spanish students by increasing their confidence in their language-learning journeys.

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Introduction

It is common for students learning a new language to experience anxieties during the language-learning process. In studying foreign language anxiety (FLA), research focuses on second language (L2) learners learning the language in a classroom setting. L2 classrooms are a formal setting, often focusing on expanding vocabulary and teaching verb conjugations, where many students start from point zero in the target language (Horwitz et al., 2010). Despite this pedagogical approach, L2 students are only one type of learners often found in L2 classrooms.

Commonly known as "native speakers," heritage speakers of a language are frequently found in L2 classrooms. Heritage language (HL) students learn their HL informally in the home or community. When placed in traditional L2 classrooms, they pose challenges for language instructors because they already have a comprehensive linguistic and cultural background in their HL and have different pedagogical needs (Polinsky, 2020). Additionally, HL learners are a heterogeneous group and do not all share the same abilities; some come to the classroom speaking the language but struggle with writing. Others may be receptive bilinguals who understand but cannot produce the HL.

Due to the rising numbers of Spanish HL learners in the U.S., many institutions now offer courses designed for Spanish as a Heritage Language (SHL) learners. Regardless of whether they are placed in L2 or SHL classes, and despite knowing the HL at varying levels, HL students also experience language anxieties. Nevertheless, they differ from the anxieties of L2 students because HL students have a strong cultural connection to their language, which can create a sense of commitment to keep the language alive in their families despite living in a society where they may experience discrimination due to the stigmatization of their culture. The HL is seldom taught in schools, typically because it is a minority language in society (Pascual y Cabo et al., 2015).

Background

When measuring FLA, researchers have often used the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), a 33-item questionnaire about students' anxieties in foreign language classes. In the original study, 151 undergraduate students in first and second-year French, Spanish, and Russian classes took the FLCAS. Some anxieties found include students fearing they will not understand what their professors are saying and being viewed as less competent by their peers (Horwitz et al., 1986). While this scale addresses anxieties of L2 students, as previously mentioned, HL students experience different anxieties because of how they acquire their HL at home, their cultural connections to the language, and their HL has a minority language status in their society (Pascual y Cabo et al., 2015).

Because the FLCAS is widely used by researchers to analyze the anxieties of L2 students, researchers investigating HL student anxiety have adapted the FLCAS to better address the specific needs of heritage students. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) modified the FLCAS to eight questions, leading Prada, Guerrero, and Pascual y Cabo (2020) to use the modified version in their study to compare heritage student anxiety in the SHL and L2 classrooms. They found

that HL students in L2 classrooms experience more anxiety than those in HL classrooms because HL classrooms offer a less threatening environment than L2 classrooms because students in the HL classroom share similar backgrounds and experiences. HL anxiety is also closely linked to individual factors of each student, such as personal traits and contextual pressures (Prada et al., 2020). Because HL anxiety can be individualistic, HL students within the same HL program may experience different anxieties.

Present Study

The present study focuses on SHL students and how their enrollment in an SHL course affects their anxieties. Questions that drove this study are:

1) Does student self-confidence in their Spanish or length of time in a SHL program affect their anxiety?

2) What activities or situations in the classroom trigger anxieties for heritage Spanish students?

Methodology

In the Spring 2023 semester, I created a 17-point anxiety scale questionnaire based on the FLCAS (Horwitz et al., 1986; Tallon, 2009) and distributed it to students enrolled in an SHL class at a university in Texas. The scale was a section of a two-part survey, with Part A distributed in the first few weeks of the semester and Part B at the end of the semester.

The surveys comprised two parts: 1) A background questionnaire to ensure all participants were heritage students, and 2) A series of quantitative questions split into two parts. In the first part, students were asked to self-evaluate their Spanish reading, writing, listening, and speaking abilities using a 5-point Likert scale from excellent to poor. The second part was the FLCAS-based anxiety scale, where students were given different scenarios and rated how much anxiety they felt during those situations, using a 5-point Likert scale from very comfortable to very anxious.

Participants

The university offers a four-course SHL sequence: an introductory, two intermediate (which can be taken simultaneously), and an academic writing course. Participants were recruited from all four courses. A total of 37 students agreed to participate; 15 in the introductory course, 12 in one intermediate course, four in both intermediate courses, and six in the academic writing course. All 37 students responded to Part A, and 26 (70%) responded to Part B at the end of the semester. Six students were interested in an optional interview, and three of the six carried out the interview.

Data Analysis

The data for this study were organized in an Excel spreadsheet. For the self-evaluations, responses of "good," "very good," and "excellent" were grouped because students had a positive view of their Spanish abilities. Ratings of "fair" and "poor" were similarly grouped because the students did not have a positive view of the ability. For the anxiety scale portion, answers of "very comfortable," "comfortable," and "neither comfortable nor anxious" were grouped because students did not experience anxiety. "Anxious" and "very anxious" were grouped because students choosing this rating experienced anxiety during these tasks.

Findings

Linguistic vs. Social Anxieties

SHL students experience two types of anxieties, each one triggered in different situations, with some activities triggering both. Students experience linguistic anxieties when producing or interacting with the language, such as writing a paper. On the other hand, social anxieties manifest due to perceptions of the student's abilities from themselves or others, such as the expectation to speak with a certain fluency. This distinction stems organically from the data because, given the nature of the scenarios, students experience different anxieties when producing the language vs. how they feel they are viewed when producing it. The results are analyzed in terms of linguistic anxieties and social anxieties.

Linguistic Anxiety Results

As expected, students with higher self-evaluations of their Spanish abilities tended to experience more comfort and less anxiety with tasks involving those abilities. The inverse of this is also true; students with a lower self-evaluation of their Spanish abilities had more anxiety with the particular tasks related to those abilities. Tables 1 and 2 below show data from the listening self-ratings and questions from Part A.

Rating	# of Students (n=37)
Excellent	16
Very Good	16
Good	4
Fair	1
Poor	0

Table 1. Self-Evaluations for Listening, Part A

Rating (n=37)	Listening to Podcasts/ Video	Listening to a Presentation	Listening to Fluent Speakers
Very Comfortable	12[1]	16	7
Comfortable	15	14	11
Neither	8	2	9
Anxious	2	5	10
Very Anxious	0	0	0

Table 2. Task Responses for Listening, Part A

In Table 1, 36 (97%) students rated themselves as good or better listeners of Spanish. This is anticipated because SHL students have grown up listening to Spanish and feel confident in their listening abilities. Table 2 shows the students' rating of their anxiety during listening tasks, where we can see that 95% (35 students) reported no anxiety when listening to a podcast in Spanish, 86% reported no anxiety when listening to a presentation in Spanish, and 73% reported experiencing no anxiety when listening to other fluent Spanish speakers.

This relationship between self-confidence and anxiety is true across all skills except one: formal uses of Spanish. This result is expected since SHL students learn Spanish at home, in informal contexts, and often use it in low-stakes environments; thus, many are unfamiliar with formal Spanish. For many, the SHL classroom is their first time being exposed to an academic register of Spanish. Table 3 shows student self-evaluations of their speaking proficiency in Part A, and Table 4 shows student anxiety levels during speaking tasks, divided between formal and informal settings.

Rating	# of Students (n=37)
Excellent	6
Very Good	8
Good	17
Fair	6
Poor	0

Table 3. Self-Evaluations for Speaking, Part A

Rating (n=37)	Speaking with Family	Speaking with Friends	Speaking in a Discussion	Speaking in a Presentation
Very Comfortable	13	14	6	6
Comfortable	12	11	8	6
Neither	5	5	5	1
Anxious	4	5	13	12
Very Anxious	3	2	5	12

Table 4. Task Responses for Speaking, Part A

In the speaking self-evaluations, 31 students said they were good or better speakers of Spanish, and six said they were only fair speakers. Informal speech is often used with family and friends, and 30 students said they do not experience anxiety during these activities. However, in a formal setting, students who reported anxiety while speaking increased significantly from 19% during informal speaking tasks to 49% during a discussion and 65% during a presentation.

However, giving a presentation, even in one's native language, may cause performance anxiety (Tallon, 2011). During a presentation, how much anxiety is credited to the HL rather than performance anxiety? This can be seen by comparing student anxiety with other skills during higher-stakes tasks. Table 5 shows the student reading evaluations in Part A. Table 6 shows their responses to reading during low and higher-stakes situations.

Rating	# of Students (n=37)
Excellent	7
Very Good	9
Good	14
Fair	6
Poor	1

Table 5. Self-Evaluations for Reading, Part A

Rating (n=37)	Reading an Article	Reading a Social Media Post
Very Comfortable	7	10
Comfortable	15	17
Neither	5	9
Anxious	6	1
Very Anxious	4	0

Table 6. Task Responses for Reading, Part A

In Table 5, 30 students rate themselves as good or better Spanish readers, similar to the 27 students in Table 6, who do not experience anxiety when reading an article. Conversely, when reading a social media post, a lower-stakes task compared to reading an article, only one student reported experiencing anxiety. The difference between the social media post and the article is the register, meaning students experience more anxiety with texts in formal Spanish. Linguistic anxiety plays a role in student anxiety when using Spanish, not just performance anxiety.

Social Anxiety Results

Unlike linguistic anxieties, social anxieties do not depend on students' self-confidence in their Spanish abilities. While a student may have a higher rating with a

particular ability, when adding the factor of the perception of their ability by someone else or as a comparison to someone else's ability, anxiety tends to increase for all students. As shown in Table 4, students tended to experience more anxiety because of the formality of the Spanish and how their peers perceived them. Because SHL students are often corrected by their families, they are vigilant of how they speak and try to minimize mistakes, which causes anxiety because students are not solely focused on the discussion but also on how they speak and are perceived by their peers.

Looking again at reading abilities, of the 30 students who said they are good or better readers of Spanish, 11 said they are anxious or very anxious when reading aloud in Spanish. Compared to reading an article, only five students with the same rating claimed to experience anxiety, most likely because it does not involve social anxiety, as students can read the article at their own pace. Table 7 shows students' anxiety levels when reading aloud in Spanish. Of the 17 students who reported anxiety when reading aloud, 11 previously rated themselves as good or better readers of Spanish, demonstrating a layer of social anxiety independent of student self-confidence.

Rating	# of Students (n=37)
Very Comfortable	9
Comfortable	9
Neither	2
Anxious	11
Very Anxious	6

Table 7. Task Responses for Reading, Part A

Speaking is another ability where students experience social anxiety. Of the 31 students with a high speaking self-evaluation, 14 are anxious when speaking with their professor, and 18 are anxious when speaking with a native speaker.

Ratings (n=37)	Speaking with a Native Speaker	Speaking with My Professor
Very Comfortable	5	5
Comfortable	9	9
Neither	3	7
Anxious	9	8
Very Anxious	5	2

Table 8. Students with Good or Higher Speaking Self Evaluation, Part A

Speaking with a professor involves a mix of linguistic and social anxieties because while producing the language, students may feel pressure to use a formal register with the professor teaching them that register, adding a layer of social anxiety. They may fear that when asking their professor questions, they are judged despite being in a low-stakes environment where mistakes should not carry much weight. Students might also judge themselves if they commit an error and try to fix it, especially if it relates to a particular grammar point the class is currently learning. By their self-judgment, HL students may feel more anxiety when they do not perform as well as they wish.

Time in the Heritage Program

Before starting the SHL program at the university, some students claim Advanced Placement credits or take a placement exam; therefore, their first SHL course might not be the introductory course. In the present study, 25 (68%) students were enrolled in their first heritage course, with ten students in a course other than the introductory course. This brings a new layer of learning diversity in the classroom because not everyone has the same exposure to formal Spanish.

Data in Tables 9 and 10 show that when comparing self-confidence in their Spanish abilities, students in their first SHL course are less confident than students in the same course who have had one or more semesters of SHL instruction. Similarly, students in their first SHL course experience more anxiety than students with at least one semester of SHL instruction.

Scale	# of Students (n=25)	Scale	Writing a Paper
Excellent	1 (4%)	Very Comfortable	1 (4%)
Very Good	1 (4%)	Comfortable	2 (8%)
Good	7 (28%)	Neither	4 (16%)
Fair	14 (56%)	Anxious	12 (48%)
Poor	2 (8%)	Very Anxious	6 (24%)

Table 9. 1st Semester Students Writing Results, Part A

Scale	# of Students (n=12)	Scale	Writing a Paper
Excellent	3 (25%)	Very Comfortable	1 (8%)
Very Good	2 (17%)	Comfortable	2 (17%)
Good	3 (25%)	Neither	6 (50%)
Fair	4 (33%)	Anxious	3 (25%)
Poor	0	Very Anxious	6 (24%)

Table 10. 2nd Semester+ Students Writing Results, Part A

Table 9 shows that 64% (56% + 8%) of first-semester students say their writing abilities are fair or poor, compared to only 33% of 2nd semester+ students, as seen in Table 10. Consequently, 72% (48% + 24%) of first-semester students experience anxiety when writing a paper, considerably above the 25% of 2nd semester+ students who

experience anxiety during the same situations. These tables show that students in their first SHL course view their Spanish abilities similarly to each other and experience more anxiety than students with more than one semester in an SHL course, even if that student is in an earlier course than them.

Conclusion and Implications

Results from the present study show that SHL students are aware of their Spanish abilities, contributing to how much anxiety they feel because the more confident they are, the less anxiety they experience. Therefore, self-evaluations can predict how much anxiety a student will experience with certain tasks. However, this is only true in informal settings because that is the context most familiar to SHL students. In formal contexts, such as the heritage classroom, students experience more anxiety due to the perception of their abilities from their peers, professors, and themselves.

The data show that students experience linguistic and social anxieties. While linguistic anxieties tend to be more predictable because they are connected to their Spanish abilities, social anxieties are less predictable because different students weigh the perceptions of their abilities by others with varying levels of importance. Some students feel safe making mistakes in the classroom, while others may fear committing the same mistakes because they are often criticized for making them.

Lastly, the results of this study show that taking more SHL courses gives students more opportunities to lower their anxieties and become more confident in their bilingual skills. Although anxiety is closely linked to individual factors (Prada et al., 2020), these data can show general trends to help inform SHL educators on how and when to lower students' anxiety and what activities to focus on.

It is vital to reinforce students' improvement because it is easy to focus on their mistakes rather than taking a holistic approach and seeing the student's growth. SHL students need validation, especially in a society where their bilingualism is not always celebrated and may be stigmatized. SHL students should be uplifted as bilingual and bicultural people, and instructors should aim to reduce their anxieties in the language learning process to help them reach their full potential.

Endnote

[1] The numbers represent how many students rated this level of comfort/anxiety.

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Guilty Masculinity vis-à-vis Autotheoretical Works by Sigmund Freud and Paul B. Preciado

Breigh Plat, *The University of Texas at Austin*

Breigh Plat is a third-year at The University of Texas at Austin, majoring in Plan II Honors and African and African Diaspora Studies. After graduating, Breigh plans to apply to doctoral programs in Comparative Literature and Media Studies.

Abstract

Inspired by the Twitter-storm that ensued after singer Bad Bunny was filmed throwing a fan's phone into the ocean, this essay explores forms of neoliberalism that tether themselves to violence despite claiming to disavow it. Termed "guilty masculinity," the paper uses Sigmund Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* and Paul B. Preciado's *An Apartment on Uranus* as examples that illuminate the gap between form and content in assessing non-performative behaviours deployed by gazes. By supplementing the Lacanian conception of the gaze with the work of Caribbean scholar Édouard Glissant, these gazes are critically unpacked across gendered and racial lines. The two texts exemplify the limits and bounds of guilty masculinity as a framework for understanding theoretical and practical manifestations of violence against subalterns, thereby illustrating the need for opaque and unintelligible resistance strategies.

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When Bad Bunny, Puerto Rico's reggaetón sweetheart, was filmed throwing a fan's phone into the ocean, the internet fell apart. The incident, allegedly occurring near a well-off area in the Dominican Republic and with a wealthy, white woman's phone, betrayed fans' expectations of his soft image—characterized by his delicately painted nails, gentle temperament, and renunciation of gendered clothing (Martinez). In an attempt to explain why Bad Bunny's behavior is consistent with the neoliberal desire to perform activism in word (form) while adhering to violence in behavior (content), I propose that we might begin to diagnose such behaviors as instances of *guilty masculinity* (Arroyo; Aponte-Parés et al.). Firstly, a close reading of psychoanalytic debates concerning the gaze will offer us the tools to map the terrain of guilty masculinity and the demands it places on subalterns.[1] Equipped with this topography, we will forge ahead into examining Sigmund Freud and Paul Preciado's works to analyze how autotheoretical works craft an illusion of trust that ultimately permits gazers to dodge accountability. Finally, a detour through Jack Halberstam's *Wild Things* will help us to examine how guilty masculinity undercuts the effectiveness of theorists' work.

The psychoanalytic conception of the gaze enables us to discover the contours of guilty masculinity. For Jacques Lacan, the gaze follows many points of light and the screen mediates these in order to reveal the subject of representation such that the gaze is behind the screen, as opposed to the screen being subject to the gazer's will (Lacan 107–108). For Laura Mulvey and related feminists, the gaze is mediated by the screen which produces subjects of representation (thereby confirming the presuppositions of the gazer) (Mulvey 17–18). However, Lacanians and feminists alike deploy the assumption that the gaze can ever view the subject of representation.[2] Drawing from Édouard Glissant, I propose instead that the gaze, despite claiming to see the subject of representation, misses the subject entirely because subjects (rendered as objects) in the totalizing gaze of the ego are displaced: they do not appear as possible or coherent (133). The item in view is not a subject at all, but an object the gaze has chosen to examine as an example of what they think the subject looks like. Such a formulation is dangerous in that it obfuscates the positioning of minoritarian bodies. Despite appearing to be revealed, they are mere avatars of themselves. The gazer believes they've seen the "subject" and depicted it accurately.[3] Worse than failing to represent the subject, the gaze presents simulacrums of real minoritarian concerns. The gazer's own biases unconsciously inform how their gaze decides what parts of the "subject" to see. Therefore, the gazer can tend to marginalized bodies in a cursory way by providing just enough lip service to feel good about themselves. But their mobilization efforts end there: at their lips. Henceforth, I will refer to individuals deploying such a totalizing gaze as guiltily masculine subjects, characterized primarily as agents who perform neoliberal, nonperformative acts and expect praise for their (sl)activism. As such, I take Freud and Preciado as departure points for characterizing guiltily masculine subjects.

While the conventional wisdom might read Sigmund Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* as purely theoretical, a more robust view rereads it as autotheoretical. Freud's analysis of his own dreams positions the theoretical claims he derives from them as both factual and yet shielded from criticism. He is the judge, jury, and executioner on their final meaning; the reader is thrust into believing everything the author asserts. He gains the reader's trust as he reflexively comments on how he, too, has doubted his choice to analyze certain dreams:

> When I recollected the dream in the course of the morning, I laughed outright and said, 'The dream is nonsense.' But . . . I reproached myself in these words: "If in the course of a dream-interpretation one of your patients could find nothing better to say than "That is nonsense," you would reprove him . . . (35).

Word choice is paramount. His reaction is personalized, not only by saying that he found the dream ridiculous, but that he "laughed outright." This aural invocation becomes subdued by the following sentence, its rationalized complement, "the dream is nonsense," which organizes the otherwise reckless, body-encompassing laughter invoked by Freud's affective reaction to himself. Such a dialectic—sound followed by speech (the latter, we know, is too often striating, structuring, suturing)—contrasts Glissant's belief that "the dispossessed man organized his speech by weaving it into the apparently meaningless texture of extreme noise," e.g., a scream, a cry, a shout, a shriek, a laugh (123–124). For the dispossessed, the aural subsumes the oral whereas the aural is only perfunctory for Freud; it serves the purpose of gaining the readers' trust. The laugh, then, becomes an important jumping-off point for conceptualizing guilty masculinity. While laughter can indicate a welcoming environment, Sara Ahmed teaches us that laughter can also appraise and normalize violence (245–246). Laughing at a sexist, racist, classist joke makes you *one of the boys*. Simultaneously, a refusal to laugh makes you a *no chill uptight bitch*. A laugh can be a dismissal, a normalization, or a minimization. Freud's seemingly innocuous laughter lulls the reader into a false sense of security: hindsight tells us that the interpretation following his laughter will influence a century of labeling subalterns as hysterical. Laughter as a trust-gaining technique remains repeated both outside of the psychoanalyst's home and within guiltily masculine circles.

Such a desire to analyze everything, even if it seems like "nonsense," points to the Freudian will to transparency which urges the patient (an already subalternized subject position) to shed their right to opacity. Freud's aforementioned dream goes on to form the basis for his belief that hesitation indicates that "we are dealing with an idea which [the patient is] trying to *repress*" (37). He proceeds to state that dream interpretation is uniquely poised to unearth repression given that "the stricter the domination of the censorship . . . the more ingenious the means employed to put the reader on the track of the actual meaning" (38). What, exactly, will revealing the wish do for the patient? Cure them of their so-called pathology? Returning to Glissant, we know that the right to opacity remains essential for dissident bodies to navigate, survive, and protect themselves in matrices of oppression that are increasingly interested in encroaching on personal and communal histories (Prabhu 88). Patients and subalterns don't need to share everything because it isn't productive for doctors and the State to retroactively construct an explanation for their behaviors.[4] Where Freud sees more and more information as instrumental to the "cure," Glissant sees a heightened sensitivity to sharing information as an antidote to the psychiatrist's will to make one's experience legible.

Convenient invisibility, however, can also be weaponized by guiltily masculine gazers to discount the work of minoritarian bodies. To explicate this, I turn to the work of Paul Preciado, a transgender man and white Spaniard[5] whose sheepish handling of conversations regarding race and queerness illustrates how masculinity as a power position transcends the gender binary.

Preciado explains how the pieces in his autotheoretical essay collection *An Apartment on Uranus* reflect both the political moments they were written in and his state of transition. For instance, approximately half of the original essays were attributed to "Beatriz Preciado," the other half to "Paul B. Preciado," and one, singular piece in the middle to "Beatriz Marcos." Instead of leaving the reader to find this out on their own, Preciado steadfastly charges into the discrepancy. He states that he initially decided to rename himself from "Beatriz" to "Marcos" following an open letter from Subcomandante Marcos claiming that "Marcos," the collective title for the revolutionary movement in Chiapas, had died. Preciado's choice was rebuked by activists who denounced his positionality as a white Spaniard attempting to appropriate a colonized group's revolutionary history. However, Preciado's recounting of this situation frames it differently: "they asserted that, as a white Spaniard, I could not bear the name Marcos . . . The Latin American activists were probably right. There was colonial arrogance, personal vanity in my action. But there was also a desperate search for protection" (*An Apartment on Uranus* 35). In the same paragraph where Preciado claims to fully acknowledge his "personal vanity," he swiftly undermines the activists' legitimacy. "Asserted" reframes the robust criticisms as mere allegations. "Probably" tells the reader that the comments were likely unsubstantiated. And capping the story with "but there was also a desperate search for protection" offers one final defense mechanism to justify his innocence. The choice to continually caveat his apology attests to how whiteness affords Preciado the ability to shapeshift through identities and the inability to recognize wrongdoing despite performatively doing so. He goes on to describe what he learned from the fiasco: "I would have to fight for my name" (35). A fight where a Spaniard kidnaps the name of a Mexican organization feels less like a fight and more like an exercise in white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. The choice to territorialize a brown collective's name appears irreverent at best and colonialist at worst.[6]

Furthermore, citation politics are at play when Preciado chooses to leave the critics unnamed and unattributed. By referring to them only as "the Latin American activists," he shields himself from readers investigating a public and significant criticism of his work. In the original comments, it is clear that not only are the activists in question speaking publicly[7] with their names—Mauro ï Cabral,

Max Lira, and Alain Versa—but there is also a comment from intersex activist Del LaGrace Volcano. Volcano's comment begins by thanking Cabral and Versa for their astute analysis before asking for a correction to the article: a photograph s/he took had been used without consent and posted without attribution. S/he explains that s/he found it "curious and inexplicable" that "a piece that is purporting to be about revolutionary tactics and actions behaves towards those who have dissenting opinions by total silence and/or dismissal" (Volcano). For as much as Preciado pontificates about intersex subjects (discussion of intersex children is the cornerstone of his broader theory of pharmacopornographics, so much so that they appear in *all* of his published books), he fails to cite an actual intersex person when the opportunity arises. It is, after all, much easier to theorize about communities than it is to engage with them. Preciado appears closer to an armchair philosopher than a dissident body dragging the analyst's couch into the streets.[8]

Preciado's encounter with the activists tells us a familiar tale: it is people of color that are at the helm of pushing anti-colonial movements forward because of their lived experiences with colonialism; it is living, breathing intersex bodies that are subject to the very medicalization that he repeatedly critiques. Of course, Preciado cannot understand what it is like to be left uncited. His shiny biography—Fulbright recipient, student of Jacques Derrida, Princeton PhD—alongside his corporal presentation—a white trans man who unquestionably passes—means his mind and body, at the time of his most important publications, largely do not occupy a precarious position. In this sense, guilty masculinity transgresses biological conceptions of maleness: everyone runs the risk of deploying an arrogant gaze. In Preciado's case, we can recognize that transitioning is an unending process while simultaneously acknowledging how class- and race-neutral it is to ignore how whiteness and access to prestigious higher education frame how his work is received, maintained, and lauded in the discourse. Guilty masculinity proves itself to be an intersectional framework that acknowledges how power flows in all sorts of directions, blurring demarcations between oppressed and oppressor.

What to make of this dismal terrain? Clearly, guilty masculinity informs the gazes deployed by some of the foremost thinkers of the last 100 years. Jack Halberstam began to shed light on this when he argued that "any queer theory that avoids the category of wildness runs the risk of reproducing the norms it critiques and stabilizing the system it seeks to unsettle" insofar as "queerness without wildness is just white homosexual desire out of the closet and in sync with a new normal" (39). Freud's insistence on his *tabula rasa* perspective and Preciado's inability to accept criticism of his colonialist name change demonstrate how "reproducing" and "stabilizing" norms happen via-à-via guilty masculinity. Such fidelity to normalcy while claiming deviance shows how guilty masculinity enables nonperformativity in so far as it begs for empty words to be rewarded—one immediately thinks of *good guys finish last* or *#NotAllMen*. Returning to Bad Bunny, it becomes clear that guilty masculinity enables subjects to reap the rewards of appearing progressive without materially disavowing one's fidelity to masculinity. As such, his kind of masculinity dodges accountability in favor of a supposed ignorance that is impossible for subalterns. While Freud might not have identified as homosexual and Preciado might not identify as white, both prove Halberstam's statement true: they embody "desire out of the closet and in sync with a new normal," that is, a normal they have uplifted in theory and practice. As such, if scholars wish to craft productive theories for understanding often messy networks of oppression, they must relinquish the impulse to assume the "subject" they believe they see is that subject in their fullness.

