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About *South Atlantic Review*

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Since its founding in 1935 as the newsletter for the South Atlantic Modern Language Association, *South Atlantic Review* has become a premier academic quarterly publishing research in the modern languages and literatures, as well as in associated fields such as film, cultural studies, and rhetoric/composition. The journal welcomes submissions of essays, maximum length 8,000 words, that are accessible, and of broad interest, to its diverse readership across a number of disciplines. Submissions may be made electronically directly to the managing editor at the address above. *SAR* also welcomes proposals for special issues and special focus sections.

Additional information regarding submission requirements and book reviews can be found on our website at http://samla.memberclicks.net/sar.

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About SAMLA

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Given at the Eighty-Ninth Annual Conference of the
South Atlantic Modern Language Association
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Scott D. Yarbrough

I: The Reader's Progress

I would suppose that if there is any one thing that joins together all the people in the South Atlantic Modern Language Association, it is a shared love of reading. I imagine it's difficult to reduce our motley cohort further than that. Even a review of panels offered at the annual conference doesn't tell one very much, because many scholars don't necessarily like the works they study. Many of us have things we like to read, on the one hand, and things we like to study or teach on the other. But regardless of where we are on our own individual professional progressions, we all started out in the same place, with an abiding love of the written word.

I wonder how many members of SAMLA can recall what it was like to not be able to read. What it felt like when we first discovered the wonders of written narratives, of poetry, of the pleasure of the text.

I was not one of those reading-in-the-womb newborns. I was more the scream all night and spit up a lot type. I was old enough when I learned to read in kindergarten that I can still remember it.

Oh, what the family roadtrip used to be. No DVD players in cars, no internet, no audiobooks. My father's three 8-track tapes played on endless repeat: Willie Nelson's *The Redheaded Stranger, Willie Nelson Sings the Songs of Kris Kristofferson*, and *Classic Country Hits* as chosen by the curators of K-Tel. And for entertainment when we were particularly small my brothers and I would color.

In recent years coloring books have come back into vogue and evidently there are now many adults who find coloring relaxing. As a left-

hander with perpetually antic handwriting, I always hated the activity and found it frustrating and tedious. So I preferred comic books.

Embarking on each trip, my family would hit a 7-11 convenience store on the way out of town. Each of us was given a dollar. My youngest brother splurged on Yoohoo chocolate drinks and Reese's Cups. My middle brother would buy weird chewy candies in bizarre flavors so he wouldn't have to share them. Watermelon-flavored Now-or-Laters, or Sour Apple Mouth-Shrinkers.

But as I said above, moving into kindergarten I was sick of coloring books, so I bought what my parents always called a "funny book." The one that particularly comes to mind was an issue of *Superboy.* My mother didn't want me to buy it because I couldn't quite read, yet. But I knew about comic books. My cousins had stacks and stacks and I'd have them read to me from *The Legion of Superheroes* in *Adventure* comics, and from *The Rawhide Kid,* and *Kid Colt Outlaw,* and of course from *Superman* and *Batman*. So I insisted and bought that issue of *Superboy* for a quarter.

The comic book I bought didn't make any sense to me, of course. But it still didn't make any sense when my mother read it to me, either, and I completely suspected she was pulling some kind of mean mom trick on me. I was a suspicious little bastard I guess. To be fair to my four- or five-year-old self, I later found out that even after I learned to read that this particular issue of *Superboy* still failed to make any damned sense. I'd somehow stumbled onto an issue which would become a kitsch classic, a "what if" tale pondering what if, instead of crash-landing in Kansas to be raised by the kind and wise Kent family, young Kal-El from Krypton had landed in the African jungle to be raised by great apes? Instead of being called "Tarzan" he was called "Karkan."[1]

But that comic book led to more comic books, most of which were somewhat more prosaic, and then on to the Hardy Boys, to Nancy Drew, and to the Three Investigators, who had their own secret clubhouse in the form of a trailer buried beneath a mound of scrap in a junkyard. Somehow these fellows led to the Tarzan and sword-swinging adventures of Edgar Rice Burroughs, and to the juvie science fiction of Robert Heinlein, the mindlessly intense fantasy tales of Conan the Barbarian as penned by Robert E. Howard, the westerns of Louis L'Amour and Zane Grey, mysteries by Agatha Christie, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Dorothy Sayers, and eventually spy fiction by Eric Ambler, Ian Fleming, and Alistair MacLean. Forced by teachers, along the way I would make the occasional more literary foray: *To Kill a Mockingbird, The Scarlet Letter, The Catcher in the Rye,* and a number of Shakespeare's plays, including *Macbeth* and *Hamlet,* which are still my favorites. But those were for school, not for fun.

Genre and formula fiction were, for me, the literary equivalent of gateway drugs to more sophisticated and complex fiction. As I moved into college, I dug into more intricate science fiction by writers like William Gibson and Philip K. Dick; I moved from Christie to Hammett and Chandler and Ross Macdonald; the Westerns of Louis L'Amour led to Larry McMurty as Ian Fleming led to John LeCarre; and then, in college, someone finally taught *The Great Gatsby* to me the way it ought to be taught, and everything changed.

I imagine that this narrative of literacy is a pretty common experience for most of us, although I'm sure that some of our SAMLA members were discussing *The Portrait of a Lady* at Brownie Girl Scout meetings and Little League baseball camp, while I also suspect that I might be in a very small company as someone who read not only all of Zane Grey but also the entire body of work of Philip K. Dick.

Somewhere during this process I became aware—probably early in high school when my 80,000-year-old 11th Grade English teacher expressed disdain for J.R.R. Tolkien—that there was a divide between the books we read for fun and those which are considered art. As Thomas Roberts explains in his book *An Aesthetics of Junk Fiction* (1990) (italics his),

> Traditionally we have divided readers of the novel into three types. There are the discriminating few—the *serious readers*, who include the reading of certain novels among the most important experiences in their lives; there are the many—the *plain readers,* who seem to read only what everyone else is reading; and there are the millions—the *paperback readers*, who sometimes seem to be browsing on novels rather than reading them. (31)

I'm not sure when this distinction between literature as a form of art and literature as a form of entertainment begins. We know that when the printing press proliferated in the sixteenth century, scholars warned of the "confusing and harmful abundance of books" and called upon the aristocracy to put the matter right (Blair 11). Ann Blair writes how Samuel Johnson distinguished between reading that required scholarly scrutiny and reading he did for fun (12), although his judgements on the different quality of the books in question seems not to have been severe. Thomas Roberts relates a scene from Sheridan's 1775 play *The Rivals* in which a woman desperately seeks to remove evidence of trashy reading when important guests are expected over at the house (33).

As the availability of education in the nineteenth century grew in Western Europe and the United States, new literary forms published on cheap pulp paper proliferated to meet the need of a newly literate populace. Literary magazines, which published purveyors of the new form of the short story such as Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne, also published in serial form the works of novelists like Emily Bronte, Charles Dickens, and Henry James. At the same time, Penny Dreadfuls with ghost and vampire stories were sold at every bookstand alongside dime novels. Later they'd be joined by early pulp magazines like *The New Review*, *The Strand*, and *Argosy*, publishing writers such as H.G. Wells and Arthur Conan Doyle.

As Erin Smith writes in *Hard-Boiled: Working Class Readers and Pulp Magazines,* "The pulps were direct descendants of nineteenth-century dime novels, cheaply produced fiction published by Beadle & Adams, Street & Smith, and other companies that targeted the urban working classes between the 1840s and the 1890s. A few of these titles endured until World War I." She goes on to explain that when

> changes in postal regulations made it prohibitively expensive to distribute dime novels through the mail, many of the largest publishers simply repackaged their cheap fiction as pulp magazines, continuing to feature favorite series characters such as Nick Carter and Buffalo Bill. Street & Smith, the largest dime-novel publisher, switched over to pulp format in 1915. The pulp-magazine business boomed between the wars, driven by falling costs and rising literacy levels. (19)

But the discernment of a great gap between significant artists, on the one hand, and hacks who wrote only for the money on the other, was there from the beginnings of consumable pop culture. One such self-conscious hack who worked hard to provide himself a living through writing was Edgar Allan Poe, who said of his peers, "The most 'popular,' the most 'successful' writers among us (for a brief period, at least) are, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, persons of mere . . . perseverance, effrontery—in a word, busy-bodies, toadies, quacks" (Lepore).

Throughout the twentieth century the divide simultaneously grew wider while also, perhaps, becoming easier to traverse. The pulp magazine market continued to flourish in the post-World War I West with the popularity of such magazines as *Black Mask* and *Amazing Stories.* And, although paperback books have existed since the invention of the printing press, in 1935 publisher Allen Lane launched his line of Penguin Paperbacks in England, anchored with Agatha Christie's *A Murder on the Links.* Four years later, Robert de Graff started Pocket

Books in the U.S., which sold for a quarter each. As Louis Menand writes,

> The key to Lane's and de Graff's innovation was not the format. It was the method of distribution. More than a hundred and eighty million books were printed in the United States in 1939, the year de Graff introduced Pocket Books, but there were only twenty-eight hundred bookstores to sell them in. There were, however, more than seven thousand newsstands, eighteen thousand cigar stores, fifty-eight thousand drugstores, and sixty-two thousand lunch counters—not to mention train and bus stations. . . .The mass-market paperback was therefore designed to be displayed in wire racks that could be conveniently placed in virtually any retail space.

The paperback was boosted by its free distribution to American servicemen during World War II. By the 1950s, publishing was an entirely different world than it had been a generation previously. Menand notes how "Pocket Books, after its business got established, rarely went to press for less than a hundred thousand copies; Signet started at two hundred thousand, and Fawcett, the publisher of Gold Medal Books, had initial print runs of three hundred thousand." By contrast, as David Earle points out, *The Sun Also Rises* sold just over five thousand in its first print run and *The Great Gatsby* a little over twenty thousand copies in its first printing (qtd. in Menand).

The membrane between "serious" literary publishing and genre or formula publishing seems to have long been permeable. Detective writers such as Dashiell Hammett, Dorothy Sayers, and Raymond Chandler have been given their serious academic due, just as science fiction novelists like Ursula LeGuin, Octavia Butler, and Philip K. Dick have long been studied in the academy. Graham Greene loved to dance back and forth across this perceived gap between commerce and art, although he was very focused on the distinction and which novels were "serious" and which were "entertainments." The 2017 recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature, Kazuo Ishiguro, has published among his works a science fiction novel and a fantasy fable.

Despite the acclaim of certain writers operating within the frameworks of formula fiction and the willingness of some respected writers to dip their toes into the waters of popular literary genres, however, critics positioning themselves as gatekeepers have railed against popular forms. The Frankfurt school argued that popular culture is a product of the culture industry employed to keep down the masses. Writing

not long after World War II, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer argue that

> The purity of bourgeois arts. . . . was from the beginning bought with the exclusion of the lower classes—with whose cause, the real universality, art keeps faith precisely by its freedom from the end of the false universality. Serious art has been withheld from those for whom the hardship and oppression of life make a mockery of seriousness, and who must be glad if they can use time not spent at the production line just to keep going. Light art has been the shadow of autonomous art. It is the social bad conscience of serious art. (135)

And the goal of serious art, contended writers like John Ruskin sixty years earlier in *Modern Painters,* was to hold a mirror up to life. Not to entertain. No delight without instruction.

Lest we relegate that line of thought to a group of unhappy Europeans who had seen the destruction wrought by totalitarian governments, we should remember the reaction when the National Book Foundation decided to give horror fantasist Stephen King an award for distinguished contribution to American letters in 2003. The literati and academics of the nation rose in an uproar. Harold Bloom, self-appointed curator of literary merit, said of King, "He is a man who writes what used to be called penny dreadfuls, . . . That they could believe that there is any literary value there or any aesthetic accomplishment or signs of an inventive human intelligence is simply a testimony to their own idiocy" (Kirkpatrick). As Mr. Kurtz might have said it, the horror—the horror.

The notion seems to be, to put it the way that novelist Bret Lott did in speaking to a group of writing students at my university once, "You are either writing for art or for commerce. You can't serve both masters."

For many writers this has been true, but I wonder if it always has to be that way. With this question in mind I'd like to consider the examples of novelist William Faulkner and one of his primary literary heirs, Cormac McCarthy. These are two of the more internationally respected American writers. Faulkner may well be the most studied author of the Twentieth Century, and both writers have their own scholarly societies and literary journals dedicated to their study. Both are in many of their novels famously difficult for many readers, and so are often held up as exemplars of serious and challenging writing.

II: Two Roads Converged in a New York Club

Almost from the start Faulkner knew he wanted to be someone important in the literary world, whether as a poet or novelist. He went to Canada to join the Royal Air Force, and then couldn't complete his training before the Great War ended, but he still bought an officer's uniform and took to limping around his home town of Oxford letting on that he had maybe quite very possibly been wounded in the war. He took to wearing tweeds as a young man and, as we say in the south, was prone to "putting on airs." The people of Oxford started calling him Count No'Count. He moved to New York because that was what writers did although he didn't last long, working as a clerk in a bookstore, gaining notoriety for railing against people with bad taste in their choices of reading material. Harold Bloom would be proud. This same recognition that writers at that time did not hail from the Oxford, Mississippis of the post-Great War era, but from hipper climes, would send him downriver later to New Orleans, now that he had determined to be a novelist. We should all remember that the two most essential elements in succeeding as a novelist are, first, who you know, and second, blind luck, because his boss from the New York bookstore had married Sherwood Anderson and the two were living in New Orleans. Faulkner immediately renewed the acquaintance in hopes that Anderson would help his literary career; Anderson seems to have not been particularly interested in Faulkner as a writer but did show the young Mississippian's books to his publishers and thus was a career born. Faulkner gave Anderson the idea that he drank so much because of a steel plate in his head from his war injuries.

As many have noticed—including Sherwood Anderson—it took Faulkner a while to find his voice. *Soldier's Pay* (1926) deals with pilots and post-war trauma and seems more like a Hemingway novel. *Mosquitoes* (1927), filled with abortive affairs and short-winded elations, seems more a Fitzgerald novel. It was only with his third novel, *Flags in the Dust*, released in edited form as *Sartoris* (1929), that he began his focus on Yoknapatawpha County.

In *The Sound and the Fury* Faulkner wrote one of the masterpieces of the twentieth century, but nobody much cared. The first three printings of the novel amounted to three thousand copies and lasted the publisher until 1946 (Minter 106). Conversely, the first four short stories he placed in the *Saturday Evening Post* would pay more than the sales of his first four published novels combined (those first four consisting of *Soldiers Pay*, *Mosquitoes*, *The Sound and the Fury*, and *As I Lay Dying*) (Karl 401). And so Faulkner, ole Count No'Count, perennially unemployed, set about, as he later told people, to make money.

He told one friend that he made a "thorough and methodical study of everything on the lists of best-sellers. When I thought I knew what the public wanted, I decided to give them a little more than they had been getting; stronger and rawer—more brutal. Guts and genitals" (Blotner 234). The result was *Sanctuary.*

As he worked on the novel, the critical notices kept pouring in for *The Sound and the Fury* even if the money didn't follow. When he sent the first draft to his publisher, Hal Smith wrote him, "Good God, I can't publish this. We'd both be in jail" (Mintner 110). But Faulkner cajoled him into it. Gangster and detective writing sold, he argued, and it was time to make money.

But then he started on another novel, *As I Lay Dying.* He churned it out, finishing the entire thing, revised drafts and all, between October of 1929 and January of 1930. When it was published in October of 1930, it too garnered excellent praise, and yet again the novel sold less than the author had hoped. But now Faulkner was concerned with his literary reputation and legacy in a way he hadn't been able to be prior to the reception of *The Sound and the Fury.* And so, famously, when he received the galleys for *Sanctuary*, Faulkner paid his publisher Hal Smith so that he would be allowed to rework the novel significantly. As he stated in his introduction to the 1932 Modern Library edition of the novel, he had to "pay for the privilege of rewriting it, trying to make out of it something which would not shame *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying* too much" (Blotner 337).

The novel was immediately controversial. Book reviewers for the *New York Sun* and in the *New York Times Book Review* declared the novel "extraordinary" and proclaimed Faulkner a modern Dostoevsky. On the other hand, the reviewer for a Memphis paper called *Sanctuary* an "inhuman monstrosity of a book that leaves one with the impression of having been vomited bodily from the sensual cruelty of its pages" (Blotner 275). Famously, his own father, upon seeing an Ole Miss coed walking across campus with a copy of the novel, accosted the student and told her, "It isn't fit for a nice girl to read" (Blotner 276).

If it accomplished nothing else, *Sanctuary* did make money. The novel may not have vaulted to the top of the best seller lists, but in its first six weeks it sold more than 6000 copies, more than *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying* had sold combined up to that point (Minter 106). It was the only novel of his currently in print when Malcolm Cowley produced *The Portable Faulkner* in 1946.

In fall of 1931, Faulkner took an extended trip to New York. His literary agent Ben Wasson had recently added to his small stable of writers one of the most famous detective novelists in America and certainly the most respected at that time: Dashiell Hammett. He introduced the

two and, as Hammett biographer Richard Layman put it, they were unified in their love of drink, their love of literature, and their disdain for New York City. Faulkner also enjoyed the company of Hammett's partner Lillian Hellman and ended up spending a good amount of time with the two of them.

As biographer Joseph Blotner writes, "There were long evenings of drinking and talking, and in the morning Faulkner might still be there, asleep on the couch" (293). The two were able to concentrate on the things they had in common, like their love for drinking, literature, and hunting, and were able to avoid areas such as politics where they shared dissimilar views. One day they were lunching at a club with publisher Bennett Cerf who bragged to them that he had to attend a black tie affair that night at the house of Alfred Knopf. First they badgered Cerf to obtain an invitation for them and arranged to meet him at the 21 Club for a ride. What he didn't realize was that they would spend the entire day at 21 drinking (Layman 130-31). They weren't embarrassed at all to attend the black tie party in their rough and ready tweeds and sit on a couch drinking until Hammett "slid quietly off the couch and passed out." Faulkner, who had presumably also been reposing, "rose to his feet, announcing his departure, and also passed out." Faulkner then supposedly roused himself again and repeated this performance; the timely intervention of Ben Wasson seems to have been the only thing that saved the two from a long drunken night on the floor of the Knopf household (Blotner 293).

At some point during their forays in the city, Faulkner remarked to Hammett that he'd written *Sanctuary* as a potboiler to make money, and Hammett denied Faulkner's self-accusations, stating that "a good writer doesn't write for money" (Blotner 293).

Faulkner would go on to finish writing that year one of his most significant novels, *Light in August*. Hammett would publish in that same year his last novel, *The Thin Man*. His career as a novelist would largely be over, although he did convert older stories to screenplays for the *Thin Man* franchise and worked as a dialogue doctor on Hellman's plays. In later years he tried to write literary fiction but he never finished more than a few chapters of a novel (Layman 232). Hammett would also publish Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" in book form for the first time in an edited collection of suspense stories (Layman 133).