Endnotes

1 Broadly, "the gaze" here will be used to refer to the process by which subjects visually identify, cohere, and brand subjects/objects of view through their perception. This paper will explore psychoanalytic definitions of "the gaze" in broader detail; however, my foremost assumption is that "the gaze" is a site of power and meaning-making (either by the viewer or the subject/object in view).

2 A Lacanian might intervene here to argue that a more generous reading of "Of the Gaze as *Objet Petit A*" indicates that his revised conception of the mirror stage includes that the gaze *fails* to actually encapsulate the subject of representation, and it is through this failure that the subject iteratively comes to recognize their fundamental alienation. However, the Lacanian position still requires that the gaze has a subject to represent and see, even if it is a view of the fractured ego. Mulvey might argue that the subject in view is not the actual subject, but merely a confirmation of the gazer's assumptions; nevertheless, their view confirms that there is some visible (even if inaccurate) subject produced in the process of gazing.

3 To clarify, the "subject" here refers both to the type of oppression itself and the body affected by that oppression, but it is not the subject (in their fully opaque subjectivity, unencumbered by the totalizing effects of fascism on their positionality) themselves.

4 Freud would likely argue that explanations borne out of analysis cannot be retroactive because of the very distinction between manifest- and latent-dream content. However, while such a distinction might exist, he fails to provide a clear explanation for how the analyst can, with absolute certainty, distinguish between the two during treatment.

5 Importantly, "invisibility" is not synonymous with "unintelligibility." "Invisibility" might be a failure to cite or attribute—an action taken by the gazer—but "unintelligibility" remains rooted in opacity: a trait of the subject of representation.

6 It is apropos to mention here that Preciado enjoys deploying the word "anticolonial," so much so that it and its derivations appear a whopping 57 times in his 98 page-long book *Can the Monster Speak?*.

7 This phrasing draws from Preciado's decision to transition in the medical-legal context as discussed in *Can the Monster Speak?*: "And I chose. I said to myself: speak publicly." (33).

8 This phrasing draws from Preciado's demand on psychoanalysts in *Can the Monster Speak?*: "The time has come to drag the analysts' couches into the streets and collectivize speech, politicize bodies, debinarize gender and sexuality and decolonize the unconscious" (95).

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Saint Keith: Interrogating the Martyrdom of Keith Haring

Cecil Pulley, *Oberlin College*

Cecil Pulley is a senior at Oberlin College, majoring in Art History and Gender, Sexuality & Feminist Studies. Originally from Texas, he is passionate about studying queer and religious art. After graduating, Cecil plans to apply for an Art History doctorate program and eventually return to the south to teach art history through intersectional frameworks.

Abstract

In 1984, amidst his rise to celebrity status, street-turned-pop artist Keith Haring painted a rendition of St. Sebastian that utilized the symbol of planes to hint at a personal identification with the historically queered Christian martyr. This paper will interrogate the martyrdom of Haring, seemingly predicted and his own work, through an analysis of the cultural context surrounding Haring's death, his critical reception, his portrayal of St. Sebastian, and his personal journals. The popular and oversimplified understanding of Haring's life, which reduce Haring to his death from AIDS, serves to reconcile the art world's modern efforts to amplify marginalized voices and the continuous upholding of art historical tradition. This essay will discuss how and why theistic allusions and the constructed characterization of Haring as a martyr continue to prevail in discussions of the artist's career—and, by offering a nuanced reading of St. Sebastian, exhibit how individualized analyses of Haring's works can aid in modifying and problematizing these narratives.

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Keith Haring was an openly gay, street-turned-pop artist whose icons and boldly patterned style helped define the American visual language of the 1980s. Haring's wall drawings in the subways of New York in the late '70s propelled his career into success, and over the next decade he would go on to create art in a variety of mediums including consumable goods, balancing celebrity fame and creating widely recognizable and accessible art. Though his career was cut tragically short by his death from AIDS-related health complications in 1990, Haring's work remained prominent in the public sphere, due equally to museums and collectors and the variety of products that immortalize his iconic designs.[1]

The limited existing scholarship about Haring, meanwhile, has immortalized the artist himself—with critics and collaborators of Haring retrospectively presenting him as a modern-day martyr.[2] This generalizing narrative reduces Haring and his career to the circumstances of his death, and leaves many of Haring's works undiscussed in a critical lens other than that of AIDS. Considering this, my aims in this essay are twofold: I will first introduce examples of the phenomena of Haring's critical martyrdom and posit cultural factors that aided in this construction of the artist's legacy. I will then conduct a case study of Haring's painting *St. Sebastian* (1984) that closely examines the artist's own relationship to the topos of martyrdom and sainthood. My interpretation models the possibility of more nuanced readings of Haring's work that highlight important aspects of his career and life, such as his relationship with Christianity, rather than his death.

Following Haring's death in 1990, Haring's fans, critics and collaborators approached the artist's already widely publicized career with increased reverence, intensifying the public image of Haring as a radiant and endlessly giving spirit taken from the world too soon and inspiring allusions to martyrdom and sainthood in discussions of the artist's life. Critic Robert Pincus-Witten observes (and is absorbed into) this phenomena as he writes: "AIDS raised the stakes sky-high, suffused the ordinary with a sense of tragedy, and transformed Haring . . . ultimately into a figure of eleemosynary grandeur, *Saint Haring*."[3] These allusions are not limited to professional critics or any select audience of art enthusiasts, either—a similar sentiment prevails in today's modern lexicon; in the 2022 article in Daily Art Magazine that dubs Haring "Our Rainbow Angel,"[4] or a 2021 blog post from theologian Michael Wright that likens Haring to Christ,[5] for instance. Thus, existing literature and discussions on Haring from the last three decades perpetuates an idealized characterization of him and reduces the artist to the circumstances of his death. The unquestioned idealization of Haring lacks a critical consideration of the privileges of class, race, and gender that favored Haring in the professional art world, as well as the way legacies are intentionally (re)constructed to perpetuate these notions of privilege.

How did this idealized characterization of Haring come to be? The shifting cultural memory of AIDS and the unfolding of the American culture wars in the early 1990s, in conjunction with Haring's own identity, set the stage for critics of art to retrospectively nestle Haring and his body of work into a specific sociopolitical agenda that reconciled inclusivity and political awareness with the art-historical standard of the white, male, artistic genius or divine hero. The art world, trapped in the warring matrices of identity politics, respectability, and art historical tradition, turned to

Haring as the perfect subject of critical attention and transfigured the artist into a martyr.

AIDS and the social phenomena spurred by the disease encouraged the imposition of a morbid interpretive framework upon Haring's works and career which centers his death and its cause. Haring did not publicly confirm he had developed AIDS until an interview with *Rolling Stone* in 1989, and much of his work that overtly addresses AIDS were made around that time,[6] but despite a large majority of Haring's works not being about AIDS, he is remembered largely through association with the epidemic.[7] This may be in part due to the shifting cultural memory of AIDS during the "second wave" of the early '90s. With early developments in preventative medicine, discussions of AIDS became "in some sense normalized,"[8] and were marked by an odd, emerging culture of positivity fixated on dying young—a phenomena best exemplified by Jonathan Larson's musical *Rent* which centered much of its drama and romantic resolution around one the character's death from AIDS. Haring, with his "heightened artistic awareness [and] tragic yet romantic early death"[9] is a perfect figurehead of the "second wave" of AIDS. From the '90s to today, Haring's designs have been used and sold on products that retail AIDS awareness such as posters and buttons—making his work and identity synonymous with his death in a consumable, capitalizable form. Haring thus became a piece of the ongoing construction of a cultural memory surrounding the AIDS epidemic.

Simultaneously, the American culture wars[10] of the '90s—the dramatic polarization between conservative and progressive thought in politics and culture—ushered in new challenges for museums and the professional world of art to explore identity and political subjects in the public forum. In 1991, then-Senator Jesse Helms introduced an amendment to the National Endowment for the Arts (N.E.A) that would forbid the usage of grants in promoting obscene material in response to the N.E.A. funding an exhibit of sexually-explicit and homoerotic photography by Robert Mapplethorpe.[11] Amidst, perhaps feeding off interest from, or in response to this controversy, museums experimented with identity-forward and densely political exhibitions to mixed success. This is most famously exemplified by the Whitney's 1993 biennial, which reframed their traditional exhibition format by focusing on works of marginalized artists rather than a generalized survey of contemporary art, exploring themes such as racial inequality and queer sexuality.[12] White, male art critics especially "reviled" the exhibit,[13] but art critics and viewers alike nearly-unanimously critiqued the Biennial for its failure to generate productive discourse. Despite the exhibit's rupture to the traditional biennial format, its homogeneous presentation of politically-charged works resulted in an overbearing, "one-note" message that fell flat for much of its audience.

Understanding the impact of the AIDS and the culture wars on the shifting culture of art criticism in the '90s helps explain critics' oversimplification of Haring and his career. Keith Haring, his art, and his death offered a brightly colored, thickly outlined olive branch that could effectively reconcile the feud between identity politics, art historical tradition, and respectability: an openly gay artist whose expansive and widely appealing body of work could be cherry-picked enough to allude to politics without challenging the art-historical status quo. Haring's dancing figures and radiant babies—unlike the works of other gay artists such as David Wojnarowicz or Robert Mapplethorpe—are joyful, and child-like. When carefully curated, Haring's figures sit in a sweet spot between the orthodox ideal of art as visually-pleasing or healing of societal ills, and the progressivist ideal of art as an expression of the self and sociopolitical reality.[14]

The historical and cultural context of the '90s also offers explanation into the transfiguration of Haring into a modern-day martyr. In a critique of Whitney's 1993 biennial, Paul Richard describes the featured artists as "martyrs of the margin," and we see the same role being intentionally crafted onto Haring in exhibits of his work around the world since his death. Haring is all at once an artist, activist, sufferer and victim of AIDS, the latter which fulfills his "requirement for sainthood and cultural enlightenment."[15] His life and death are purposely propositioned as a fated narrative because making Haring a martyr allowed the art world to find solid ground amidst the tumultuous culture wars—atoning for the guilt of ostracizing queer art, mourn those lost to AIDS, and propelling the museum institution's push for inclusivity and political awareness, while still identifying a hero who could embody the white, male, artistic genius.

Problematizing Haring's effective "martyrdom" opens a door to reevaluating Haring's works and career with a new critical lens, one with an emphasis on biographical details beyond Haring's death. And, interestingly, specific works in Haring's oeuvre suggest that Haring was actively thinking about and taking inspiration from Christian narratives of sainthood and martyrdom during his lifetime, possibly finding a sense of self-identification with martyr subjects. When utilized as a case study, Haring's 1984 painting *St. Sebastian* (today in a private collection) can further nuance our understandings of Haring's legacy and challenge oversimplifications of his work as related to his death.

Painted with acrylic paint on a five-foot square canvas, Haring's *St. Sebastian* (Figure 1) depicts the well-known

Christian saint of the same name. Conforming to tradition, Haring depicts Sebastian tied to a tree and shot, an incident which he miraculously survives until a second attempt on his life where he is beheaded and successfully martyred. Haring's saint is painted in a strikingly bright, stop-sign red, with gangly limbs and a long neck that jut outwards and curve from its body in unnatural, disproportionate angles. Five white airplanes penetrate and wound the saint's body in place of traditional arrows.

Haring's representation of Sebastian follows a centuries-long history of the saint as a homoerotic artistic subject.[16] Representations of the saint in the mid-'80s and early '90s grappled with themes of the dehumanized homosexual male body and allegorized Sebastian's tied-up pose and role of a "martyr" as emblematic of the deaths of countless queer artists and activists, silenced by Reagan-era governmental neglect. Throughout the AIDS epidemic St. Sebastian served as a patron to and representation of those impacted by the disease, especially gay men who identified with Sebastian's demoralization in early modern history as a figure of narcissism and "perverse pleasure."[17] It is not difficult to initially read Haring's *St. Sebastian* within this context, especially in retrospect. Haring's painting was created when assumptions about AIDS that demonizing homosexuality were at an all-time high, and it is near impossible to overlook the visual connections between representations of diseased bodies and Haring's bald, gaunt Sebastian.

However, Haring's painting, completed in 1984, predates queer works that utilize the St. Sebastian subject in the late '80s and early '90s amidst the height of the AIDS epidemic,[18] as well as before Haring explicitly addressed AIDS in his own work or in his personal journals.[19] Though the looming presence of AIDS and AIDS-spurred homophobia may have actively been on Haring's mind in 1984 when he painted *St. Sebastian*, and thus may have influenced it, it may be more productive to consider alternative readings that account for other details of the painting. Haring's Sebastian departs from previous depictions of the saint by replacing the arrows penetrating his Sebastian with *airplanes*, specifically passenger airplanes. Based on information from Haring's journals and the context of his life and shifting career at the time he painted *St. Sebastian*, the planes can be read as an enigmatic symbol of Haring's understanding of himself and his work. This allows for an autobiographical reading of the painting that is identical to but precedes critics casting Haring into the role of a martyr or saint.

A piece of historic context that tempts a connection between *St. Sebastian* to the AIDS epidemic through planes is the historic myth of "Patient 0," a misunderstanding that blamed a gay, Canadian flight attendant for bringing HIV into the United States. The myth originated based on a study published in a medical journal the same year Haring painted *St. Sebastian*. Given the unlikelihood that Haring read this journal upon its publication in 1984, there is little reason to correlate the planes in the painting explicitly with the myth, and thus AIDS. Additional evidence further disqualifies AIDS-related reading of *St. Sebastian*. Other AIDS-era depictions of the saint generally lack this motif. Even more convincing, the relevance of air travel in Haring's life at the time *St. Sebastian* was painted disrupts the immediate idea that Haring is using the painting as an early commentary on AIDS and instead suggests a tie between the painting's subject and Haring's travels.

This is evidenced in Haring's personal journals.[20] By 1984, the year Haring painted *St. Sebastian*, the artist was two years into his first appearance on the international stage, and between 1982 and 1986 Haring found the most time to keep up with his journals while traveling the world for exhibits and public projects. His entries from plane trips during this time confront his newfound celebrity status and his mortality, speaking to a transitory period in which Haring began to closely consider the acquisition of celebrity status and the legacy of his artistic identity. In 1986, he writes: "flying on airplanes so much, I face the possibility of death every day."[21] In this same entry, Haring comments that "[His life] has been moving so quickly that the only record is airplane tickets" and postulates that "Someday I suppose these will constitute my biography."[22] Ticket stubs from flights around the world would serve to prove that Haring lived, and this proof will outlive him, while simultaneously this proof he is alive poses a threat to his safety. He confesses that he keeps his journals out of fear of his own death, because when he is gone, no one will be able to take his place or replace what he calls his one-person "movement"—his artistic and personal style, attitude, and principles.[23]

Haring describing himself as a movement directly recalls the travel and transit inexplicably connected with the first half of his career while revealing a level of self-awareness and active desire to immortalize himself and build a reputation for himself that is followed, not unlike that of a saint. In 1997, over a decade after *St. Sebastian* or any of Haring's journal entries, friend of Haring and actress Ann Magnuson unintentionally likened the artist to the subject of his own painting. Reflecting on Haring's earliest performance art pieces in New York, Magnuson writes that "Both stunned and defiant, Keith persevered until his tall, gangly body was covered with hundreds of invisible arrows of hippie scorn."[24] Magnuson's allusion asserts a connection between martyrdom and Haring's career while he is alive, describing how Haring's divinely-inspired status manifested in his overcoming of the negative crowds of his early

performance artworks, surviving an initial "death" to propel him towards success.

Considering these examples of journal entries and quotes, we can read *St. Sebastian* as autobiographical—a visualization of Haring grappling with the costs of his ever-expanding celebrity career and artistic success. By changing arrows to airplanes, Haring recalls instances of travel that embed themselves into his *body* of work. As he paints his own Sebastian, Haring is processing his place within the celebrity limelight and the looming weight of his queer identity, conscious of the fact that these challenges can propel him further. Retrospectively, Haring endured the arrows of the art world's scorn, emerging victorious to bless the world before being struck down once again in tragic glory. To critics and the general public, Haring successfully became the Saint Sebastian of art world through his death. However, Haring's own work reveals a more deeply interesting and nuanced origin to his identifications with the role of a martyr saint, one unbound from death and imaged by the artist himself.

Figure 1. Haring, Keith, "St. Sebastian," Acrylic on Canvas, 1984, Private Collection, Keith Haring artwork © Keith Haring Foundation.

Endnotes

1 For more on Haring see Haring, Keith. *Keith Haring Journals.* Penguin Books, 2010., John, Gruen. 1991. *Keith Haring: The Authorized Biography.* Prentice Hall Press., Simon, Doonan. 2021. *Lives of the Artists: Keith Haring.* London: Laurence King Publishing., Ricardo, Montez. 2020 *Keith Haring's Line: Race and the Performance of Desire.* Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv14t48m0.

2 See examples in the following paragraph likening Haring to a saint such as Pincus-Witten's quote. Specifically because of the artist's death (and the turn in critics' opinion/appreciation of his work that followed) Haring's legacy develops into that of a martyr as well (death is, after all, a prerequisite for martyrdom.)

3 Emphasis added. Robert, Pincus-Witten. "Keith R Us" in Elizabeth Sussman. 1997. *Keith Haring*. Whitney Museum of American Art, p. 254.

4 Emily, Lyu. "Remembering Keith Haring, Our Rainbow Angel." *DailyArt Magazine*, June 1, 2022. https://www.dailyartmagazine.com/pride-remembering-keith-haring/.

5 "His compassion for the weak and vulnerable, his critical eye to unjust systems, his celebration of the body and human dignity—this was all part of Haring's sensibility, and it's deeply Christ-like too . . ." Michael, Wright. "Keith Haring Was A Jesus Freak??" Still Life. tinyletter, March 8, 2021. https://tinyletter.com/still-life/letters/still-life-keith-haring-was-a-jesus-freak.

6 David, Sheff. "Keith Haring: An Intimate Conversation." *Rolling Stone*, August 10, 1989. https://www.haring.com/!/selected_writing/rolling-stone-1989. Works that explicitly grapple with AIDS include Haring's "Silence=Death" poster and a series of drawings from 1989 depicting a "devil sperm" emerging from sexual organs.

7 This may be best exemplified by the Haring sculpture, entitled *Self Portrait*, that stands in the center of the AIDS Garden in Chicago, Illinois. https://www.aidsgardenchicago.org/haring.

8 Marita, Sturken. 1997. *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering.* Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 163–168 See also Judith, Landau-Stanton and Colleen D. Clements. "Correcting AIDS Metaphors and Myths with a Systems Approach." In *AIDS, Health, and Mental Health*, pp. 3–28. Routledge, 2019.

9 Marita, Sturken. 1997. *Tangled Memories.* p. 167.

10 The term was coined by sociologist James Davison Hunter in his 1991 book *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*. New York: BasicBooks.

11 "Corn, Porn and the N.E.A." *The New York Times.* October 27, 1991 and James Davison, Hunter. 1991. *Culture Wars.* p. 231.

12 Bruce, Altshuler and Phaidon Press. 2008. *Exhibitions that made Art History.* London; New York, N.Y.: Phaidon. p. 311.

13 Ibid., 320–324 and Jerry, Saltz.

14 This divide in orthodox versus progressive views on the cultural role of art is also discussed in more detail by James Davison Hunter in *Culture Wars.*

15 Marita, Sturken. 1997. *Tangled Memories.* p. 163–168.

16 For more on the history of St. Sebastian as a homoerotic figure, see: Richard, Kaye. "Losing His Religion: Saint Sebastian as Contemporary Gay Martyr." 1996. In *Outlooks*, edited by Peter Horne and Reina Lewis, p. 86–105., Richard E, Spear. and Guido Reni. 1997. *The "Divine" Guido: Religion, Sex, Money, and Art in the World of Guido Reni.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press., Jason James, Hartford. 2018. *Sexuality, Iconography, and Fiction in French: Queering the Martyr.* Cham: Springer International Publishing. doi:10.1007/978-3-319-71903-0.

17 Marita, Sturken. 1997. *Tangled Memories.* p. 150..

18 See, Ron Athey's 1994 performance piece *HIV/AIDS Odyssey*, James McCourt's 1993 novel *Time Remaining* or, most notably, David Wojnarowicz's *Bad Moon Rising* (1989, Collection of Steve Johnson and Walter Sudol). St. Sebastian specifically was a frequent motif in Wojnarowicz's oeuvre, included in other earlier works such as *Yukio Mishima St Sebastian* (1983) and *Untitled (Brian as St. Sebastian)* (1979). The latter actually includes planes like Haring's, though they circle the subject's body while the original arrows are retained. Though Haring and Wojnarowicz knew one another, the work is a unique photograph from a collection of private correspondences, so it is unlikely Haring would be familiar with it.

19 Works such as Haring's "Silence=Death" poster and the series of drawings with the "devil sperm" from 1989. The journal entry that mentions AIDS is from July 7, 1986 and will be discussed further in this paper.

20 Haring began journaling as a student and continued to write entries throughout his life, spanning a collection of notebooks. Entries as early as 1978 mention Haring's art classes and various things he is reading or making for class at the School of Visual Arts in New York.

21 Keith, Haring. *Keith Haring Journals.* Penguin Books, 2010, p. 131.

22 Ibid., p. 128.

23 Ibid.

24 Ann Magnuson. "The Prime Time of Our Lives" in Elizabeth Sussman, *Keith Haring*. Whitney Museum of American Art, 1997, p. 124. Notably, both Pincus-Witten and Magnuson's selected comments come from pieces included in the Whitney's 1997 retrospective exhibit on Haring, one that has been criticized for its exaggerating praise and diluted narrative it conveys of Haring's life (See Adams, Brooks. "Keith Haring: Radiant Picaresque" *Art in America*, April 1998, p. 130 or, more recently, Ricardo, Montez. 2020. *Keith Haring's Line*, p. 19–22.) The retrospective was largely curated by the same woman who arranged the 1993 Whitney Biennial—Elisabeth Sussman. Interestingly, *St. Sebastian* appears (without any extra commentary) in the 1997 exhibit's catalog but was not actually featured in the exhibit itself!

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Imperial Preoccupations: A Black Internationalist Analysis of the Uses of ShotSpotter Globally

Amber Rahman, *Princeton University*

Amber Rahman is an undergraduate student at Princeton University in the African American Studies department on the Race and Public Policy track and pursuing a minor in Technology and Society. Her research focuses on assessing the uses of carceral and surveillance technologies within global systems of policing and incarceration. Amber is a research assistant in the Ida B. Wells Just Data Lab (www.thejustdatalab.com), which engages in abolitionist practices of utilizing data for justice. She has interned at the Surveillance Technology Oversight Project in NYC to resist surveillance against marginalized communities and with Amnesty Tech to assess global AI regulation trends. She is a student organizer with SPEAR (Students for Prison Education, Abolition, and Reform) and with the Princeton Committee on Palestine (PCP). She is currently living in Amman, Jordan.

Abstract

ShotSpotter is a faulty AI-powered acoustic gunshot detection technology used by over 120 police forces across the United States and U.S. military globally. These various carceral contexts led me to interrogate the central marketing claim of ShotSpotter: that it exists to reduce gun violence. I built upon Black Internationalism as a framework for my analysis, which refers to a tradition of Black resistance in the U.S. that understood how the police are fundamentally agents of a U.S. empire that is maintained and expanded by oppressing people of color within the imperial core and abroad, particularly by occupying territory. Therefore, ShotSpotter is a case study through which we can understand how carceral technologies of imperialism help maintain and expand this imperial project of occupying territory globally. By close reading against the grain of a ShotSpotter gunshot detection technology whitepaper comparing police and military uses of the product, I offer the term *imperial pre-occupations* to illustrate how prediction (pre-) is a tool for the occupation of racialized communities and policing racialized populations is a preoccupation of the imperial state domestically and internationally to maintain and expand its power. By situating how ShotSpotter functions as an imperial tool both internal and external to the U.S. empire, a portal to envision and enact transnational resistance against ShotSpotter emerges.

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In 2014, the acoustic gunshot detection company ShotSpotter sent out a whitepaper directed at potential customers titled "Gunshot Technology—Hammers or Pliers? Depends on the task at hand."[1] This 11-page paper, written by the company, compares police and military uses of its gunshot detection technology to market its services to possible customers—naming them as different tools in the same toolbox: hammers or pliers.[2] The writers likely work as engineers at ShotSpotter because they utilize highly technical descriptions of how acoustic gunshot detection works throughout the whitepaper to compare its uses by police and military. The whitepaper calls upon possible customers to decide which "tool," or kind of ShotSpotter technology use, suits their needs. The existing and prospective customers of ShotSpotter are mostly governmental agencies—particularly police and military—but the actual names of these agencies are generally hidden from the public. This obfuscation works to protect them from organized movements against them. Whitepapers like this one are not meant to reach the public; they are to be shared only with possible customers: carceral institutions. In fact, as of January 2024, it is not possible to search for this whitepaper on the Internet as it has been removed from the ShotSpotter website, possibly to avoid public knowledge of its military use.[3] However, by publishing this whitepaper, the company reveals a direct relationship between police and military in expanding and upholding U.S. empire globally and the company's role in enabling these systems on different terrains of combat. The relationality revealed through this whitepaper is incredibly useful for abolitionist, anti-militarist organizers as it is one of the few times in which the company publicly acknowledges military uses of the technology. Therefore, is all the more important to analyze this whitepaper to understand how ShotSpotter leverages police and military geographies and contexts to maximize power and harm against people of color as a tool of U.S. empire.