Faulkner, on the other hand, would one day try again with detective fiction, publishing a collection of mysteries called *Knight's Gambit* in 1949. The collection was uneven and its reception lukewarm. The stories in it did put him on the path of his successful *Intruder in the Dust* (1948), about a young teen boy trying to help prove the innocence of

an African American man wrongfully accused of murder, but the genre conventions of that novel are among its least successful parts.

The next year would also bring him the Nobel Prize for Literature and suddenly money was less of an issue. He would go on to write four more novels and a play, but he never again dallied in the mystery genre.

III: All the Pretty Screenplays

When one discusses the literary legacy of Faulkner, a number of writers are mentioned, among them Toni Morrison, Michael Ondaatje, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and any writer from Mississippi. However, the writer perhaps most perceived as an inheritor to Faulkner's style and overall aesthetic is Cormac McCarthy. Born in Rhode Island but raised in Knoxville, Tennessee, McCarthy's early works show both a stylistic debt to Faulkner (making use of a very lofty vocabulary; long, complicated sentence patterns; neologisms; poetic phraseology; and densely woven syntax) as well as a thematic debt (as the early novels consider incest, necrophilia, and the rebelliousness of the disenfranchised denizens of Appalachia trying to avoid the encroach of twentieth century industrial society).

If writers are torn between serving commerce or art, for the first thirty years of his writing career McCarthy appears to have been less interested with selling himself or building his reputation than any writer since Bartleby the Scrivener. In 1992 he granted at his agent's bequest an interview to Richard Woodward for the *New York Times Magazine* because of the publication of *All the Pretty Horses,* which would go on to win the National Book Award. As Woodward writes at that time, "It would be hard to think of a major American writer who has participated less in literary life. He has never taught or written journalism, given readings, blurbed a book, granted an interview. None of his novels have sold more than 5,000 copies in hardcover. For most of his career, he did not even have an agent" (28).

This doesn't mean that McCarthy didn't want to reach a wide audience and to make good money with his writing; he just didn't want to do it by compromising his aesthetic. After he moved to El Paso, Texas, in 1976 and finally completed his epic *Suttree*—a labor of nearly twenty years—in 1979, he seems to have mostly purged the South from his system. One could argue he continued to work hard to remove himself further from primary influences like Joyce, Faulkner, and Flannery O'Connor.

But once in El Paso, he turned to writing a Western, but it is a Western that subverts the formula at almost every turn. He makes pur-

poseful nods to the genre. He uses chapter titles which act as precis to the chapters, in the vein of the old dime novels. He refers to his central character as "the Kid" in reference to Western characters real and fictional, from Billy the Kid to the Ringo Kid to perhaps even Kid Colt of Timely Comics (which later became Marvel). The novel contains many scenes of action. Yet the action itself is never portrayed as heroic or necessary; instead the novel drips with horrific violence throughout. The settlement of the West is not portrayed romantically or sentimentally and there is no argument made to serve as a glorification of manifest destiny. Rather, the novel picks up where *Heart of Darkness* leaves off.

All the Pretty Horses, his next novel and the first of his Border Trilogy, seems much more a standard western than *Blood Meridian,* for all that it is set in post-World War II Texas and Mexico. We have a skilled, courageous, self-effacing hero who falls in love with a girl and never backs down from a fight. But any perceived honoring of formula tropes in the first novel of the trilogy are completely undone by the second and third novel. The first of the trilogy was by McCarthy's standards very successful, selling 190,000 copies in hardcover and making the *NY Times* best-seller list (Frye 96). However, his later deviation from genre paradigms and subversion of the popular formula is not a mere reaction to the great popularity of the novel but seems to have been part of his project from inception. The trilogy has its origins in a screenplay McCarthy wrote, *Cities of the Plain.* The screenplay is in terms of its overall central plot very close to the published final novel of the trilogy that bears the same title, and it shows that the genre-subverting arc of the trilogy was planned from the start.

McCarthy's awareness of formula tropes and how to manipulate them is never more evident than in his novel *No Country for Old Men*, published in 2005. If I were to simply describe the novel in its most basic components, it would go something like this:

It's a modern Western of a sorts, but really more of a crime novel, a thriller. Its writer originally wrote the novel as a screenplay and then later decided to novelize it. The story is set in the southwest, and it's about a working man's encounter with a professional killer connected to the mob. The hero is a former soldier, a Vietnam vet, who incurs the wrath of the killer. A sympathetic sheriff tries to help the soldier but ultimately sits out most of the action on the sidelines. The vet has a choice. He can stick to his guns—literally—and defy the killer and his organization, or he can avoid the complicated trap set out before him. Crime fiction, of course, is peopled largely by characters who fail to see the problems in their paths. And there's a woman involved, too, and the protagonist's actions will place her in harm's way as well.

Everything I read above is accurate for *No Country for Old Men,* but it also a completely accurate summary of Elmore Leonard's novel *Mr. Majestyk*. It was published in 1974 and released in a film that same year. As was the case with the Border Trilogy, it began life as a screenplay. So the bones of genre formula are quite bare in *No Country for Old Men.*

When the novel was first released, its swerve into the dusty canyons and mean streets of genre paradigms seems to have perplexed and fascinated many of the early reviewers. They bemoaned the loss of dense, high poetic diction and almost universally indicated that this was McCarthy's equivalent to Faulkner's *Knight's Gambit*, a dip into the crime genre to please the public, pay the bills, and keep the creative juices flowing while stymied on more important texts. In *The New York Times*, the ubiquitous Michiko Kakutani derided the novel, seeing Sheriff Bell as "the mouthpiece of [McCarthy's] most ponderous, sentimental and high-falutin' musings" (E1). Walter Kirn, on the other hand, writing in the same newspaper, saw the novel as a flaunt in the face of the literati and intelligentsia who presumably form McCarthy's readership. The novel is straight-forward crime fiction, according to Kirn, and he is very clear that he welcomes this departure from what he calls " the murky, grand German philosophizing that bogged down" McCarthy's earlier works (9).

In her study of the original screenplay which preceded the novel, however, Stacey Peebles shows how radically different the original conception of the story is than the published novel. In the screenplay, Llewelyn Moss and Sheriff Ed Tom Bell team up to take out a hit man named Edward Ralston. Bell, in a painfully formulaic twist, recognizes that Ralston was involved in his daughter's murder; this makes it personal (60-64). Luckily this screenplay was never produced. Evidently, McCarthy is willing to serve commerce in his screenplays but his novels are laid upon the altars of art. In the novel we have the relentless and almost inexplicable Chigurh. Moss meets his end in as unheroic a fashion as could be imagined and Bell gives up on the case, fearing he is not strong enough to contend with Chigurh.

In *No Country for Old Men,* as he does in his four preceding western novels and in the post-apocalyptic *The Road* that follows, McCarthy subverts and deconstructs the myths behind the genre formula to such a degree as to unravel the series of paradigms and signifiers defining the formula in the first place. Roland Barthes describes this rhetorical shift in *Writing Degree Zero* (1953), where he writes that in most writing, structural forms—such as genre formulations—become "autonomous object[s]" that function as "trouble-saving device[s]" (27). In Barthes' economy, the way to call attention to one's writing is to break with familiar forms and to divorce the work from what he will later call

"the pleasure of the text," and to write against the patterns and forms in such a way as to focus the reader's attention. It is through examining McCarthy's purposeful deviations from formula—while writing within very familiar genre frameworks—that the reader perhaps best understands these departures.

Faulkner, writing *Sanctuary* seventy-five years earlier, thought initially that he could only work within the formulas if he sacrificed his muse to do so. A participant like all of us in the intervening decades of formulaic narratives populating the media of film, radio, television, and games, not to mention books, McCarthy understands how to sharpen his craft precisely through his awareness of formula and reader expectations.

IV: Books Borne Back Ceaselessly into the Past

Allow me now, please, a change of direction which I hope will not seem too jarring. My tone throughout this piece has been to question those critics and scholars who automatically disdain a work because of its genre or formula origins. I have not addressed the scholarly revolution which has occurred in the wake of post-structuralism; as Derrida implies in "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," everything in a given culture becomes a text and can be studied as such. This fundamental notion couples with the rise of Cultural Studies and so now we see an entirely different kind of divide than that of art and commerce. The academy in its departments of literature and languages then serves to produce scholars in one category (to evoke a binary opposition, which Derrida just loves) intent upon their focus on literature, which they see as one of the more important artifacts of a given cultural milieu, and in an alternate category those scholars who wish to study the cultural milieu writ large and who consider literature as one of many cultural signifiers to be examined.

Professors with long experience in Cultural Studies know the dangers inherent in the approach. A given young scholar reads an essay or two and is suddenly an expert in, say, the soup industry, and writes grand proclamations on how the mass-produced soup of the 1970s is, with apologies to Theodor Adorno, a product of the culture industry employed to keep down the masses through weak processed pseudo-soup with reductive nutritive value. The young scholar has been trained in literary studies, not nutrition, and hasn't had the time to really investigate the several hundred books on soup and the longstanding approaches to soup study in the biological, medical, social, and anthropological sciences, and instead works hard to reference Foucault

because typically that'll put a nail into any discussion on the subject. (If you want to see writing on foodways done right, by the way, check out Davis and Powell's *Writing in the Kitchen* anthology).

What I'm trying to work toward here is an acknowledgement that writing, criticism, scholarship, and cultural approaches to soup, all require a certain level of energy in the critical battery. Simply put, most literary fiction requires more energy from a reader than most formula fiction precisely because the formula fictions of thrillers, mysteries, romances, science fiction and fantasy so often allow their formula foundations to bear so much of the weight of the narrative.

But studying those formula pieces in a worthwhile way requires an equal expenditure of critical energy, an equal intensity of focus, just as studying soup or street art or popular television requires that expression of focused energy. Reading the Harry Potter series demands very little from a reader, but writing anything significant *about* the series demands a great deal.

Finally, I suspect that I have more than a little Harold Bloom in me when it comes to the perseverance of literary art. We live in a world where and when, as I write this, the most powerful leader on the planet seems to have never read anything longer than 140 characters, where one million viewers of a television show are considered to represent "low ratings" but Nobel Laureate Ishiguro's all-time collective book sales amount to a total of 2.5 million sales, a number bolstered by having had film adaptations of two of his books (Alter and Bilefsky). If professors and scholars don't get people to read important books, who will?

But don't misunderstand me. I don't want someone to read Ishiguro's *Remains of the Day* in lieu of whatever constitutes her or his particular guilty pleasure. I want him or her to read Ishiguro and stories about Sherlock Holmes and Melville, and, if there's time left for Agatha Christie, work her in as well. I want everyone to read it all, to read everything. To just read.

Notes

1. *Superboy* no. 183, which was published in 1972. I think I was reading more than I remember, by then, so perhaps it was the bizarre mélange of Superman with Tarzan which threw me.

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"What Is to Be Done?"[1]: A Discourse on Discourse in Post-Truth America

Helen Diana Eidson

As creators and curators of culture, authors chronicle their realities, envision alternate realities, or offer escapes from reality. Collectively, they are sensitive to every political issue, every movement, every crisis, every alliance, every act of oppression and resistance. Literature, never created in a vacuum, is both shaped by and shapes the political life of its time and place—and, in the finest works, other times and places. Whether compelled by moral duty or intellectual interest, authors in every milieu have challenged or celebrated the status quo in their works. As Chinua Achebe writes in "The Novelist as Teacher," "The writer cannot expect to be excused from the task of reeducation and regeneration that must be done. In fact, he should march right in front" (45). Fiction writers, playwrights, poets, essayists, and filmmakers have narrated the paths of social actors—ways of being, thinking, acting, and speaking within structures of power and privilege. The scholars whose work is showcased in this issue wrestle with fundamental questions about our roles as writers and critics of literatures, languages, and cultures. In the following selections, two questions come to the forefront: 1) *How can we better help each other achieve our full humanity?*; and 2) *What is business good for?*

At first, we envisioned this special issue's theme as "Political *Fiction*." In light of our current post-truth/"alternative fact" sociopolitical zeitgeist, perhaps that would have been a more appropriate focus. Even so, we decided to cast the net farther and wider to see what kinds of fishes we could catch. When I was asked to edit this issue, I could never have envisioned what an array of luminous fishes would swim into our net. After some difficult decisions, I selected eight manuscripts that reflect what I consider some of the most provocative and timely issues and arguments of our moment. I hope you will agree.

How can we better help each other achieve our full humanity? Turkish-American novelist Elif Şafak (Shafak), in her 2010 TED talk "The Politics of Fiction," begins and ends with the image of a circle. She

employs it as a metaphor to convey the risks of what she terms "cultural ghettoes":

> From [my grandmother], I learned, among many other things, one very precious lesson. That if you want to destroy something in this life, be it an acne, a blemish or the human soul, all you need to do is to surround it with thick walls. It will dry up inside. Now we all live in some kind of a social and cultural circle. We all do. We're born into a certain family, nation, class. But if we have no connection whatsoever with the worlds beyond the one we take for granted, then we too run the risk of drying up inside. Our imagination might shrink. Our hearts might dwindle. And our humanness might wither if we stay for too long inside our cultural cocoons.

For Şafak, storytelling constitutes a way to dissolve the walls that divide and diminish people. Literal walls create figurative walls. What remains inside the circle dies. Thus, the cultural circle's boundaries must be transgressed, our cocoons punctured.

Each of the articles in this issue breaks down a wall in some way, getting us a bit closer to optimizing our empathy and ethics. *How can we better help each other achieve our full humanity?* As a nation based on individual freedom and private property, we have lost our sense of the *common good*. We no longer focus on how we can take care of each other and the natural world. We sometimes forget that we *all* do better when we all *do* better. Paulo Freire defines *intersubjectivity* as the transformation of the Other (i.e., a subject) into a (liberated) *Subject*. Freire attributes the seed of his idea to philosopher and Jewish mystic Martin Buber, who theorized this relationship as "I-Thou." As opposed to the limiting "I-It" view, someone who relates to other subjects as "I-Thou" sees equal value in all humans and thus strives to make the world more equitable. Literature provides ways for cultures to instill this deep empathy. We know that professionals who have studied the humanities demonstrate more emotional intelligence, a soft skill that can and must inform public discourse and public policy.[2]

What is business good for? The doctrine of capitalism has eroded our empathy—our focus on the common good—in the service of market freedom and private property. This reality is nothing new. In fact, Kenneth Burke observed in 1941 that in culture, "the contemporary emphasis must be placed largely upon propaganda, rather than upon 'pure' art" (314), a statement that still holds true. Burke maintains that capitalism violates the "integral relationship between work and ethics." He substantiates his argument with seven propositions:

1) Work-patterns and ethical patterns are integrally related;

2) The ethical values of work are in its application of the competitive equipment to cooperative ends;

3) Under capitalism this basic integration between work patterns and ethical patterns is constantly in jeopardy, and even frequently impossible;

4) Such a frustration of the combative-cooperative fusion under capitalism is a grave stimulus to wars;

5) 'Pure' art tends to promote a state of acceptance;

6) 'Pure' art is safest only when the underlying moral system is sound; [and]

7) Our thesis is by no means intended to imply that 'pure' or 'acquiescent' art should be abandoned. (314–322)

Burke insists, rightly, that under capitalism, we "must worry ourselves as to 'what is good for business,' rather than ask the more fundamental question, 'What is business good for?'" (317).[3] Each of the articles in our special issue deals with this question, insofar as each critiques our privileging of material wealth, competition, and power over intangible "wealth," cooperation, and mutual respect.

In choosing a few bright fishes from the remarkable school our net captured, I opted for the *unusual* manuscripts—those dealing with non-canonical cultural productions, offering original theoretical approaches, and/or making provocative arguments. To accommodate broad conceptualizations of "politics" and "literature" set forth in the call for papers, I sought diversity regarding time period, geographical region, political issue, theoretical tradition, genre, and author's subdiscipline. To my chagrin, too many brilliant manuscripts had to be set aside. My unorthodox selection criteria yielded manuscripts from which I inductively surmised the connections I outlined above. To some degree, each of this issue's essays gets us closer to answering questions

we are (or should be) asking now and always. In simplest terms, these questions again are *How can we better help each other achieve our full humanity?* and *What is business good for?*

In "Queerness, Opioids, and Mountaintop Removal: The Politics of Destruction in *The Evening Hour*," Paula Gallant Eckard explores transgender identity, environmental destruction, poverty, and opioid addiction as portrayed in the Appalachian setting of Carter Sickels's 2012 novel *The Evening Hour*. Eckard contextualizes her argument by familiarizing readers with the life of Sickels and the context of mountaintop removal in coal country. Against this backdrop, she juxtaposes Big Coal's destruction of the natural environment with substance abuse's destruction of the social fabric, drawing conclusions about the novel's relevance in our zeitgeist.

M. Irene Morrison also critiques a contemporary novel dealing with marginalized identities and corporate malfeasance. Her article, "Stories to Stop the Apocalypse: Indigenous Mythmaking as Solidarity-Building Practice in Thomas King's *The Back of the Turtle*" employs China Mieville's theoretical frame of "salvage Marxism" and his related notion *utopalypse* in order to explore Big Oil's devastating impact on the Canadian wilderness and its indigenous communities. King's 2014 novel, a work of "Indigenous Futurism," portrays First Nation, Taiwanese, and Caucasian characters who, despite the ecological ravages of their landscape, build solidarity and mitigate trauma through traditional mythmaking. *The Back of the Turtle*'s characters, in restoring balance to their society, embody Joan Didion's observation that "we tell ourselves stories in order to live."[4]

Continuing our literary tour of North America, we move southward to Mexico, site of some of Sophie Treadwell's plays. Using Homi Bhabha's critiques of colonial discourse, Bryan Williams ties Latinx cultural identities to the recent emergence in the US of the Black Lives Matter movement. "Bhabha and the Bandit: Myth, Stereotype, and Colonial Discourse in Sophie Treadwell's *Machinal* and *Gringo*" argues that Treadwell's drama enables alternate readings of women's issues and Mexican-American subjectivities that epitomize the United States's ambivalent efforts to right old wrongs. Treadwell, Williams asserts, exemplifies the well-intentioned liberal writer whose ideology has been molded by colonial hegemony. Williams applies this literary case study to public discourse today centered on immigration and stereotypes of Latinx subjects.

John Maerhofer transports us to India, where the All-India Progressive Writers' Association, founded in 1936, promoted literature's social justice role. During India's decolonization, AIPWA built critical consciousness among the masses. As Maerhofer asserts in "Let

Us Dance under the Blood-Drenched Flag: AIPWA, Mass Politics, and the Aesthetics of Anti-Imperialism," little scholarly attention has been paid to works such as Mulk Raj Anand's 1936 novel *Coolie*, which articulates anti-imperialist discourse amid burgeoning nationalism. As one of AIPWA's founders, Anand saw his role as modeling a politically engaged ethos. In light of the neofascism and religious fundamentalism emergent in current public discourse globally, AIPWA provides a model of consciousness-raising and collective action.