ShotSpotter, a faulty AI-powered acoustic gunshot detection "precision policing technology," is used by over 120 police forces across the United States.[4] The company markets this technology to "law enforcement and security forces across the globe," including the United States, South Africa, Jamaica, Uruguay, the Bahamas, and, as of 2021, occupied Palestine.[5] ShotSpotter's scope extends beyond

police departments: it is also used, has been tested, and is funded by the U.S. federal government, including the FBI and U.S. army.[6] ShotSpotter, which relies on secretly placed microphones to "detect" gunshot noises through a process that involves both artificial intelligence and human review to send police to the scene, is almost entirely deployed within communities of color across the United States and against people of color globally because it "predicts" their supposed criminality.[7]

Therefore, investigating and exposing the (dis)functionalities, entanglements with carceral systems, and harms of ShotSpotter helps to disempower it and dismantle the central marketing claim of ShotSpotter: that it exists to reduce gun violence. What does the ShotSpotter whitepaper reveal about how ShotSpotter functions as a tool of U.S. empire globally through its different geographic uses, from the Southside of Chicago to U.S. military bases globally to occupied Palestine, all locations in which ShotSpotter has been deployed? What does the case of ShotSpotter reveal about the relationship between the police and military in expanding and maintaining U.S. empire? Other scholars have drawn critical connections between technology and carcerality,[8] but the following question remains: how do transnational practices of policing and militarism motivate and shape carceral tech development?

To answer these questions, I will use a methodology of close reading against the grain of language used to market the technology to (governmental) customers to analyze the ShotSpotter "Hammers or Pliers: Depends on the Task at Hand" whitepaper. To make sense of how ShotSpotter's origins in a U.S. local policing context directly shape its utility in a U.S. military context, I will utilize a theoretical framework of Black Internationalist thought. In this paper, this term refers to a critical moment within this tradition of Black resistance in the U.S. that connects the struggles of Black people *internal* to the American empire to the struggles of the "Third World" or people of color outside the U.S. towards decolonization and against neocolonialism. During a critical period of U.S. imperial violence globally, particularly the Vietnam War, the 1960s and 1970s Black Power movement flourished, and Black Internationalist freedom fighters and organizations from Malcolm X to the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) to the Black Panther Party rejected the ways in which civil rights activists use non-violent civil disobedience to appeal to the state for full citizenship, inclusion, and equal participation within the United States.[9]

Instead, they understood how the police are fundamentally *agents* of a U.S. empire that is maintained and expanded by oppressing people of color within the imperial core *and* abroad, making carcerality intimately bound up with empire and Black liberation intimately connected to anti-imperialism. Black Internationalism teaches us that policing, militarizing, and occupying people of color outside the U.S. is just as foundational to U.S. empire as the same violence's against people of color, particularly Black people, internal to U.S. empire. I choose to refer to this critical historical period because of how foundational it was to cultivating anti-imperialist politics *from* the imperial core and linking the violence of U.S. empire locally and globally, which is generally absent from movements against carceral technologies today in the United States.

The Panthers understood the police "as occupying our community like a foreign troop that occupies territory," and challenged the carceral state through anti-imperialist politics.[10] Therefore, the police and military are inseparable and one and the same as they seek to "occupy territory" (i.e., land) to occupy and control people, and ShotSpotter aids these systems in achieving this goal. Building on this analysis, I created the term *imperial pre-occupations* to illustrate how prediction (pre-) by carceral technologies is a tool for occupation and controlling racialized populations is a preoccupation of the state domestically and internationally, utilizing the ShotSpotter gunshot detection technology whitepaper as a case study.

ShotSpotter maintains and expands carceral control of oppressed people globally by functionally weaponizing space and occupying territory in order be profitable from contracts with imperial governments. And the state benefits at the same time by using this technology to deploy police to criminalize, control, contain, and occupy Black and Brown lives in their own neighborhoods globally. Race and technology scholar Ruha Benjamin writes how racialized containment enables technological innovation, and containment is an important framing for carceral tech like ShotSpotter, because only certain racialized groups are contained within geographic spaces and deemed disposable to *test* technologies that would not otherwise be used against wealthy, white people, what I call *experimental pre-occupations.*[11] I use the term experimental pre-occupations to illustrate a fundamental aspect of imperial pre-occupations where racialized and disregarded populations are testing grounds for carceral tools because they are contained by the state through a focus on ShotSpotter. Scholars Anthony Lowenstein in his book *The Palestine Laboratory* (2023) and Samera Esmeir expose a deadly profit-making system in which technologies are experimented on Palestinians before being marketed and sold globally as "battle tested."[12] However, ShotSpotter is a critical example of a tool that was first developed against Black and Brown people in the U.S., then exported and further experimented with globally.[13]

The premise of this whitepaper reveals that this tool ShotSpotter can be mobilized to many different, but ultimately related ends, whether it be military base protection outside the U.S. or supposedly detecting gunshots in U.S. cities. The authors write, "For example, a soldier on the battlefield needs to know the direction and approximate distance of whoever is firing at her. By contrast, a police captain needs to know what gunfire is happening anywhere across a big city."[14] The "soldier" described here is likely located in the Middle East as this technology was used primarily in the global War on Terror according to a U.S. Army article from 2007 describing how ShotSpotter was being tested by U.S. Joint Forces Command (USJFCOM), which was a branch of the military tasked with counterterrorism and counterinsurgency discontinued in 2011.[15] In 2011, the U.S. military also deployed—for the first time—over 13,000 gunshot detection sensors on body armor in Afghanistan to detect "hostile fire" and "ensure that every Soldier is protected."[16] This temporal context of the War on Terror is evidenced by the (limited) language used to describe the "enemy" by the U.S. army as an "enemy combatant," a term created during the War on Terror by the Bush office to justify extralegal military torture of Muslims globally.[17] ShotSpotter's role in the global War on Terror is meaningful as it is one of the most murderous periods of U.S. imperial violence in the history of the country.[18]

The whitepaper is almost entirely focused on the spatial and acoustic mechanics of gunshot detection. When the authors describe how the technology reads different kinds of sounds of snipers in the spatial geography of a military base, it raises the questions of *who is the enemy? Does the "enemy" actually have snipers?* The U.S. military certainly does, but does the "enemy"? There seems to be a purposeful evasion of describing who exactly an "assailant" is even though it is the language repeatedly used to describe the intended target of the technology, which is an implicit privileging of the narrative of the U.S. military. Because the soldier is located in a geography that is much more proximate, enclosed, and targeted (like a military base), ShotSpotter in this case is described as a "counter-sniper technology." The technology was piloted to be worn on soldiers themselves or on trucks rather than microphones placed on top of streetlights meant to surveil a wide area. This difference is underscored by the "trade-off" described in the conclusion of the whitepaper:

> For military counter-sniper use, such seconds matter, and therefore ShotSpotter's use in military contexts is limited to base and other large area protection. But in an urban environment, those 2–3 seconds provide ShotSpotter with unequalled accuracy and information, making the slight delay well worth it.[19]

This "trade-off" is differentiated by the spatial geography of each context: urban vs. military. But what happens when urban and military are and become one and the same, either through the militarization of U.S. police, or the presence of the U.S. military in urban environments they turn into warzones globally?[20] In one study on integrating ShotSpotter sensors with drones (which is now used in Occupied Palestine), the authors Elliot and Thompson wrote that it was an "impressive and powerful tool that could help our troops tremendously," particularly because of the "urban, asymmetric warfare that our military is likely to continue to face in the future."[21] Telecommunications scholar Andrea Miller builds on Black Internationalist ideas of occupied territory by emphasizing how the weaponization of space and "territorial enclosure" is central to the functionality of carceral, colonial technologies.[22] Territorial enclosure, like containment, is achieved by surveilling geographies 24/7 with these ShotSpotter microphones and sending police to terrorize those areas in less than one minute. Space is then rendered "criminogenic—so saturated with racialized threat that persons within those spaces cannot be otherwise than suspect," as Miller writes.[23] This same goal of territorial enclosure is revealed in the way "seconds matter" differently for ShotSpotter in locating the "enemy" target in *both* contexts. The microphones preemptively create a territorial enclosure where U.S. soldiers can target "insurgents." The reference to a future of urban, asymmetric military warfare by Elliot and Thompson also signals the utility of using a tool first developed to be used in U.S. urban policing contexts in a military environment external to the U.S. Racialized and occupied populations of U.S. cities are testing grounds for and serve as experimental pre-occupations for ShotSpotter's use abroad by the U.S. military.

The authors of the ShotSpotter whitepaper use deliberately technical, evasive, and confusing language to describe what the technology is used *for* as a tactic of covering up its role in imperial violence, even if they describe in detail the *mechanics* of the technology, writing "to put it another way, counter-sniper technology makes an a priori assumption that the counter-sniper sensor will be deployed in the line of fire."[24] This quote refers to the fact that ShotSpotter sensors in this military context are tools of war to be used in military crossfire. In this context, the central purpose of the technology is to assist U.S. soldiers in locating the "approximate location" of "insurgents" and "enemy combatants" to maintain "base defense," not to prevent gun violence or protect U.S. soldiers from injury, which the technology is marketed to do.[25] This is technology used to help U.S. soldiers better target their *own* snipers to murder people of color globally on territory they are occupying in order to expand U.S. empire.

Critically reading the ShotSpotter whitepaper reveals how U.S. imperial militarism and local policing actually shape each other, a relationship that is severely under-researched.[26] The writers of the whitepaper repeatedly use the word "different" to describe U.S. "urban" policing and U.S. military action. Yet both systems are about locating an "enemy" on different terrains of combat. The authors use militaristic language like "deployment" to describe ShotSpotter's use by police forces on U.S. streets: "For example, many of our deployments cover 10 square miles or more of complex urban environments."[27] What does the term "urban" signal? "Complex urban environments" are U.S. city streets, particularly Black and Brown neighborhoods, yet this is not explicitly defined in the paper, which evidences the way in which ShotSpotter understands city streets as militarized enemy terrain and uses knowledge from targeting U.S. city streets to inform their military technology development.[28]

ShotSpotter's language around its police uses comes across as militarized through its emphasis on "precision" and "targeting," yet, as I mentioned earlier, ShotSpotter was a law enforcement technology before it became a military one. A U.S. army article from 2007 describes how although ShotSpotter was "originally designed for use in law enforcement, military use of the product has come about only recently and with the help of USJFCOM, who has been evaluating ShotSpotter since 2004."[29] Instead of understanding ShotSpotter as a tool of militarizing the police, it is also important to see that it not only is the other way around, but they are symbiotic and deeply related systems both engaged in the project of empire by occupying territory and people, just on different terrains of combat. The necessity to challenge these technologies, and therefore challenge empire, is imperative.

Endnotes

1 The company referenced has since been renamed SoundThinking, likely because of targeted campaigns across the United States against its ShotSpotter gunshot detection product that had the same name as the company. Because of this corporate attempt to avoid accountability, I choose to use the original name of the company, ShotSpotter, in this paper.

2 "ShotSpotter Whitepaper: Gunshot Technology—Hammers or Pliers? Depends on the Task at Hand," September 2, 2014, https://www.shotspotter.com/system/content-uploads/mediakit/Gunshot-detection-WP.pdf.

3 "Page Not Found," SoundThinking, accessed January 15, 2024, https://www.shotspotter.com/blog/gunshot-technology-hammers-or-pliers-depends-on-the-task-at-hand/.

4 "End Police Surveillance: Research Findings," End Police Surveillance, accessed December 15, 2023, https://endpolicesurveillance.com/research-findings/.

5 Airobotics; ShotSpotter, "Airobotics and ShotSpotter Partner to Offer Integrated Gunshot Detection and Real-Time Aerial Video to Help Save Lives and Deter Crime in Israel," accessed November 15, 2022, https://www.prnewswire.com/il/news-releases/airobotics-and-shotspotter-partner-to-offer-integrated-gunshot-detection-and-real-time-aerial-video-to-help-save-lives-and-deter-crime-in-israel-301446362.html.

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7 "Confidential Document Reveals Key Human Role in Gunshot Tech," AP NEWS, January 20, 2023, https://apnews.com/article/shotspotter-artificial-intelligence-investigation-9cb47bbfb565dc3ef110f92ac7f83862; Todd Feathers, "Gunshot-Detecting Tech Is Summoning Armed Police to Black Neighborhoods," *Vice* (blog), July 19, 2021, https://www.vice.com/en/article/88nd3z/gunshot-detecting-tech-is-summoning-armed-police-to-black-neighborhoods; "End Police Surveillance: Burden on Communities of Color," End Police Surveillance, accessed December 15, 2023, https://endpolicesurveillance.com/burden-on-communities-of-color/; Dell Cameron, "US Justice Department Urged to Investigate Gunshot Detector Purchases," *Wired*, September 28, 2023, https://www.wired.com/story/shotspotter-doj-letter-epic/.

8 Ruha Benjamin, *Race After Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code* (Medford, MA: Polity, 2019); Sarah Brayne, *Predict and Surveil: Data, Discretion, and the Future of Policing* (Oxford University Press, 2021); Andrew Guthrie Ferguson, *The Rise of Big Data Policing*, 2017, https://nyupress.org/9781479892822/the-rise-of-big-data-policing; *Unwarranted: Policing Without Permission a Book by Barry Friedman*, 2018, https://bookshop. org/p/books/unwarranted-policing-without-permission-barry-friedman/7282274. MA: Polity, 2019.

9 Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin Jr, *Black Against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party, With a New Preface*, 2016.

10 Ibid., 46.

11 Ruha Benjamin, "Catching Our Breath: Critical Race STS and the Carceral Imagination," *Engaging Science, Technology, and Society* 2 (July 1, 2016): 150, https://doi.org/10.17351/ests2016.70.

12 Antony Loewenstein, *The Palestine Laboratory: How Israel Exports the Technology of Occupation Around the World* (London New York: Verso, 2023); Samera Esmeir, "Colonial Experiments in Gaza," Jadaliyya–جدلية, July 14, 2014, https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/27434.

13 "Company," SoundThinking, accessed January 16, 2024, https://www.soundthinking.com/company/.

14 "ShotSpotter Whitepaper: Gunshot Technology—Hammers or Pliers? Depends on the Task at Hand."

15 "Command Helps Test New Gun Shot Location System."

16 Kris Osborn, "Army Deploying 'Individual Gunshot Detector' | Article | The United States Army," March 15, 2011, https://www.army.mil/article/53292/army_deploying_individual_gunshot_detector.

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17 "The term enemy combatant is a concept creating an extraordinary legal status with specific rules that were established by President George W. Bush's Administration to describe the combatants suspected of having supported or participated in armed and/or terrorist activities against

the United States. The term "enemy combatant" has therefore been used by U.S. military authorities to detain suspects, indefinitely and without charge. The extraordinary status that accompanies the concept of "enemy combatant" has allowed the U.S. military to override the rules of international law and deny the detained suspects the rights and protections granted to prisoners of war by the Third Geneva Convention of 1949." in "Enemy Combatant," LII / Legal Information Institute, accessed November 23, 2022, https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/enemy_combatant.

18 "Human Costs of U.S. Post-9/11 Wars: Direct War Deaths in Major War Zones | Figures | Costs of War," The Costs of War, accessed January 17, 2024, https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/figures/2021/WarDeathToll.

19 "ShotSpotter Whitepaper: Gunshot Technology—Hammers or Pliers? Depends on the Task at Hand," 11.

20 This question becomes extremely relevant when we turn our attention to the current #StopCopCity movement against the building of a police training facility to prepare them for "urban warfare" in the Weelaunee forest in Southeast Atlanta.

21 Elliot and Thompson, "Comparison of 'Functional Concept of Battlespace Awareness' Versus the Concept of 'Power to the Edge,' with a Focus on Integrating Shotspotter Sensors and Unmanned Arial Vehicles," 55.

22 Andrea Miller, "Shadows of War, Traces of Policing: THE WEAPONIZATION OF SPACE AND THE SENSIBLE IN PREEMPTION," in *Captivating Technology*, ed. Ruha Benjamin, Race, Carceral Technoscience, and Liberatory Imagination in Everyday Life (Duke University Press, 2019), 90, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11sn78h.9.

23 Miller, 96.

24 "ShotSpotter Whitepaper: Gunshot Technology—Hammers or Pliers? Depends on the Task at Hand," 4.

25 "Command Helps Test New Gun Shot Location System."

26 Anthropologist Laurence Ralph's scholarship on how torture in Chicago police custody and at Guantanamo Bay was committed by some of the same people using similar practices reveals the not only theoretical but tangible, direct overlap between these systems that builds on Black Internationalist frameworks: Laurence Ralph, "Alibi: The Extralegal Force Embedded in the Law (United States)," in *Writing the World of Policing: The Difference Ethnography Makes*, ed. Didier Fassin (University of Chicago Press, 2017), 5, https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226497785.003.0012.

27 "ShotSpotter Whitepaper: Gunshot Technology—Hammers or Pliers? Depends on the Task at Hand."

28 "Our next generation of rapid deployment solutions will help both law enforcement and now homeland security agencies respond quickly to the rapidly changing threats facing us today. In addition, *our urban gunshot detection solutions for the military* provide the same proven gunshot detection and location technology in a ruggedized system designed for the harsh realities of modern combat conditions." in "Shotspotter, Inc–About ShotSpotter," December 8, 2003, https://web.archive.org/web/20031208035430/http://shotspotter.com/about.shtml.

29 "Command Helps Test New Gun Shot Location System."

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Resisting Violence in Chicago's Antiblack Homotopia: Black LGBTQ+ Space-Making, Challenging the Digital Archive, and Employing the Ordinary

Marc Ridgell, *Washington University in St. Louis*

Marc Ridgell graduated from Washington University in St. Louis in May 2023 as a Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellow, where they majored in African and African American Studies and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and pursued a minor in Sociology. Marc completed an honors thesis in African and African American Studies on Black LGBTQ+ communities' forms of resistance in Chicago and New York City. In fall 2023, Marc began a PhD program in Africana Studies at the University of Pennsylvania.

Abstract

For decades, Black trans and queer communities across U.S. cities have experienced exclusion from gay neighborhoods, policing and interpersonal violence in neighborhoods more generally, and medical racism within public health crises. Despite this oppression, Black LGBTQ+ people have still performed resistance to build community and experience better worlds. This article examines how Black LGBTQ+ Chicagoans resisted legacies of violence in Boystown, Chicago's gay neighborhood, through a recorded protest-performance in summer 2020. First, this project is in conversation with scholars who have transformed the canonical idea of "the right to the city," considering how queer people of color have uniquely navigated and challenged urban inequalities. Second, this article challenges the haunted legacies of surveillance in the digital media archive. Lastly, this article engages with Kemi Adeyemi's method of the "Black Queer Ordinary" to emphasize that future research on Black LGBTQ+ life should work against academic and media surveillance.

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Introduction

In June 2020, Black trans and queer people[1] participated in a prideful protest of performance, erotic sensuality, and barricade in Boystown, Chicago's gay neighborhood.[2] Black LGBTQ+ Chicagoans pridefully stopped, taunted, hopped on, and twerked on a police car. This performance was recorded and uploaded to YouTube by an account named "Insane Films," and they titled the video "Black LGBTQ Kids Fighting Their Oppressors As They Take Back Boystown." This video signified the ongoing Black queer responses to systemic antiblackness and carceral violence beyond and within Chicago. For instance, this performance happened in summer 2020, around the time when police murdered Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and Tony McDade, and deaths related to COVID-19 disparities proliferated in Black communities.[3] Even the video's title alludes to the 2011 "Take Back Boystown" (TBB) events that happened in Boystown, which were neighborhood protests that intended to limit the "sudden uptick" in the gayborhood's burglaries and assaults in summer 2011, despite the crime rates displaying no statistically significant rise in crime.[4] As Jay Orne highlighted, TBB was an attempt to rid Boystown of its Black trans and queer youth visitors, who have historically frequented the neighborhood for its queer-friendly scene and social services.[5]

Gayborhoods as "Antiblack Homotopias"

Boystown became a white gayborhood when (mostly) white gay men settled in this North Side enclave in the 1980s. These men displaced the surrounding Puerto Rican community through gay gentrification, and the city designated the current Lakeview area as a "gay neighborhood" by the late 1990s.[6] This city-designation as a "gayborhood" has ensured that Boystown receives development projects and that LGBTQ+ resources and social services are located there and receive privatized funding.[7] These social services have primarily served vulnerable populations across Chicago's South and West Sides, including Black queer youth who are unhoused and/or need sexual health resources. Housing practices and resource inaccessibility are not limited to the gayborhood; rather, these forms of systemic oppression speak to how the city—as a neoliberal geographic entity—has historically disregarded the needs of Black LGBTQ+ populations and amplifies their intersectional vulnerabilities to violence, policing, and exclusion.[8]

Existing literature on gayborhoods like Boystown showcase that gayborhoods, while places of queer life and community, can simultaneously act as what I call "antiblack homotopias," sexually queer yet homonormative[9] places that still foster antiblack racism, misogyny, and transphobia under a fragile guise of "geographic community."[10] This article builds from this scholarship, focusing on the relationship between the Chicago as a neoliberal city and Boystown as a functioning microcosm of the city's violence. Taking seriously Marlon Bailey and Rashad Shabazz's notion that "Black queer space . . . is placeless, a space without geographic coordinates," if most Black queer and trans Chicagoans cannot claim Boystown as a site of residence or full safety, then both the antiblack homotopia and the city at

large co-conspire to inflict the structural violence that they experience.[11]

Reading Urban Black LGBTQ+ Resistance: Transforming "The Right to the City" and Challenging the Politics of Resistance

While greater Chicago and smaller Boystown have indeed inflicted violence against Black LGBTQ+ Chicagoans, I argue that these Black LGBTQ+ Chicagoans from summer 2020 used performance and space-making to resist the violent extra-judicial legacies of the 2011 TBB events. Specifically, I analyze how this recorded protest-performance actualizes a Black queer "right to," "refusal of," or "revolution against" Chicago.[12]

This idea of "resisting the city" is intellectually credited to scholars Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey's foundational notion of "the right to the city," which theorizes that marginalized people living in urban places do have the right and capacity to transform their disenfranchised landscapes.[13] This article is in conversation with contemporary scholars who transform the "right to the city," considering the unique and sometimes overlooked avenues that queer and trans people of color have expressed their right to, or rather refusal of, their city and its accompanied forms of violence.[14]

While I illustrate "resistance" in this article, I also challenge the material consequences of surveillance within the digital archive and academia, as both the media and the academy have long exploited minoritarian people for their resistive work against oppressive structures. Thus, I think with critical ethnographer Kemi Adeyemi's method of the "Black Queer Ordinary." Working in archival tandem with the Black Queer Ordinary, this article does not offer a comparison between different forms of resistance but rather contributes to scholarship that expands how we think of "productive" and "legible" forms of resistance against urbanized neoliberalism. Resistance has been epistemically understood through group action, organizable legibility, coalition, and formal engagement with political structures. What this article attempts to do is not reinscribe these historically standardized conceptions of resistance. Instead, I regard and speculate upon different analytical registers of resistance—including their potential nonproductivity—and address the material stakes for those who do resist—the vulnerable peoples subject to media surveillance and academic consumption.[15]

Black Queer Space-Making in (Re)claiming Boystown

The YouTube video, uploaded by Insane Films, begins with young Black queer people shouting, laughing, and jumping up and down while facing a Chicago police car, with a policeman parked inside of it. A Black queer person wearing a Bulls jersey jumps up and down on the hood of the car. Inspired by their performance, two other Black queers–both dressed in white t-shirts and gray shorts–start twerking on opposite ends of the car. Other Black queers and queers of color join in and begin to dance as well, waving their pride flags; some Black queers even lay across the car, shaking their buttocks back and forth. When another Black queer shakes their buttocks again and whips their hair, the policeman turns on the car's sirens. When the twerking becomes more pronounced, the cop rings the sirens multiple times. While the police siren has historically represented a sound and image of emergency and carceral-ity for Black people, these Black queer protestors use the siren as soundtrack for their performance instead. Next, these protestors back away from the cop car, as the same policeman motions for them to move out of the street. The perspective from which the viewer films these Black queers becomes larger than the initial visual field of the half-city block. The camera pans to many more youthful Black queer protestors outside the 7-Eleven across the street. The camera then shows the protestors blockading the entire street, holding up traffic. Two of the three initial Black queers who seized the police car began climbing up and twerking in front of a Chicago Transit Authority bus.

The Black LGBTQ+ individuals in this video showcase Black queer space-m¡aking practices within the antiblack homotopia of Boystown. Black queer space-making consists of "critical shade," refuses the social order with excessive Black queer ontology, resists homonormative space-time, and honors Black LGBTQ+ youth violated from the 2011 TBB events.

In his research on Black queer performance in ballroom culture, Marlon Bailey explains that space-making is "the practices that Black [LGBTQ+] people undertake to support their non-normative sexual identities, embodiments, and community values and practices."[16] When these Black queer people confront a carceral and pro-homonormative Chicago, they engage in Black queer space-making through a collective Black queer performance like twerking and "being loud." This performative space-making consists of what Tavia Nyong'o theorizes as "critical shade," the act of performing both for and against the camera, while staying astutely aware to dominating outside forces like the spectator and the violent social order.[17] These Black trans and queer youth enact critical shade by twerking and dancing for yet against all cameras and cops within (and outside of) their visual field.

Additionally, the sexual embodiment and erotic *affect* of this performance "excessively" ruins the heteronormative

and homonormative bounds of acceptable behavior within the social order of the antiblack homotopia and city, necessitating the heightened police presence and furthering the annoyance of residents, business owners, and drivers.[18] Adeyemi's focus on these slow potentialities of Black queer space-time attunes the viewer to the temporal.[19] As such, these small acts of holding up traffic, slowing the police's objectives, inconveniencing the quiet and comfortability of the surrounding community, and halting the fast pace of productive capitalist behavior hold a moment for recent Black deaths and perform against the broken promises of the failing, neoliberal city. Indeed, these protestors/performers pause late-stage capitalist and homonormative space-time by inflicting Black queer space-time, a form of refusal that relies on communal support and performative confrontation against the carceral state. As mentioned previously, the video title alludes to the 2011 TBB events itself, claiming that these young Black queers are now the ones *actually* taking back Boystown. The same police that Boystown residents and business owners utilize as surveillance tools against Black trans and queer people were now being ridiculed by them. Overall, these performers protest vibrantly and happily through dance, laughing, physical bombardment, and without fear.

Precarious Implications of Media Surveillance

While I used analytical methods to understand how and why Black LGBTQ+ Chicagoans resisted the cop's carceral oversight, these performative protestors did not necessarily consent to the posting this video.