Leticia Alonso, in "Police, Politics, and Anti-Art: the Case of Berlin Dada," also uncovers a creative collective that engaged audiences and agitated for change: the Dadaist movement in World War I-era Germany. Using Jacques Rancière's notions of *police* and *politics* (*The Politics of Aesthetics*), Alonso examines the "anti-art" of the Berlin Dadaists, maintaining that their subversive challenge to the essence of art reflects a broader cultural challenge to the political status quo. By upending bourgeois notions of fine art, the Dadaists threatened the artistic edifice upon which their status as artists had heretofore been based. Their transgression not only challenged Weimar society's aesthetic mores, but it also insisted upon what Alonso calls the "necessity of dissent."

Focusing on the question of workers in late nineteenth-century America, Wesley Bishop explicates several labor plays as they engaged concerns of the public sphere in "The Public Stage: The Working Class in Theatrical Representations and the Fear of America's Declining Public Sphere." Bishop analyzes how labor drama addressed questions of democracy's decline in the face of decreasing entrepreneurship, increasing immigration, and the resultant class tensions exacerbated by the Civil War. He uses the Biblical Tower of Babel story as a metaphor illustrating a prevalent belief that the working class would tear down the edifice of democracy. Ironically, as Bishop observes, highbrow drama challenged hegemony while lowbrow vaudeville maintained the status quo by depicting the working class in stereotypical ways.

Zachary Michael Powell's "The Ethics of Alternate History: Melodrama and Political Engagement in Amazon's *The Man in the High Castle*" shifts the critique of political economy and ethics to a dystopian scenario in which the Nazis won World War II. Powell draws an analogy: Hulu's *The Handmaid's Tale* is to the 2017 context of the Women's March and the #MeToo Movement as *High Castle*'s alternate history is to America's escalating alt-right white nationalism movement. While *The Handmaid's Tale* limns a futuristic dystopia, *The Man in the High Castle* employs the past to create a sense of "double estrangement" in viewers. Although Powell concedes that the show traffics in melodramatic tropes that challenge its ethical influence, he situates the show's

ethos in Hayden White's narratological view of history and thus foregrounds its kairos in light of our post-truth political discourse.

Julia S. Charles and Sarah Pitts also address issues of race and ethics in their contribution, "Between the Students and Me: Experiencing Political Literature in the Classroom." This article encapsulates our work as teacher-scholars; though we cannot escape the political nature of classroom dynamics and content, we can guide students to think critically about systems of power and oppression. By narrating their subjectivities as Black professor and white student, Charles and Pitts challenge readers to acknowledge and present "our unmediated political selves" through engaging in "a conversation that collapses the boundaries of the conventional classroom." They share personal perspectives and collective experiences in an innovative Black Revolutionary Literature course that both challenged racial preconceptions and subjectivities and created a community of candor where students "defeat[ed] the silence that engenders indifference" and ultimately built "a sincere desire to accurately understand each other." They conclude by relating the story of controversial campus event that tested their ability to apply course takeaways.

I hope you find this special issue engaging and thought-provoking. While the selections represent a range of literatures, approaches, and issues, they all address key questions about our identities, values, and actions as world citizens. My desire is that audiences engage with these readings in order to continue this conversation. We often think about the meaning of our work in contemporary culture and politics, and these contributors model ways for us to "lean in" as critics, educators, and social actors. Right now, we need to continue to engage and resist. The time could not be more exigent.

Notes

1. The quotation comes from the title of a work by Vladimir Lenin, "What Is to be Done? Burning Questions of Our Movement."

2. See Ofri, "Doctors Should Study the Humanities" and Scheidenhelm, "Losing Humanities in Education Is Propelling a Deficit of Empathy."

3. Burke (1941) defines "business" as the corporate workings of capital, whereas he calls the wage laborer's work "industry."

4. From *The White Album*, 1972/2006.

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Queerness, Opioids, and Mountaintop Removal: The Politics of Destruction in *The Evening Hour*

Paula Gallant Eckard

In his novel *The Evening Hour,* transgender writer Carter Sickels depicts a fragile Appalachian space devastated by unemployment, drug use, and environmental destruction: issues that ruin the natural landscape of fictional Dove Creek, West Virginia and the lived experience of its residents. While some leave the mountains and others fight the destruction, most residents ignore what is happening around them as they struggle to survive. In showing the intersections between human and natural worlds, Sickels portrays marginalized characters who suffer a host of insecurities that are economic, environmental, social, and even sexual. He draws striking parallels between predatory coal companies that blow up mountains to get at valuable coal seams and desperate people who abuse opioids and other drugs, including methamphetamine; the natural and the synthetic goods destroy individuals, families, and communities. These elements coalesce in the character of Cole Freeman, a nurse's aide and drug dealer, whose moral complexity raises questions about taking responsibility, enacting agency, and making choices about whom to save.

When *The Evening Hour* was published in 2012, Appalachia was already ground-zero for the growing national epidemic of opioid abuse. The region's geography, history, and economics figure prominently into the epidemic's development and escalation. Stretching from southeastern Canada into northern Georgia and Alabama, the Appalachian Mountains are among the oldest in the world, by some estimates between 300 and 500 million years in age. With its abundant natural resources, Appalachia saw the rise of timber and coal industries following the Civil War. The arrival of the railroad brought investors and workers to the region and provided a means for getting timber and coal out of the mountains. For many miners, including European immigrants, African Americans, and the Scots-Irish who had settled in Appalachia, coal mining provided an attractive alternative to working in big city factories or to "the uncertainties of farming" (Santelli xxiii). These developments, however, came at a price—unsafe working environments, poor living conditions, low wages, dependency on the company store, and violence at the hands of company agents hired to

suppress unionizing activities. Indeed, coal mining in Appalachia has a complicated and dangerous past; the coal wars that raged in West Virginia and Kentucky during the early twentieth century provide ample proof of this history. Today, the region's rural nature and its "reliance on heavy manual labor, be it in its coal mines, farms or forests" have exacted a new cost: the current drug crisis (Kemsley).

Drawing on his extensive research in coal mining areas of West Virginia, Sickels explores the politics of destruction that have taken hold in contemporary Appalachia. Through the diverse characters he presents and the very act of writing about them, he questions societal and cultural forces shaping the region. His depiction of queer sexuality, drug abuse, and environmental destruction yields a compelling, multi-layered portrait of people and place. Although Sickels identifies as transgender, *The Evening Hour* reflects rural queer rather than trans perspectives and shows how same-sex desire can successfully exist outside urban settings. The presence of gay and bisexual characters in the novel, along with Cole Freeman's fluid sexuality and unconventional male identity, offers insight into this possibility. The connection between self and environment that lies at the core of *The Evening Hour* provides a lens for considering the major dynamics in the novel.

For the most part, Sickels depicts the relationship between characters and their mountain world as a fragile interdependency. In this depiction, he appears to follow Patricia Yaeger's directive about new ways of narrating space. In her editor's introduction to *The Geography of Identity,* a collection of essays on space and places, Yaeger argues for a cultural geography that takes into account the social basis of space and that incorporates "a more personal and phenomenological approach to representations of the local" (5). She makes the case for a new reading of place that acknowledges the "repressed or forgotten" connections between self and history:

> The omnipresence of political encryption requires a new self-consciousness about the relation of place and narration: it demands the invention of a poetics of geography: a site for investigating the metaphors and narrative strategies that we use to talk about space. The invention of such poetics will require, above all, a rhetoric that can unearth the strange effects of ordinary space: place-centered narration not only refocuses our attention on the ways in which place is political; it necessitates the geographic equivalent of the ghost story—an awareness of the irreducible strangeness of space and a narrative capable of addressing its encryption. (5-6)

Yaeger's discussion elucidates the interweaving of politics, poetics, and the personal that takes place in place-centered narration, the very strategy that Sickels uses in his novel.

The emphasis on self, place, and cultural politics found in *The Evening Hour* appears to stem from Sickels's lifelong sense of place and his gender transitioning experience. In his memoir essay "Bittersweet: On Transitioning and Finding Home," he explores his family roots in southeastern Ohio, a coal-mining area that abuts West Virginia and is considered part of Appalachia. He recalls the stories and people associated with the place: "It wasn't until years later that I started to think about these half-forgotten stories and names, overcome with a longing to return to my roots even as I moved further away from them" (73). Visiting his grandparents as a child, Sickels gained intimate knowledge of the land with his father, grandfather, uncles, and cousins, noting that he was often "the only girl" on walks of the old family farm (75). A sense of difference, of not fitting in, came later as he entered his twenties and thirties and began to identify as queer, though as a lesbian he knew "there was something not quite right about this" (75). The only member of his family to leave Ohio, Sickels distanced himself from home—"the place that I love"—first for college and then for work in New York, all while moving "closer to my true self" (75). The choice between self and place seemed irreconcilable until Sickels started thinking about *The Evening Hour* and began researching mountaintop removal: "Coal companies were blowing up the Appalachian Mountains, burying streams and flattening West Virginia, just across the Ohio River, a forty-minute drive from my grandparents" (76). Visits there were both devastating and inspiring.

As part of his research, Sickels met with locals turned activists, who grew up "believing in God and family and the coal company" but who suffered grim betrayal when mountaintop removal destroyed mountains, poisoned water supplies, and displaced people from their homes: "They were fighting for their lives, their way of life. Many of them lost their friends, their communities, even their families, because they stood up for what they believed, while most people in the towns ignored what was happening, or joined the Friends of Coal lobby" (76-77). These interactions fueled his writing and evolving trans identity; they also caused him to contemplate questions of gender and identity:

> I started wondering, what would it mean to come of age here, not as a girl, but as a boy? Could a man find love with another man? How did one cultivate a masculinity that embodied such maleness—the hunting, the drinking, and fighting—with the sensitivity I had witnessed, like my grandfather cutting a twig

> of sassafras and peeling back the bark with his pocketknife and handing it to me: "Tastes like root beer." This was the world of men, through which I was still finding my way both in my novel and in my life." (78)

Sickels's reflections on masculinity in connection to self and place reveal the effect that the mountains, also undergoing transformation, had on him. In navigating the world of men, both fictionally and as a trans individual, he employs the "new self-consciousness" that Yaeger advocates in writing about place.

In writing about queerness in *The Evening Hour,* Sickels creates a place-centered narrative that blends the personal and the political, a rhetoric of geography that Katie Hogan sees as "quietly challenging the typical portrait of the rural as wretched space—a view routinely found in queer studies, politics, and culture" (n. pag.). Rather than showing rural spaces as backwards and dangerous, Sickels shows that queer and trans individuals can find belonging and a sense of home. In his rendering of same sex-desire in *The Evening Hour,* he aligns with John Howard, a pioneer in the field of rural queer studies, who views rural spaces as offering opportunities for such desire to exist and even flourish. In *Men Like That: A Southern Queer History,* Howard debunks the myth that queer desire cannot find expression outside urban spaces. While studying desire among Mississippi men from 1945 to 1985, he found "primary institutions of the local community—home, church, school, and the workplace" were not "inherently hostile" to homosexual activity and actually encouraged it (xi). Though complicated at times, Howard argues that queer sex in Mississippi, perhaps the most traditional of Southern states, was not "rare" (xiii). Individual characters in *The Evening Hour* and the setting of Dove Creek illustrate Howard's assertion that rural spaces do not possess "a uniform and timeless hostility to queers," providing instead a sense of home and connection for many individuals ("Of Closets and Other Rural Voids" 102).

Place contributes powerfully to Cole Freeman's identity and his relationships in *The Evening Hour.* His first name links him to the coal extracted from the mountains, while his last name suggests both freedom and fluidity in his identity. Cole does not identify as straight or gay, which gives him a broader range of human experience—sexually, psychologically, and geographically. Earlier in life, his homoerotic relationship with Terry Rose connects him to home and also stirs a longing to be elsewhere: "He used to dream about leaving for good; in high school, he and Terry Rose made up plans to run away and never come back" (9). Coles recalls their youthful passions and their inability to identify what existed between them: "They were burning up with bore-

dom and recklessness and hope for something they could not name. They were young then; they had each other" (121). Ultimately, the relationship falls apart when Terry gets a girlfriend pregnant and enters into an early marriage. Cole moves to the state capital for a few months after high school but finds city life stultifying. He retains a desire for home and rural life, feeling "cut off from the land and from himself," a sense of displacement not uncommon among rural gay men who feel disoriented after moving to cities (35).

In his study of Midwestern "farm boys," Will Fellows elaborates on the phenomenon that seems to be affecting Cole: "the dislocation of living in an urban culture after growing up rural was in some ways similar to that of being gay but living in a heterosexist culture; in both regards, they felt like outsiders" ("Afterword" 311). In a related discussion, Katherine Schweighofer explains the dichotomy of space that Sickels appears to question in *The Evening Hour*: "Geographic identities are shaped as much by cultural ideologies as by physical landscapes, and the constructed division between the 'country' and the 'city' is a particularly powerful and naturalized formation in American culture" (223). Cole's feelings of displacement reflect the sense of double alienation identified by Fellows and others that cause queer men who grow up in the countryside to feel out of place in both rural and urban settings.

As *The Evening Hour* shows, Cole's ties to home and place are unusually forged and tentative at times, but they give him a sense of belonging, nonetheless. His persistent need for connection with the natural world, which remains constant throughout the novel, is echoed by Henry Bauer in *Farm Boys*: "I was in heaven when I was in the woods; it was an escape" (67). For Cole, nature is not just a place associated with queer activity, as is frequently described by Fellows's interviewees, but an integral part of his identity and survival. He recollects hiking the mountains with his grandfather to hunt, fish, and collect ginseng roots and mushrooms, activities that connect him to family and place. The natural world provides extraordinary sensory experience and connection for Cole: "The sun was so bright that he could see the orange flesh of his eyelids. He smelled the grass and dirt. . . . He could stay here all afternoon, just him and the land" (35). It also offers a place for spiritual connection. Watching "the rising light of the sun" from the mountain top, his grandfather would tell him about God's goodness and sustaining presence evident in the natural world (36).

In contrast to the intimacy that Cole feels with nature, his limited relationships with women offer sexual release but not much else. Sex with Charlotte Carson seems perfunctory and provides casual companionship rather than intimacy. Drugs, specifically the OxyContin that Cole supplies her, form the core of their relationship. With Lacy

Cooper, a single mother and local activist, he finds a more promising possibility but still feels conflicted and empty. After a night of love-making with Lacy, Cole asks himself, "What was this thing he searched for? He held on to her and wished her beauty would somehow fill him . . ." (151). In contrast to Charlotte and Lacy, Cole's friendships with men, including openly gay ex-con Reese Campbell and former lover Terry Rose, offer important areas of scrutiny as these two relationships illustrate the intricate intersections between sexuality and geography. A former drug dealer, Reese serves as an early mentor to Cole, teaching him the value of pills on the streets and "who was looking to buy" (29). Fear of going back to prison keeps Reese from dealing drugs again, but his continued drug use and "homo ways," which initially shock Cole, endanger Reese's life (27). Reese's flirtations with "tough country boys," often while high on drugs, have dire consequences (28). Furtive encounters with "rednecks who followed him out to the bushes, wanting what their wives wouldn't give them" lead to violent beatings and cause Cole to note his friend's outsider status: "Though Reese had friends all over Dove Creek—roughnecks who hated queers but partied with him—they would never call Reese one of their own" (28). In some respects, Reese and Cole mirror each other's character and constrained life. Both men are part of the mountain community yet retain some alienation from it—Reese through his homosexuality, Cole through his ambivalence about self and place. Together, their experiences provide an alternative vision of queerness and rural spaces.

For better or worse, Dove Creek is home for Cole, offering connection despite abounding insecurities. It represents what John Howard views "as an imagined, conflicted refuge, and as a broader cultural space" (*Men Like That* 77). Cole's youthful relationship with Terry Rose, which Cole recalls with longing and regret, illustrates Howard's observation that in many rural areas, "male-male desire exist[s] not *apart from* but rather as an inextricable *part of* everyday home and community life" (77). Although life in Dove Creek is hardly idyllic, Sickels's novel affirms that nuanced, complex relationships can exist in rural areas. This possibility is evident in Cole's relationship with Terry, with whom he finds both eros and acceptance. It provides a temporary sanctuary away from Cole's conflicted family life, including an absent mother and his snake-handling preacher grandfather, whom he both loves and fears. When Terry returns to Dove Creek after years away, Cole's desire for home, belonging, and his former lover coalesce into painful awareness when the estranged friends meet in the mountain wilderness one last time. In the place where they camped together as teenagers, they share a moment both intimate and revelatory. With Terry, Cole finds the lost

part of himself, but he soon realizes that his friend has come only for money to score a big meth deal.

While *The Evening Hour* provides valuable insights into gender and sexual identity in rural spaces, its portrayal of the drug crisis in Appalachia adds another layer of contemporary realism. In rendering the effects of the epidemic on individual characters and the community of Dove Creek, Sickels creates a cultural geography reflecting the social, political, and phenomenological "representations of the local" Yaeger describes (5). As with his treatment of rural queer sexuality, Sickels continues a place-centered narrative strategy showing the intersections between personal experience and larger cultural forces. The history of opioid addiction in Appalachia has much to do with the region's rural identity and predominant industries. Jobs involving heavy physical labor have been an integral part of West Virginia's economy, but these jobs also "leave workers prone to injury" and chronic pain, hence the need for painkillers (Jacobs). "West Virginia was ripe for the picking," according to Dr. Carl "Rolly" Sullivan, director of the Addictions Program at West Virginia University Hospitals. He adds, "We had a lot of blue-collar workers who were in farming and timbering and coal mining and things that were likely to produce injuries" (qtd. in Gutman). Mining camps did not employ many physicians and, instead of prescribing rest or other therapies, doctors who treated injured miners were "more likely to opt for the quick fix and give people pills to fix their pain and get them back into the mine" (Temple qtd. in Gutman).

In addition to job-related injuries, factors such as the area's low educational levels and high unemployment have contributed to substance abuse in Appalachia. Poverty, underemployment, and unemployment remain problematic, or, as retired pharmacist and state official Don Perdue explains, "Joblessness and that kind of thing lends itself to a certain amount of despair. People start trying to escape their reality" (qtd. in Gutman). Perdue's observations are echoed in a report prepared for the Appalachian Regional Commission under the doleful title: "Appalachian Diseases of Despair." The report found that the 2015 mortality rate from all causes was 32 percent higher in Appalachia than other parts of the United States (Meit et al. 4). The region also showed a significant increase in diseases/deaths of despair stemming from three main causes: prescription drug, illegal drug, and alcohol overdose; suicide; and, alcoholic liver disease (1). Of the three diseases of despair, drug and alcohol overdoses created the greatest burden and disparity, with Appalachia experiencing an overdose mortality 65 percent higher than the rest of the nation (5).