The user behind the account "Insane Films" is a white gay person[20] who is not relatively popular on YouTube, and he posts politically satirical content and comments on topics in queer popular culture. "Insane Films" only has 6.3 thousand subscribers, while the protest video, titled "Black LGBTQ Kids Fighting Their Oppressors As They Take Back Boystown," received 30 thousand views. The titling of the video also signifies that Black LGBTQ youth are in an inherent *oppressed* position. If the actual Black LGBTQ youth in that video had the opportunity to title it, I ask: would have they used the same language? I also question: Did these same youth even know about the 2011 Take Back Boystown events, considering it happened a decade earlier? Or are Black LGBTQ+ youth generationally participating in a continual extra-judicial battle with Boystown's antiblack homotopian environment?

In her analysis on antiblack surveillance technologies within the archive of slavery, theorist Simone Browne questions her own reading practices: "do my reading practices act to reinscribe violence and a remaking of Blackness, and Black bodies, as objectified?"[21] I foreground this important question to challenge my romanticized analysis of their digitized resistance, as this romanticization is tied to a longer history in which the media and its viewers surveil Black and Black queer communities and expose them to further violence. This is not to say that Black trans and queer displays of resistance are not valuable, as they are, and that is why this article valorizes their power. This is also not to say that the user "Insane Films" had bad intentions, as I believe that he may have even wanted to use his racial privilege and social platform to uplift the type of Black trans and queer worldmaking displayed in this powerful protest. However, in my own interpretations of agency, I must address the haunted legacies of the digital archive that overconsume Black LGBTQ+ people's bodies and modes of activism. In particular, I am reminded of how five queers of color featured in *Paris is Burning* were "found dead" within five years of when Jennie Livingston released it.[22] I also think of the activists in the streets of Ferguson, MO who were "found dead" after Michael Brown's murder, especially given the heightened media coverage.[23] Black and Black queer people are already subjected to surveillance as is, and digital technologies, as well as the analyses of them, can exacerbate their intersectional vulnerabilities to violence.

Conclusion: Trans-Centric Necessity and a Move Toward the "Black Queer Ordinary"

Alongside these precarious implications of digital surveillance exist fatal realities for Black trans lives in particular. Six months after this protest, Courtney "Eshay" Key, a Black trans woman, was murdered on Chicago's South Side. Loved by both her biological and chosen families, the city's police—who claim to "protect" its citizens from "crime"—failed Eshay.[24] Eshay's murder happened under the current neoliberal state of Chicago's sociopolitical landscape, one that claims to be diverse, safe, and welcoming for LGBTQ+ populations, especially given how residents have idolized previous mayoral figures like Lori Lightfoot.[25] Eshay's death also occurred within a larger field of antiblack violence that cyclically necessitates scholar Cathy Cohen's earlier call to expand the definition of "queer" beyond rigid boundaries of identity.[26] For example, Black cisgender women and girls in Chicago have been experiencing a racialized femicide unaddressed by the state to this day, alongside the violence that Black trans and gender-expansive people encounter.[27]

Adeyemi argues that, for Black LGBTQ+ people living under neoliberalism, "near-death is [an ordinary] quasi-event that is intimately entangled with the joys of release at a weekly party. . . ."[28] Similarly, this prideful protest-performance in 2020 had occurred in response to or in spatiotemporal accordance with quotidian Black death or near-death experiences, including but not limited to

anti-trans violence, police brutality, and public health fatalities. Black LGBTQ+ activism compounded with the continual tragedies of Black trans death, among other barriers and forms of violence, create realities of affective exhaustion for Black trans and queer populations. While Black LGBTQ+ people twerking on a cop car in heavily-policed antiblack homotopias help us envision a quasi-revolution against neoliberal exclusion and homonormative time, scholars should now incorporate two practices into future research methodologies to better care for the affective needs of Black LGBTQ+ populations. First, using methods like CTDA to question surveillance within the digital archive, like I employed earlier in this article, is necessary. Second, as I will explain below, future scholarship should grapple with the "event-potentiality matrix" and move with a methodology of the Black Queer Ordinary, centering Black trans and/or femme experiences.

When scholars solely romanticize the spectacular and fatal realities of Black trans and queer life, they reproduce what Adeyemi also calls the "event-potentiality matrix." This event-potentiality matrix occurs when academia expects that "Black queerness be productive, that it works, that it makes our research go, that it makes our learning . . . valuable."[29] Thus, regarding the protest of displayed resistance, I ask: would the lives of these Black trans and queer people be less valuable if they chose to stop protesting because cameras were out? Would Black trans and queer people's livelihoods be less valuable if they did not organize against the police at all, particularly against the traditional analytics that the academy and media have historically conceptualized resistance?

To challenge this "event-potentiality matrix," Adeyemi built from scholars like Savannah Shange and Shaka McGlotten to theorize the "Black Queer Ordinary" as a methodology. As Adeyemi writes, an interpretive project for scholars of minoritarian communities should valorize the "subtle, quieter, less public, often invisible, and entirely ordinary modes of living Black life [that] are [usually] devalued as seemingly carrying less political force."[30] For future scholarship that engages the Black Queer Ordinary, prioritizing trans lives, and of course the lives of cis women and nonbinary people, is critical. Marquis Bey, for instance, found that current neoliberal U.S. cultures collapse trans and non-normative sexual identities into the acronym "LGBT," silencing anti-trans violence in society.[31] This collapsing of "LGBT" experiences can also happen within this methodology, when quotidian Black trans people's and women's experiences with urban life should be most specified and protected in research.

Employing this method in one's fieldwork centers their Black trans and queer research participants' livelihoods. Challenging the event-potentiality matrix and using the Black Queer Ordinary—like I have attempted to do in this article—do not devalue the significance of studying Black LGBTQ+ resistance. Instead, this method will intellectually uplift forms of Black queer and trans resistance that exist outside the bounds of academic legibility, media spectacularity, and epistemically prioritized modes of organized political action. This method also works for material futures where the most vulnerable Black LGBTQ+ people—Black trans people and queer women—do not have to constantly worry about, experience, and/or resist violence, but can rather live safely and serendipitously.

Endnotes

1 In this article, I use variations of "Black trans and queer people" to describe Black people's whose gender and sexual identities have deviated from cisheteronormativity. "Black trans and queer," "Black LGBTQ+" and "Black queer" both interchangeably refer to all Black people across non-normative gender and sexual identities. When specifying Black trans and/or nonbinary people, I use terms like "Black trans," "Black nonbinary" or "Black gender-expansive."

2 Insane Films, "Black LGBTQ Kids Fighting Their Oppressors As They Take Back Boystown." I refer to "gay neighborhood" and "gayborhood" interchangeably from this point on.

3 Taylor, "Of Course There are Protests."; Reyes, "The Disproportionate Impact of COVID-19 on African Americans."

4 Orne, *Boystown*, 196.

5 Ibid., 196–200.

6 Ghaziani, *There Goes the Gayborhood?*; Greene, "Gay Neighborhoods and the Rights of the Vicarious Citizen"; and Stewart-Winter, "The Law and Order Origins of Urban Gay Politics."

7 Ghaziani, *There Goes the Gayborhood?*; Orne, *Boystown;* Beam, "Gay Inc."

8 Lefebvre, "The Right to the City"; Harvey, "The Right to the City"; "Adeyemi, "The Practice of Slowness" and *Feels Right*.

9 "Homonormativity" represents assimilation practices that some queer people embody. It is the usage of heteronormative ideologies and practices to advance queer politics, participate in neoliberal-capitalism, and become more normative to represent the "ideal western citizen." "Homonormative" time is a timeline of life that prioritizes heteronormative events, like marriage, reproduction, and a corporate clock. On "homonormativity" and homonormative time, see Duggan, "The New Homonormativity"; Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*.

10 My framework of "antiblack homotopia" builds from scholars' Marlon Bailey and Rashad Shabazz's notion of the "antiblack heterotopia," which are "placeless" geographies that Black gender and sexual minorities perform labor and experience heteronormative marginalization from both nonblack and Black communities. For more on "antiblack heterotopias," see Bailey and Shabazz, "Editorial: Gender and sexual geographies of Blackness."

11 Bailey and Shabazz, "Editorial: Gender and sexual geographies of Blackness."

12 While "resistance," "right to," "refusal of," and "revolution against" can all signify different forms of political action against oppression, this article is not concerned with differentiating these forms of action. While I build from "the right to the city" model and use the term "resistance" primarily in this article, I list these different ways of conceptualizing political action to provide the reader definitional breadth for the capacious politics and forms of actions that Black queer people inflict against oppressive structures in urban places.

13 Lefebvre, "The Right to the City"; Harvey, *Rebel Cities*.

14 For queer/trans of color adaptions of the model of "the right to the city," see Walker, "Toward a FIERCE Nomadology"; Greene, "Gay Neighborhoods and the Rights of the Vicarious Citizen"; Adeyemi, "The Practice of Slowness"; Whitley, "We Call Them *Bandos.*"

15 While I use Adeyemi's method of the Black Queer Ordinary to understand the digital archive, I also cite Andre Brock and his method of "critical technocultural discourse analysis" (CTDA), as it is useful in prioritizing the standpoint of Black (queer) people and considering how they use navigate digital media. Employing CTDA as a method also thus requires a holistic approach in reviewing who distributes the material. See Brock, *Distributed Blackness*.

16 Bailey, *Butch Queens Up in Pumps*, 146.

17 Nyong'o, *Afro-Fabulations*, 92.

18 Fleetwood, *Troubling Vision*. Nicole Fleetwood's theory of "excess flesh" is useful in understanding how Black femme and queer subjectivities can disrupt notions of respectability in homonormative environments.

19 Adeyemi, "The Practice of Slowness."

20 While I have used he/him pronouns to describe "Insane Films," I am not sure of his actual gender identity nor pronouns. I have based my assumption of reviewing his other YouTube videos.

21 Browne, *Dark Matters*, 67.

22 Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*; Keeling, "Looking for M—." I cite theorists Jack Halberstam and Kara Keeling because they both gently critique films like *Paris is Building* for its legacy of visual exploitation against queer youth of color. This essay is also interested in Halberstam and Keeling's notions of (Black) queer temporalities, which are heavily severed by media-induced and visual forms of surveillance.

23 Dickson, "Mysterious Deaths Leave Ferguson Activists 'On Pins and Needles.'"

24 Fry, "Courtney Key was found dead on Christmas, shot in the head and dragged by a car."

25 Táíwò, *Elite Capture*, 40. I cite Táíwò's work to emphasize the danger of identity politics and idolization of political figures *just* because they have marginalized identities.

26 Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens."

27 Padilla, "Silenced Prey."

28 Adeyemi, *Feels Right*, 103.

29 Ibid., 101.

30 Ibid., 107. I understand that this article was a minor attempt to work with aspects of the Black Queer Ordinary that could not be all fleshed out in a small, pointed article for the *MMUF Journal*. I wanted to use this method with my preexisting thesis work and plan to employ this method and its critical ways of thinking more deeply in my future research as a doctoral student.

31 Bey, "Trouble Genders."

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'Til Death and My Properties Do Us Part: Elite Indigenous Women's Wills and Testaments in Early New Spain

Jasmine Salas-Arteaga, *University of Southern California*

Jasmine Salas-Arteaga graduated from the University of Southern California, majoring in History. Jasmine has dedicated her research to how race, gender, and intersectionality concern Mexican history in the seventeenth century. Jasmine is applying to gain teaching experience while applying to doctoral programs in American studies or History.

Abstract

In this excerpt from Chapter 1 of my thesis, I investigate the early New Spain, colonial archive to trace Indigenous women's navigations of Central Valley Mexico in the late sixteenth century. Rather than recycling the narrative that Indigenous women were subject to colonial rule, I determine that they moved into the New Spain world as independent historical actors. Through wills and testaments left behind by women of economic stature, I unearth how Indigenous women asserted agency in a post-Spanish contact world by participating in Catholic rituals and recording wills by Church standards. In this, women exercised agency—even though not allowed to learn to read or write—to ensure the safety of their loved ones, resist gender roles, and safeguard their property when they neared death.

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In my project I reconsider Nahua (Nahuatl-speaking Indigenous people of Central Valley Mexico) men and women, not as colonized subjects in New Spain that had phenomena *just happen* to them, but as those that exercised situational-agency in moments to escape religious persecution and/or experience social mobility. My project stems from a conceptual tool coined by Arunima Datta from their historical work in the Indian Ocean. In their work on Malaya, Datta investigates the strategies of survival through decision-making made by indentured Indian women in a Colonial world while inserting agency into the conversation: "Making the effort to better their situation, these women demonstrated the situational-agency which colonial and anti-colonial discourses denied them, even if such fleeting agency might only lead to escaping one situation of oppression before being threatened by another."[1] Despite these colonial legacies of Indian and Nahua women are separated by oceans, it is important to reconsider and reconceptualize women recorded in a colonial archive. These archives, not designed to include colonized stories, must be asked different questions to reassign agency to those that left their mark in the archive in the ways that were possible to be recorded.

Nahua agency shows up differently in the archive. In some cases, it appears more explicitly through acts of resistance in the historical archive, such as retaining Indigenous language and spiritual customs, and refusals to baptize, which are branded as resistance and an assertion of agency.[2] However, I expand on this in my undergraduate thesis as I cover the course of approximately a hundred years. Even in these hundred years, as the Catholic Church grew in power churches were built and Spanish record-keeping systems were established, this did not erase the opportunity to assert agency and act as independent historical agents. Assimilation to Catholicism is usually understood as colonial power being successful, where Indigenous bodies are being controlled, and managed, on the route to being "civilized." Yet, how Nahua women and men showed compliance diversified their survival techniques in New Spain where the Catholic Church grew in power. Indigenous people turned to religious piety and participation in Catholic institutions to escape moments of suppression and to make themselves distinct from the Spanish inhabitants. This excerpt from the first chapter of my research does a deeper exploration of the exercise of Nahua women's agency within wills and land testaments.

Wills and Land Testaments

Nahua woman, Ana Juana of Santa Ana Tlacuilocan, is on the brink of death. Following the typical procedure, an Indigenous notary came to record her last wishes and document how she wanted to divide her properties. Some Nahua men and six native women witnessed this ritual. Maybe it was the level of ease at the sight of fellow women as some of her witnesses, or perhaps it was her brewing resentment towards her husband, but as recorded in her testament, Ana Juana speaks ill of her husband. She prohibits her husband from bothering her son and declares that he is not to inherit any of her money or belongings after her death. Dutifully writing down Ana Juana's wishes, Juan San Pedro, the notary, also scribbles down her references to her husband as an evil man and unreliable with money.[3] Often, women like Doña María Ximenez and Isabel Moetuczoma spoke respectfully of their husbands and, even in most cases yielded some power for the wife's burial and other belongings in their wills; Ana Juana does not follow this pattern.[4]

Indigenous women's presence is scarce in pre-Hispanic documents, a state of affairs that continued in Colonial Mexico. However, in New Spain (Mexico under Spanish rule) in the late sixteenth century, there was a surge in the production of documents such as land testaments, land grants, and censuses. In these sources, Indigenous elite

women, because of their socio-economic standing and material wealth, were able to etch their presence in the myriad of land grants and testaments that were created in the early Colonial period in Mexico. Although documented, recorded, and heard by male notaries, these documents can be used to tell us what these women valued, thought, or believed in.

In this era of conversions, merely decades after the Conquest, there were moments in the archive that captured Indigenous women exercising agency within approaching-death conditions.

Nahua women engaged in more Catholic practices than their male counterparts in New Spain, including the recording of wills. Importantly, they were barred from learning to read and write, but they labored in churches, assumed positions as servants, and even assisted Franciscan Friars.[5] Some would even teach catechism and look after the poor and the sick.[6] Naturally, when it came to the recording of wills, Nahua women were more religious in their wishes, often requesting special burials, masses, and donations to the Church.[7] However, their religious dedication is not a marker of colonial success, but rather, an assertion of agency. In this period, I argue that with the growing presence of the Catholic Church, women used wills to resist gender roles and negotiate with the Catholic Church to ensure the safety of their properties and those that they were survived by.

Before the Spanish Conquest of the region, we now call Mexico, the Mexica (Aztecs) had their system of inheritance. The parallel organization of gender in the Mexica empire has been carried over to this system. *Bilateral inheritance*, a term coined by historian Susan Kellogg, describes how both men and women of the empire had an equal right to inheritance from their parents. The term itself refers to how the Mexica conceived of both the father and mother as equally contributing to a child's conception, as both provided bodily fluids. This notion also organized the rights of their children after they were born. In essence, both men and women could hold and inherit property independently; even in marriage, women retained their independent ownership of wealth and land.[8] Women of the Mexica empire were regarded as economically independent from their spouses; even dowries or inheritance from their parents solely belonged to them.[9]

A land testament, synonymous with a will, was an innovation that crossed the Atlantic with the Spaniards and penetrated the Americas. Serving proof of ownership of land through the process of a notary documenting the properties and material goods of an individual, a testament functioned to transfer property from one individual to their surviving family members. For a land testament, the property or properties would be listed as would the names of the individuals who lived on those properties, and the names of those the property would be transferred to upon the owner's death. The formula for both Spanish and Indigenous notaries wrote the place, date, governmental body, authority head, members of the local cabildo (council), notary name, and the soon-to-be deceased's name and wishes.[10]

Don't Touch My Property, Spaniards

A crucial element to consider that raised the stakes for the creation of legal documents for land and material belongings was the new competitive dynamic between the Spaniards and the elite Indigenous nobles. For both party's economic interests in land and cheap labor, Spaniards and Indigenous elite feuded for both land and laborers from the lower classes.[11] This competition led to an increase in the demand for grants and other legal documents to prove what land belonged to whom. As Spanish nobility became competitors for land and capital in New Spain, Indigenous nobles tried to prevent the Spanish from getting the upper hand. It was common in other parts of Mexico, such as Oaxaca and Tlaxcala, for Indigenous elites to keep properties in their possession, and this anxiety would appear in testaments. This concern was warranted, as many of the elite were perceiving, in real-time, the decline in nobility and the Spanish buying more and more of their land.[12] Both Nahua women and men were united in this dilemma and used their testaments to declare that their properties were not to be handed over to non-Nahua people.

Some Nahua women would explicitly address Spaniards in their testament, forbidding them to take their property in the event of their death. In the case of Doña María Juárez of Culhuacan, she forbade her properties to be sold to the Spanish in the event of her death. In one instance in regards to her *chinampa* (plots of arable land), María states "And Spaniards are not to buy these chinampas that I mentioned, but only inhabitants of the *altepetl* [city-state] here."[13] Later, about her fields with peach trees, María declares that "No Spaniard is to buy [the field], but likewise only the inhabitants of the *altepetl* here."[14] In these selections of her testament, Doña María Juárez distinguishes herself from Spaniards as she uses one of her last wishes to refuse to sell land to the Spanish, which by no means be seen as favorable to the Spanish population in New Spain. Motivated to safeguard her agricultural plots, María risked Spanish disapproval, which undoubtedly becomes an example of her moving as an independent historical actor reacting to her environment.

This inclination to protect the land from non-Nahua peoples was not just exhibited by women; this was also an

anxiety among elite Indigenous men. In a testament left behind by Don Toribio Cortés in 1559 Cuernavaca, he is explicit on his deathbed that his lands were to be divided among his nephews and grandchildren and, importantly, anyone who is not purely Indigenous had no right to his property: "Never is someone to speak about it, nor is someone to evict them [or] appropriate the land, never a Spaniard, nor a mestizo, nor a mulatto, nor a priest, for it is really our property, altepetl land."[15] As purely Indigenous people only had the right to access Toribio Cortés' land, his request for restrictions on his land exhibits his grasp on the pre-Conquest way. His demands illuminate conceptions of land and community that were made up of a series of Nahua peoples and neighboring *altepeme* (city-states), not a New Spain heterogeneous population.

Establishing Authority

It was common for women to cede power and property over to their husbands in the event of their passing. For Doña María Ximenez, she yielded power to her husband to decide where she was to be buried as it was not an anomaly for a wife to entrust her spouse to decide where to place her deceased body.[16] However, not all women did this in their testaments; at times, women used land grants and wills to exhibit more authority in their legal documents. In exercising agency within the context of their wills and testaments, these women pushed against the patriarchal frames of society.

Even in cases where the notary had a heavier hand in interpreting land transactions, some women, like Ana of San Miguel, left traces of establishing authority. In the narrativized Nahuatl document requesting a land transfer, Ana speaks on behalf of her husband to lords of the native cabildo asking for land. As she follows her duties of cooking for the guests by making tortillas for her husband, brother, and local Indigenous Lords, Ana leads the discussion, requesting land that she and her husband want. Additionally, Ana instructs her older brother to serve tortillas to the Lords instead of herself: "Then Ana spoke to and said to her older brother, 'Give them tortillas, let them enjoy them.'"[17] Leading into negotiations, Ana dominates the conversation: "Ana came in and addressed herself to them, saying to them, 'It is really no reason that he summoned you. Here is what we beg, that we might request a bit of the land of our precious father the saint San Miguel."[18] Demonstrating an assertion of control and authority, Ana is recorded to have led negotiations for the approval of the land grant, moving beyond the tradition of New Spain. In this narrativization, Ana moves as an independent agent, especially in a room where she is the only woman.

Additionally, in most testaments, married Nahua women do not denounce their husbands; Ana Juana's testament deviates from this. Ana Juana of Santa Ana Tlacuilocan, documented September 16, 1580, demonstrates a level of resistance to the Spanish structure and procedures of the testaments. Straying from the typical formula of listing properties and belongings and which family member(s) are to receive them, tensions towards Ana Juana's husband bubbled to the surface: "And here is what I say concerning my husband named Gabriel Itzmalli, who is a great villain. Let him never bother my son, nor accuse him of anything. I do not know how many debts he has. He never gave me anything at all."[19]Ana Juana in front of her witnesses, discloses how she views her husband, Itzmalli, in a negative light. She claims to have paid for her husband's debts and later illustrates her husband's unreliability: "And my husband asked me for a peso and said, 'I am going to get fruit with it,' and he just collected it and didn't buy the fruit."[20] Given that testament are not in the spur of the moment, it can be surmised that the demands of the Nahua woman not only fended for her belongings but also ensured the safety of her son in the event of her passing. Ana Juana left a mark on her testament to counter the patriarchal structure of speaking respectfully about one's husband in a will and expressing her frustrations through this Spanish-structured forum to be heard and recorded.

Conclusion

Participation in Catholic rituals was a significant form of exercising one's situational agency. Moving into compromised communities with many Churches being built, and new competition with Spanish elites, Nahua women used wills to protect their landholdings and even at times, their loved ones. In this cultural transition, we owe upper-class Nahua women their ability to adapt to this environment, as they used this New Spain system to try to maintain power. Indubitably, these women left a mark in the early archive of New Spain in the ways that it was possible for an Indigenous woman with some economic stature. Even if these assertions of the agency were not used to better their chances of survival—since they were approaching death—they adapted for the sake of their belongings, those that they would be survived by, and sometimes resisted gender roles on their deathbed. In the larger context of the detecting Nahua agency in the early Colonial archive, even forms of compliance exhibit that these individuals made decisions as independent historical agents. Although this archive can mislead one to think that documents such as wills and land testaments would not capture moments of situational agency, a reinterpretation determines that Nahua people used these as tools for their benefit in a quickly changing environment.

Endnotes

1 Arunima Datta. *Fleeting Agencies: A Social History of Indian Coolie Women in British Malaya*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2021, p 20.

2 Cheryl Claassen and Laura Ammon. *Religion in Sixteenth-Century Mexico: A Guide to Aztec and Catholic Beliefs and Practices*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2022, https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009000383, p 61.

3 Matthew Restall, et al. *Mesoamerican Voices: Native-Language Writings from Colonial Mexico, Oaxaca, Yucatan, and Guatemala*. Cambridge University Press, 2005, p 138–39.

4 Their testaments will be analyzed in this chapter. Both Moetuczoma and Ximenez yielded power to their husbands, as recorded in their testaments, to decide where to bury their bodies when they die.

5 Jonathan, Truitt. "Courting Catholicism: Nahua Women and the Catholic Church in Colonial Mexico City." *Ethnohistory*, vol. 57, no. 3, 2010, p 417.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid., 421.

8 Susan Kellogg. "The Woman's Room: Some Aspects of Gender Relations in Tenochtitlan in the Late Pre-Hispanic Period." *Ethnohistory: the Bulletin of the Ohio Valley Historic Indian Conference*, vol. 42, no. 4, 1995, pp. 563–76.

9 Susan Kellogg. "From Parallel to Equivalent to Separate but Unequal: Tenochca Mexica Women, 1500–1700." In *Indian Women in Early Mexico*, edited by Susan Schroeder, Stephanie Wood, and Robert Haskett. Norman, Okla., 1997. See pages 123–143.

10 Barbara E. Mundy. "The Emergence of Alphabetic Writing: Tlahcuiloh and Escribano in Sixteenth-Century Mexico." *The Americas*, vol. 77, no. 3, 2020, pp 406–07.

11 Matthew Restall, et al. "Household and Land." *Mesoamerican Voices: Native-Language Writings from Colonial Mexico, Oaxaca, Yucatan, and Guatemala*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2005, pp. 11–21.

12 Ibid., 102–3.

13 Ibid., 105.

14 Ibid.

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17 Matthew Restall, et al. *Mesoamerican Voices: Native-Language Writings from Colonial Mexico, Oaxaca, Yucatan, and Guatemala.* Cambridge University Press, 2005, p 101.

18 Ibid., 102.

19 Ibid., 138–139.

20 Ibid., 139.

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The Puerto Rican Panopticon: A Literary Analysis of Foucauldian and Althusserian Discipline Discourse in Puerto Rican Contemporary Literature

Pat Santalices-Torres, *University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras*

Pat Santalices-Torres is an undergraduate student at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras campus, double majoring in Comparative Literature and English Literature, with a minor concentration in Women and Gender Studies. Their research interests have consistently addressed identity development within diverse Caribbean contextualities, often focusing on marginalized and underrepresented groups. As a current Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellow, they are performing interdisciplinary research on the influence of contextual signifiers in the development of Puerto Rican identities. They have also worked with Rutgers University as a research intern, Archivo General de Puerto Rico as a volunteer, and UPR Caribe Digital as a DH Fellow. During the fall of 2024, they intend to start graduate studies on Latin American and Caribbean cultures.