Over and over, these problems surface in *The Evening Hour* as characters suffer the crushing effects of despair brought on by unemployment, poverty, disease, and substance abuse. Even the setting reflects the collective hopelessness of the community. On his drug route, Cole visits a street known as "Blacklung Block," its old coal camp houses mirroring the pall felt by many: "on bad days, the entire neighborhood turned gray with coal dust" (25). Here, at the duplex that Reese Campbell shares with his adoptive mother Ruthie, the place is littered with cigarette butts, beer cans, and empty bottles of Jack Daniel's. The three-legged cat Cole finds on the porch steps, like Reese's trash-strewn yard, symbolizes the despair and decrepitude pervading the place.

Although *The Evening Hour* does not directly trace the history of the opioid crisis, that history provides important context for what takes place in the novel. In the 1990s, the confluence of changing prescription practices, corporate greed, and federal legislation that favored Big Pharma caused the powder keg of discontent to explode into the modern opioid epidemic, and that conflict plays out in *The Evening Hour*. Prior to this era, physicians were often reluctant to prescribe narcotics for pain due to addiction concerns. However, conservative treatment of pain could be detrimental to patients who suffered from acute and chronic pain, including end-of-life and cancer-related pain. Chronic pain that persisted for months or years was especially problematic, as it could compromise health and lead to social isolation, disrupted sleep, and an inability to perform one's usual activities at home, work, or school (Rosenblum et al.). In response to the under-treatment of pain, patient groups, academic journals, and even the federal government "made a convincing case" that physicians could be doing more to alleviate pain (Kliff).

With the liberalization of opioid prescription practices, pharmaceutical companies began aggressively marketing new painkillers, including Vicodin and OxyContin, in ways that minimized the risk of addiction. OxyContin's time-release formula taken twice a day was touted to be as safe and effective in managing pain as the short-acting version of oxycodone. When OxyContin went on sale in 1996, the Food and Drug Administration allowed product labeling implying that, since the drug was time-released, it "had less appeal as a drug of abuse" (Meier 85). Ironically, OxyContin's product label also included a warning that crushing, chewing, or dissolving the tablets could cause rapid release and absorption of the drug. According to Sam Quinones, award-winning author of *Dreamland: The True Tale of America's Opiate Epidemic*, "That was like an invitation to a junkie" (126). With FDA approval and favorable labeling in hand, Purdue Pharma's campaign to promote OxyContin increased prescriptions for non-cancer pain from 670,000

to 6.2 million over a five-year period, between 1997 and 2002 (Van Zee 223).

As one of the most abused drugs nationwide, OxyContin has been cited as "setting off" the current opioid epidemic (Ryan et al.). Known as "Oxy," "OC," and "Hillbilly Heroin," it produces an immediate, intense euphoria similar to heroin when it is crushed and then ingested, snorted, or injected (Applegate). It is highly addictive, with the brain requiring increased amounts and more frequent dosing to achieve the same euphoric and pain-relieving effects. The potential for tolerance, dependence, and addiction are real possibilities, along with the risk of respiratory failure and death, particularly when it is used in unapproved ways or dosages (Rosenblum et al). Even patients who follow their doctor's orders for taking the drug can experience side effects and addiction. In many people, OxyContin's twelve-hour formula wears off hours early, leading them to have "excruciating symptoms of withdrawal, including an intense craving for the drug," problems that Purdue Pharma supposedly knew about for years and that may explain the high rate of addiction today (Ryan et al.).

West Virginia has one of the highest prescription rates for opioids and leads the nation in death rates from drug overdoses. In 2012, over 136 prescriptions were written for every 100 persons in West Virginia ("U.S. State Prescribing Rates, 2012"). By 2016, the state's overdose death rate stood at 52 per 100,000, representing a 25.3 percent increase over the previous year ("Drug Overdose Death Data"). An investigation by the *Charleston Gazette-Mail* in 2016 found that Big Pharma distributed 780 million hydrocodone and oxycodone pills to the state over a six-year period, "unfettered shipments [amounting] to 433 pills for every man, woman, and child in West Virginia." In the Mingo County town of Kermit, population 392, a single pharmacy received almost 9 million hydrocodone pills in just two years (Eyre). The opioid crisis has overwhelmed the state's resources and has affected almost all age groups, with prescription painkillers accounting for most drug overdoses. Recently heroin and fentanyl have added to the overdose problem, creating deadly statistics and a "startling age divide" in the epidemic (Frostenson).

Emergency room data has shown that adults in their 50s and 60s were more likely to overdose on prescription opioids such as OxyContin, while those in their 20s and 30s "overdosed disproportionately on heroin" (Frostenson). Although older adults do not suffer the highest rate of overdose deaths, they can have various chronic health conditions requiring multiple medications and pain relief. New evidence suggests that Medicare patients have "some of the highest and fastest growing rates of opioid use disorder," with opioid-related hos-

pitalizations growing by ten percent each year ("Heartache, Pain, and Hope"). Several characters in *The Evening Hour* fall into this category, their health and well-being dependent on access to painkillers or the income that extra pills can provide. At the other end of the life spectrum, demand for neonatal intensive care units for newborns addicted to opioids and other substances has skyrocketed in places like Huntington, West Virginia, where one of every four residents was hooked on heroin or another opiate in 2016 (Drash and Blau).

Throughout the opioid epidemic, large corporations and politicians have been cozy bedfellows, escalating addiction problems in the process. A *Washington Post-60 Minutes* investigation in 2017 determined that McKesson, Cardinal Health, and AmeriSource Bergen drug companies, collectively known as "The Big Three," spent millions of dollars on lobbyists and campaign contributions "to get Congress to look the other way" while they pumped opioids into local communities (Hall). Their lobbying efforts resulted in new legislation that weakened the Drug Enforcement Administration's ability to freeze wholesale shipments of "hundreds of millions of pills"—prescription narcotics destined to make their way to the nation's streets and to bring billions in sales for Big Pharma (Higham and Bernstein). Enacted in 2016 at the height of the opioid epidemic, the new law reversed the DEA's broad authority to halt suspicious shipments that might pose danger to communities. Today the burden falls on the DEA to prove that a company's actions constitute "'a substantial likelihood of an immediate threat,'" which creates a greater hurdle for drug enforcement to overcome (Higham and Bernstein). With the role that corporations play in the opioid epidemic, the current drug war has been viewed by some as another form of class warfare (Roller).

In showing the impact of drugs on people and place, *The Evening Hour* serves as a fictional microcosm for the larger opioid problem plaguing Appalachia and other places. With OxyContin in widespread use in Dove Creek, Sickels depicts the diversion, abuse, and addiction associated with the drug. Generational differences emerge as younger characters opt for heroin and meth while older residents rely on prescribed painkillers. Drug dealing allows Cole to bridge this age divide, further complicating his character. His actions are troubling and understandable, exploitative and heroic. They also appear rooted in Cole's sexual/gender identity, growing out of his non-traditional role as caretaker for his elderly grandparents and as nurse's aide at the local nursing home. At his job, he attends to patients with concern, listens to stories intently, and tries to preserve their dignity as they confront disease and old age. Cole's compassion is evident in his interaction with Larry Potts, a former coal miner passing his days in a wheelchair,

"twiddling his thumbs" (11). In a gendered image that contradicts the harsh labor Larry once performed: "He had thick meaty hands, but his thumbs twirled like little jewelry-box ballerinas" (11). Cole's response conveys his sensitivity toward his patients and an awareness of coal mining's dehumanization of its workers: "[Cole] put his hands over Larry's, felt his thumbs buzz against his palms like insect wings. Larry used to work the deep mines, crawling around on his hands and knees in the dark. 'It's okay, Larry,' he said, wheeling him into the cafeteria" (11-12). More poignantly, the scene emblematizes the displacement that occurs when one becomes too old or too sick to work.

Cole also takes solicitous care of his grandparents, whose lives and nerves are rattled by the coal company's incessant blasting on the hill above their farm. The explosions worsen his grandfather's dementia, causing "fits" that lead him to react with fear and violence (6). Given the grandfather's close association with the land, it is not difficult to see the connection between the destruction of the mountain and that of his mind, which has been altered by mini-strokes that "ate away at his brain like acid" and are exacerbated by the blasting (5). Cole's concern for his grandparents' fragile existence, however, leads him to steal from his patients, a crime that starts as a "quick thrill" before devolving into "Who he'd become, or who'd he'd always been" (29). He also begins buying and selling drugs to help pay his grandparents' medical bills. Cole thus practices a contradictory ethics. He takes cash and valuables from nursing home residents, but only items they will neither need nor miss. He refuses to sell methamphetamine, limiting his supply to "what's doctor-prescribed and FDA-approved," including oxycodone, Percocet, and morphine, which he buys from older residents who need cash for groceries and bills (29). His suppliers, mostly people he meets through the nursing home's outreach program or his grandfather's church, are "poor, lonely, and living out in the hills" (19). During his house calls, Cole visits with them, checks their food supplies, and reminds them not to drink the water, which has been contaminated by liquid coal waste. He does not use drugs himself but justifies his drug dealing as filling a need.

In rendering Cole's drug-related interactions, Sickels depicts the opioid crisis in Appalachia with an awareness of its complexity and the real human needs behind the epidemic. In brief, revealing portraits, he shows the insidious role that opiates and other drugs play in the day-to-day lives of characters. World War II veteran Harley McClain sells Cole his extra OxyContin, Xanax, and "nerve pills," over-prescribed by "a quack VA doctor" (19). Disabled and widowed, he finds Cole an attentive listener, someone to alleviate his isolation. In another example, cousins Dell and Lyle approach Cole at a local bar to buy Ritalin and

Adderall, stimulants for themselves and fellow workers at the mining site: "Something to keep us up, you know" (54). In a case that thematically and perhaps literally circles back to Harley McClain, Taylor Jones buys OxyContin from Cole to cope with undertreated pain from getting his hand blown off in Iraq. The young Marine rages to Cole about the VA doctor's refusal to prescribe higher dosages of the drug: "Does he know what pain is, motherfucker?" (77). Taylor's words speak to the isolation and hopelessness caused by unrelenting pain, problems that are poorly addressed by the government and that Cole seeks to remedy by his drug dealing.

Other examples are more ominous and call into question the morality of Cole's actions. In one scene, Cole watches dispassionately as divorcée Diane Chapman, one of his "hardest users," snorts OxyContin from the kitchen counter as her young child sits nearby watching television (128). In another encounter, he accepts oral sex from Jody Hampton in exchange for a hit of the drug, thus feeding a habit that later leaves her homeless and violently battered by a boyfriend. Cole's interactions with Reese Campbell show the revolving door of addiction that overwhelms users and loved ones alike. Initially, Reese sells Cole his adoptive mother's prescription painkillers, but as her health deteriorates and his addiction worsens, he and Ruthie use up the pills themselves. When Cole visits Reese to sell him more drugs, he finds his friend snorting Oxy and Ruthie barely alive—nothing but "skin and bones," lying in her own urine and suffering from bedsores and bruises (157). Her condition speaks to the depraved neglect caused by Reese's addiction. When Cole confronts Reese about Ruthie's plight, Reese admits to contemplating desperate action: "I thought by now I would just do it, give her the fuckin' morphine" (157). Rather than take Ruthie to the hospital for needed care, he urges Cole to give her an overdose of the drug, to "give her all of it" (157). Cole draws the line at euthanasia but, with awful cynicism, observes, "He was a dealer, and this was his customer, and there was nothing else for him here" (157). This may be Cole's lowest moment of self-realization about his drug dealing; while he does not give Ruthie the overdose, his dispassionate response to her predicament and Reese's desperation conveys an almost icy indifference.

As much as any dynamic, Cole's connection to the land gives the novel its enduring power and makes the mountains' destruction intensely felt. Similar to its depiction of the opioid crisis, *The Evening Hour* shows the impact of environmental ruin on personal and local levels; corporate greed, along with political indifference about global warming and its consequences, endangers both human and natural worlds. Coal mining in the form of mountaintop removal frames *The*

Evening Hour; from its opening pages to its apocalyptic conclusion, the threat of environmental ruin looms large. The assault upon the land is relentless and intrudes upon Cole's consciousness. He observes that "The air smelled like sulfur and scorched earth" (3). He finds "rocks the size of basketballs in his yard" (5). The blasting leaves cracks in his grandmother's house, her calls to government agencies unheeded. Cole ponders the mining operation's enormity, which, encompassing 1,800 acres, has driven most residents from the holler. His thoughts provide a glimpse of the changes that have come to Appalachia: "It wasn't like the old days of sending men underground. Now, to get to the layers of coal seams, they blew the tops off the mountains, bringing them down hundreds of feet, and then pushed the rubble into the valleys" (8). When Cole visits the land where his aunts and uncles once lived, the exploitation of people and place become evident: ". . . Heritage had burned the trees and demolished the houses, leaving behind a mess of upturned earth and monstrous bulldozer tracks with pools of black, brackish water collecting in the ruts. The gardens were torn out" (45). He also acknowledges the greed that has driven coal mining over time and that continues to consume the land.

As the novel continues, a picture of Edenic destruction emerges:

> Most of the mining land had already been swindled from the people more than a hundred years ago, but the coal companies always wanted more. . . . The first thing they did was to clear-cut the forests. Bulldoze the trees, burn them. Oaks, hickories, everything. Then they drilled giant holes into the earth and filled them with explosives, and after they blasted, they dumped the rocks and rubble into the valleys. (44)

The mountaintop removal practices described in the passage constitute what Brandon Absher identifies as a form of ecological violence happening in coal mining areas across Appalachia, including West Virginia, Kentucky, Virginia, and Tennessee. Traditionally, coal mining has been labor-intensive, dangerous work that takes place underground. With new technologies and "ever-more-massive machinery," surface mining has increasingly replaced underground practices, including workers (and their unions) who performed such work (Absher 90). As an extension of strip-mining practices dating to the 1970s, mountaintop removal is considered a cost-effective, efficient way to extract coal from underground seams. Whereas hundreds of miners might be employed at an underground mine, mountaintop removal relies on a few workers, mostly non-unionized, to operate heavy equipment on the surface.

The process of mountaintop removal coal mining includes clearcutting forests, pumping explosives into mountains, and pushing trees, earth, and debris (known as "overburden") into adjacent valleys and streams so that coal "can then be scooped out of the heart of the mountain" (Absher 90). People living nearby, like Cole's grandparents in *The Evening Hour*, find their homes shaken and foundations ruined. They are also subjected to "fly-rock"—rocks and boulders propelled at deadly velocity following an explosion. Mountaintop removal coal mining can remove six hundred feet or more from the summit of a mountain, causing irrevocable damage to the landscape. Many areas of Appalachia have been described as "a 'moonscape'—a barren rock which has undergone the complete devastation of native ecosystems" (100). As environmental activists have pointed out, mountains do not grow back. Harm to surrounding areas causes great concern to scientists and residents: debris buries streams, poisonous heavy metals contaminate wells and waterways, and mudslides and flash floods rip through destroyed landscapes.

In an event drawn from history, *The Evening Hour* captures these horrors and gives them new urgency. Toward the end of the novel, a coal slurry dam ruptures and unleashes 200 million gallons of toxic waste down the mountain ridges into Dove Creek. The incident resembles the 1972 Buffalo Creek Disaster, which Sickels references in the acknowledgements section of his novel. In that West Virginia catastrophe, improper strip mining and heavy rain resulted in one of the deadliest floods in American history. In the span of minutes, raging waters killed 125 people and injured 1,100 more. Over 4,000 residents were left homeless, while property damage totaled $50 million ("Buffalo Creek"). As in its treatment of the opioid crisis, *The Evening Hour* vividly portrays the human suffering and loss behind the statistics. The carnage resulting from the flood—houses swept away, "uprooted trees and rutted-out earth," scores of human casualties—stuns Cole: "[He] had seen plenty of death in the nursing home, the waxy faces and blue skin and puckered mouths. But everyone he'd seen up until now had been old. Now he saw swollen, drowned children. A body hung up in a tree. A man's mouth stuffed with black sludge, eyes matted shut. They laid out the bodies like memorials," images that convey a nightmare landscape of unimaginable proportions (220-21).

As he helps collect the dead, Coles contemplates the prayers his preacher grandfather might offer in the face of such loss, his thoughts conveying the title of the novel and the hopelessness of the situation: "His granddaddy would believe that this was the end, the evening hour was upon them. But there were no angels meeting them in the air, no by-and-by, no heavenly light. Only this cold toxic sludge, these broken

people" (224). The coal company's representative tries to divert blame, saying the disaster was caused by rain and, therefore, was "an act of God" (255). Cole's retort, "God n—never made no sludge dam," contradicts that notion and empowers him and others at the public hearing to reject the coal company's authority. In language repeated today—whether in inner cities with poisoned drinking water or in towns where jobs have dried up and moved overseas, Cole challenges the learned helplessness that political, corporate, and outside forces have encouraged and have used to oppress individuals and communities: "'You've made us all too scared to stand up for ourselves. Made us think there was nothing we could do. That we just had to accept it.' That time Cole ignored the sound of his voice, and didn't get stuck on the words. 'You took what was ours,' he said. 'And now you're just telling lies, just like we've been telling ourselves'" (256). His words mark an evolution of self, a turning point that brings new awareness and hints at the possibility of change and much-needed justice.

Sickels emphasizes the connection between self and the environment in the novel's final chapters. While place holds many personal insecurities for him, Cole finds it to be an integral part of his being, a just cause to defend. In his shorter works, Sickels approaches queer and trans rural experience with a "potent mixture of beauty and affection, hardship and peril" (Hogan). These elements, amplified in *The Evening Hour,* unify the novel's themes concerning place, including its depiction of rural queer sexuality, the drug crisis, and the destruction of the environment. In an incident that brings these themes together, Cole experiences the loss of Terry Rose, who dies in a shoot-out with law enforcement because of his methamphetamine involvement. This tragedy prompts Cole, who fears he will be arrested for his drug dealing as well, to leave town. Before fleeing, he visits his grandmother and leaves her a large envelope of cash. He also stops at the nursing home to see his favorite patients one last time, including Mabel Johnson, an elderly black resident whom Cole's grandfather defended from local racists years earlier. She gives Cole a "blood red scarf" she has knitted for him and that he "[wraps] around his neck like something to ward off evil spirits" (318-19). The scarf grants him protection and serves as a sharp reminder of home, the environmental destruction that has taken place there, and the lives lost in the flood.

In his final stop, Cole visits the family homestead one last time and reflects on the distinctive features of the place: "Sugar Holler, Big Lick, Bony Knob, Red Bird Hill, Garden Hole. All of these names that were a part of him like the scripture itself and now all of it disappearing" (320). And, in a passage that unifies sexual, spiritual, and geographic elements into satisfying wholeness, he recalls watching the sun rise

from the mountain ridge with Terry Rose: "Cole thought that maybe that was as close to God as he ever got" (321). What follows is a shocking disruption of the pastoral, the machine in the garden *in extremis*. When Leo Marx created his literary metaphor of the train (and industrialization) intruding upon natural landscapes such as Walden Pond and other settings in American literature, he could not have envisioned the catastrophic scene in *The Evening Hour*. As Cole sets foot on the ridgetop above his grandparents' home, he discovers that half of the mountain has been blasted away: "What had been forest and mountain was no longer there. Just gray rock and scars, bulldozed earth, and glistening seams of coal" (322). He watches as enormous bulldozers and dump trucks crisscross the mining site like "bloated insects," their droning blocking out all natural noise. On a hillside not yet leveled, "newly felled trees lay like bodies, thousands of them" (322). The mountain resembles a rotting corpse, a grotesque scene that makes Cole feel that he is "at the gates of hell" (322).

In confronting the destruction of the mountain and his growing sense of being spiritually adrift, Cole considers the choices he faces: "He did not know how a person was born again, how there could be more than one beginning, how a person could walk away from the past" (323). In an effort to reconcile the broken parts of himself with what has transpired, he repudiates the destruction of human and natural worlds by repeating the names of family members, the living and the dead, trees, flowers, and creatures, "[e]very creek and mountain and hilltop and family cemetery" (323). His litany gives way to weeping and, as he lies upon the ground, he realizes "the memory of the place was deep inside of him" (323). In the end, we do not know Cole's eventual destination or fate, whether he will return to his Appalachian homeland or not. Whether he will return to a life of drug dealing or embark on a fight for mountain justice. Wearing Mabel's scarf as a talisman, Cole drives down the mountain into bright sun, the scarf "[blowing] wildly in the wind, straggly pieces of yarn dancing like pearls of light around his face" (324). Despite all that has taken place, this final image is hopeful and suggests the fragile possibility of change.

As much as any recent novel, *The Evening Hour* captures our zeitgeist. Although fictional, it connects profoundly with crucial issues debated today—gender and sexuality, opioid addiction, environmental deregulation, and marginalized groups' disempowerment. As political literature, *The Evening Hour* refrains from diatribe, showing instead, in riveting terms, the dire consequences of neoliberal policies, corporate greed, outside influence, and class conflict. As a powerful narrative of people and place, it fosters empathy for those suffering from discrimination, exclusion, or a lack of vital resources. *The Evening Hour* also

reminds us of the fragility of rural spaces and the interdependency between human and natural worlds. One cannot exist without the other. With its diverse themes, the novel offers both opportunity and context for examining issues of contemporary importance. It challenges readers to consider the role of personal responsibility in responding to social, political, and environmental issues. In perhaps its greatest value, *The Evening Hour* inspires thoughtful contemplation and dialogue, which, in these polarizing times, is needed more than ever.

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Stories to Stop the Apocalypse: Indigenous Mythmaking as Solidarity-Building Practice in Thomas King's *The Back of the Turtle*

M. Irene Morrison

In "The Limits of Utopia," an introductory manifesto of his reasoning behind creating the new journal *Salvage*, China Miéville writes about a convergence of the concepts of "apocalypse" and "utopia," attributable to industrial capitalism and the climate change it engenders:

> Far from antipodes, these two have always been inextricable [. . .] The one, the apocalypse, the end-times rending of the veil, paves the way for the other, the time beyond, the new beginning. Something has happened: now they are more intimately imbricated than ever [. . .] This is not quite a dystopia: it's a third form – apocatopia, utopalypse – and it's all around us.

Miéville suggests *utopalypse* (the coinage I'll use henceforth) is becoming the only way to imagine a better world because the apocalypse of climate change is now unavoidable. It would be unrealistic to cling to hope and ignore the very real despair resulting from accelerating environmental collapse. Just as important, this environmental apocalypse stems from the dystopian system of neoliberal capitalism. But Miéville contends that it *is* possible — even preferable — to hope and despair at the same time.

This article looks at *The Back of the Turtle* (2014) by Thomas King (Cherokee and Canadian-American), a dystopian speculative fiction (sf) novel in the growing genre of sf known as Indigenous Futurisms.[1] If, for Indigenous peoples, a better world can only be thought of in the context of an apocalypse that has already happened (in the sense that 1492 marks the beginning of Indigenous apocalypse) and is still in process of happening, then "utopalypse" is the only kind of better world possible in Indigenous sf. Grace Dillon explains that "Native Apocalypse," a sort of subgenre in Indigenous Futurism, is conceived as a state of imbalance, and says that

> Native apocalypse storytelling, then, shows the ruptures, the scars, and the trauma in its effort ultimately to provide healing and a return to bimaadiziwin [Anishinaabemowin word for 'the state of balance']. This is the path to a sovereignty embedded in self-determination. (9)

This healing and return to balance from the ruins of apocalypse, such that the earth sustains people and people sustain the earth, aligns with the concept of utopalypse. By understanding the philosophy behind *bimaadiziwin*, Westerners who seek to ally with or advocate for Indigenous peoples will respect Indigenous sovereignty.

I examine *The Back of The Turtle* by employing Miéville's *utopalypse* as well as elements of Salvage Marxism that emphasize intersectional politics in order to explore implications for Indigenous tactics of building a sustainable world in an era of climate change. *The Back of the Turtle* provides political education through storytelling, highlighting environmental racism in Canada, and the need for people of European descent to act as allies/accomplices in Indigenous-led resistance to environmental racism. The novel engages with the complexities of seeking *bimaadiziwin* despite the devastation of capitalist-driven environmental destruction and shows the urgency for radically reimagining both sovereign community relations and science and technology in order to build a better world. King draws heavily on Indigenous storytelling practices, which allow for stories to change over time; such stories discourage unifying and implacable moralism, and they do not simply prescribe ways of living and being in the world. *The Back of the Turtle* exemplifies how storytelling as method of dissemination of cultural ideas might inform intersectional politics.

The Back of the Turtle's plot unfolds in Canada in the near future, when the world has moved closer to environmental collapse. The novel follows several main characters, including Gabriel Quinn, a scientist who worked for Domidion, a Monsanto/Exxon-like company that epitomizes environmental racism and wanton destruction in the name of capital. Gabriel tries to commit suicide over his culpability in an environmental disaster that killed his mother's Indigenous community in Samaritan Bay, British Columbia. This disaster stemmed from Gabriel's development (for Domidion) of a genetically modified bacterium called GreenSweep. Intended as a weed-killer for crops, it destroyed all plant life and, ironically, was used near the Samaritan Bay reservation to clear forests for an oil pipeline. GreenSweep killed the town's residents and devastated the landscape.

Gabriel finds unexpected allies upon returning to Samaritan Bay in an attempt to kill himself at the scene of his crime: among them

are Mara, a disaster survivor from his mother's tribe; two Taiwanese families (whom Gabriel unknowingly rescues after they abandon the *Anguis*, a ghost-like ship carrying Domidion's remaining GreenSweep); and the non-Indian community of Samaritan Bay. The non-Indian community is also a shell of its former self because it relied on tourists who came to see turtles who had annually hatched on a nearby beach but who have been killed by the original spill. Three other characters of note are suspiciously devilish Nicholas Crisp (whose timeless agedness recalls Santa Claus, combining Christian concepts of evil/devilishness and virtue in one allegorical figure); developmentally disabled and reclusive Sonny, who believes his father is holed up in a derelict hotel room and to whom he talks through the door; and a curiously intuitive dog, whom Gabriel names Soldier. One other major plot line of the book contributes dark humor and political satire; it follows the only flat character in the book: Dorian Asher, Domidion's CEO. Dorian suffers from a mysterious disease yet delights in upscale dining and shopping in order to deal with his wife's leaving and his company's stock price dive due to a recent chemical spill. Dorian participates in the capitalist systems destroying both himself and the planet; the system from which he profits also victimizes him.

Despite the evil that Dorian Asher and predatory capitalism have wrought, King closes the novel on an optimistic note. Newly reunited, Samaritan Bay residents push the toxic *Anguis* out to sea with community solidarity and Indigenous ceremonial song; they are aided by a spring tidal wave that reclaims the ship. Gabriel and Mara discuss the possibility of "doing something" against Domidion, but instead settle as uneasy neighbors on the reservation. In the final scene, a first new clutch of turtle eggs hatches on the beach, and under Sonny's protective gaze, the baby turtles swim away from shore.

In what follows I explore how King illustrates, then humorously undercuts the dystopian condition not only of Indigenous peoples in North America but of disenfranchised peoples generally, a state due in part to the falsely utopian rhetoric of Western science, articulated by capitalist endeavors as political cover. I then argue that King imbues storytelling with political significance when envisioning the possibilities for inter-community solidarity in the age of environmental instability, suggesting that the sharing of stories can build solidarity. Finally, I focus on how the plot lines involving Sonny and his obsession with "salvage" serves as one way to build solidarity. I argue that — in light of Salvage Marxism, a new movement to update classical Marxism with the values of intersectionality and in light of climate change and environmental racism[2] — Sonny's story demonstrates how white allies should act toward Indigenous peoples (Sonny shows this by counter-

example and then by example) during a time when subjects must practice resourcefulness and adaptation.

The Disasters of Western Science, its Rhetoric and False Utopian Promise

King indicts Western science and corporations deploying scientific frameworks and profit methods, especially in agriculture and energy industries. Gabriel's obsessions provide the primary vehicle for King's condemnation of nuclear and chemical sciences. Gabriel deals with his guilt about the disaster that killed his mother, sister, and nephew at Samaritan Bay (along with many in his mother's community) through obsessively comparing himself and his actions to historical disasters and figures. Early in the novel, Gabriel compares himself to Robert Oppenheimer, the so-called "father of the atomic bomb," quoting Oppenheimer's lament —borrowed from the *Bhagavad Gita,* "Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds" (62). Gabriel also writes the locations of other disasters on the walls of his apartment and trailer. Among these sites are Chernobyl, Ukraine (1986 nuclear accident) and Bhopal, India (1984 gas leak). He then lists more obscure disasters: Lanyu, China, a nuclear waste dump, and Renaissance Island, a Russian anthrax facility. Thus, capitalism, while escaping sole blame, receives as much attention as militarism — and, justifiably, globalization. Gabriel also lists Indian reservations that have fallen to disasters stemming from for-profit extraction, including Pine Ridge, South Dakota, where a uranium mine led to severe health problems. Disenfranchised people across the globe are remembered as victims of these disasters; Gabriel understands environmental devastation through his own experience with loss and guilt that arguably transcends Western/non-Western and colonizer/colonized binaries, though he is also attentive to them.

Gabriel remembers disasters, while Nicholas Crisp suspects corporate malfeasance as Samaritan Bay comes under a new threat from Domidion's building of an oil pipeline designed to remedy the economic impacts of the previous disaster. Domidion's officials secure complacency by promising prosperity: "Opportunity, they blithered. Salvation, they blathered. Wealth. Prosperity. Economic Security. Cuban Vacations" (62).[3] Yet Crisp sees through corporate spin, a practice King attends to through describing Dorian Asher, CEO of Domidion. Crisp can see what Phillip Wegner calls the "false utopia" of industrial capitalism.[4] And, as I show, Crisp works to create a community that offers an alternative to this utopia.

King excoriates more than disasters marked at a fixed point in time. From the novel's opening, King parodies the way corporations spin the "slow violence"[5] of environmental pollution from heavy industries — e.g., the way they cover up actual crimes against communities of color. We see this technique early on, when Dorian is first told about the *Anguis* and the Taiwanese, presumed dead on board. What to do for their families? "I suppose we can announce some kind of package," Dorian says. When pressed for details, he responds, "Let's start with the announcement [. . .] We can revisit compensation itself at a later date" (19-20). Whenever a corporation causes a major disaster, such as the Deepwater Horizon spill in the Gulf of Mexico, press appearances control the resulting damage to corporate credibility. This spin elides corporate accountability in the form of victim compensation.

Other parodic moments directly critique the marriage of science and capitalism. Dorian, while instructing subordinates on how to spin a spill of petroleum extraction byproducts, references the fact that companies seeking to sow doubt about their activities' environmental effects have taken their playbook from the successful public relations campaigns of tobacco and gun companies, such as the latter's insistence that mass killings demonstrate the need for more guns. Then, implying government complicity with corporations, Dorian cites Harry Truman's dictum: "If you can't convince them, confuse them" (440). Dorian's subordinates catch on and suggest using another time-honored argument for environmental racism — lifestyle choices: "Fortunately [. . .] most of these are Native communities where the mortality rate is already higher than the norm [. . .] Making it difficult to determine whether the additional deaths are the result of the spill or lifestyle" (437). In this and other passages, King links a deceptive strategy that assuages public fears about capitalism's disastrous consequences to issues of environmental racism specific to Indigenous communities. Neither Dorian nor his company experience negative consequences: stocks falter, then recover; Dorian's mysterious disease has seemingly disappeared or gone into remission; and those most responsible for our dystopian/apocalyptic status quo continue to commit atrocities with impunity.

But what might stop these trends before the planet becomes completely unlivable? How might we survive amid the ruins, in spite of all the irrevocable damage? King does not leave us completely without hope. At the novel's conclusion, Gabriel, once again contemplating suicide, realizes how he had bought into the utopian rhetoric of Western science:

> Science was supposed to have been the answer. World hunger. Disease. Energy. Security. Commerce. Biology would save the

> world. Geology would fuel the future. Physics would make sense of the universe. At one time, science had been Gabriel's answer to everything. Love. Friendship. Family [. . .] He could see his errors now, could see all his illusions in stark relief. Too late, of course. Very much too late. (446)

Instead of addressing environmental problems, Western science —i.e., agricultural science's GreenSweep, a satirical allusion to greenwashing combined with Roundup — will soon cause (another) apocalypse with Gabriel as its unwitting architect. But Gabriel will not be allowed to kill himself. Mara insists on his responsibility to do "something" given his culpability, though she does not recommend a specific course of action. We do not see solutions here, or Gabriel saving the day, or even a promise to try. We *do* see Gabriel returning to his community and its spiritual and storytelling practices; this return represents the possibility of partnership between Indigenous and Western science that could lead to solutions to a number of climate problems.

Storytelling and Community in an Unstable World

The Back of The Turtle reveals how Indigenous philosophies of storytelling and humor heal and rebalance humanity in an era of climate change. The novel can be read as a demonstration of King's philosophy of storytelling, as outlined in his 2005 book *The Truth About Stories*. Storytelling expresses sovereignty and community: "The truth about stories is that's all we are" echoes throughout the book. King emphasizes the importance of stories — especially stories employing humor to heal collective trauma — in creating communities and inter-community dialogue, and in offering hope for building what he calls "a truly civil society" through defining community priorities and guiding individual actions. King insists upon making a story one's own by infusing it with one's unique style, focusing on "The Woman Who Fell From the Sky" as an example. King and his tribal family retell this creation story many times.[6] The story contrasts with monotheist Christian tales of an omnipotent God. King also uses the "Woman Who Fell" myth as framing device in *The Back of the Turtle*. The story's plot usually involves a woman who falls from the sky by digging a hole from her own world. Water animals rescue her and help her build a home on the back of the turtle — a home that becomes North America. There she gives birth to twins — one whose powers are creative, while the other's powers are destructive.

"The Woman Who Fell From the Sky" lends itself to an environmental theme in that it emphasizes both humans' responsibility to the earth and the precarious balance of creation and destruction. The Anishinaabe refer to this balance as *bimaadiziwin*, and Grace Dillon highlights it as a key component of Indigenous Futurism. The creation story appears in different ways in the novel, both as a frame for the novel's structure and as an educational tool used by characters. Gabriel originally names the GreenSweep project after the tale (it is then renamed to allude to greenwashing and Roundup), implicating him as the destructive twin. Mara tells Gabriel and others that her mother used to change the story of "The Woman Who Fell" by naming the left-handed twin after the angel Gabriel. Mara and Gabriel are repeatedly referred to as the twins and also as Adam and Eve when they return to the reservation together; they are accompanied by a cast of non-human animal and human animal characters suggestive of both tales.

King's weaving of these founding myths connects to an idea he explores in *The Truth About Stories:* intra-community solidarity, as enacted through storytelling, weaves cultural myths together. He suggests a way out of the Adam and Eve story's harmful emphasis on human dominion. He points out that Christian stories are also exactly that — stories — and suggests making these stories more malleable, by adopting the fluid nature of Indigenous myth:

> What if the creation story in Genesis had featured a flawed deity who was understanding and sympathetic rather than autocratic and rigid? [. . .] What if Adam and Eve had simply been admonished for their foolishness? [. . .] What kind of a world might we have created with that kind of story? (27-28)

As Robin Ridington points out, *The Back of the Turtle* is in part a humorous narrative exploration of this question, as well as of similar questions around the Christ story, via Sonny and Dad, a parody of Jesus and God. Ridington also emphasizes that as per Nietzsche, Dad is Dead, nonexistent in hotel Room Number One or a sort of absentee landlord — he is possibly returned to earth in the form of the dog whom Gabriel names Soldier (n. pag.). Sonny is a kind of savior for the town, but there is little room for painting him as heroic or infinitely wise. Rather, he is a playfully imagined, deeply flawed version of a forsaken/abandoned Christ, one whose obsession with salvage is integral to King's new myth in the era of climate change. Rather than setting up Christian and Indigenous stories in competition with each other over souls and cultures, the myths are told together.

I will return to Sonny and the stories of salvage told in the novel, but for now I maintain a focus on the importance of storytelling more generally. Storytelling as inter-community communication extends beyond North American cultures, as we see when the Taiwanese refugees first meet Mara, Gabriel, and Crisp. The Taiwanese refugees complicate and nuance *The Back of the Turtle*'s commitment to storytelling as community practice, by globalizing the stakes that such practices might address. Given the universality of storytelling practice, we can productively read storytelling in light of Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing's *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (2015). Tsing explores how perceptions of community and inter-community solidarity must change to adapt to climate on a global scale. She offers a creative ethnography of the seasonal communities around the world, including in North America, who forage for matsutake mushrooms, which grow only in human-disturbed forests. These communities and the mushrooms they farm represent the possibility of "life without the promise of stability," and suggest that these communities might "catapult us into the curiosity that seems to me [Tsing] the first requirement of collaborative survival in precarious times" (2). "Collaboration," she notes, "means working across difference, which leads to contamination. Without collaborations, we all die" (28). Tsing speaks of the "contaminated diversity" resulting from the forced migrations of people who make up the foraging communities, which include war refugees and economic refugees from all over Asia, people working to maintain a sense of self and culture while interacting with others from many other cultures to forage. These communities are far from utopian — foragers do not enjoy job stability or benefits — but they do offer marginalized peoples some freedom of movement, and the opportunity to build a life outside of rigid capitalist structures, even though their financial stability is ultimately indebted to a global capitalist trade system.