Abstract

Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison (1977) by Michel Foucault, as well as *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (1970) by Louis Althusser, are two texts widely recognized for their theorizations on vigilance and surveillance as instruments of prevailing power structures through the creation of a Panopticon. Given the neocolonialist dynamics in the Caribbean, especially in Puerto Rico, authoritarian symbols have negligently navigated power structures, creating mass disregard to their positions. Through a new historicism literary analysis of contemporary Puerto Rican literature, I build a text and context comparison between Foucauldian and Althusserian discipline theories and Luis Negrón's *Mundo Cruel* (2010) as well as Cezzane Cardona's *Levittown Mon Amour* (2018) to portray the transgressive persuasiveness of these local narratives in creating a satirical paradigm of opposition. I insist on the failure of power structures on the Island as the palpable manifestations of disregard, formulating the Panopticon and disciplinary society as soluble concepts on the reality of Puerto Rico. Through this exposure, I highlight the urgency to construct new theoretical frameworks that reconsider failed State structures within Puerto Rico and the greater Caribbean, while also arguing against the naturalization of European theoretical contributions.

Introduction

Troubled by the vigilance imposed on society, multiple mediatic and theoretical expressions have amplified concerns on State surveillance by addressing the lack of privacy in the prevailing systematic structure. Amongst the most popular figurations assembled through literature to picture this tendency is George Orwell's dystopian novel *1984* (1949). Through the imaginary personification of State vigilance, Orwell creates *Big Brother*, a literary symbol associated with control that, by way of altering reality, reinforces discipline to ensure societal functioning (Thorp 1984). Theoretical efforts in academic forums have also manifested disquietudes around the formidable idea of being perpetually scrutinized by the State to arrange societal performance. In his regarded theoretical work *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison* (1977), Michel Foucault introduces surveillance as a key element in the construction of disciplinary societies. Through a realistic portrayal of security measures enforced during the seventeenth century to manage the Great Plague, Foucault describes the notions of order, discipline, and control in the context of vigilance as methods to maintain power structures. Using Jeremy Bentham's terminology of the *Panopticon*, Foucault argues that by creating a state of permanent visibility in the inmate, Prison officials protect their power structure and secure inmate discipline (Foucault 1975).

Michel Foucault's theory of the *Panopticon* can be comprehended outside the literal dimensions of the Prison. In relation to other theoretical contributions, like Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser's State ideological apparatuses, the *Panopticon* can be understood as the State's mechanism to ensure its power by way of vigilance. That is, that the *Panopticon* tower, in disciplinary societies, is a metaphorical representation of the State. Louis Althusser suggests that disciplinary societies are built upon the repressive vigilance of a State body. Whether by way of physical repression, like the police, or by way of ideological repression, like the family structure, the State's task of vigilance ensures the utility of discipline within societal arrangements. As both theories interact, they ultimately establish the components of a disciplinary society ruled by the *Panopticon*, or State vigilance.

Despite the use of Michel Foucault's discipline discourses alongside Louis Althusser's repressive mechanisms as consistent theories regardless of the variables of time and space, there are particular societal scenarios that contradict the statements proposed by both individuals. Situating the *Panopticon*'s vigilance as a mechanism for disciplinary society in the context of Puerto Rico, Michel Foucault's construction of a disciplinary society lacks consistency. Historical incidents at the Island expose the incapacity of the State's task of vigilance in creating a disciplinary society. Consequently, specific Puerto Rican contemporary literary pieces have portrayed scenarios that contradict Michel Foucault's theory surrounding discipline, vigilance, and punishment as apparatuses of the *Panopticon* by exposing the incapacity of the State in its repressive role.

Using the context provided above, it is evident that the identification of gaps that Althusserian and Foucauldian discipline discourses sustain is a primordial concern. In such manner, the upcoming scholarship could generate new

theoretical frameworks that dismantle pre-established notions of disciplinary mechanisms by addressing the relevance of localized theories. Hence, this article navigates the narrative strategies of Luis Negrón's *Mundo Cruel* (2010) and Cezanne Cardona's *Levittown Mon Amour* (2018) in their task of exposing the State apparatus' incapacity of power repression, and how this incapacity exposes a gap within Michel Foucault's *Panopticon* and disciplinary society. Both Puerto Rican authors question the capacity of the State in repressing individuals towards corporeal docility by satirizing State representations within their narrations. In this way, they create characterizations that expose a gap in Foucauldian disciplinary discourse. First, I provide a sociohistorical framework that pre-date each text. Then, I complete a new historicism literary analysis of one text of each author to highlight the representation of State authority and the approaches to satirize their failure. Alongside this literary analysis, I complete a text and context comparison: both authors are put in the context of Foucauldian disciplinary discourse, supported by Althusserian State ideological apparatuses, to expose the contradictions proposed. This exposure provides a base to analyze discipline mechanisms within State failure. Similarly, it will uncover the necessity for new theoretical approaches that analyze discipline, repression, and control within failed State bodies in Puerto Rico and the greater Caribbean. This analysis will serve as a contribution to the urgent decentralization of European theories as consistent frameworks across barriers of time and space.

La Isla del (Des) Encanto: Puerto Rico in the Twenty-first Century

At the beginning of the 21st century, Puerto Rico traversed multiple scenarios that began to fracture the exemplary model of modernism that the Island once held. Tensions between the United States colonial establishment and Puerto Rico were feverish due to the unconstitutional actions committed by the first. Given the colonial affiliation Puerto Rico holds with the United States, the municipality of Vieques forcefully operated as a Naval Training range for U.S. Marine Corps, an operation that displaced the community that already lived there. Described by Pedro Cardona-Roig for Glendalys Valdés-González as "a scene of war . . . a kind of place that simulated conflict with live munitions and bullets (2022)," Vieques was the recipient of an amalgam of chemical materials. The Island's effort to expel the United States Marine Corps reached its peak in February of 2000 when thousands of people overtook the busiest avenue of the metropolitan area with the protest "Paz para Vieques" (Paralitici 2016). A year later, the Island of Puerto Rico celebrated the election of Sila María Calderón, the first and only woman to democratically reach this position. Near the culmination of her term, the National Basketball Team celebrated their victory against the Dream Team of United States in the National Olympics at Greece. States Philip Arroyo on this that "Puerto Ricans of all political affiliations and socioeconomic backgrounds came together and celebrated in the wake of one of the most incredible and proud moments in the history of Puerto Rico" (Arroyo). The victory of Sila María Calderón in 2001, along the expulsion of the U.S. Marine Corps outside of Vieques in 2003 and the defeat of the United States Basketball Team in 2004, transformed societal dynamics on the Island. The colonial relationship that the United States held with Puerto Rico began to dissolve from an ideological standpoint, for the subversion of roles between colonizer and colonized did not have a solid mold. Such subversion did not last long; the U.S. reclaimed its authority through violent actions. On September 23 of 2005, the leader of Ejército Popular Boricua, Filiberto Ojeda Ríos, was brutally murdered in his home by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) of the United States (Soto Bermúdez 2014). Says Vilma Soto Bermúdez:

> On Friday, September 23, 2005, while the 137 years of our feat of independence against Spain were commemorated, the Grito de Lares, the figureheads and sepoys of the regime, to be exact, the FBI, surrounded the home of comrade Filiberto Ojeda Ríos, commander in the clandestinity of the Boricua-Macheteros Popular Army. They fired more than 100 bullets. (Soto Bermúdez)

Besides the troubled dynamics between the United States and Puerto Rico, the rise of the new decade was also contaminated by the economic recession of the late years of 2010. In 2006, Puerto Rico faced a budget deficit of $738 million for the closing fiscal year. Upon that context, former governor of Puerto Rico Anibal Acevedo Vilá decided to close the Island's government for a period of fourteen days. Said Acevedo Vilá in a nationwide televised announcement: "Beginning next Monday, May 1, the majority of agencies of the central government will not be able to operate (. . .)" (Leitsinger 2006). The agencies will not be able to provide their services and thousands of public employees will be without pay." Such event did not only jeopardize the jobs public employees, but it also threatened the stability of almost every citizen on the Island. Many Puerto Ricans with public health insurance struggled to assure coverage. Others feared the cancellation of government-issued food stamps (Leitsinger 2006). Aware of such unsustainable circumstances, many citizens began to reclaim their agency by inciting strikes and revolts from their positions, provoking a nationwide consciousness of the transgressions exerted by those in power against unprotected communities.

Confronted with the stated events, Puerto Ricans demonstrated a different approach in terms of obedience towards power structures and discipline ideals. Given the persistent failure of the State to perform favorable towards the public, orderliness was beginning to dissolve. In contrast, strikes and walkouts became popularized, as well as complete stoppages of daily activities to highlight the relevance of mundane individuals in society's maintenance. Upon such a complex context, Puerto Rican writer Luis Negrón composed one of the most influential works in contemporary Caribbean queer literature, *Mundo Cruel* (2010). With a multiplicity of miscellaneous bodies navigating the urban cities of Puerto Rico, Mundo Cruel explores the intimate secrecy built by sexually preternatural individuals in a city that does not make space for their diversities. María Teresa Vera Rojas argues:

> Luis Negrón thinks about the representations of homosexuality as a subversive disturbance of discourses that conceive, regulate, and normalize subjects, identities, and lives. that correspond to what is humanly intelligible–among these the homonormative discoursesToni. (Vera Rojas 195)

Inside the collection of short stories that *Mundo Cruel* reunites, there is a narrative named "El elegido." Troubled by his homoerotic desires, the narrator of the story reflects on the multiple instances in which his childhood innocence was shattered by his father's imposition of masculinity, as well as his mother repressive ideals against his identity. Remembering the day he was baptized in Puerto Rican rainforest El Yunque, the narrator mentions "*Mami se puso como una fiera cuando me vio las chancletas antes de irnos para el bautismo en el Yunque.—Pareces un jodio pato-me dijo-, tú no vas vestido así para ningún lado*" (Negrón 29). His desire to dress in a particular way was met by his mother's verbal repression. However, this claim was met with indifference from the narrator. He remembers "*No me cambié. Me dio con la pandereta en la cara, me arrastró por el pelo y me metió tres bofetás, pero no me cambié. Me fui al bautizo con aquella ropa*" (Negrón 29), stating that his mother physically reprehended him, but he stayed firm on his desire to dress in a feminine way.

Within the story, the mother embodies the State's ideological discipline. Given that "an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices" (Althusser 1970), the family structure operates as a practical extension of the State's task of ideological repression. However, the narrator of the story is uncapable of subjugating himself to such ideologies. Even in the recognition of the vigilance that is imposed over him, the narrator does not limit his actions to please his mother. Such deviation from the mother's control, and by extension the State's control, demonstrates the individual capacity of escaping the disciplinary society.

In juxtaposition with Michel Foucault's comprehensions of discipline in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison* (1977), there are certain elements within the story presented that do not conform to the theories proposed. Says Foucault:

> He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection. (Foucault 202)

Yet, Luis Negrón's character does the exact opposite. Aware of the visibility his mother holds over him, he firmly reinstates his actions instead of molding his identity to satisfy the stability of power structures. This individual possibility of liberation is excluded from Michel Foucault's *Panopticon*. If the individual is perpetually scrutinized, he eventually begins to self-regulate his behavior (Foucault 1977). Luis Negrón character, however, disregards vigilance and does not assume self-regulation, exposing an initial gap in Foucauldian discipline discourse. Given that Puerto Rico has faced a multiplicity of events that demonstrate the incapacity of the State, the Puerto Rican identity constructed by Negrón is comfortable with destabilizing the power structures. The State, in its repressive vigilance, is a failed project in Luis Negrón's "El elegido." The protagonist character created by Luis Negrón portrays an individual that dares to overthrow the power structures that confine him.

The Neocolonial Paradise: The Sociopolitical Development of Puerto Rico

Further on the historical framework that predates author Cezanne Cardona and his collection of short stories *Levittown Mon Amour* (2018), in 2016 U.S. President Barack Obama signed the PROMESA Bill (Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act) to combat the economic crisis. This bill indirectly sentenced the Island to ten years of budgets cuts to public services, health care, pensions, and education, deteriorating the sustenance conditions of Puerto Ricans. Counting with multiple unelected officials, the purpose of the bill was to alleviate the debt payment by providing bankruptcy benefits to the Island (Lamba Nieves 2021). As seven years have passed, this law has not provided any benefits. Instead, common services like water, electricity, and food have become inaccessible with unreasonable prices. Similarly, public education and

housing security are receiving less economic support. In 2017, the Island was struck by one of the most terrific natural disasters, hurricane María. With a death toll of 4,645 lives (Kishore et al. 2018), as well as 100 billion dollars in structural damage that to this day has not been repaired, the Island suffered the consequences of poor infrastructural organization. After this event, an estimate of 200,000 citizens bought a one-way ticket to the United States, creating one of the biggest exoduses in contemporary Caribbean history (Sutter and Hernandez 2018).

Escaping the Vigilant Gaze in Cezanne Cardona's *Levittown Mon Amour* (2018)

Inside the collection of short stories *Levittown Mon Amour* (2018) by Puerto Rican author Cezanne Cardona, the short story "Una escopeta sobre la hierba" demonstrates the failure of surveillance and observation as methods to create discipline in Puerto Rico. Troubled by the economic desperation of not being able to afford a coffin for his dead father, the narrator recounts his occurrences to find the money. After receiving a command from his job to write a note on a recent crime near him, he finds himself in the position of stealing a potential piece of evidence from the crime scene that could help him gather the money needed, a shotgun. He says:

> *Tomé algunas fotos; unas de cerca, otras de lejos y, mientras buscaba un ángulo, di algunos pasos hacia atrás en la hierba y tropecé con algo. Al principio pensé que era un bate de beisbol. Luego supe que era una escopeta. Cuando le iba a tomar una foto, pensé en mi padre, en el ataúd. . . . Pensé que tal vez podía sacarle trescientos, quien sabe si hasta cuatroscientos dólares, no sabía en realidad.* (Cardona 25)

The only trouble the narrator encounters when attempting to steal the shotgun is the policeman at the entrance of the crime scene. In his despair, he invents a lie for the policeman, to which the policeman pays no attention to. Says the narrator that "*El policía ni miró, parecía que iba a invitar a una mujer a comerse un mantecado o algo así. "Anda, un momentito, nadie nos va a reconocer: te recojo en la patrulla y prendo la sirena: te va a gustar," decía*" (Cardona 29).

Within this fragment, the police represents the State as an object that fails in its task of surveillance. Even more, the roles are tragically inverted in this dynamic, for the State is the one observed, described, and judged. Such portrayal of State behavior serves an adequate representation of the failure of the State in Puerto Rico. It is evident how the power structure, represented by the police, is ineffective in his act of observation and his duty of control. Because power structures in Puerto Rico are inconsistent like the policeman who fails to shield the crime scene, the *Panopticon* is also unsuitable in the sense that the entities that conform it do not complete their activities of surveillance, observation, and visibility. By way of observing the observer, the individual can confirm that he, in fact, is not the object of observation, a possibility beyond Michel Foucault's reach. The policeman, a repressive State apparatus, fails in his disciplinary activity. Says Michel Foucault on the dichotomy between the *Panopticon*'s observer and the observed that "He is seen, but he does not see; he is an object of information, never a subject in communication." Upon a systematic structure that has demonstrated the incapacity of the State, the observed becomes the observer in Cezanne Cardona's short story.

Dismantling EurocentricTtheories on Discipline, Vigilance, and Control

"El elegido" by Luis Negrón and "Una escopeta sobre la hierba" by Cezanne Cardona are exceptional literary constructions that demonstrate the State's incapacity in its duties of vigilance, control, and repression. Through the construction of the church and the family as fraudulent representations of State repression, Luis Negrón creates an environment of subversive capacity where the individual can define its reality beyond the limiting capacities of the State. The queer narrator constructed by Luis Negrón embodies historical legacies of survival, rebellion, and radicalism by assuming complete independence regardless of the circumstances that define his exterior life. *Mundo Cruel* (2010) and "El elegido" propose an innovative approach in the comprehension of State surveillance within the contextual scenario of Puerto Rico. On the other hand, Cezanne Cardona's story demonstrates the State's failure in its vigilant duty. The distinct portrayal materialized by the narrator of the story captures the fraudulent behavior of the State, and its derivatives like the Police, in its social dimensions. Such interconnectedness of literature and politics provides a framework to determine the gaps of Michel Foucault's Panopticon and Louis Althusser's State ideologies. Although both stories part from a satirical and critical standpoint, they introduce key examples on discipline within Puerto Rico, examples that can further develop the scholarship around mechanisms of oppression within failed State functions.

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Searching for a Caring Community: A Case Study Evaluating the University of California's Foster Youth College Support Programs through Mixed Methods

Alishba Sardar, *University of California, Berkeley*

Alishba Sardar is a University of California, Berkeley student pursuing a degree in Ethnic Studies with a minor in Education. Her academic journey is driven by a strong dedication to empowering marginalized communities. Alishba's passion lies in advocating for crucial resources for foster youth and working towards improving educational accessibility. In pursuit of her passion, she hopes to attend graduate school to continue her research on evaluating support programs for child welfare-wimpacted scholars.

Abstract

This qualitative mixed-methods study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of campus support programs, commonly known as guardian scholars or hope scholars, in supporting college students with a history of foster care or involvement in the child welfare system (e.g. kinship, juvenile justice, emancipated youth). These programs are designed to provide academic, financial, and other resources to promote postsecondary education persistence. FYCSPs have existed for nearly two decades, and research suggests that FYCSPs are a vital factor in increasing the number of foster care students graduating. However, approximately 3–4% of foster care students graduate college; a number that has not changed for the past two decades. There is limited evidence on the specific support practices that contribute to foster youth experiences in higher education. Therefore, this study seeks to address this research gap by investigating two central questions: (1) What specific program practices contribute to foster youth students' comfort, trust, and willingness to seek help? (2) How does social support within the foster youth campus support program foster community building, reduce stigma, and promote a sense of belonging among foster youth students? The findings emphasize the significance of positive relationships between program coordinators and foster youth students, as well as the role of social support in community building and stigma reduction. The theoretical implications of this study contribute to a deeper understanding of the role that supportive relationships and social support play in the well-being and academic success of foster youth.

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I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Jill Berrick, for her invaluable support and guidance throughout my research journey. I am truly grateful for her mentorship and expertise. I would also like to extend my appreciation to the UC Berkeley MMUF team and my fellow peers for their unwavering support and encouragement. A huge shout out to Xavier Durham, Dr. Catanese, and Dr. Ledesma. I am deeply grateful to my mentor Dr. Letha C. Ch'ien and friends for their unconditional support. Their presence has been instrumental in my personal and academic growth. I take great pride in and express deep gratitude for the Berkeley Hope Scholars community, along with our dedicated Coordinator, Charly King Beavers. Charly consistently exemplified genuine and unconditional community support. Above all, my heartfelt thanks go to my dear friend Christian Aleman, who not only discussed and refined my ideas for this project but also served as a constant reminder to uphold my unwavering passion for supporting the BHS community.

Introduction

It is one thing to get admitted to a four-year university, but to navigate it and successfully graduate is another. Only an estimated 3–5% of foster youth attain a bachelor's degree each year (Geiger et al., 2018). Foster youth face an immeasurable set of challenges in four-year universities, which include but are not constrained to, limited financial assistance, housing instability, lack of proper mental health support, and educational setbacks (Okpych, 2021; Hogan 2019). In this study the term "foster youth" is used as an umbrella term for students who have been impacted by the child welfare system, which includes, but is not limited to, kinship, court-ward, emancipated, independent, etc. Many foster youth come from marginalized backgrounds, and the challenges they face arise from their own experiences in the foster care system. Stigma also plays a significant role in how foster youth navigate college life, affecting their self-confidence, access to support, and inclusion with the general population. Compared to first-generation low-income students, foster youth have a greater risk of dropping out of college due to the lack of support, resulting in increased stress (Davis, 2006; Okpych, 2021; Okpych et al., 2020).

Additionally, foster youth make up a small fraction of the university population, often having their needs overlooked by administrators (Okpych, 2021). To support them, over 30 states have implemented Foster Youth Campus Support Programs (FYCSP), which aims to improve academic retention by providing resources like housing, financial aid, tutoring, and other support. Yet, many lack funding or proper training (Okpych, 2021). Over time, research has emphasized the importance of FYCSP in improving graduation rates and addressing the needs of foster youth. However, there is limited knowledge on the effectiveness of FYCSP from the perspective of students themselves and specific aspects of the programs that are most beneficial to foster youth.

To address this gap, this study investigates effective practices of FYCSP, assesses the role of social support in community building and overcoming stigma, and examines the experiences of foster youth students who participate in FYCSP. Through the use of surveys and interviews collected across the University of California (UC) FYCSP, this study aims to enable the identification and implementation of necessary changes for building a stronger support system. The findings contribute to understanding the experiences and challenges faced by foster youth students in university settings, informing the development of supportive mechanisms, raising awareness, and improving understanding of FYCSP among foster youth students and campus administrators.

Literature Review

Scholars have taken an interest in foster youth and their college experience by considering all the factors that can affect their way of life from the transition from pre-college, to the rigors of higher education, to the psychosocial experiences of societal stigma, lack of support, or coping skills, to name some. Bringing all their personal experiences and the effects of these factors to their university life, literature is abundant with discussions on how foster youth differ from non-foster youth; their standing in society and in the population of the university; and the importance of having FYCSPs in colleges for these students, and how they affect their success in the university setting.

Compared to non-foster youth, foster youth students experience significant declines in various aspects of their health as they enter university, carrying the effects of childhood experiences and trauma (Dworsky & Pérez, 2010; Geiger et al., 2018; Okpych & Courtney, 2021; Salazar et al., 2016). Educational disruptions, often caused by placement changes within the foster care system, place them at a higher risk of dropping out and hinder their academic progress (Geiger et al., 2018; Medlin, 2019; Okpych, 2021). Additionally, foster youth students, who are often first-generation and low-income, face financial challenges and must meet specific academic requirements to access aid (Dworsky & Pérez, 2010; Geiger et al., 2018; Okpych, 2021).

Stigma plays a significant role in how foster youth navigate college life, both externally and internally (Graham et al., 2015; Klein, 2012). Negative stereotypes attached to foster youth can impact their self-confidence, isolate them from the general population, and hinder their access to support (Graham et al., 2015; Klein, 2012; Okpych, 2021). Awareness and access to support programs are critical for foster youth in universities. However, these students often remain invisible within the campus population, lacking proactive advocacy and awareness from administrators and staff (Okpych, 2021; Salazar et al., 2016). The lack of familial support, coupled with responsibilities to care for their families, creates additional stress for foster youth students (Okpych, 2021; Yang & Bechtold, 2022).

Foster Youth Campus Support Programs (FYCSPs) have been implemented to address the needs of foster youth in colleges. These programs provide financial support, housing accommodation, life skills coaching, mental health resources, and tutoring (Okpych et al., 2020; Hogan, 2020). However, accessing and utilizing these programs can be challenging due to underfunding, limited staffing, and a lack of awareness among foster youth and campus administrators (Okpych et al., 2020; Wells, 2019).

Research Questions

Current research and lack thereof have compelled me to investigate two central questions: (1) What specific practices exhibited by the foster youth campus support program contribute to foster youth students' sense of comfort, trust, and willingness to seek help? (2) How does social support within the foster youth campus support program contribute to community building, overcoming stigma, and fostering a sense of belonging among foster youth students? These questions aim to uncover a blueprint of the strategies that lead to the success of foster youth in a university setting, providing guidance for replication. Ultimately, the questions center on the voices of foster youth that have been dismissed by the university and highlight how they create a community within large institutions.

Methodology

This mixed-method, qualitative study involved a total of 68 participants who completed an online Qualtrics survey and 18 participants who volunteered for interviews conducted via Zoom. The survey assessed eligibility and contained 18 questions on various topics, including knowledge of campus resources, satisfaction with program resources and services, involvement with the program, and contact information for scheduling interviews. Initially, 102 students screened for the study, 79 met the eligibility criteria, with 68 of those completing the survey—a response rate of 67% (Table 1). The interviews, lasting between 40–90 minutes, covered topics such as student involvement, college transition, relationships with program coordinators and peers, evaluation of resources, and suggestions for program improvement (Table 2). Out of the nine UC campuses, only five campuses chose to participate in the study.

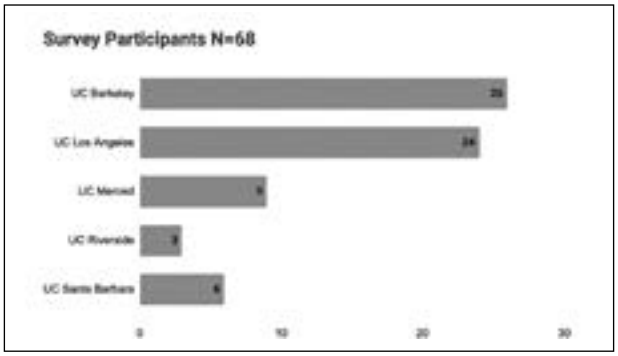

Table 1 indicates the number of survey participants and their distribution across the five University of California campuses providing FYCSP.

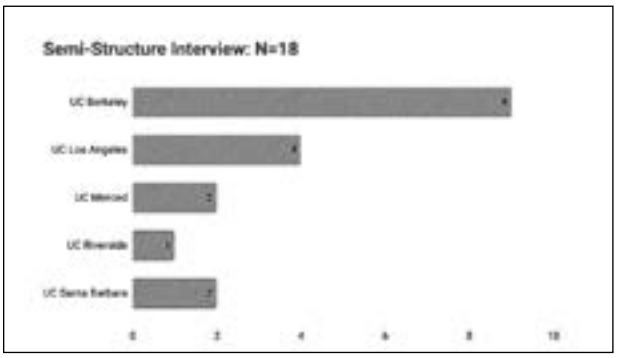

Table 2 indicates the number of interview participants and their distribution across the five University of California campuses providing FYCSP.

The survey data was analyzed using Qualtrics, while the interview data was transcribed using Otter.AI, an online transcription software. The survey categorized and compared the closed-ended responses to reveal patterns across the programs, offering insights into participants' satisfaction levels, degree of involvement, and sense of belonging within the program. The transcripts were reviewed and corrected by the researcher, with three recordings transcribed from scratch due to recording issues. The transcribed data was then uploaded to Dedoose qualitative software for a thematic analysis was conducted using a hybrid coding approach, combining deductive analysis based on previous literature with inductive analysis to generate new codes. The codebook consisted of nine parent codes: academic support, community experiences, stigma, care, institutional challenges (housing, financial aid, etc.), programming (positive/negative), type of programming, Covid-19, and improvement suggestions. To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms were used to replace participants' names. The project received approval from UC Berkeley's Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (Approval #2021-11-14855).