What are the Taiwanese in *The Back of the Turtle* — who arrive as castaways (from a ship full of environmental toxins) to a landscape and community itself scarred by capitalist-driven environmental disaster — but an opportunity for the cultural entanglement and collaboration of which Tsing speaks? As Shu-mei Shih and Ping-hui Liao, editors of *Comparatizing Taiwan,* argue, Taiwan is a multi-ethnic society with its own history of colonization, settlement, and the significant cultural changes this history entails; as such, Taiwan invites many comparisons to other Island and small nations struggling with their colonial history. Perhaps this connection implies that King's Taiwanese refugees might understand the relationship between Indigenous North Americans and European settlers.

King makes eerie comparisons between the Taiwanese and the now-dead inhabitants of Gabriel's mother's reservation throughout the novel, including at the beginning, when the Taiwanese seem to answer Gabriel's drum as he attempts to kill himself in the ocean. They are described as otherworldly: "At first he didn't see it. Saw only the vague shadows of the running tide. And then it was there. A hand thrust out of the water, then an arm, fragile, a slender branch caught in the flood. And then a pool of black hair, floating around a child's face" (7). After Gabriel saves one Taiwanese refugee, the sea becomes "alive with people," and he rescues them all before they disappear in the fog. Sonny then sees them several times before they are revealed to the community, and he believes they are reservation Indians (Gabriel/King's term) who have returned, describing the girl again as a shape before realizing it is a girl: "Someone moving quickly with long black hair. An Indian. A young Indian girl in the alley [. . .] Sonny can feel his whole body tremble with excitement as he realizes what it means. The beginning of days [. . .] And he is pleased" (104). Here, creation stories merge: Sonny's pleasure refers to God's pleasure at creating the earth; he also references the biblical flood when he hypothesizes birds and other creatures will now return "two by two." But the girl also has much in common with the woman who fell from the sky, as the first to be seen falling out of the ocean and as myth becoming real for those in Samaritan Bay. The Taiwanese thus shift from myth to real slowly over the course of the novel, as they begin to make a life for themselves after being wrecked ashore, becoming refugees of a global capitalist system devoid of empathy. Just as Indigenous North Americans did not die out, contrary to Western tendencies to place them in the past (as an "extinct race"), the Taiwanese refuse to die. Initially they hide on the empty Smoke River Reservation; they salvage shelter materials and foodstuffs, or steal them when they must.

But they are welcomed by Crisp, who enthusiastically extends hospitality by exchanging stories and offering food. Crisp and Mara model the generosity of inter-community relationships when Gabriel, Mara, and Soldier finally meet the Taiwanese who have emerged from hiding on the reservation. They share a meal, and Crisp overenthusiastically encourages them to tell their own stories. He "fling[s] his voice about the room" and declares, "I'm a pirate's dog with a bone, when it come [*sic*] to a good story" (434). The Taiwanese then tell the tale of repairing the aging *Anguis* and the resourcefulness required; of the ship breaking down beyond repair and their abandonment of it; and of Gabriel's saving them from drowning as he attempts suicide on ocean rocks. Crisp promises to ask forgiveness of the white community members

from whom the Taiwanese have stolen, which he will gain easily, in part because his generosity has built social capital.

Gabriel feels overwhelmed by the storytelling and food sharing and tells Crisp he "should be getting back" to his trailer. Crisp responds: "This is the back to which ye needs be getting. Look around. Ye are already here" (436). Crucially, the stories Crisp and the Taiwanese trade are not just sad tales; they are imbued with humor as well, and healing laughter. Crisp moves from a sad story to his travels in Australia, where "an emu had tried to kick down an outhouse while he was in it" (445). Humor becomes politically significant as a way of cementing community relationships.

The mischievous Crisp senses an imminent community. With recovery and rebuilding on the horizon, he commits himself to subtly arranging events to ensure this.[7] In this way, King emphasizes the importance of maintaining a balance between retelling different cultural stories without appropriating Indigenous myth, and this emphasis speaks to his larger concern with balancing cultural sovereignty and community partnership. Although Mara concedes Crisp is the superior storyteller, he demonstrates cultural respect by insisting Mara tell the tale of "The Woman Who Fell from the Sky":

> "[I]t's not my story to tell. I only do so when there's not a proper human being in the assembly."
>
> "He means an Indian," said Mara.
>
> "It's a story that comes with the land, and the two are forever wedded," said Crisp. (222)

At Mara's insistence, and in implicit acknowledgement of Crisp as mythical figure ("no one's been here longer than you" she tells him [223]), the two settle into co-storytelling. King describes this method in *The Truth About Stories* as ideal in retelling a story to children who have heard it many times, encouraging them to interject versions of key points they remember while confounding them with compelling new points that add vividness.

This makes Crisp not just a storyteller, but rather a story facilitator and community enabler. Nevertheless, the new community will not be unified per se; the Taiwanese move into the town and promise to put their resourceful building skills to work fixing the hotel and growing a community garden, implying they respect the sovereignty of the reservation as a space not intended for émigrés. Nor will it be (and never was) a utopia in the sense of an unattainably perfect place; Crisp

remarks to Gabriel when they return to the reservation's community center, "It were no paradise, if that be the question. But it were a community" (417). Instead, Samaritan Bay could constitute a collection of communities living as much as possible in balance with their still-damaged environment and each other, uniting when necessary—e.g., when the community pushes the *Anguis* out to shore. Together they will salvage community from a landscape that will not fully recover for several lifetimes, but it will be community nonetheless.

A Salvage Story to Stop the Apocalypse

Not only are storytelling practices encouraged within the novel as a necessity in the age of climate instability, the novel itself can be thought to represent one such story to be told — a story of salvage. Salvage is a concept with unfortunate connotations in different fields (for example in "salvage anthropology," which emphasizes the collections of remains and artifacts for "preserving" Native North American cultures perceived as dead or dying), but King's use of salvage dovetails well with the idea of Salvage Marxism. *Salvage*, the new periodical of "revolutionary arts and letters" (one of whose editors is China Miéville), argues for the urgency of restoring the dated idea of Marxism — not only because the promised revolution never happened, but also because Marx's contention that capitalism represented "progress" discounted colonialist violence. Such a revival brings Marxist thought to bear on capitalism in the age of climate change, while attending to intersectionality rather than focusing solely on class struggle (that is, updating classical Marxism to account for the ways that racism and gender discrimination complicate class struggle). The planet is in serious danger because of neoliberal capitalism's wrecking-ball ideology, and Marxism's strength resides in its critique of capitalism as socially destructive, so it remains to emphasize how it is also environmentally devastating.

To salvage (in verb form) Marxism is to call for the Left to seriously examine its failings especially in terms of intersectional politics, to learn humility, and, echoing Tsing, to rebuild revolutionary movements from the ruins of capitalism. Salvage Marxism must examine, for example, the denigrated phenomenon of Leftist "identity politics"; *Salvage*'s first few issues demonstrate the editors' stated commitment to embrace identity politics — seeing feminist, postcolonial, and queer studies as integral to analyses of neoliberal capitalism. The editors are largely pessimistic about the future, but they claim to have earned their pessimism in a rational study of the current dystopian state of Euro-

American politics. That is not to say there is no place for hope, but they claim in their editorial statement/masthead that "hope is precious; it must be rationed" (n. pag.). For the most part, it seems a fragile utopian hope shines through the journal's engagement with art and creative expression under Miéville's direction as Art Editor. Salvage Marxism, with its explicit commitment to postcolonial critique, also extends Marxism beyond its traditional European bounds. But Salvage Marxism does not claim to be the locus of a New Left revival; it is rather an attempt to understand what elements of the Marx-inspired 20th Century Left should be carried into the 21st—that is to say, what tools exist or should be built for resistance of a capitalism that may already be post-neoliberal (in the sense that neoliberalism represents a type of privatization through economic shocks, but this is now being eclipsed by economic structures such as the "gig economy" that exploit workers in new ways).

Miéville maintains art and creative expression help us employ "Boolean literalism," or the rejection of false choices (such as Clinton OR Trump), choices that potentially mean rejecting cultural productions lacking an (unattainable) perfection free of capitalist and colonial complicity. Ideas can be salvaged from even the most problematic of Western science fiction, and Miéville examines creative expression from the developing world in this light as well. Boolean literalism enables hope and despair to co-exist, allowing artistic expression to be simultaneously liberatory while also bound up in the multiple oppressions of global capitalism. King seems to use Boolean literalism as Miéville does, especially when it comes to issues of hope and despair. Writing in *The Truth About Stories* of himself and a writer-friend who committed suicide, King remarks, "we were both hopeful pessimists. That is, we wrote knowing that none of the stories we told would change the world. But we wrote in the hope that they would" (92). For King, salvage forms a key part of mythmaking, an alternative to the facile prospects of redemption and apocalypse; it is a concept born of hopeful pessimism.

Much of this emphasis on salvage is made by way of Sonny's plot line. Sonny is obsessed with Salvage to the point of religious fervor; he reflects early in the novel that "In the beginning was the Salvage" (28), and he spends much of his time beachcombing. Sonny can not only be seen as synecdoche for Christ, but also as symbol of the recklessness of Christian attitudes about dominion over the earth. Sonny is, as previously mentioned, developmentally disabled, and Crisp secretly keeps him fed at a derelict motel (featuring a blue star suggestive of the Star of David and therefore an apt place for the Son of God to reside) by refilling an "EverFresh (TM)" vending machine, perhaps a metaphor for the bounty of nature but commodified in the service of capital. One

day, however, Sonny exuberantly destroys the machine while demonstrating his prowess as a tool-user to Soldier (Gabriel's dog). Sonny thinks to himself, in third-person:

> Perhaps Sonny was too enthusiastic when he was showing the dog how he could hammer things. Perhaps he should have shown more control and self-restraint.
>
> A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.
>
> This is one of Dad's sayings, and while Sonny doesn't know what it is supposed to mean, he is sure that it applies to vending machines as well as cities. (353)

Sonny recalls several of Dad's enigmatic platitudes such as this one. Despite fumbling through life without a clear understanding of his purpose, Sonny does understand the need for community thanks in large part to the tricksterish Crisp, and he turns his knowledge as a tool user to that purpose, if imperfectly, in the form of the lighthouse he builds to guide people back to Samaritan Bay. He builds it from salvage — metal odds and ends, shells and bones, and copper wire he steals from the then-abandoned community center on the reservation. Sonny thus represents the resourcefulness and creativity so renowned in white European men, which sometimes manifests as scientific practice or (creative re-) use of technology, but King undermines this renowned trait in showing that it can prove destructive or even appropriative of others' resources, in this case the copper wire. Equally important to recognizing what elements of physical objects and philosophies are useful in problem-solving is recognizing what is *not* useful or what is useful but should not be used. Sonny especially must learn the difference between salvage and garbage, but so must everyone else, and here is where the *Anguis* becomes an important lesson in the age of salvage. Sonny also must give up his obsessive obedience to his absent Dad — his obsessive obedience to strict, unchanging tenets of Christianity.

The *Anguis* carries a many-layered significance, both historically and allegorically (and phonetically as "anguish" without an "h"). Its travels along the Atlantic, where it was repeatedly rejected from ports for the waste it carried, mirror the plight of the MOBRO 4000 in the 1980s, also known as the "gar-barge," which could not find port while carrying garbage from New York. Early in the novel, King provides decidedly anti-capitalist commentary through Dorian's sinister musings about the way garbage and pollution management have become

capitalist industries, with developing countries competing for the garbage of the developed world. But the name also embeds the ship in the weave of Christian and Indigenous myths: an anguis is a type of lizard with no legs, a possible allusion to Satan (though in contrast to the devilishness of Crisp, this is pure evil), who lost his legs when in snake form as punishment for tempting Eve.

Sonny believes the *Anguis* will provide the best salvage opportunity he has encountered; he will "be paid," he thinks, buying into the profit motive of capitalism when looking at refuse. Seeing the *Anguis* as salvage, thereby dooming the community once again, is a temptation Sonny resists with the help of Crisp. Two manifestations of devilishness — one of delightful mischief that is more trickster in the Indigenous sense of the term versus one of destruction and evil, and therefore a representation of balance between good and evil that is a key idea for the twins in "The Woman Who Fell" — compete for Sonny, as Crisp explicitly warns Sonny that the ship is "not salvage." Though the narrator does not clarify that Crisp knows exactly what is in the ship, he seemingly instinctively knows that it does not belong on the shore. He and Mara rally the remnants of the white community of Samaritan Bay to push the ship out to sea, as the next step in the community's re-formation after the meal-sharing and storytelling with the Taiwanese castaways. Yet when Gabriel initially rejects Mara's pleas to help with the ship, it is partly because he sees it as a scientifically impossible task. She responds to his dismay by saying: "It's not about moving [. . .] It's about community" (498). Eventually, with the help of the traditional song Gabriel sang when he first rescued the Taiwanese, and nature's help in the form of a spring tidal wave, the community successfully pushes the ship out. This action signals, in light of Salvage Marxism, a community's rejection of the technological "salvation" offered by neoliberal utopia, here represented by an agricultural miracle chemical-turned-destructive pollutant, but it still relegates hopefulness to a place-specific thing. After all, the *Anguis*, essentially a bomb at this point, begins to circumnavigate Turtle Island once again, threatening to return to its original port on the Atlantic coast of Canada. And wherever it sinks it will cause great harm.

Also toward the end of the novel, before the ship is pushed out but after Mara once again rescues Gabriel, Crisp tells Sonny he can rename the dog, and he names him Salvage, which Crisp agrees is a fine name. Salvage has become a deity, cementing its importance as a guiding philosophy for our uncertain times. Through Sonny, Mara and Gabriel, King salvages two Christian myths — both dealing with issues of redemption and lost paradise — showing, as Salvage Marxism teaches us, that we should stop waiting for redemption, but be the agents of

change. This will not be a redemption from without, via a Christian god or the form of revolutionary Marxism that manifests as a *deus ex machina*. Instead, King offers us a blueprint for creating intra-community myths as a step for solidarity — mythmaking as guiding strategy might be a way to create the web of alliances among communities needed while the Western "Left" remains broadly disorganized and ineffective. This web would, King seems to suggest in the ending of *The Back of the Turtle,* involve a commitment to more place-based community work rather than the broad analytic scope that Salvage Marxism generally implies. I find solace in tackling local environmental (and other) problems in the face of such overwhelming global catastrophe, so perhaps place-based local work is a useful start.[8] And mythmaking might in turn make Marxist analyses more accessible outside academia, and it might help us imagine an accessible future against the grain of false capitalist utopian rhetoric.

Conclusion

Temagami First Nation writer Dale Turner argues "the politics of allyship and solidarity between Native and non-Native peoples are of real importance to social movements concerned with transcending settler colonialism" (131). Of course, settler colonialism can only be transcended through an understanding of its link to neoliberal capitalism and its disastrous effects on people and the planet in the context of mutual cooperation between Westerners and Indigenous peoples.

In a time of the truism that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than utopia, King engages with the politics of ally-ship with *The Back of the Turtle*. Using storytelling to mourn Indigenous communities and ecologies that are now beyond full repair and restoration, King manages to salvage a fleeting vision of a better world from the ecological and political ruins of the present — through a story of a burgeoning relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. A return to *bimaadiziwin* or balance in the time of climate apocalypse may take generations, but at the novel's close, Crisp promises Gabriel and Mara that other surviving members will return to build a community, one that will be strengthened by the now international community of Samaritan Bay.

China Miéville's concept of utopalypse echoes this sentiment:

> Earth: to be determined. Utopia? Apocalypse? Is it worse to hope or to despair? To that question there can only be one answer: yes. It is worse to hope or to despair. Bad hope and bad

despair are mutually constitutive. Capitalism gets you coming or going.

Miéville calls for us to hope *and* to despair, in an informed way that differentiates between the false utopian visions of neoliberalism — a calculated hope amid mourning and loss. King nuances Miéville and Salvage Marxism more broadly, first by mourning the violence of neoliberalism-as-colonialism and beginning the healing process through parodic and humorous storytelling. The novel then nuances China Miéville's Marxist emphasis on class struggle against the apocalyptic nature of capitalist oppression by foregrounding Indigenous survivance and sovereignty in projects of community building. Key to King's vision of salvaging community — as Sonny, the Taiwanese migrants, and the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities of Samaritan Bay show — will be salvaging both ideologies *and the Western myths that perpetuate them* in the traditions of Indigenous mythmaking, in order to fit the intersectional politics of the present moment.

Notes

1. In *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction*, Grace Dillon defines Indigenous Futurism as an emerging genre of stories that "confront issues of 'Indianness'" using the tropes of science and speculative fictions in a way that "undercuts the western limitations of science," and in doing so argues for the importance of "Native intellectualism [and] Indigenous scientific literacy" (2). Dillon creates five subcategories of Indigenous Futurism, which includes Indigenous Science and Sustainability stories that carry on the Indigenous tradition of using storytelling to communicate Indigenous scientific literacies, such as medical and agricultural knowledges; Native Apocalypse (qtd. in main text); and *Biskaabiiyang* (Anishinaabemowing word for "returning to ourselves," that often involves decolonization narratives. *The Back of the Turtle* can be thought to straddle these categories.

2. Environmental racism is defined as acts of environmental destruction committed usually for profit motives, in areas populated predominantly by people of color. For example, companies tend to dump hazardous waste or build oil refineries in such areas because they perceive these communities as incapable of resisting them. Governments often turn a blind eye to this or actively support it, as with the Dakota Access Pipeline. Such practices lead to higher incidents of preventable disease in these communities. Another example would be the

dumping of coal ash in Puerto Rico, and its subsequent spread in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria.

3. This plot point is likely a reference to the continuing struggles of First Nations peoples in Canada to block pipelines, which have further intensified since the publication of King's novel. Several Internet videos show First Nations women telling companies like Trans Canada that they are not welcome. In a counter to this false utopian future, one woman asks: "What do you have planned for the future? In 20 years, 25 years when the pipeline is old?" ("Elder Nancy Morrison").

4. Monsanto, for example, is infamous for its own version of a false utopia in the form of a greenwashing campaign targeted at criticism that its pesticides have led, among other things, to the decimation of monarch butterfly populations. The page for its "2015 Sustainability Report" is littered with future-oriented slogans about how essential its work will be to both feeding the world and making it habitable for generations to come. One graphic contains the words "Growing Better Together," and within the graphic's letters are monarch butterflies and a racially diverse cast of farmers (n. pag.). This report masks the reality that their monocropping has destroyed soil and polluted water around the world and caused biodiversity loss, and that they have contributed to the destruction of stable third world economies (as Vandana Shiva details).