Results

The survey and interviews revealed two major findings regarding the support available through the foster youth campus-based support program. First, the majority of survey participants expressed satisfaction with the resources and support provided by the program (Table 3). The interview findings showed that positive interactions with the coordinator fostered trust, a sense of community, and a willingness to seek help when needed. The care provided by the coordinators also played a crucial role in exposing students to institutional and social support available at the university. This finding highlighted the importance of building positive relationships between coordinators and foster youth students to ensure their satisfaction with the program.

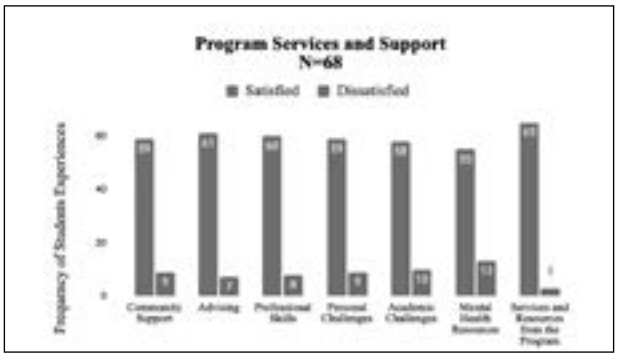

Table 3 presents an overview of the students' experiences with program resources and their satisfaction. The majority of the respondents were satisfied with the programming.

The second major finding from the interviews highlighted the impact of social support on community building, overcoming stigma, and fostering a sense of belonging. The thematic analysis showed that students who were exposed to social support through the program reported a greater sense of community, reduced stigma, and increased opportunities for advocacy. The program allowed students to connect with peers, allies, and mentors who shared similar experiences, creating an environment where they could engage in meaningful conversations and gain a better understanding of their own identities. The sense of community facilitated self-advocacy and empowered students to address challenges and pursue their goals.

The effective care practices identified in the interviews included accommodating and taking an extra step to meet the needs of foster youth students. Coordinators who demonstrated active listening, knowledge of the challenges faced by foster care students, and a willingness to connect them with resources were highly valued by the participants. Coordinators also played a significant role in helping students navigate academic challenges and providing

continuous support through follow-up meetings or emails. By creating a safe and comfortable environment, coordinators built trust with students and encouraged them to ask for help when needed.

> "[The Coordinator] asked me a lot of personal questions . . . which I am not okay with a lot of people . . . [but]I am very comfortable with her. I think it is the way she asks questions . . . it was very easy for me to open up about certain things . . . share things I might feel embarrassed to ask for or embarrassed that I don't know a lot of things about" (Harper).

The study also revealed that coordinators' awareness and education about the programs and services available at the university played a crucial role in supporting foster youth students. Coordinators provided essential information about academic resources, mental health support, and administrative processes, which helped students overcome challenges. When facing administrative obstacles, coordinators took the initiative to contact department liaisons to resolve issues and alleviate students' stress. The students' positive experiences with coordinators instilled trust and confidence, enabling them to overcome avoidant attachment tendencies and seek help more readily.

> "She [coordinator] immediately had a meeting with me about budgeting and housing. She helped me calm my worries about coming to . . . campus . . . I have never come across anyone so kind and helpful. **Receiving that help from someone was crazy to me** . . . I asked myself, "Why would she help me? . . . She showed me how to schedule meetings with her [Emphasis applied]" (Sol).

In terms of community building and recognition, the interview results showed that the program created a space where foster youth students' lived experiences were acknowledged and valued. The community interaction allowed students to gain self-awareness, articulate their experiences, and fill gaps in their identities. It provided a platform for students to engage in conversations about their experiences and collaborate on projects, research, and initiatives related to foster youth identity. Students found a sense of belonging, support, and motivation within the program's community, which positively influenced their academic progress and personal growth. The community also served as a means to combat isolation on campus and provided opportunities for students to share knowledge, advocate for foster youth issues, and create awareness among their peers.

> "Berkeley Hope Scholars [the name of one of the FYCSP] provide[d]needs that I wanted from the university . . . giving me a space to call mine, giving me a community that understood what I went through and, given me the confidence to go back to university, to my classrooms and feel like I belonged and my perspective mattered in the classrooms . . . **I think my foster care identity gave me an new perspective. That made me ask a few big questions that are a little scary to ask"** (Saige).

> "It's like a second home for us. I didn't really know anyone here until I attended [BGS] events and found a community. I feel at home. **These are the people that really care about you and want you to be at home. They hear you, and you feel seen by being around the people in the program"** (Kal).

While the findings highlighted the positive aspects of the foster youth campus-based support program, the study also identified areas for improvement. First was the lack of awareness and understanding of the program among the university campus community. Despite the supportive environment within the program, students who participated in interviews described still feeling shame and stigma outside of it. This finding emphasized the need for increased awareness and education about foster care issues and the program's benefits across the university campus. Creating a more inclusive and supportive campus environment would help foster youth students feel accepted and understood beyond the program's boundaries.

Discussion

The research findings provide valuable insights into the experiences of foster youth students in university settings and the role of FYCSPs in addressing the needs of foster youth. The first major finding emphasizes the significance of positive relationships between program coordinators and foster youth students. The study revealed that positive interactions with coordinators fostered trust, a sense of community, and a willingness to seek help. Coordinators who demonstrated effective care practices, such as active listening, understanding the challenges faced by foster youth students, and providing continuous support, were highly valued by the participants. These findings have important implications for the theoretical and practical understanding of the role of supportive relationships in fostering the well-being and success of foster youth students in higher education. It suggests that fostering positive relationships and providing tailored support can contribute to the overall satisfaction and success of foster youth students in their university journey. Practically, it shows the need for specialized training for program staff that caters to the unique needs of foster youth. It is crucial for coordinators to possess knowledge about the potential challenges foster youth might face and to actively engage in regular check-ins with them. The second major finding highlights the impact of social support on community building, overcoming

stigma, and fostering a sense of belonging among foster youth students. Exposure to social support through FYCSPs allowed students to connect with peers, allies, and mentors who shared similar experiences. This sense of community facilitated self-advocacy and empowerment, leading to reduced stigma and increased opportunities for fostering positive identities.

Theoretically, it contributes to understanding the importance of social support in identity development and creating inclusive communities. Practically, it emphasizes the need for fostering supportive environments that facilitate community engagement, peer support, and the recognition of foster youth students' lived experiences. This study successfully identified specific care practices exhibited by program coordinators that contribute to foster youth students' sense of comfort, trust, and willingness to seek help. It also explored how social support within FYCSPs contributes to community building, overcoming stigma, and fostering a sense of belonging among foster youth students. Additionally, the research examined the experiences and challenges faced by foster youth students in navigating the university campus outside of the FYCSP and how this impacts their sense of shame and stigma. The outcomes provide valuable insights into these areas of inquiry and contribute to the existing literature on foster youth students in higher education.

However, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of the study. The time constraints of the project imposed limitations on the number of interviews that could be conducted. Additionally, the study relied on self-reported data, which may be subject to recall and response biases. Comparative studies could examine variations in program implementation, resource availability, and cultural factors that influence the experiences of foster youth students. Longitudinal research designs could also provide insights into the long-term impacts of FYCSPs on foster youth students' educational attainment, well-being, and career outcomes. Considering the findings, it is crucial for universities to provide training for staff members and faculty to understand the needs of foster youth better. It is advisable to hire program coordinators with expertise in working with foster youth.

Additionally, programs should explore the idea of organizing monthly events to foster a sense of community and enhance social support throughout the academic year. This study affirms that foster youth value higher education despite the obstacles they face, positioning programs to offer the most valued resources. Higher education administrators, faculty, and community are responsible for ensuring that foster youth are recognized on their campus. Continuous evaluation and advocacy must take center stage on the agenda to transform universities and create a supportive environment.

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She Will Be Loved: The (Im)possibility of Stipulating Consent in the *Muwaṭṭa* and *Risāla*

Ankit Sayed, *Amherst College*

Ankit Sayed is a rising junior at Amherst College, majoring in Religion and Economics. He is interested in American Muslim culture and its intersection with digital technology and consumerism. Currently, Ankit is writing his undergraduate thesis on how Muslim dating apps negotiations between inherited norms and American socioeconomic reality. After graduation, Ankit will work as a consultant at Booz Allen Hamilton in the Washington, D.C. area. He hopes to apply to doctoral programs in American Studies and Religion after gaining private sector experience.

Abstract

In this paper, I weigh in on the debate between Asifa Quraishi-Landes and Kecia Ali, two noted scholars of Islamic marital law, to see what extent Sunni legal tradition can enshrine consent within marital contracts. Quraishi-Landes advocates for the creation of marriage contracts that treat spouses as equal partners, while Ali denies the possibility of the legal tradition to respect consent and seeks to replace existing frameworks altogether. This study seeks to evaluate whether or not Sunni legal texts support either of these positions. I focus on two primary foundational legal texts: the *Muwaṭṭa* by Imām Mālik and the *Risāla* by Imām Shāfiʿī. The *Muwaṭṭa* compiles judgments of Muhammad and prominent jurists in Medina, while the *Risāla* presents a model for Islamic legal judgment based on the Sunnah and the Quran. The paper reveals that neither position is completely supported by the primary sources. The elements of a marital contract are clearly stipulated, and any deviance would likely be forbidden by the jurists. However, there is still room for creative use of additional stipulations in a marital contract that would apply to both spouses, including a stipulation requiring both spouses to abide by agreed-upon notions of sexual consent. Therefore, Quraishi-Landes' general idea of imaginatively using the existing tradition to construct more egalitarian contracts is sound.

Acknowledgements

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Muslims in the West are getting married, as Muslims have been for centuries before. However, one facet of Islamic marital law poses a critical issue for many Western Muslims looking to get married in accordance with Islamic law: a women's right to freely consent to and withhold sex from her husband. This right, according to some feminist Muslim thinkers, is not presented in much of the classical *fiqh*.[1] In *Sexual Ethics and Islam*, Kecia Ali writes that "sex is, by and large, a male right and female duty, according to fiqh texts," and further explains that marital rape was not seen as a crime in medieval Islamic law.[2] Given that coerced sex is almost universally agreed to be a heinous crime among Western Muslims, if not all Muslims, a range of Muslim scholars, especially women, are grappling with how to reconcile the classical traditional and contemporary sexual mores.[3]

One scholar in particular, Asifa Quraishi-Landes, has put forward a two-part model for women to assure their right to deny sex within a marriage. First, she advocates for the right of women to write in specific stipulations in their marriage contracts to secure rights for themselves that are not *prima facie* stipulated in previous juristic rulings. One of her key examples is the right of women to say no to sex in a marital relationship, and she admits that the *fiqh* does not make possible.[4] In her article, "Drafting a Muslim Marriage Contract: A Summary of Mandatory and Optional Clauses," she gives an example of one such contract from a 20th-century Muslim marital contract in South Africa:

> "As with all relations in our marriage, sexual relations will be based on mutual respect and trust. Thus, we accept that the time at which sexual relations take place and the kind of such relations depends on the agreement of both of us. And neither of us would have the right to force sexual relations of any kind or at any time on the other."[5]

As we see here, consent in her sense is related to each party's ability to control the time and nature of any sexual act without consequence or coercion. If both parties in a marriage can achieve this, then we can say that this marriage is one where consent is respected.[6] Quraishi-Landes also argues for Islamic marital contracts to be rooted in partnership law, like business dealings, as opposed to the laws regarding sale. While she does not elaborate on specifics, constructing marriage contracts as mutual partnerships between equal parties would go a long way to eliminate the power imbalance that exists between a husband and wife.

However, Kecia Ali does not agree with Quraishi-Landes' modification of the existing classical Islamic juristic system. Ali writes elsewhere that marriage was often conducted "using the terminology of sales and purchases" to imply that in most classical Islamic jurisprudence, women in

the marriage contract were primarily seen as transferable property and sexual providers, and certainly not equal to a man in terms of ability to choose partners or control their own bodies.[7] Ali finds that the fundamental nature of classical Islamic jurisprudence is one where women's agency is subjugated under a patriarchal system, and no reforms to the existing framework can wholly address the issues at hand:[8]

> "Certain other stipulations may secure rights that would otherwise be unenforceable. However, this formulation fails to address the complicity of jurisprudential institutions and doctrines in, at the very least, perpetuating the patriarchy and inequality that make such measures vital."[9]

Ali envisions a new legal framework where the existing legal traditions surrounding marriage and divorce are replaced wholesale. In her words, "There is no getting around law; we must understand it, then work to replace it."[10] In diverging sharply from Quraishi-Landes, Ali allows us to view a key debate between two influential feminist scholar-activists. While Ali herself states in the notes to this article that she regrets the polemical nature of her argument and is less convinced on the feasibility of a novel legal framework as she once was, she is clear that these arguments are still very relevant to modern Islamic discourse about the possibility of a truly progressive Muslim legal system. Given that these articles cogently and clearly evaluate each other's argument, in tandem they serve as a useful entry into the larger discussion of the actual possibility of progressive Muslim marriage law.

In this paper, I hope to identify whether the Sunni legal tradition could support the feasibility of Quraishi-Landes' model of contract stipulations and partnership law in establishing sexual consent rights within a marriage, or if Ali is correct in their inability to protect women's consent. If the legal tradition could be used to enshrine stipulations in contracts and thus protect a woman's right to sexual body autonomy, undermining Ali's claim that it needs to be completely replaced. In closely reading legal texts, we can see whether there is potential for flexible and creative interpretations of marriage *fiqh*, opening the door for much more constructive scholarship in the same vein as Quraishi-Landes. To this end, I use two foundational Sunni texts as primary sources of medieval legal perspectives: the *Muwaṭṭa Imām Mālik*, written by Imām Mālik, and the *Risāla*, written by Imām Shāfiʿī, Mālik's most famous student.[11] Both texts are legal works of different genres. The *Muwaṭṭa* is a compendium of the most accurate judgments of Muhammad (PBUH) and the best prominent jurists in Medina in Mālik's. The *Risāla* is a work of legal theory and is more concerned with presenting exactly how the Sunnah should be used both in partnership and separately from the Quran as the cornerstone of Islamic legal judgment.[12]

In my analysis of the sources, I find that the Islamic marital relationship, at least in terms of classical law, is primarily one that transacts sex for support between a wife and husband. The desire to reject sexual acts was not present in the core source material, and thus was not factored into the legal opinions of the jurists. However, working within the legal framework of the *Risāla* and inspired by the opinions presented in the *Muwaṭṭa*, I find support for Quraishi-Landes' use of stipulations as a potential device for Muslims seeking to explicitly enshrine consent as a part of their marital relationship. But this textual support does not extend to a wholesale reimagining of marital contract law as a mutual partnership of equals.

Using the Hadith as its source, the *Risāla* lays out a clear definition of what constitutes licit and illicit sexual acts. In the chapter, "Description of God and His Emissary's Prohibitions," Shāfiʿī uses marriage as one of his key examples of how the Prophetic tradition takes primacy over all other sources when establishing the licitness of an act. For Shāfiʿī, the Prophet has forbidden to men all "sexual access to women," except under two relationships: marriage and concubinage. The processes to fulfill these conditions are directly laid out in the Sunnah, and if even a single condition, such as a lack of witnesses, is not met, then the relationship is void and all sex is illicit.[13]

Notably absent from this list of conditions for permissible sex is the consent of either party *to a specific sexual act*. While men and women (who have been married at least once) can revoke consent to being married, there is nothing written about revoking consent to sex when already within a marital relationship. In her book, Kecia Ali makes the strong claim that "early jurists would have considered marital rape an oxymoron," and it is likely that Shāfiʿī would agree with this characterization.[14] As all marital sex is permissible by definition in a legally conducted marriage, Shāfiʿīī would not see a legal distinction between consensual and coerced sex that occurs within a marriage; both are equally permissible according to the Quran and Sunnah. Concerning people who get married without all the necessary elements, Shāfiʿī says:

> "What is unlawful for them is other than what is lawful. Their sin concerned something permissible; it did not render those things unlawful in all circumstances. Rather, it was unlawful for them to sin in a particular way in regard to those otherwise generally lawful things."[15] In other words, just as the Prophet explicitly laid out marriage as an exemption from the general prohibition on sex, the Prophet would likely need to explicitly declare consent an element of permissible sex for Shāfiʿī to recognize it.

As we see, according to Shāfi'ī, the Prophetic tradition must be taken in its totality, even if that leads to rulings such as the permissibility of coerced sex within a marital relationship that may make individuals uncomfortable. Implicitly, a woman's right to control her husband's sexual access to her body is subservient to the right that God has allowed him. But even though Shāfi'ī's legal framework permits all marital sex, coerced or not, according to Islamic law, Muslims may be able to specify the right to consent in their contracts, like the aforementioned example. Shāfi'ī is not clear on whether this would count as forbidding what is allowed, but he at other times provides cases where a married couple can make binding oaths, so it is certainly possible if he considers it an oath. After all, Shāfi'ī does not say that Muslims can only make oaths or agreements on topics not mentioned in the Quran and Hadith.

Although he might accept the existence of stipulations in a marital contract, when it comes to the novel idea of couching Islamic marriage in partnership law as Quraishi proposes, Shāfi'ī would likely reject the idea outright. Given that his framework is one where sex within a marriage is made licit through the meeting of Prophetically prescribed conditions, a partnership like the one that Quraishi-Landes suggests where "sexual rights would be based on mutuality, respect and companionship, rather than male ownership and payment" changes the fundamental conditions that the Prophet deemed necessary to make a marriage legal.[16] It is one thing to add extra contractual stipulations to a marriage that was otherwise conducted in full accordance with prescribed marital conditions. But it is another altogether to locate the legitimacy of a sexual relationship in an idea of mutuality not expressed by the Quran and Hadith. Doing so risks reducing the primacy of scripture and the Prophet's words in determining what is licit. Just as one cannot allow what the Prophet has forbidden, one cannot make impermissible what has been made permissible without a Prophetic decree. He says:

> "If it were permissible to abandon a Prophetic practice—because of the conclusions arrived at by some, out of ignorance of the position of such practices relative to the Book—then one could abandon what we have mentioned above, to wit."[17]

As we see, according to Shāfi'ī, the Prophetic tradition must be taken in its totality, even if that leads to rulings such as the permissibility of coerced sex within a marital relationship that may make individuals uncomfortable. It is probable that constructing marriages as a mutual partnership would appear to Shāfi'ī as putting individual desires over the command of God and His Prophet, and thus not a possibility.

Unlike the *Risāla*, the *Muwaṭṭa* is not a work of legal theory. It does not provide a cohesive legal framework but does directly address the issue of marital contract stipulations. In one instance, Mālik mentions the addition of an oath to divorce in a marriage contract.

> "Mālik said, "The custom among us is that when a man marries a woman, and he makes a condition in the marriage contract that he will not marry after her or take a concubine, it means nothing unless there is an oath of divorce or setting-free attached to it. Then it is obliged and required of him."[18]

It may be possible that a wife could make a similar oath that she would initiate divorce upon her husband's attempt to coerce sex, and this would be upheld as per Mālik's statement.

However, this solution only protects a woman from the consequences of a sexually aggressive husband; it does not enshrine her right to a marriage where her right to deny sex is respected. If the only way to avoid marital rape is to not be married, the resulting marriage is not one where consent is respected. The example Quraishi-Landes gives does not cite conditions or consequences, and she does not mention divorce as a consequence of a breach of contract in any of the stipulations in her article, preferring arbitration and mediation with both secular and Islamic legal authorities.[19] But without the punishment of divorce, any stipulation would be unenforceable for Mālik.

But Mālik does not advocate for a single legal system as his successor Shāfi'ī did. With Shāfi'ī, any attempt to establish stipulated consensual boundaries within a marital relationship could run the risk of violating Prophetic authority *per se* by declaring the permissible to be impermissible. Conversely, since these relationships already possess all the necessary elements to be deemed permissible by the Prophetic tradition, Mālik's presentation of various, often disagreeing opinions supports the presence of disparate marriage practices within the bounds of Islamic permissibility.

This could especially be true given that norms around marriage have obviously changed in the last millennium. According to Kecia Ali, "classical Muslim views about consent and its relationship, or lack thereof, to lawfulness were unremarkable in the context of broader Near Eastern and Mediterranean late antiquity."[20] Consent was anachronistic to jurists like Shāfi'ī and Mālik in their times and locales, but jurists today, especially those living in the West, undoubtedly have developed a belief that women should have the right to deny unwanted sex.

Unfortunately, it is unlikely that the *Muwaṭṭa*'s potential for multiplicity supports the idea of marital contracts being placed under the realm of partnership law, even if

norms around consent have changed over time. Mālik explicitly equates the oath of divorce with the oath of setting free a slave, and this reflects fundamental similarities between the status of a wife and concubine that Quraishi-Landes points out, given that both relationships featured "the concept of male ownership of sexual parts."[21] Despite both men and women being able to own slaves, only male slave owners were allowed to have licit sex with their female slaves, marking female sexual access as something that men could own, buy and release in the classical tradition.[22] Transitioning from the conceptual framework evident in this language to one where men and women would be seen as equals in a marriage, neither with unconditional ownership of the other's sexual parts, would be hard to support from what we see from the *Muwaṭṭa*.

From the *Risāla* and *Muwaṭṭa*, we see that Quraishi-Landes' vision for marital contracts as equal partnerships is not strongly supported. The *Risāla* relies too strongly on replicating the framework of the Quran and Hadith to risk supplanting them with another value system, and the *Muwaṭṭa*'s language betrays its perception of marriage and concubinage both being built on systems of male ownership over women. Kecia Ali's point that classical marriage systems fundamentally reject a woman's right to reject sex is clearly supported here. However, it may be feasible to introduce stipulations into marital contracts, though their ability to be upheld would not be guaranteed in either case. Stipulations do not necessarily challenge Shāfi'ī's championing of Prophetic scripture. And while Mālik does not, in his time, uphold contractual stipulations that do not have divorce as the consequence for breach, his implicit acceptance of multiple opinions among jurists makes it possible that stipulations like the contemporary example could be upheld.

Of course, these are only two legal texts. There are two other major Sunni legal schools whose foundational texts have not been addressed, as well as a huge amount of commentary texts that build upon the words of Imam Mālik and Shāfi'ī. To further build Quraishi-Landes' points, more work is required to assess the variety of partnership contracts possible in the attempt to find models for partnerships that allow the right to sex to be freely given and revoked while not compromising its legality. For example, there could potentially be both a marital contract and a separate partnership contract to reflect the co-existing spiritual and practical aspects to a progressive Muslim marriage, each of which exists in a different sphere of law. In any case, it is imperative that further scholarship explores the immense potential for diverse solutions to the problem of consent that is made possible by the multiplicity of the Sunni legal tradition. It is undeniable that the Sunni legal tradition is of paramount important to a huge number of Muslims, both in and out of the West, and scholarship in this vein is necessary to provide practical solutions to the angst of progressive Muslims in the current moment. The discourse between Ali and Quraishi-Landes is one example of the kind of productive dialogue which can stimulate intensely creative legal thinking, inspiring a new generation of progressive Muslim legal scholars to imagine new frontiers for the existing texts.

Endnotes

1 *Fiqh* refers to the system of human jurisprudence designed to adhere to the divine Law of Allah as proclaimed in Islamic scriptures. For further analysis, see Asifa Quraishi-Landes, "Sharia and Diversity: Why Some Americans are Missing the Point (2013)," in *Half of Faith: American Muslim Marriage and Divorce in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Kecia Ali (Boston: OpenBU, 2021), 31–34.

2 Kecia Ali, *Sexual Ethics and Islam: Feminist Reflections on Qur'an, Hadith, and Jurisprudence*, Expanded & Revised Edition (London: Oneworld Publications, 2016), 13.

3 Kecia Ali, "Progressive Muslims and Islamic Jurisprudence: The Necessity for Critical Engagement with Marriage and Divorce Law (2003)," in *Half of Faith: American Muslim Marriage and Divorce in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Kecia Ali, (Boston: OpenBU, 2021), 35.

4 Asifa Quraishi-Landes, "Drafting a Muslim Marriage Contract: A Summary of Mandatory and Optional Clauses," in *Tying the Knot: a Feminist/Womanist Guide to Muslim Marriage in America*, ed. Kecia Ali, (Boston: OpenBU, 2022), 67.

5 Ibid., 76.

6 Of course, the conversation around sexual consent is not limited to married couples, even for Muslims. However, for the scope of this paper, we will limit our discussion of consent to the right to deny specific sexual acts at any time within a marriage. This allows us to focus our discussion around contract law and not criminal law.

7 Ali, "Progressive Muslims," 44.

8 She, and virtually all scholars in this conversation, are not saying that the Islamic law is what is keeping Muslim men from forcing themselves onto their wives. We are instead questioning how the Islamic law can or cannot be used to give Muslim women what most Muslims in the West agree is the intrinsic right to deny unwanted sex.

9 Ali, "Progressive Muslims," 47.

10 Ibid., 36.

11 In this paper, I focus on solely Sunni jurisprudence due to the constraints of time, space, and my own familiarity. For a grounded, multifaceted look at marital law in Shi'ism, namely in Iran, a good resource is Shahla Haeri, *Law of Desire: Temporary Marriage in Shi'i Iran, Revised Edition*. Syracuse University Press, 2014.

12 Muḥammad ibn Idrīs Shāfi'ī, trans. Joseph E. Lowry, *The Epistle on Legal Theory* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 42.

13 Shāfi'ī, *Epistle*, 146.

14 Ali, *Ethics*, 12.

15 Shāfi'ī, *Epistle*, 150.

16 Asifa Quraishi-Landes, "A Meditation on Mahr, Modernity, and Muslim Marriage Contract Law (2013)," in *Half of Faith: American Muslim Marriage and Divorce in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Kecia Ali, (Boston: OpenBU, 2021), 63.

17 Shāfi'ī, *Epistle*, 103.

18 Mālik Ibn-Anas, *Al-Muwaṭṭa of Imām* Mālik, trans. Aisha Abdurrahman Bewley, 3rd ed. (Bradford: Diwan Press, 2014), 212.

19 Quraishi-Landes, "Marriage Contract," 69.

20 Ali, *Ethics*, 73.

21 Quraishi-Landes, "Meditation on Mahr," 56.

22 Ibid. Further discussion on the relationship between marriage and slavery in Islamic law can be found in Kecia Ali, *Marriage and Slavery in Early Islam*. Harvard University Press, 2010.

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If Coffee Could Speak: A Story of Trade, Diplomacy, and Socialization

Ahmed Tabbakh, *Hunter College*

Ahmed Tabbakh is from New York City, New York and is a third-year undergraduate student at Hunter College majoring in History. In addition to being a Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellow, he is an Athena Scholar, Beinecke Scholarship recipient, and member of the Hunter College History Honor Society, Phi Alpha Theta. His research interests revolve around the early modern period and European-Ottoman interactions. He is also interested in exploring the development of a new historical paradigm focused on material culture and the nature of how events and other cultures are perceived and remembered by those who were present. He wishes to explore and contribute to the wider integration of minority and underrepresented scholarly voices into the canon of historical study. He plans to pursue a PhD in History or Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard, New York University, or Princeton University.

Abstract

This paper examines what coffee meant to English and Ottoman cultures in the early modern period. Through an analysis of social, economic, diplomatic, and artistic sources, a general conclusion about what coffee represented in the early modern period can be made. Namely, coffee facilitated or enabled a more interconnected preindustrial world than was previously thought. It acted as a cultural conduit, effectively assisting to blend aspects of European and Ottoman culture as Europeans began to adopt the Ottoman creation in a time before mass material culture was encouraged through factory production. Further, the perceptions surrounding coffee as a beverage of class and knowledge were also absorbed by Europeans from Ottoman coffeehouses and coffee culture, which contradicts the notion that these traits were created or only flourished in Europe, in a vacuum. With a focus on contemporary sources and material culture of varying kinds to draw conclusions about the history of coffee, this paper will contribute to the nascent field of holistic intersectional studies.

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Introduction: Coffee and Hospitality

"He treated me at his lodge with coffee."[1] This is the first reference Dr. John Covel makes to the famed drink in his account travelling the Ottoman Empire as a trade representative of England. Trained as a scholar, Covel was tasked by King Charles II in 1670 as a "chaplain" or aide to the Levant Company. Chartered by Queen Elizabeth I in 1581, the Company began to struggle somewhat to achieve its mission of furthering Anglo-Ottoman commerce by 1660s.[2] Covel's experience and the existence of the Company in the Middle East represented an important and often overlooked aspect of cross-cultural exchange in the early modern period.

While abroad, Covel met local leaders, religious and secular, to attempt to cultivate a working relationship between the Ottoman Empire and England as well as to promote English political interests. However, this does not make up the bulk of what he wrote in his personal journals. From attending Mass in Greece[3] to the ceremony of an Ottoman prince's circumcision[4], instead of focusing on the professional side of his work, Covel seems to have cultivated a curiosity for the cultures and peoples he encountered. It is through these personal connections that Covel comes to coffee. In fact, coffee becomes ubiquitous for Covel, present with him at almost every meeting and meal, always served by the host he is visiting.

Indeed, when Covel describes the Ottoman sultan's tents in Adrianople (in modern Turkey) he mentions coffee as being a natural part of the setting, listing it off with other fineries: "[the sultan's] tent was full of fingans [Turkish coffee cups], snowpit fountain water, etc, all ready coffee, etc [*sic*]."[5] Throughout Covel's travels, it is likely he began to see coffee in a more ordinary light, perhaps even seeing it as a requirement for any social situation among peers. This signifies with further clarity the role coffee seemed to be taking on as a social beverage.

It is through this individual account that one may begin to understand a wider narrative; coffee, as a beverage, was most certainly adopted by Europeans while originating elsewhere. Such a fact is not debated. However, a point that has been neglected by much of the current scholarship remains; coffee culture and the perceptions of it as a drink of politicians and intellectuals did not originate in Europe, either. Rather, this culture and perceptions of it were appropriated by Europeans while originating in the Ottoman Empire and Middle East at-large. This did not happen through direct conquest, but through a fluid mercantile and social exchange across the Mediterranean. This process of cultural appropriation began in the early modern period and as will be demonstrated, continued into the mid-19th century. The current scholarship on the region and period has done much to discuss various aspects of cultural practice

in European and Middle Eastern coffee culture, but the cross-connections between the two—possibly the most important step of all—is overlooked in favor of more specialized narratives. Understanding this hitherto unappreciated connection is critical to understanding and researching the human factors that drive history. The appropriation of Middle Eastern coffee culture by Europe represents two core tenets of fostering human connections, and these tenets have remained despite being sidelined by much of the historical scholarship of the pre-industrial era: firstly, a deep love for communicating in a social setting and secondly, an even deeper love of consuming together, be it food or drink. In this article, I hope to demonstrate the existence of the overlooked influence of coffee culture from the Middle East to Europe in the 18th century.

The Coffeehouse and Sociability in the Ottoman Empire

In 1599, seventy-one years before Dr. Covel's travels, an organ maker named Thomas Dallam made a similar trek to the Ottoman Empire. Dallam, like Covel, also wrote an extensive journal of his travels and his many (overwhelmingly negative) interactions with Ottoman culture. However, nowhere does Dallam mention coffee or coffeehouses; he instead spends much time offering his thoughts on the "Rude and barbarus doged Turkes."[6] Notably, Dallam's lack of mention of coffee likely indicates its lack of popularity, at least in urban social settings, in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. This would change drastically within a mere few decades.

How exactly the coffeehouse came to be is uncertain, though some clues lie in its presentation within the tribes and households who first had access to it. As Anthropologist Benjamin Saidel notes, archaeological evidence of the development of coffee culture among the Bedouin tribes of the Arabian desert in the late 16th century also provides a good "relative date" for "the introduction of coffee to the Middle East."[7] Due to their development of a proto-coffee culture, these tribes had a unique way of serving the drink. Bedouin tents were normally divided by sex with foodstuffs being produced entirely on the women's side. However, coffee was an exception. Coffee was the only such foodstuff prepared on the men's side of the tents and was subsequently served to both sexes. This breaking with tradition set coffee into a class of its own. It is evident from this that the Bedouins did not classify coffee as another 'normal' drink like milk, juice, or water. There was a clear distinction among them that coffee was something special, and this perception of coffee as a specialty beverage is a familiar one even into the modern day.

It is quite clear that from its earliest days, coffee was treated as an exception to the rules. Ger and Karababa, in their analysis of Ottoman consumer culture in the mid- to late-17th century, noted that "despite their different social positions, the learned, the dancers, and the dervishes interact in the coffeehouse: we see a dervish, denoted by his yellow felt canonical cap, [referring to an image within their article] discussing poetry with the turbaned poetry enthusiasts."[8] Their description of the Ottoman coffeehouse as it developed takes on a curiously familiar form. Namely, it becomes clear that Ottoman coffeehouses had much of the same class-equalizing and intellectual rule-breaking qualities as coffeehouses would soon acquire in Europe.

Throughout the development of the Ottoman coffeehouse, one may begin to note that the ideas that surrounded coffeehouses and coffee serving were introduced well before European coffeehouses emerged. In fact, by the mid-17th century, the Ottoman coffeehouse seemed to be so well-established that a traveler like Dr. Covel only had to look around himself within one to see exactly what made one so special, and he only had to drink coffee to taste its unique properties. It is for this reason that it is so important to look at the Ottoman coffeehouse before discussing the European coffeehouse. Without knowledge of the Ottoman coffeehouse, one may simply assume that European coffee culture developed within Europe itself.

Transculturation: Coffee Conquers Europe

A mid-17th-century English poet once said of the prestige and colloquial 'street cred' coffee granted an individual, "Credit got / [that] he's no gentleman that drinks it not."[9] In much the same manner as in the Ottoman Empire, European coffee and coffeehouses acquired an aura of intellectualism and social mixing. One needs no more proof than the very first coffee house in Edinburgh, Scotland, which was opened in 1673 near the Parliament House to provide a place for scholars to "retire and spend much of the day in hearing and speaking of news,"[10] as Anthony Wood, himself a scholar at the time, relates. Concurrently, coffeehouses in Plymouth, England began to host "learned debate" between leading medical researchers in the 1680s.[11] The coffeehouse, in many ways, became the antithesis of the pub; it was a sober and clean place for men of intellect and prowess to discuss serious matters, and within this space all were peers.

As this paper's timeline now returns to match up with the tale of Dr. Covel's travels, which themselves began in 1670, one may begin to see the influence that travel had on the European, and specifically English, attitude towards coffee. Mr. John Houghton, at the Royal Society in 1699, presented the idea that Arabs adopted the beverage as a "Succedaneum [substitute] for Wine, which *Mahomet*[12] had prohibited."[13] The inclusion of this history is not puzzling at face value, however, one must think about where Mr.

Houghton would have gotten such information, which could only be relayed through those who had gone to the Middle East. Thus, Houghton's otherwise passive comment becomes a major signifier that travelers, like Dr. Covel, brought back not only a passion for coffee but also relayed the histories they heard along the way, which became the story Europeans told about coffee's origins, effects, and how it should be enjoyed.

The above evidence all acts as clear shibboleths of European cultural interest in the Middle East. However, how exactly can this be further solidified? After all, interest in the Ottoman empire grew to such proportions that by the 18th century, the term "Turk" became a descriptor in Europe for all people from the Middle East and Muslims at-large, regardless of individual ethnicity.[14] It is, thus, no stretch to say that Europeans likely took something from Ottoman culture to adapt coffee into their societies. This connection becomes even more apparent in art from this time. A German print from 1720 depicting a coffee server with his accouterments is a case in point (Figure 1).

Figure 1[15]

It is evident from a cursory glance that the coffee server presented here dresses in the Ottoman style, including his mustache. Cultural appropriation can be seen as the coffee server is not from the Ottoman Empire. He is a *European* coffee server. The European willingness to not only adopt Ottoman coffee but to also adopt Ottoman dress while drinking it is a remarkable demonstration of things and *habitus*. Furthermore, in the background, one may note the presence of an individual dressed in a stereotypical Chinese style. This allows one to glimpse into the surprisingly interconnected early modern world. The fact that a German printmaker sought to display not only Arab but Chinese culture as well demonstrates a degree of intercultural awareness. Despite this awareness, it is still a form of cultural appropriation, and nowhere is this more conspicuous than the below painting of Louis XV of France's mistress, Madame du Pompadour, depicted as a *Sultana*, or female Sultan (Figure 2).[16]

Figure 2[17]

Here, the Madame du Pompadour is dressed in full Ottoman regalia and is served coffee by a Black female servant. Coming from the mid-18th century, this image illustrates how, as time progressed, the association within Europe of coffee as a *Turkish* or *Arab* export only grew stronger. If this cultural phenomenon was strong enough that people in high social positions like the Madame du Pompadour wished to be depicted as Turkish while sipping coffee, there is little to say in the way of proving that Europeans did, indeed, appropriate elements of Ottoman culture to adopt coffee culture.

Naturally, all Europeans did not begin to dress in the Ottoman style just to sip coffee at a coffeehouse. However, as scholar Julia Landweber put it, the increased visible consumption of coffee "was the birth of a taste of *turquerie*."[18]

This occurrence proves itself to be more than a simple one-off. It serves as evidence of a greater cultural globalization taking place well before the age of modern technology and industry.

Coffee Enters 19th-Century America

Moving forward into the 19th century, the world was much changed by the American and French Revolutions and the subsequent rise of Napoleon, which reshaped politics and trade. As Western culture began to shift as the early modern period ended, coffee seemed to lose its Ottoman and Arab connections. This can be seen most clearly through the story of Christopher Osanyan, an Armenian-Ottoman scholar and businessman who, after attending New York University in the 1830s and returning to the Ottoman Empire, moved back to New York City in 1855. Upon relocating, he attempted to open an Armenian-Ottoman coffeehouse as well as a Turkish bath house, both of which failed in quick succession.[19] Had such positive attitudes toward Ottoman culture remained, Oscanyan's coffeehouse likely would have succeeded as coffeehouses in the Ottoman style did in England decades prior.

Furthermore, it also reveals a changing view of who could make coffee. As discussed in the previous sections of this article, Ottoman and Arab influence was likely the single biggest cultural association with coffee during the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries. By the 19th century, however, it seems as though Europeans and the relatively new Western culture at-large began to incorporate coffee deeper into the mythos of their own nations and eschew the Ottoman associations with the beverage.

Conclusion

The impact of a single man like Dr. Covel, travelling to the Ottoman empire during the 17th century, was not awfully important. His name is not echoed in the annals of history, and few know of his journal or name. However, Covel, in his mission and travels, represented a new age of discovery and cultural interplay between two nations with entirely different social and political systems. He represents a blending and semi-harmonious phase in the development of Western culture. Coffee was merely one such instrument, though it is by far the most ubiquitous. By establishing the appropriation of coffee culture and coffee itself by Europeans, one may begin to see just a small section of a bigger, and more holistic, picture.

The world of the past was more connected than many give it credit for, and coffee stands today as a testament to that connection. It is through seeing the development of the coffeehouse and the attitudes towards it that the scholarship is able to accurately appreciate how much of a connection different cultures had in the early modern world. Human desires to interact in a social setting and to forge close relationships over food and drink remain entirely unchanged despite centuries passing. It helps to break down barriers of *Otherness* built up over centuries of war and discord. The experience of the psychological *Other*, as scholars Heero and Saagpaakk put it "also leads to a self-examination."[20] In other words, facing the Middle East with an open mind may not just have been evidence of connection, but also evidence of a mutually beneficial socio-psychological one.

Endnotes

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16 Perrin Stein . . . full reference needed as she was the one who identified the sitter as Mme. Pompadour!

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"And they took my milk!": A Path Forward When Language Fails in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

Jordan Trice, *Amherst College*

Jordan Trice is a senior at Amherst College, double majoring in English and sexuality, women's, and gender studies. He is an award-winning essayist and poet who studies sexual violence in American slave and neo-slave narratives. After he graduates, he plans to attend a doctoral program in English literature to continue this work.

Abstract

American chattel slavery and sexual violence are two realities that evade language. When working at the intersection of these realities, language quickly runs dry and those who survived them are left unable to explain the full heft of their experience to others. In neo-slave narratives, writers have found ways to exhaust language and narrative in order to make the unspeakable real for those who did not experience it. This paper reads a much-studied scene in Toni Morrison's 1987 novel, *Beloved*, for how it seeks to express a scene of sexual violence, one of those experiences that language alone cannot fully pin down. I argue that a selective return to narrative is offered as a way of expressing what exhausts the resources of language, allowing for a path toward understanding this experience.

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> To render enslavement as a personal experience, language must get out of the way.
>
> —Toni Morrison[1]

The quotidian realities of American chattel slavery evade language. No word or group of words alone can make one understand stolen children, opened backs, or an absolute atmosphere of terror, not even to mention all of these, and more, combined. Even when considered for generations, language still falls short. I'm interested in one aspect of this "peculiar institution" that still evades language today and thus evades its complete understanding: its sexual terror. In exploring this, I'm particularly interested in neo-slave narratives, which, building on the work of Bernard W. Bell, Arlene Keizer, and Valerie Smith among others, I take to be those fictional works that deal substantially with American chattel slavery and/or its afterlives.[2] In neo-slave narratives, writers have found ways to exhaust language and narrative in order to make what sits at the intersection of the unspeakable—American chattel slavery and sexual terror—real for those who did not experience it. In Toni Morrison's 1987 novel *Beloved*, in particular, formerly enslaved women return their male counterparts to selective parts of the stories they've already told as a way of vocalizing what language alone cannot pin down, especially when gendered experiences of the same system hinder a complete, mutual understanding.

The project of writing a narrative that tends to experiences that evade language is what Paul Gilroy has termed the "slave sublime." He defines the slave sublime as "the work of enquiring into terrors that exhaust the resources of language,"[3] purposefully leaving it open to encompass all the terrors of American chattel slavery, known and unknown, that evade language. Morrison, herself, discusses the difficulty in exploring these terrors in the preface to *Beloved* and offers a way through it, writing that "to render enslavement as a personal experience, language must get out of the way." In this article, I add to scholarship on *Beloved* by probing how Morrison does this in relation to sexual violence.

Sexual terror during American chattel slavery impoverished language. As has been well studied, sexual violence was an integral part of this institution. It produced more slaves for rapist enslavers ("that which is born follows the womb"), functioned as a form of domination over both enslaved men and women, and the enslaved people affected had no legal recourse. They simply had to live knowing these violences were always around the corner and rarely escapable, violences that, to use Christina Sharpe's formation, are both imminent and immanent. Enslaved parents also had to live with the reality that their children could be taken from them at any time and could suffer the same violations. It is this atmosphere of terror, of always knowing the worst could happen, that adds another layer to the unspeakability of this institution's sexual violence. It is not just the act itself, but what it can produce and reproduce that impoverishes language.

It is from this impoverished state that Toni Morrison's *Beloved* offers some nourishment. In the novel, Sethe, a formerly enslaved woman who escaped to Ohio, is haunted by her past. When Paul D, a man enslaved with her on a farm called Sweet Home, shows up on her front steps one day, Sethe has the chance to talk about that past with someone else who lived it. Prompted by Sethe's mention of a tree on her back, the first memory Sethe tells of that past is of the moments before her escape:

> "After I left you, those boys came in there and took my milk. That's what they came in there for. Held me down and took it. I told Mrs. Garner on em. She had that lump and couldn't speak but her eyes rolled out tears. Them boys found out I told on em. Schoolteacher made one open up my back, and when it closed it made a tree. It grows there still."
>
> "They used the cowhide on you?"
>
> "And they took my milk."
>
> "They beat you and you was pregnant?"
>
> "And they took my milk!"[7]

The first memory that Sethe tells Paul D of her time enslaved is one, as Michele Mock has rightly put it, of rape.[8] It is a scene that Sethe cannot escape, one "to which there is always a return."[9] This is, to use Christina Sharpe's language, a past that is not past, one that "reappears, always to rupture the present."[10] As she tells him about the rape, Paul D returns to what he knows; he returns to and repeats "the words that correspond to his male experience of slavery."[11] But this is not what is important to Sethe, so she repeats the same words over and over: "And they took my milk." This "and" encompasses all that Paul D knows and acknowledges but it also includes the part that he leaves out, the part that is most important to Sethe. After Sethe's last "And they took my milk!," which is an exclamation, encompassing the frustration of his not understanding and emphasizing the part being left out, no more words are spoken. Paul D kisses the tree on Sethe's back and cups her breast with the same care. The trauma that he understands and the one he does not are put on the same level. Even if he doesn't fully understand what it means for Sethe to have had her milk taken, he understands that it has had a profound impact on her and that it deserves the same care as the violence that he does understand. Sethe's repetition of the same words, a repetition that returns Paul D to the part of her story that is most important to her and that leaves out other parts of the story to which he can revert, is what brings about this understanding.

What Sethe is trying to communicate to Paul D is not just the facts of her rape, but what all came with it. Growing up enslaved, Sethe did not spend much time with her mother: "she must of nursed me two or three weeks—that's what the others did" (72). Afterwards, Sethe is breastfed by the white children's nursemaid and only after the white children have gotten their fill. After those first two or three weeks, her belly is never plump like a baby's should be. She "know[s] what it is to be without the milk that belongs to you; to have to fight and holler for it and to have so little left," and she never wants her children to experience that lack (236). She never wants her children to be without. She never wants her children to have to drink from another's breast or fight for their basic necessities. So, when she sends her children away from Sweet Home before running away herself, she tells the woman with her still-nursing baby to "put sugar in a cloth to suck from" so that she wouldn't forget her, so she knew her mother would soon be back with her milk (19).

Returning her milk to her baby is what keeps Sethe going when her escape seems impossible. When she sees her friend who was supposed to escape with her hanging from a tree, she thinks of getting her milk to her baby; when she is part way through her escape and thinks the baby she is pregnant with has died, she thinks of getting her milk to her baby; when she retells the story over a decade later, what she thinks about is knowing she had to get her milk to her baby (233; 97; 19). Her need to get her milk to her children helps her to endure and get free.

Once Sethe is free, her and her children's freedom is threatened by the men who stole her milk. They find her at her home in Ohio in hopes of enslaving her and her children again. Instead of allowing them to take her back, Sethe attempts to kill her four children and then herself, but only succeeds in killing one of her children, the one for whom she had been saving her milk. "She had the milk all the time" and her plan had been for them all to "be together on the other side, forever" (284). This plan doesn't work out, though, and Sethe gives her milk to the child who can still take it. With the blood still on her from her murdered child, Sethe breast feeds her youngest, has her take "her mother's milk right along with the blood of her sister" (179). This moment, too, stays with Sethe when she thinks back on her milk being taken both because there was a threat of it being taken again and due to the lengths she has gone to ensure that didn't happen.

The rape itself, too, comes with its own trauma that language cannot pin down. As Michele Mock has outlined in her reading of the scene:

> As a maternal reader, I am forced to re-enact the horror of the scum-covered teeth scraping against her nipple, acutely sensitive as a result of repeated nursing and engorgement. Sethe's horror and shame multiply as sensation to the nipple's surface sends a signal to the swollen milk ducts which spurt milk to the nipple's surface in a flooding physical release. . . . The unspoken acknowledgement, what Sethe cannot bear to contemplate, is that her body betrayed her and enabled them to do so.[12]

Along with the complete violation that comes with rape and the fear of not being able to get her breast milk to her children that is specific to this rape, Sethe also must deal with the physical pain of the teeth of two grown men biting into her nipples and the shame of her breast milk releasing for people who are not her children. The physical pain, shame, and past and present traumas all meet in what is a cauldron of unspeakable horrors.

Despite the difficulty of the task, Sethe attempts to explain what happened to Paul D and what it meant to her.

> All I knew is I had to get my milk to my baby girl. Nobody was going to nurse her like me. Nobody was going to get it to her fast enough, or take it away when she had enough and didn't know it. Nobody knew that she couldn't pass her air if you held her up on your shoulder, only if she was lying on my knees. Nobody knew that but me and nobody had her milk but me (19).

In telling this story to Paul D, it is first important to Sethe to emphasize what only she could do for her baby. It is not that there were no other people with breast milk, but that nobody else knew her baby like she did, that nobody could care for her baby like she could. Paul D, however, doesn't see the importance of this to the question he asked about the tree on her back and responds: "We was talking 'bout a tree, Sethe" (19). When she tells him about the tree, about how after her milk was stolen her rapists whipped her for telling her slave mistress about it and that when it healed it formed a tree that still grows, that's all he can hold on to. It is all this that brings us to the scene with which I started:

> "They used the cowhide on you?"
>
> "And they took my milk."
>
> "They beat you and you was pregnant?"
>
> "And they took my milk!"

Whether Sethe is tired of explaining, too traumatized by the memory to carry on, realizes that Paul D will never fully understand what she went through, or any combination or extension of these, it is her insistence on what is important to her—"and they took my milk!—an insistence that gets the distracting language of her story out of the way, that allows for some sort of mutual understanding.

This tactic is used again in the novel when a gendered experience makes it so that a formerly enslaved man has trouble understanding the experiences of a formerly enslaved woman. At a later point in the novel but a moment that chronologically occurs years earlier, Sethe's mother-in-law Baby Suggs tries to explain to Stamp Paid, a man who lives nearby and helps enslaved people who have run away get to freedom, why she has decided to ponder color for the rest of her life and why she cannot judge Sethe for killing her baby.

> "You blaming God," he said. That's what you doing."
>
> "No, Stamp. I ain't."
>
> "You saying the whitefolks won? That what you saying?"
>
> "I'm saying they came in my yard."
>
> "You saying nothing counts"
>
> "I'm saying they came in my yard" (211).

In this moment, Stamp Paid cannot understand how one could be so exhausted by their life that they decide to spend the rest of it lying in bed and thinking about color. Baby Suggs repeatedly comes back to the moment when her daughter-in law and grandchildren were almost enslaved again—"they came in her yard"—to explain. What is especially telling about this moment is that, years later when Stamp Paid finally understands what Baby Suggs was trying to tell him, he picks up on her language: "Now, too late, he understood her. The heart that pumped out love, the mouth that spoke the Word, didn't count. They came in her yard anyway and she could not approve or condemn Sethe's rough choice" (212). *Beloved* offers this selective return to narrative, to stories already told, as a way forward when language on its own fails.

In the foreword to *Beloved*, Toni Morrison writes about the process of writing the novel. She understood that certain experiences were just too much for language and that she would have to work around it in order to write this story. *To render enslavement as a personal experience, language must get out of the way*. When it comes to the sexual terror of American chattel slavery in particular, and what comes with it, she offers a path to some sort of understanding that does not further drain the already exhausted survivor. The way in which Sethe and Baby Suggs return Paul D and Stamp Paid, respectively, to select parts of the stories they've already told allows them to make their suffering known and to have something to call back to in moments when others may not understand. It shows us that in order to render experiences that evade language, *language must get out of the way*.

Endnotes

1 Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Vintage, 1987), XIX.

2 The term neo-slave narrative was originally coined by Bernard W. Bell in his 1987 book *The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition* and has been expanded on by scholars of Black literature since. For a succinct review of this literature, see Valerie Smith's "Neo-Slave Narratives."

[3] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 218.

[4] Morrison, *Beloved*, XIX.

[5] For a succinct overview of this literature, see Rachel A. Feinstein's *When Rape Was Legal*.

[6] Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 13.

[7] Morrison, *Beloved*, 19–20. I will be using in-text citations when referencing *Beloved* for the rest of the article.

[8] Michele Mock, "Spitting Out the Seed: Ownership of Mother, Child, Breasts, Milk, and Voice in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*," *College Literature* 23, no. 3(October 1996): 7, 11.

[9] Lauren A. Mitchell, "The Trauma of Second Birth: Double Consciousness, Rupture, and Toni Morrison's *Beloved*," in *Toni Morrison on Mothers and Motherhood*, ed. Lee Baxter and Martha Satz (Demeter Press, 2017), 106.

[10] Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 9.

[11] Lorraine Liscio, "*Beloved*'s Narrative: Writing Mother's Milk," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 11, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 34.

[12] Mock, "Spitting out the Seed," 123.

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Healing from Intergenerational Trauma in Thi Bui's *The Best We Could Do*

Katelyn Tsai, *Duke University*

Katelyn "Katie" Tsai is a recent graduate of Duke University, where she majored in English and minored in Cinematic Arts and French Studies. She wrote her senior honors thesis, of which this paper is an excerpt, on intergenerational trauma in Vietnamese American literature. She is currently a Teaching Fellow in English at Phillips Academy in Andover, MA. Her research interests lie at the intersection of American literature, Asian American studies, and refugee studies. She plans to attend graduate school in the future.