5. In *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011), Nixon explains that slow violence is violence committed by the globally powerful upon the poor, but drawn out in time. It is often related to environmental pollution, and is difficult to understand as violence because it is less directly manifested. It does not appeal very strongly to Western media consumers as a cause for concern because it is not an easy sound-bite in our information age. The task of the writer-activist, for Nixon, is to portray these things, and he reads the nonfiction of writers like Arundhati Roy to illustrate this.

6. King is not alone in this idea of retelling Indigenous myths both for multicultural audiences and in the service of healing collective trauma, one notable example being Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (1977). A more contemporary example is Nanobah Becker (Navajo)'s short film, *The 6th World* (2013), which argues for Indigenous sustainability sciences in partnership with Western sciences through a retelling of myths involving Changing Woman, one of the tribe's Holy People who guide humans through successive worlds.

7. Retelling the stories of negative historical figures as a way of confronting and healing collective trauma is a staple of Indigenous Futurism. Gerald Vizenor (Anishinaabe), for example, recasts Christopher Columbus as the tortured progenitor of a mixed race of Indians in *The Heirs of Columbus* (1991), and General Custer in "Custer on the Slipstream" (1978).

8. One major occasion for community partnership involves partnership between Indigenous and Western scientific communities. Priscilla Settee remarks how Indigenous knowledge continues to gain currency among scientific communities in a wide range of fields, among them agriculture (but also notably medicine). Less acknowledged for Settee, however, is the inseparability of

art from many Indigenous scientific philosophies, both as useful products of such sciences (such as a birch bark basket), and also a way to convey spiritual knowledge that has practical, everyday uses (such as in Indigenous storytelling). In short, yes, Indigenous sciences are important, but just as important is a rethinking of the relationship between community, scientific practices, and spiritual and philosophical beliefs.

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Bhabha and the Bandit: Myth, Stereotype, and Colonial Discourse in Sophie Treadwell's *Machinal* and *Gringo*

Bryan C. Williams

Do Latinx lives matter? It is a tired observation by now to state that the presidential campaign of 2016 exposed a festering anxiety of cultural and racial superiority in the United States. Chants for a border wall, indictments of Blacks and Hispanics as violent criminals, and the incessant claims of Mexicans pillaging and raping the American social body have become normalized in the media. A salvific return to Nordic dominance appears to be the call of many. A resistance has mounted, though. Progressive groups of various political stripes are countering. Black Lives Matter, sanctuary cities, sanctuary churches, professional athletes, and various other entities are confronting the discourse of white superiority. And the battle playing out in film, print, and social media is fierce. However, the aim of all this political energy remains unchanged since the founding of the country: who gets to control the writing, reading, and representation of the Other? For example, Black Lives Matter is a declarative statement for African Americans who desire to control their own representation and signification in culture; however, it is an interrogative for those who wish to manage it for them ("Black Lives Matter?"). Though many advocates call for it, Latinx have yet to form a declarative social movement, and the struggle over who gets to control the signification of Latin Americans in US cultural discourse will determine whether Anglo imperialism repeats itself, as it has for more than a century, or whether Latinx wrest control of the stereotypes and false representations that continue to narrate their story away from imperialist powers.

In this study, I investigate historical literary representations of Latinx, particularly natives of Mexico, in the United States. Such an investigation must be performed because historically, US progressive political movements have sought to liberate Mexico from debilitating stereotypes and false narratives of racial inferiority; in addition, the US historically fails to accomplish substantive and lasting social change. Revisiting how journalists, playwrights, and directors have portrayed Mexicans in the past may enable us to learn from their tactics and avoid their mistakes. The work of Sophie Treadwell exemplifies US sociopo-

litical engagement with progressive social issues such as women's rights and the representation of Mexico both on stage and in the media.

Many feminist scholars have lauded Sophie Treadwell as a pioneer who exposed the oppression of women in the early twentieth century. Indeed, Barbara Ozieblo and Jerry Dickey have stated that throughout the tenor of Treadwell's career as a dramatist, "she typically sought to bring reforms to the commercial Broadway theater while simultaneously seeking to expand women's traditional social roles" (6). By creating characters who subvert scripted gender roles and snub social expectations, Treadwell's plays challenged dominant social codes of the period. *Machinal* and *Gringo* exemplify Treadwell's groundbreaking feminism. In these dramas, women experience freedom from their mundane existence through illicit love affairs. Indeed, commenting on the tryst between Richard Roe and Helen Jones in *Machinal*, Julia Walker asserts, "However proscribed their union is morally, Treadwell establishes it as good and just" (217). Several Treadwell scholars agree that she undoubtedly believed Helen's sexual liberation and the eruption of agency Helen experiences in Roe's bedroom were necessary moves toward social justice. And that argument is sound. But is the love affair between Roe and Helen comprehensively, in every way, "good and just"? Is it possible that by advancing one sociopolitical issue for the sake of a marginalized group, Treadwell inadvertently oppresses others? By investigating the characters and places that appear both off and on stage in *Machinal* and *Gringo*, I argue that Treadwell perpetuates imperialistic myths and stereotypes even as she advances forms of social justice.

Though Treadwell has not received nearly as much scholarly attention as some of her contemporaries, recent analyses of her work, particularly of *Machinal*, have tended toward feminist readings of the body and language as sites of resistance. In *Expressionism and Modernism in American Theatre: Bodies, Voices, Words*, Julia Walker discusses the motif of hands in *Machinal* in a thorough analysis of Treadwell's expressionistic style. For Walker and others, the character of Helen Jones reveals the entrapment of women, suggesting a woman's life is only a by-product of the social forces acting upon her, corralling her into gender-based, prescriptive roles. That is, socioeconomic constructions interpolate her into the machine of patriarchal capitalism (227). Body parts—disarticulated bodies, hands especially—come to signify "both the materiality of existence and the essence of the personality they express" – Helen's pretty hands, thus, expressionistically force the agency of her material body into a patriarchal narrative that no longer requires a woman's personality be expressed in penmanship but still requires the physical hand to type information (227). In the moments Helen

takes control of her body (that is, both its materiality and personality), she displays agency and attains a "freedom that can only be found when women are allowed to experience embodied subjectivities—through their bodies, their voices, their words" (235). And Helen achieves this freedom via her tryst with Richard Roe. For reasons discussed below, this embodied freedom may come at the cost of perpetuating colonial discourse.

Like Walker, Katherine Weiss has discussed the social anxiety surrounding control of the female body. Weiss posits that the use of electricity on Helen serves two purposes: electrotherapy and execution. Following Tim Armstrong, Weiss states electrotherapy was a common treatment in contemporary psychotherapy for hysteric females, utilized in special cases to rid them of undesirable energies. The electric chair, another contemporary invention, was employed to rid the body politic of undesirable threats. Electricity—the physical force *par excellence*—underscores the dangerous position in which women find themselves, a position in which their bodies are controlled through the discourses of medicine and law (Weiss 8-9).[1] Similar to Walker's observation of disembodied freedom, Weiss suggests that only through Helen's love affair with Richard Roe is she able to discharge her sexual energy and find temporary relief from the pathology of existing in a mechanistic, patriarchal world.

Moving towards a consideration of the role of the Other, Les Hunter in "Becoming Romantic: Women's Sexual Encounters with the Other in *Mourning Becomes Electra* and *Machinal*" explores, in part, the problematic set-up by the present absence of a mythologized frontier. Employing Edward Saïd's Orientalism, Hunter argues that Lavinia's and Helen's respective transformations result from romantic encounters with an exotic, sexualized Other that occur within a marginalized space, the paramours for each being the South Sea island native Avahinni and the drifter Richard Roe, respectively. The origin of these women's desires, suggests Hunter, lies in the '"battery of desires, repressions, investments, and projections"' inherent in Western imperialist attitudes toward the Orient, generally, and the United States' imperial attitudes toward the South Seas and Latin America, specifically (Saïd qtd. in Hunter 57). Furthermore, each woman's desire for a romantic encounter with the land of the Other translates into a multiplicity of desires, as suggested by M.H. Abrams, in that a woman actually seeks "self-realization, the desire to escape to nature, and the elevation of the social outcast" (Abrams qtd. in Hunter 56), all of which fall in line with the tropes of Romantic frontier literature. Though initially liberating, the illicit freedom experienced by each woman comes at the cost of her life—Lavinia is banished to perpetual isolation, Helen to the

electric chair. Hunter further comments that such punishment has a precedent in canonical American literature (*The Last of the Mohicans*, *Moby Dick*, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, etc.) in that only males are permitted to experience the horrific and sublime encounters of the frontier—the land of the Other—and *return* from their journeys; women, conversely, are severely disciplined for their attempt to do the same (64-5).[2]

Richard Wattenberg supports Hunter's assertion, stating that the mythical frontier of the West appears in both *Machinal* and *Hope for a Harvest* as a space where one could escape the oppression of civilization to the freedom of undisturbed nature; though, he adds, in agreement with Hunter, this mythic space "has little relevance to women's experiences" (344). In Wattenberg's view, Richard Roe is not only a key variable in Helen's liberation, but he is also a marginalized figure, an archetypal Western frontier adventurer who has no frontier left to conquer. Because in the United States, settlers had eradicated Indians and developed the land, Roe moves south into Mexico, the only frontier left where he can continue to explore and master the people and the land. But the most significant element of Hunter's and Wattenberg's arguments, for my purpose, is their focus on American imperialism and urbanization, suggesting that the spike in economic production during World War I and the Mexican Revolution led to intensive American nationalism that manifested most notably in colonizing aggressions—such as the Philippine-American War, the annexation of Guam, and the invasions of Haiti and Cuba (Hunter 56-57). Therefore, with them, I emphasize the symbolic importance of Mexico in the American imagination as well as the way in which it intersects with Richard's character and, by extension, Helen's freedom, in order to perform a postcolonial analysis of Treadwell's preoccupation with images of Mexico.

Bábara Ozieblo and Jerry Dickey provide a comprehensive study of Treadwell's life and the critical reception of her oeuvre in *Susan Glaspell and Sophie Treadwell,* in which they discuss both *Machinal* and *Gringo.* Commenting on Treadwell's early life and works, Dickey and Ozieblo agree with other scholars that Treadwell's first Broadway play *Gringo* was heavily influenced by her journalistic career at the *San Francisco Bulletin* and the *New York Tribune* during and immediately after the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920). During this period, journalists representing the major periodicals in the US were divided in their assessment of the war in general, but more specifically, in their critiques of the revolutionary leader Pancho Villa, many painting him as the "typical" Mexican: a bandit, savage, and indigenous animal (130). But it was Treadwell's unprecedented private interview with Villa that generated the material for *Gringo* and reinforced her sympathy for Mexico. This

experience, along with her continued journalistic projects south of the border, earned her recognition as "'one of America's best informed authorities on Mexican affairs'" (Treadwell 1924b qtd. in Ozieblo 129). And it was in her status as expert on Mexico that, Dickey and Ozieblo assert, one should understand the tenor of Treadwell's work, both journalistic and artistic, as an attempt to recast Mexican life and culture sympathetically in terms other than racialized stereotypes perpetuated by American newspapers and film (132-3).[3]

To be sure, Dickey and Ozieblo's assessment of *Gringo*'s writing context is accurate. It is difficult not to perceive the lengths to which Treadwell went in order to recast Mexico and Mexicans in her writing. In fact, she writes of the humble, pensive, civilized human of Pancho Villa in her famous profile "A Visit to Villa, A 'Bad Man' Not so Bad" appearing in the *New York Tribune* on August 28, 1921. In this article, Treadwell speaks of the civility with which Villa had treated her. She also recounts the heroic exploits of the Villistas who defended the peons of Mexico from Francisco Madero and Victoranio Huerta. She even goes so far as to say, "Yes, I believe in Francisco Villa; in the sincerity of his feeling for his country and for his people—his people, the poor, the ignorant, the helpless of Mexico" (*Tribune* 1921). And within the same column, she again commends his remarkable talents and even ends her piece by stating she has full confidence in Villa's integrity and would entrust her own life and resources to him, in spite of "his ignorance, his profound ignorance" (*Tribune* 1921).

Through the liberal and respectful tone with which she portrays Villa, she no doubt wished to paint him in a favorable light to US readers. Curiously, though, she labels the "Mexican" as "ignorant" and "helpless" throughout the article. In one instance, she reports a scene in which an old man comes to Villa's hacienda in order to purchase rice. The old man is uncomfortable and slightly clumsy in his attempt to show decorum in the home of his general. After he leaves, Villa comments: '"*Pobre viejito*' (poor little old man), smiled Villa, taking it all in. 'So good, but so ignorant.' Then he was serious. 'That is the trouble with us, señorita. We are good people, but we are so ignorant. Where is the man with the power to lift up my race?'" (*Tribune* 1921). Treadwell's reporting reaffirms stereotypes of Mexicans as helpless and unenlightened even as it elicits sympathy for Villa and his cause. The lasting impression is one of pity, or charity, and charity thus becomes the vehicle by which multiracial politics moves. Within her repeated reports of the noble but helpless, ignorant Mexican, Treadwell ventures into ambiguity.

Moreover, this ambiguity may stem from Treadwell's ambivalent attitude toward her own Mexican heritage. Treadwell's father, Alfred

Treadwell, was partly Mexican and was raised in Mexico. He was deeply ashamed of his Mexican heritage, as was his wife, Sophie's mother. In fact, whenever Mrs. Treadwell wanted to sting her daughter, she often mocked Sophie's tan skin and dark hair. Consequently, Sophie Treadwell's Mexican heritage adds a layer of painful complexity to her representation of Mexico in her work (Rodríguez and Dickey, *Broadway's Bravest Woman* 6-7).

Articles like the *Tribune* piece affirm yet problematize Ozieblo and Dickey's assertion that Treadwell's oeuvre should be perceived as a conscious attempt to change the nationalistic American image of the Mexican as greaser, savage, and/or bandit. The ambiguity of the *Tribune* piece as well as Treadwell's mixed feelings about her heritage necessitate further analysis of the Treadwell plays that utilize and/or invoke the Mexican subaltern. Treadwell clearly sympathizes with Mexicans and seems to desire to alter the social consciousness of readers toward humanizing the Mexican people. However, the signifiers "ignorant" and "helpless," though seemingly insignificant, obfuscate any intent to reconstruct the sign of the stereotypical Mexican, because such labels do not generate the pathos necessary to catalyze sociopolitical change.

The observations and analysis offered by Walker, Weiss, Hunter, Wattenberg, Dickey, Ozieblo, and Rodríguez represent the multifaceted feminist, biographical, and cultural readings of Treadwell's work in recent decades—ranging from the body as a site for performative subjectivity to the desire for a sexual encounter with the exotic Other to the prevalence of the American myth of the frontier and the Western conceptualization of the Orient. The force of these critical investigations, though, primarily focuses on women's existential dilemmas and consequent self-liberation. To be sure, this is a just and important endeavor, an agenda Treadwell herself clearly raised. However, does all the attention given to oppressed female figures in Treadwell's plays come at a cost? Does Treadwell, in a well-intentioned move to expose the oppression of women, unwittingly reinforce the elements of American imperialism she finds destructive?

As Treadwell clearly uses social justice discourse in her plays, rather than solely investigating the treatment of female characters, I choose to focus on the treatment of those characters, who by dint of their present absence—those indicated in the stage directions as "darkness. Nothing can be discerned," (*Machinal* 45) and "dim voices" (*Machinal* 59)—provide the symbolic structure vital for the aforementioned feminist readings. Therefore, following Homi Bhabha's explication of the stereotype and its functions in *The Location of Culture*, I argue here that despite Treadwell's inclination to subvert and change the image of the Mexican in the American cultural imagination, she in fact reifies it

by recirculating the subjects and signs that constitute the recognizable totality of the Other (the Mexican) in the already established system of representation in American colonial discourse (Bhabha 101). That is, her ambivalent attempt to alter the associative total of the sign of the Mexican in her writing lacks the discursive power to change its *signification*—the Mexican myth as it functions within the colonial symbolic system. This signification aligns with Bhabha's assertion that "to judge the stereotyped image on the basis of a prior political normativity is to dismiss it, not to displace it, which is only possible by engaging with its *effectivity*; with the repertoire of positions of power and resistance, domination and dependence that constructs colonial identification subject . . ." (95). In her early plays, Treadwell dismisses but not displaces the essentializing image of the Mexican because she primarily focuses on the plight of early twentieth-century women.

The image of the indigenous Mexican as backward and deficient had been propagated through journalistic and literary texts since the Mexican-American War and the annexation of Texas in the mid-nineteenth century. However, two major events occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century that forever altered the image of the Mexican in American consciousness: the Mexican Revolution and the advent of industrialized cinematography. Juan J. Alonzo has noted that, through the synecdochic Mexican-made appearances in silent Western films before 1910 such as those of D.W. Griffith, the threatening atmosphere of the Revolution solidified the Mexican's presence in American film as a staple villain for decades afterward (47-8). Silent films had already been portraying Mexicans as scrappy ruffians, but the political instability that hazarded American economic interests during the Revolution was enough to warrant a re-envisioning of them as unscrupulous *bandidos*, uncivilized rogues who wandered the frontier as pirates wandered the ocean. Early films such as *A Trip Through Barbarous Mexico* (1913), *The Mexican Spy* (1913), *Captured by Mexicans* (1914), and *A Mexican Spy in America* (1914) represent hundreds of other films made in the early twentieth century involving the Mexican (Alonzo 48).