Abstract

Until the end of the 20th century, most American cinematic and literary depictions of the Vietnamese were through the lens of the Vietnam War and, as such, focused primarily on the experiences of American soldiers and veterans. Increasingly, Vietnamese Americans have found alternative representation in the works of contemporary Vietnamese American writers; these works, moreover, offer different accounts of—and perspectives on—the Vietnam War and subsequent Vietnamese American experiences. Thi Bui's *The Best We Could Do*, a graphic memoir about her family's life in Vietnam before and during the Vietnam War and as refugees in the United States, is one such work. Using trauma theory, I argue that Bui's having conversations with her parents and writing about and illustrating their traumatic memories enables her to heal from intergenerational trauma and to prevent the transmission of trauma to future generations.

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Introduction

Vietnamese people endured a long history of trauma, including under French colonialism, during wars with France and the United States, in reeducation camps, as "boat people" who fled Vietnam by sea, and in refugee camps. As a result, many Vietnamese refugees suffer from mental health problems (Sangalang et al. 179). Studies on intergenerational trauma—"the ways in which the trauma experienced in one generation affects the health and well-being of descendants of future generations" (Sangalang and Vang 745)—have shown that there is "an increased risk of adverse psychological health outcomes . . . includ[ing] PTSD, mood, and anxiety disorder symptoms, psychological pain or burden in relation to parental trauma, and greater risk of abuse and neglect" among the children of refugees (Sangalang and Vang 753). Notable trauma theorists have identified speaking about one's trauma as a means of healing. Yet, according to sociologist Yến Lê Espiritu, within the Vietnamese American community, "Vietnamese refugee families wrap their war memories in a shroud of silence and forgetting" (147). Dori Laub's extensive research on Holocaust survivors substantiates Espiritu's findings. Laub states that "the imperative to tell the story of the Holocaust is inhabited by the impossibility of telling and, therefore, silence about the truth commonly prevails." However, Laub continues, "None find peace in silence. . . . The events become more and more distorted in their silent retention and pervasively invade and contaminate the survivor's daily life" ("An Event" 79). He asserts that "bearing witness to trauma or testimony" is often necessary to heal ("A Record" 47). Speaking about one's experiences to a "totally present listener," he elaborates, is an important part of the process of constructing a "story" from the "fragments" of the traumatic memories, which in turn enables the reflection on the experience that allows the survivor to live with the memory ("A Record" 48–50). Noted 21st-century Vietnamese American cartoonist and author Thi Bui engages in this process when she constructs a story by listening to her parents' experiences and by writing and illustrating her graphic memoir *The Best We Could Do* (2017).

Like Bui, many Vietnamese American authors, particularly those of the 1.5 generation—"those Vietnamese who immigrated before or during their early teens" and "who belong neither to the first generation of adult immigrants nor to the second generation of U.S.-born children" (Pelaud 33, 50)—have used literature to talk about trauma. Indeed, several contemporary Vietnamese American works, such as Lan Cao's *Monkey Bridge* (1997), Andrew Pham's *Catfish and Mandala* (2000), lê thi diem thúy's *The Gangster We Are All Looking For* (2003), and Ocean Vuong's *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* (2019), have narrators or protagonists who describe how their parents' trauma affected their upbringing. In these texts, either the parent or the child is unwilling to listen to or to talk about his or her trauma with the other. What differentiates Bui's *The Best We Could Do* from these texts is that Bui and her parents are able to communicate about their trauma effectively, thereby enabling her to heal. This finding adds to the scholarship on *The Best We Could Do*. While several scholarly articles highlight the ways in which Bui counters dominant narratives of the Vietnam War (Earle; Gusain and Jha; Miron), and others emphasize the relationship between Bui and her mother

(Frelier; Oh), in this paper, I focus on Bui's relationship with both of her parents and how and why she was impacted by and able to heal from intergenerational trauma. Specifically, it is Bui's having conversations with her parents and writing about and illustrating their traumatic memories that allows her to heal from intergenerational trauma and to prevent the transmission of trauma to future generations.

Bui's graphic novel opens with the birth of her first child, a son. One of Bui's fears "since having [her] own child" is that she will "unintentionally inflict damage [she] could never undo" upon her son (327), as she feels her parents did to her and her siblings: "And though my parents took us far away from the site of their grief . . . certain shadows stretched far, casting a gray stillness over our childhood . . . hinting at a darkness we did not understand but could always FEEL" (59–60). That her parents tried to leave their traumatic past behind suggests that the damage they caused through their residual grief (the "gray stillness") was unintentional. Bui elaborates, "For my parents, already fully formed in another time and place to which they could never go back . . . home became the holding pen for the frustrations and the unexorcised demons that had nowhere to go" (68). Bui suggests that her parents' trauma, represented by "demons," is "unexorcised," or still inside them, and that its effects could be felt at home where it was trapped, as if in a "holding pen." In reflecting upon the trauma she experienced growing up, Bui realizes that the reason she felt her parents' trauma is that they did not expel it from their bodies, and, thus, she realizes the importance of expelling her own trauma for the sake of her child.[1]

In attempting to grow closer to her parents, Bui finds it necessary to learn about her father's past, which in turn helps her comprehend his difficulty in raising her and her siblings. She writes, "To understand how my father became the way he was, I had to learn what happened to him as a little boy" (92). To show this visually, Bui employs images of herself approaching and then listening to her father, and she depicts her father as a boy and herself as a girl the same age. These illustrations represent Bui's empathy for her father during their conversations; trying to understand her father, she imagines what he, as a child, had gone through, while also imagining what it would feel like to have these experiences herself at the age her father was. Bui's drawing herself as a child also shows that her inner child, the one who suffered from the effects of her father's trauma, is the one seeking answers, seeking to understand, seeking to heal.

Bui's empathy for her father is particularly apparent in the way she illustrates both his childhood trauma and his speaking about it to her decades later. For example, when Bui's father recalls the last time he ever saw his mother and, more specifically, when he "watched as his father beat [her] badly and threw her out" during "the height of the famine" (110–1), one illustration in particular, a close-up of Bui's father's anguished face—furrowed eyebrows, giant tears, and wailing mouth—conveys Bui's understanding of how traumatized her father must have been by this incident. Two adjacent panels, of Bui's father as an adult recounting his father's final beating of his mother, show the impact these events *still* have on him (109). In the first panel, as he begins to tell Bui what happened, he trails off and does not finish his sentence, which is indicated by an ellipsis; in the second panel, he closes his eyes and pauses, and his difficulty in speaking about his devastating experience is symbolized by a speech bubble filled with only another ellipsis. In both, his furrowed eyebrows convey his distress at recalling these memories. As Bui is the one drawing these moments from her conversations, that she picks up on her father's difficulty in speaking about certain childhood memories shows how much she comes to understand her father's feelings during their talks.

Through the process of learning about and empathizing with her father, Bui cultivates an understanding of how he "became the [parent] he was" in her childhood (92) and, as a result, develops a closer relationship with him. While as a young adult, she "went away" in order "to stop being scared of him" (91), after growing closer through their conversations, Bui is able to find a similarity between herself and her father: "I imagine that the awe and excitement I felt for New York when I moved there after college—must be something like what my father felt when he arrived in Sài Gòn in 1955" (173). In this instance, Bui not only empathizes with her father by imagining how he must have felt but also draws a connection between them, and therefore does the opposite of separating herself from him as she did before.

In contrast to her conversations with her father about his early years, the way in which Bui comes to understand her mother's trauma is through the experience of having a child of her own. For example, soon after giving birth to her son, Bui asks her mother, "How did you do this SIX times?" (20). By using the pronoun "this," Bui associates her mother's experiences of giving birth with her own. That she is posing this question at all and her emphasis on the number of times her mother gave birth suggest that having now experienced childbirth herself, she can imagine how difficult it would be to do it as many times as her mother did, and thus she realizes how strong her mother is. Their emotional connection and mutual understanding of what the other has been through is depicted in the image of their physical connection: a hug. Indeed, after her mother leaves her hospital room, Bui reflects further on what raising a child will be like: "The responsibility is immense. A wave of empathy for my mother washes over me" (22).

Becoming familiar with the difficulty of childbirth and the responsibility that motherhood necessitates helps Bui understand the hardship that her mother underwent as both a parent and a survivor of war. This recognition is evident when Bui uses the space to narrate and illustrate each of her mother's deliveries. First, she highlights her mother's challenges during her brother Tâm's birth: going into labor while cooking dinner for her husband and three children in a refugee camp and having to be carried and then placed on a boat to get from the camp to a midwife (42–44). Two weeks after her sister Bich's birth, her mother worried about being killed during the Tết Offensive, and just before her sister Lan was born, her mother had difficulty getting to a hospital because the communists had "barricaded" the road "every forty clicks" (48–50). In addition to the physically and emotionally exhausting experience of being pregnant and giving birth, with which Bui is now familiar, her mother had to cope with stressors pertaining to the war in Vietnam and her and her family's escape.

To add immensely to her emotional burden, Bui's mother lost two of her babies, the tragedy of which Bui is now able to imagine after giving birth to her own child. When Bui's son has jaundice and must stay in the hospital without her, Bui understands the fear and grief her mother felt before and after losing her first child. Bui narrates, "I thought about the mortality of my infant son," and she asks her mother about what it was like "when Giang Quyên was sick in the hospital . . . at the end." After her mother recounts her poignant "last moment" with her dying baby, Bui illustrates her emotional connection to her mother, once again, with a hug (310).

Only by learning about and fully comprehending the suffering her parents underwent is Bui able to realize that her own trauma stems from her parents' inability to expel theirs. For example, while as a child she could not "understand" the "darkness" that followed her parents but could "feel" it (60), after hearing her father's stories, she concludes, "I grew up with the terrified boy who became my father. Afraid of my father, craving safety and comfort, I had no idea that the terror I felt was only the long shadow of his own" (128–9). Bui makes clear that her trauma is linked directly to her father's trauma by assigning the descriptor "shadow of his own" to the "terror [she] felt" and not using the possessive pronoun "my." It is not *her* terror but her father's that ultimately traumatizes her. By coming to understand what her parents experienced, Bui realizes that her parents did not have the opportunity to heal from their trauma because they were trying to survive, and that they did, as the title of her book suggests, "the best they could do" under the circumstances.

In the closing of her graphic memoir, Bui believes that she will not "unintentionally inflict damage [she] could never undo" (327) upon her son because she has already expelled her trauma from her body through writing and illustrating the preceding pages. In the last two pages of her book, Bui concludes, "But when I look at my son, now ten years old, I don't see war and loss. . . . I see a new life, bound with mine quite by coincidence, and I think maybe he can be free" (328–329). Her narration is accompanied by an illustration of her son swimming away, which symbolizes his freedom from intergenerational trauma. Ultimately, by having conversations with her parents, as well as by experiencing birth and motherhood, Bui is able to understand her parents better, write and illustrate a book about her and her family's trauma, release the trauma she has held in her body, and prevent the transmission of trauma to her son and future generations.

As Layli Maria Miron observes, Bui's *The Best We Could Do* "came out in March 2017, in a period of 'boat people' making perilous journeys [from Syria] across the Mediterranean rather than the South China Sea, as [Bui's] family had" (46). Since the publication of Bui's book, the end of the war in Afghanistan and the start of the war in Ukraine have led to an increase in refugees. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, by the end of 2022, there were 35.3 million refugees in the world ("Global Trends"). Refugees undergo trauma that they often unintentionally pass onto their children. Bui's illustrated memoir is unique in that unlike other Vietnamese American texts that talk about intergenerational trauma, it provides an example of how the Vietnamese diasporic community, as well as refugees from other war-torn countries, can begin to heal. By approaching one's family members with, above all, a desire to understand the trauma they endured, one can discuss their traumatic experiences, process them through writing and drawing, and thereby break the cycle of intergenerational trauma.

Endnote

[1] I got the idea of expelling trauma from the body, which is mentioned a few times in this paper, from mai c. doan's experimental poetry book *water/tongue*. In her afterword, she writes: "I think of the writing of this book as.. . . a ceremony of healing intergenerational trauma by giving it space to come out of the body . . ." (66).

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Utilizing the Agency in Loss: The Re-mourning of Harriet Jacobs' Grievances

Salma Vargas, *Smith College*

Salma Vargas is a senior at Smith College, majoring in English and Africana Studies. Salma's work uses a literary and psychoanalytic lens to examine how formerly enslaved people's grief became a source of energy for resistance. Their paper won the Pansy E. Jacobs award at the National African American Association conference this year. After graduating, Salma wishes to teach at a boarding school in New England before entering a PhD program in English. Currently, Salma is continuing their research through an honors thesis which they hope to publish within the next year.

Abstract

Although continuous sorrow over one's loss has been pathologized based on the psychoanalytic tradition, this paper troubles this idea by analyzing the power of formerly enslaved people's grief. The primary sources in this research are Harriet Jacobs' narrative and a Works Project Administration interview. I argue that their experiences with the loss of family and sexual autonomy during slavery did not paralyze their lives, but in fact, served as a launchpad for enacting change against their oppressive conditions of existence. Through a close reading of the texts, the paper introduces a new language to understand this act of agency: re-mourning. Formerly enslaved people reinvoked loss to reaffirm familial ties that were severed and assert their humanity in spite of seemingly overpowering tragedy.

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In 1941, on the porch of a rustic cabin in Alabama, eighty-six year old Laura Clark prepared to tell the story of her life as an enslaved person. Speaking to a Works Project Administration (WPA) interviewer, Clark gave testimony to a memory from eighty years earlier: herself as a child who longed for her enslaved mother's embrace. Sold away at nine years old to a North Carolina plantation, Clark never saw her mother, siblings, or grandmother ever again. "I never seed her no more in dis life" she stated (Library of Congress).

During the interview, Clark sang along as a familiar hymn from the local church rang out: "A motherless chile sees a hard time. Oh, Lord, he'p her on de road. Er sister will do de bes she kin. Dis is a hard world, Lord, fer a motherless chile." Clark intended to sing this hymn during the interview as her memories of loss were still a fresh wound that the lyrics touched upon. She began to weep. "Hits so mournful" she said, reflecting on the song's message that a child should not be without their mother. The song struck an intimate chord in Clark. Nonetheless, Clark decidedly revisited this pain to vivify the connection to her mother by nurturing a long-lasting sorrow that would keep her memory alive. For Clark, sorrow reaffirmed her claim to her mother, even long after they were torn apart.

Introduction

In this essay, I explore how formerly enslaved people's memory of painful experiences becomes a source of agency. This reframing of grief seeks to trouble the psychoanalytic tradition where Sigmund Freud claims that prolonged sorrow towards past events is unhealthy, which I will touch more upon later (Freud 243). I demonstrate that this long-established pathologization is insufficient for understanding grief in the context of formerly enslaved women, because this view ignores the underlying possibilities that arise from mourning the memory and continuous effects of slavery's violence. As a White, wealthy, and European male, Freud did not consider the racial, gendered, and political dimensions that constitute loss, leading his analysis to be clouded by his own race and privilege (Foucault 210). Nonetheless, Freud's social status and title as a doctor granted him the authority to categorize what is a healthy and unhealthy response to loss.

Considering the psychoanalytic framework's limited perspective, Africana literary and cultural scholars recognize the model's inability to fully understand African American grief towards the personal and political devastation faced as a result of slavery. Freud would categorize this long-term contemplation of the past as a pathological state. However, even after enslavement, Clark went on to live through the Jim Crow era where slavery's oppressive institution refashioned itself to carry on within the present. Saidiya Hartman questions how one moves on from a past that is not past within this "afterlife of slavery" (13). Although it is clear that the psychoanalytic tradition does not account for the conditions of loss in relation to slavery, scholars like Hartman continue to assess and categorize these lamenting emotions through Freud's framework and theoretical language. Therefore, while Freud's insular analysis of loss requires expansion, the larger issue at hand is that Africana cultural and literary scholars seem confined to utilizing Freud's limiting framework. By examining how enslaved

people enacted resistance and redressed these wounds through grief, this essay builds upon Freud's model in order to formulate a new understanding of prolonged sorrow that escapes Freud's pathologization.

As seen in Clark's case, familial separation was a crucial site on which enslaved people created deep attachments to their memories. The 19th-century rise of the domestic slave trade set in motion these severances that would cause the enslaved to endlessly yearn for their loved ones (Baptist 248). Connections between the enslaved people were also constantly subjected to the risk of separation based on their enslavers' will. Living in a state of peril, enslaved people became attuned to the possibility of loss and losses that they experienced which housed significant memories and emotions.

While it might be easiest to categorize enslaved people's attachment to the past as unresolved grief, there is evidence that for some people, such as Clark, mournfulness was more than a paralyzing state. Enslaved people who grieved their past, kept the memories of lost loved ones alive to strengthen their familial bonds, long after enslavers thought these bonds had been successfully severed. Clark's longing for her mother in fact resists her enslaver's ownership by asserting her conviction that she belonged to her mother, not her enslaver.

Using the narrative of Harriet Jacobs, a formerly enslaved woman who achieved freedom, I explore how enslaved people harnessed their grief into a source of power that asserted various characteristics of humanity that enslavers sought to control. These assertions included the strengthening of kinship, protecting enslaved families, reaffirming the claim families had to one another, and making amends with personal losses such as girlhood and familial death. Put simply, I argue that enslaved people utilized their grief to incite agency against their oppressive conditions.

Historiography

The tendency to read expressions of grief such as Laura Clark's as a debilitating pathology is part of an ongoing cultural debate. Even scholars of African American history and literature often ask whether or not they should study grief such as Clark's or just move on from slavery's losses and focus on the present moment (Best 454).

The discursive pathologization of grief originates from the Freudian psychoanalytic tradition. In his 1917 text, *Mourning and Melancholia* Freud categorized grief in two conditions. Mourning is the healthy response to loss where one moves on from their sadness "after a lapse of time" (244). Melancholia is the unhealthy response to loss where one does not move on from their sadness and hangs onto the memory of their loss for a prolonged period, including a lifetime. Although Freud's framework informs my analysis of long-term sorrow, these definitions are insufficient because they ignore grief's transformative possibilities. Current scholars of African American literature question and build upon these Freudian ideas in different ways, but ultimately perpetuate his pathologizing stance.

In her 2006 memoir *Lose Your Mother*, Saidiya Hartman, for example, attempts to recover the enslaved's humanity. Being the descendant of enslaved people, Hartman's desire comes from grief: she wishes to connect with her enslaved ancestors, but they are gone and she hurts knowing that her people were enslaved. Hartman, however, realizes she cannot recover the enslaved people's lives from the barren architectural remains of slave dungeons in Ghana. In spite of this failure, she does not want to mourn this loss because it would mean accepting that her ancestors' experiences are doomed to historical erasure (Hartman 16). However, Hartman is also wary of labeling her relationship with slavery's history as melancholic since this condition signifies that she is condemned to detrimentally suffer over the past (Hartman 16).

Hartman highlights the problem with mourning and melancholia: mourning forces her to overcome her grief and abandon the desire to redress the lives of those obliterated by slavery. Meanwhile, melancholia forces her to be trapped in her pain by only focusing on historical devastation. Despite recognizing these limitations, Hartman ultimately echoes Freud's pathologizing stance by viewing grief as a debilitating affective state that must be abandoned, otherwise it will consume her well-being. Hartman's experience raises important critiques about Freud's framework by affirming that grief's excessive presence is an issue but its removal does not heal the cause of grief either.

Because the theoretical language at hand fails to conceptualize a form of grief that empathizes with the past without being debilitating, as we see in Hartman's work, among others, I argue that new language must be introduced to move away from the deeply embedded pathological undertones in the psychoanalytic tradition. The language that I propose is called Re-mourning: a praxis where the loss one feels towards an event or object undergoes a transductive process where that grief turns into a source of energy for an individual to enact change in their life. Re-mourning takes inspiration from Toni Morrison's concept of rememory. "Re" implies a step backwards, something is being experienced or felt again: grief. Paired alongside mourning this repeated sensation of loss orients the individual to move forward in their life which escapes the loop of sadness that melancholia repeats, but does not abandon past heartache like psychoanalytic mourning.

Re-mourning captures how enslaved people understood their grief and harnessed this sentimental energy to change their oppressive conditions. Centering enslaved people's experiences, this language theorizes how grief is more than sorrow, it also agency. I will conduct a close reading literary analysis of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (2001) by Harriet Jacobs to demonstrate how re-mourning enables protection and demands ownership of one's kin in order to redress various losses.

Background Story

Quintessential examples of re-mourning run throughout Harriet Jacobs' narrative beginning with her grandmother, Molly Horniblow (Yellin). Although Horniblow faithfully served her mistress, the enslaver willed her five children, one of whom had to be sold away to equally divide the profit among her heirs. Stimulated by this sorrow, Horniblow worked endlessly to try and save up enough money to purchase her remaining children. Rather than being paralyzed by her loss, Horniblow transformed the heartache toward her sold child into a source of motivation. This transfiguration constitutes re-mourning. By harnessing her loss, Horniblow asserted her role as a mother and eventually was able to claim ownership of at least one of her boys.

Analysis

While Horniblow re-mourns familial division, Jacobs' re-mourning unfolds through the loss of her girlhood. As legal property, enslaved women working in the plantation household were subjected to their master's perverse intentions (Hartman). To avoid being raped by her enslaver, James Norcom, Jacobs decided to lay with a seemingly good-natured white man. Horniblow and Jacobs' mother had raised her to practice chastity despite her enslaved status. Even so, Jacobs had to sacrifice her sexual innocence to avoid being raped. Deeply affected, Jacob's writes, "I secretly *mourned* over the sorrow I was bringing on my grandmother, who had so tried to *shield* me from harm" (49). Like Hartman, Jacobs empathetically grieves the pain that slavery has inflicted on her predecessors. However, during mourning Jacobs does not overcome her loss. Rather, mourning becomes a contemplative state where she recalls the loss of her girlhood alongside her grandmother's failed protective efforts. The word "shield" reaffirms Jacobs' conviction that Horniblow possesses guardianship over Jacobs. Meaning that while feeling the devastating effects of enslavement, like Clark, Jacobs also feels her grandmother's care. While this parallel reaffirms their familial bond, it also demonstrates that the anguish Jacobs experiences towards sacrificing her chastity builds upon Horniblow's own grief of being unable to completely protect her family.

Grief continues to amass, when Jacobs christens her newborn daughter and she remembers her deceased mother. Jacobs writes, "Recollections of my mother came over me, and I felt subdued in spirit. There she had presented me for baptism, without any reason to feel ashamed" (67). Jacobs' mother was able to marry a man she loved and have only his children. Thus, the memory of her chaste mother simultaneously invigorated Jacobs the shame from sacrificing her own chastity. Already bearing the loss of her sexual agency and the loss of familial protection, her mother's memory intensifies these devastations such that Jacobs is emotionally paralyzed: her spirit is subdued. Debilitated by her grief, Jacobs becomes fixated on her despair, "Why had my lot been so different from my mother's? Her master had died when she was a child" (67).

However, within this climax of grief, these memories also "come over" Jacobs. The word "over" means protecting the subject. The vision that comes over Jacobs is when she most possessed purity and her mother's protection. Baptism is the sacrament of salvation that cleanses the individual of their sins. Witnessing a life before familial separation and adolescent loss, causes Jacobs to grieve her oppression so deeply that Jacobs' relationship to loss undergoes a transformation: now, the weight of these losses incites Jacobs to redress these grievances. This commitment is expressed when she writes, "I prayed that she might never feel the weight of slavery's chain, whose iron entereth into the soul" (68)! Now that trauma from slavery no longer subdues Jacobs's spirit, she wishes for her child's soul to never experience this burden. This illustrates that Jacobs' channels her grief as a source of energy that drives her to pursue freedom.

Being able to wield her grief, Jacobs draws out the desire for change embedded in her sorrow. A desire that propels her to chase an alternative existence to the conditions that originally produced that sorrow. This process of re-mourning is expressed when Jacobs latches onto the anticipation of losing her kids and uses this grief from this potential loss to fuel her desire to protect them at all costs. Jacobs says, "The little vine was taking deep root in my existence, though its clinging fondness excited *a mixture of love and pain* [. . .] but always there was a dark cloud over my enjoyment. I could never forget that he was a slave" (emphasis added; 54). In re-mourning, Jacobs is still pained by her experience with familial loss, but these emotions are not incapacitating. It is through this love for her children and pain towards the past that prompts Jacobs to continue moving forward because when Jacobs remembers her losses as an enslaved girl, she anticipates that this pain is destined to

be passed onto her children. Wielding this grief in accordance to her needs, compels Jacobs to protect her family and reaffirm their familial bond by claiming them as hers instead of Norcom's property.

Once Jacobs decides to run away from slavery, she states, "Whatever slavery might do to me, it could not shackle my children" (92). Although Jacobs harnessed her suffering to achieve her children's freedom, finding agency in grief is not a legacy she wanted to pass onto to her children. To honor her narrative, one must acknowledge that Jacobs re-mourns her various losses in a sacrificial manner so that her children do not have to undergo the same process. Even though re-mourning alters the hindering sensation of loss into agency, this does not change the gruesome nature of the events that occurred in her life. In other words, while re-mourning revisits the past, it is ultimately for the sake of creating a better future. Thus, while scholars like Hartman center the past in order to redress enslaved people's lives, Jacobs suggests that redressing slavery's trauma entails an orientation towards the well-being of future generations.

Conclusion

Ultimately, re-mourning created a pathway for Jacobs to use her loss as strength, motivation, and determination to possess the right to remain with her children. This ownership protects the familial bonds of enslaved people that their oppressors disregarded for their own purposes. The traditional psychoanalytic understanding of mourning disavows enslaved people's subjectivity by framing mourning as a process that lets go of loss. However, re-mourning serves as a pathway for enslaved people to express loss from their perspective instead of being confined to concepts that were constructed by those in power and dictate how they should process loss. Jacobs demonstrates the viability of re-mourning as it allows her to harvest agency from her vulnerability towards different losses. Re-mourning's value lies within its turn away from the pathologization of grief. Through its lens, grief no longer becomes a burden that keeps one locked in the past. Enslaved people's re-mourning is especially important because grief has been viewed as a state of debilitation by both scholars and the individuals experiencing that grief themselves. If grief is reframed to be a site of agency, then the possibility of protection, kinship, and perhaps even letting go of that loss becomes possible.

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