Many of these films were straightforward in their assessment of the Mexican problem—the dangerous *bandido* to be eliminated necessarily by an Anglo hero for the safety of the United States. Moreover, this narrative of national and racial superiority circulated via the efforts of producers in the California film industry closely linked to the periodical press, as Alanzo again points out.[4] Consequently, journalists formed relationships with motion picture executives that conflated the dialectic of reading with the dialectic of seeing, effectively reinforcing the conservative narratives of the Revolution, in which "American newspapers concentrated on three presumed aspects of the Mexican character

in their depictions: backwardness, racial limitations, and moral decrepitude" thereby displaying to American readers the image of the essentialized Mexican bandit (Anderson qtd. in Alanzo 48). Ultimately, this re-presentation of the Mexican stereotype led to an abundance of films in which the Anglo fought and destroyed the swarthy enemy who threatened to infect America with lawlessness and degeneration.[5]

The cinema accordingly became the new technological site in which ambivalence toward the Other played out in American culture. Ambivalence is a central concept in Bhabha's analysis of colonial discourse; in fact, ambivalence toward the Other exhibits anxious tension surrounding the stereotypical image created within an enunciated *Third Space*—in which the colonizing subject is mediated and the symbols and meanings of colonial discourse are shown to have no fixed, originary unity (52-55). Colonial ambivalence, therefore, indicates the anxiety surrounding a colonized group that is simultaneously mysterious (Other) and knowable (stereotype) to the colonizer. Because the symbolic structures have no fixity, they must be constantly repeated discursively through various cultural outlets in order to maintain a false coherence; such repetitions often revealing discontinuities. And these repetitions of fantasies can take multifaceted forms, especially in film.[6]

The straight-shooting, *bandido*-vanquishing Anglo American frontiersman was not the only figure that reified Mexican stereotypes. As Virginia Wexman has observed, Western films of the early twentieth century also portrayed the Anglo American as defender of the helpless Mexican Indian. Costume design and makeup in films during and directly after the Revolution perpetuated the Mexican stereotype by conflating racial signifiers. Throughout the 1920s, the Western adventurer on screen often wore accoutrements such as beads and fringe associated with Mexican Indian garb; he also journeyed with Indians who served as guides for interpreting the frontier (Wexman 133). This "double identification" operates to enable "him [Anglo cowboy] to express both the hierarchy of racial privilege and the egalitarian values of the imagined community" (133). This identification indicates that the White hero who dons Mexican Indian clothing advances colonial discourse in two ways: first, his race firmly establishes him at the top of what anthropologist George Stocking has called the "Blood Pyramid" of racial dominance (132); second, his association with Mexican Indians (the most underprivileged of all Mexican ethnic groups) signals a fairness and egalitarianism that embodies the sociopolitical discourse of the United States. This racially-superior-yet-friend-of-the-underdog persona of the Western hero also repeatedly appeared in American

cinema, effectively constructing the other half of the Mexican stereotype: the inferior and helpless.

Indeed, as a journalist and artist working in San Francisco, New York, Paris, and various parts of Mexico, Sophie Treadwell would have been well acquainted with the dominant narratives of the Mexican in film and press. By tracing Dickey and Ozieblo and Treadwell herself in the *Tribune*, we can discern that Treadwell was not satisfied with unjust, monolithic profiles of the Mexican people. Despite her dissatisfaction, though, both *Machinal* and *Gringo* provide evidence of her participation in prevailing American colonial discourse.

In *Machinal*, Helen Jones suffers an existence stifled by the mechanization of society, economic dependence, scripted gender roles, and repressed sexuality—all of which Treadwell accentuates via strategic use of expressionistic lighting, sounds, and linguistic repetitions.[7] Moreover, the body of scholarship agrees that the most salient moment in the play, in which Helen discovers freedom and attains agency, is through her brief love affair with Richard Roe. In episode five, "Prohibited," Helen accompanies the amorous Telephone Girl from work to a speakeasy in order to rendezvous with the Girl's paramour and the paramour's friend. The setting for this scene is liminal, as Walker has noted, a status demarcated not only by the character's liberal consumption of alcohol but also by the illicit acts of love encompassing Helen: abortion, homosexuality, extramarital affair; further still, the speakeasy is a locale where one may speak easily about romanticized exploits, danger, and killing (Walker 217). Furthermore, this type of dialogue in particular engages Helen. However, not until Roe recounts his recent adventures in Mexico does he pique Helen's sexual interest:

> First Man. There were a bunch of bandidos—bandits, you know, took me into the hills—holding me there—what was I to do? got the two birds that guarded me drunk one night, and then I filled an empty bottle with small stones—and let 'em have it!
>
> Young Woman. Oh!
>
> First Man. I had to get free, didn't I? I let 'em have it—
>
> Young Woman. Oh—then what did you do?
>
> First Man. Then I beat it.

> Young Woman. Where to—
> First Man. Right here. (*Pause.)* Glad?
>
> Young Woman (*nods*). Yes. (40)

Helen, in the bar's liminal space, listens to Roe describe his freedom to act in and act for freedom. Helen sympathizes with Roe in his need for freedom, and she begins to believe that she has found a "soul mate" (Wattenberg 343). In addition, by allowing herself to desire the California-born, free-ranging Roe, Helen also participates in the Romantic tradition of Western narratives, yearning to escape to the frontier in hopes of attaining self-realization (Hunter 56). Most noteworthy in this scene is the circulation of the Mexican-villain stereotype that permits feminist readings of Helen's character.

The image of Mexico as laid out in the speakeasy is one of a land of "spig[s]," (39) "bandidos," (40) and easily dupable "birds" (40). Roe is at liberty to act as he pleases—first because of the social inferiority of the lawless, uncivilized, and primitive Mexican. Second, Roe's racial superiority assures physical dominance over his brown captors, who are too weak and too stupid to defeat him. It is acceptable, necessary, and even fascinating to kill Mexicans at will. Thus, Helen's romanticization of Roe stems directly from a larger nationalistic discourse about the subaltern Mexican, whose mythological signification is bolstered by the dialectics of the press and cinema. In this scene, Roe adopts the archetypal Western cowboy of the 1910s and 20s, who vanquishes the nefarious *bandido* in order to protect the borderland. Perhaps even more revealing, Roe communicates his Western heroism to Helen in a relaxed, casual manner over cordials, underscoring the normality of the subject.

In the succeeding scene, "Intimate," the Mexican stereotype continues to foreground the subjectivity and female agency Helen finally attains. The stage directions for the scene's opening indicate that an off-stage hand organ plays "Cielito Lindo" (45). Though a popular song of the time, it nevertheless imbues this scene with Hispanic aesthetics. Just as the song is heard but the organ player never seen, so the mythic space of Mexico is present in its absence. The paradoxical closeness (music) and distance (organ player) create the operating conditions for the stereotype as fetish in colonial discourse. Because the "fetish or stereotype gives access to an 'identity' which is predicated as much on mastery and pleasure as it is on anxiety and defence," a "conflict of pleasure/unpleasure, mastery/defence, knowledge/disavowal, absence/presence" (Bhabha 107), it is necessary that Treadwell's characters never actually encounter on stage a colonial subject. If they did,

the object of fixation (fetish) might register the lack inherent in their conceptualization of the Other and, therefore, rupture the colonial fantasy. In other words, the sexual liberation and subjectivity of Helen, her "purified" state (*Machinal* 51), depends upon her romanticization of Roe. His romantic qualities correlate with his embodiment of the archetypal Western frontiersman, and the archetypal Western frontiersman is contingent upon the mythological image of the Mexican frontier as created by the "looking/ hearing/reading as sites of subjectification in colonial discourse . . ." (Bhabha 109).

"Cielito Lindo" has further significance in this scene. Both Roe and Helen sing the lyrics to the song during their post-coital moment. In Helen's attempt to learn the lyrics, which she is also unable to pronounce, she ultimately integrates her understanding of "Cielito Lindo" with a traditional childhood song of the United States:

> Man. Go on—you got a fine voice.
>
> Woman. (laughs and sings). Hey, diddle, diddle, the cat and the fiddle, The cow jumped over the moon, The little dog laughed to see the sport, And the dish ran away with the spoon—
> *Both laugh*.
> I never thought that had any sense before—now I get it.
>
> Man. You got me beat.
>
> Woman. It's you and me—La-lalalalalala–lalalalalalala–Little Heaven. You're the dish and I'm the spoon. (47).

The present absence of the Hispanic singer who plays the hand organ affords Helen the opportunity to utilize the Hispanic music in order to create a song of her own. As Walker and others have observed, Helen's agency of articulation directly contrasts with the rote, clichéd dialogue that dictates communication with her husband. But such agency may also signal a colonial tradition of co-opting Mexican folk balladry. José Limón explains that after the Mexican-American War, and particularly between the 1870s and 1920s, Mexican folk balladry in the form of epic *corridos* were highly popular. *Corridos*—the poetic form of which arrived with the Spaniards—immortalized brave Mexican figures who resisted sociopolitical oppressors, Anglos included; nevertheless, not all *corridos* dealt exclusively with American colonialism (104-6). Moreover, Texan cowboys, once accustomed to hearing the *corridos*, developed a "kind of *gringo corrido*" in which they crooned heroic tales about victory over Mexicans (107). Moreover, the *gringo corrido*'s dis-

tinguishing characteristic was its sexualization of the Mexican female whose exotic otherness rendered her sexually desirable yet racially inferior.[8] To be sure, the "Cielito Lindo" song does not fit the poetic form of the *corrido*. Nevertheless, there is a striking similarity in Helen's furtive appropriation of the music and lyrics in order to commemorate the sexual victory she has just accomplished with a romantic (but racially pure) hero imbued with the exoticism of Mexico.

In the scene entitled "The Law," Mexico makes its final (non)appearance with the "big dark looking men" and the affidavit of Richard Roe (65). Walker suggests that Helen's failure on the stand originates in the "helpless victim" being simply another scripted societal role into which she does not fit (218). Wattenberg, on the other hand, maintains that this failure stems from Helen's mistaken assumption that she can experience the traditional frontier myth like her lover; as the frontier is a space that can only be navigated by men, she cannot realize her own narrative (344). However, it seems just as likely that Helen's fatal mistake during the trial was neither a failure to assimilate nor an attempt to circumvent gendered discourse but rather her failure to specifically racialize as Mexicans the dark figures who "killed" her husband.

The darkness of the figures, of course, invokes the Other, but the lack of specificity stalls the effect of Helen's narrative. The villainy and expendability of the *bandido* had already been firmly established in political, social, and cultural discourse of the United States, as exemplified in the play by Roe's friend's admiration for killing the "spigs" and Helen's eroticization of Roe for his feats against the *bandidos*. In addition, Helen's defense attorney vehemently protests the admittance of any document from Mexico: "Mexico? Your Honor, I protest. A Mexican affidavit! Is this the United States of America or isn't it?" (*Machinal* 73). Even the fact that an American Consul notarized the document does not placate the attorney: "Your Honor! I protest! In the name of this great United States of America—I protest—are we to permit our sacred institutions to be thus—" (*Machinal* 73). Mexico is not a location of legitimacy, law, or order. Though the legal proceedings are legitimate, Helen's defense lawyer still plays on the underlying colonial assumptions that nothing resembling law and order can come from Mexico—nothing stained by ruffian lawlessness should be permitted to desecrate the sacred institutions of the United States that have established the US as socially and racially superior. The failure to identify the dark figures as Mexicans prevents Helen from diverting cultural prejudice toward, perhaps, the only marginalized figure more threatening than the wayward woman.[9]

Whereas Mexico always appears offstage in *Machinal*, it takes center stage in *Gringo*. The primary American characters, the expatri-

ates Lenard, Myra, Chivers, and Stephen, all embody, to varying degrees, significations of American colonial discourse. Len, for example, represents the bourgeois intellectual and conscientious objector to American imperialism who wants to elevate the Mexican Indian Paco by teaching him to deny the influence of American materialism and to focus on intellectual ascension, which ultimately reads as an experiment to humanize him. Chivers, by contrast, blatantly espouses his devotion to capitalism by operating a gold mine while also displaying pity for the "racially inferior" Mexican Indians as well as a colonizing need to shepherd them. For instance, a conversation between Len and Chivers reveals their opposing yet similar views of Mexicans:

> Len. You don't like the way I talk to these people—well, I don't like the way you talk to them. They're not dogs! They're human beings!
>
> Chivers. Yeah—but they are natives, and you've got to talk to 'em that way. We know how to handle 'em, don't we Bessie? *Gives her an affectionate look*
>
> Len. Natives! Well what are we!
>
> Chivers. We're Americans! (*MS 318*, 1.9)

Chivers goes on to explain to Len that the natives cannot be treated like Americans because they are like children, in need of discipline and instruction.

In *Gringo,* Treadwell clearly critiques several aspects of American culture. Treadwell's experience with Pancho Villa and her admiration for his leadership appear as coequal with or superior to American society. For example, Len, the ideal egalitarian, betrays his *mozo* (devoted pupil) Paco for money, and Chivers exploits the peons of the mine as well as his Mexican mistress. Paco, who begins the play by declaring loyalty to the gringos and their ways, leaves for ethical reasons to join the bandit Tito. In turn, Tito, an obvious caricature of Pancho Villa, outwits the Americans at their own economic games. Each of these characters functions throughout the play to criticize the one-dimensional, and largely false, interpretation of Mexicans in the United States, in the vein, perhaps, of a similar social critique put forth a decade earlier by Jack London in his short story "The Mexican." Treadwell's female characters Concha, Besita, and Myra further highlight the social oppression of women under their White American guardians even on the other side of the border. All of these critiques deserve more investiga-

tive attention in order to augment the body of scholarship on Sophie Treadwell. However, for my purpose, I attend to Treadwell's unwitting use of Mexican stereotypes in colonial discourse even as she attempts to reinterpret the image of Mexico for the United States and call attention to the plight of women in the early twentieth century.

The character of Besita exemplifies colonial angst regarding mimicry and miscegenation (something Treadwell knew personally). Besita is the daughter of American father Chivers and a Mexican-Indian mother. The initial stage directions for act one exhibit Besita's combined racial and social features: "Her mother was a native woman. Besita is 16, a little girl with a dark skin much powdered, and beautiful black eyes. Her hair is elaborately dressed, a bow pinned on it. She wears a shirt waist turned in at the neck, a very short skirt, and fancy patent leather ties, with very high heels" (*MS 318*, 1.2). As she enters, there is already a conglomeration of signifiers in operation in that her attire is both American (very short skirt, high heels) and Mexican (an elaborate decorative hair pattern). Additionally, her dark skin is covered by powder, which serves as an apt visual metaphor of imbrication, of a racial identity that troubles her. Besita identifies with her father, who calls the gringos, Besita included, "quite a little group of Americans" (*MS 318*, 1.29). Throughout the play, her father promises to send her to America to go to school as soon as he strikes gold in the mine so that she can be with "American girls like you" (*MS 318*, 2.9). At various points, she reiterates her perceived racial identity exclaiming, "we're Americans!" (*MS 318,* 1.9). In one scene, Besita even restrains her native inclination to dance to Mexican music because the newcomer Steve, with whom she has fallen in love, will not think her a proper American lady. However, her restraint is not enough. Steve will not have her, and Besita's conflicting racial identities begin to surface. Realizing Steve has rejected her, she asks an indigenous Mexican woman (Chivers's mistress) to mix a traditional herbal love potion to put in Steve's coffee in a desperate attempt to magically secure him for herself. At the end of the play, though, it is Myra, Len's Anglo American wife, who falls in love with Steve and he with her. Realizing her defeat in the final act, Besita then proclaims her love for the bandit Tito, who has become her captor, and she leaves with him for a life of rogue banditry.

Besita epitomizes Bhabha's notion of hybridity; she appears as a cultural but not racial subject of the United States, which renders her as a threat. She is a product of a liminal space where she is "produced through the strategy of disavowal" in which "the *reference* of discrimination is always to a process of splitting as the condition of subjection: a discrimination between the mother culture and its bastards, the self and its doubles, where the trace of what is disavowed is not repressed

but repeated as something different—a mutation, a hybrid" (Bhabha 159). As a racial and cultural hybrid, Besita mimics prevailing colonial discourse by trying to become a "proper" American. Of course, she is not part of the ruling colonial entity: she is an American colonial subject. Furthermore, in mimicking Anglo culture Besita upsets the newest member of the gringo group who has just come from America: Steve. He serves as the dominant white hero who saves the lives of the play's gringos, makes deals with Tito, and wins the heart of Myra. As the undeniable representation of Anglo dominance, Steve is consequently offended by the sexualization of non-Anglo women, especially those of mixed-race:

> Steve: Nothing funny about it: I don't like native women, that's all!
>
> Chivers: Oh!
>
> Steve: Don't want to mix up with 'em—any of 'em!
>
> Chivers: Some of these girls have got a lot of white blood, you know. We aren't the first gringoes that have been here!
>
> Steve: Half breeds are worse than any! You never know where they're going to jump! (*MS 318*, 2.2)

In rejecting the sexually exotic Other, Steve is not the Anglo-Texan cowboy of the *gringo corridos*. Significantly, even if Steve is the true Anglo American hero, he is outnumbered—many of the ambivalent Anglo cowboys apparently do not adhere to his staunch cultural views, as there are plenty of girls in Mexico who "have got a lot of white blood." Half-breeds, of blood and culture, as Steve knows, in their hybridity register societal ambivalence, revealing the inauthenticity of natural colonial dominance.

Dominique Brégent-Heald also provides possible insight into Treadwell's treatment of Steve's aversion to Besita, and indeed, Besita's character in general. A prevailing negative image of interracial colonized subjects circulated through the border films of the early twentieth century: "The American cinema frequently coded half-breeds as 'more vicious and more dishonest' than full-blooded Indigenous peoples" (Bataille and Hicks qtd. in Brégent-Heald 92). A nuanced strategy for dealing with the half-breed in film was to establish the image of the endangered Indian as a decline of species and code them as "tragic figures" (Brégent-Heald 92-3). Even though many films, including

several from D.W. Griffith, were superficially sympathetic toward the injustice suffered by Indians, early films still portrayed the interracial subject as the bottom of the biological and social pyramid. If that did not work to reify the indigenous stereotype, a third and final solution to the problem was to depict an Indian woman as an "ill-fated" lover who is unable to be with the White man she desires and, as a result, usually commits suicide, implying the evils of miscegenation (105). Treadwell does not depict a case study of such cinematic images via Besita. However, parallels occur in Besita's thwarted love for Steve and her effective banishment (read death) from the gringo community specifically, and America in general. For certain, an experienced journalist like Treadwell would have been aware of the popular stereotypes of interracial Mexicans circulated in film and print, especially since her own father was of mixed European and Mexican parentage. Moreover, instead of challenging these common stereotypes, she reifies them through the aforementioned elements of Besita's character.

In spite of, or perhaps because of, his treatment of Besita, Steve's character is constitutive of the second Western film archetype discussed by Wexman: the Anglo-egalitarian. Battling against Tito to protect the group at the gringo estate from harm, Steve is ultimately injured, and Len, Myra, and Besita are taken captive. Along with old Chivers, Steve then gathers the gold necessary to pay the requested ransom to Tito in order to save his friends. After accepting the ransom and striking a gentleman's accord with Steve, Tito departs with Besita. Len, now free from peril, chides Steve for not trying to negotiate with the Mexican bandits for a lower price:

> Len. Yes! But you didn't even ask him if he'd take less! I bet if you'd only had sense enough to bring along only half with you—or two thirds—he'd been satisfied and—
>
> Steve. He'd been satisfied to leave you face down in the road, too! There's no way of dealing with these fellows when they are on their high horse, but to come through!
>
> Len. Well, if the United States government is— (*MS 318*, 3.18).

In this exchange, Steve exemplifies the American frontiersman who possesses "double identification with Anglo privilege and Indian ways" (Wexman 133), utilizing both his White intelligence and knowledge of Indian ways to strike deals, make peace, and secure protection. Moreover, he asserts his racial dominance in this scene not as before in his rejection of the half-breed Besita but through attaining

the affections of Len's wife Myra. Just as in *Machinal*, one sees here that the Western adventurer imbued with Mexican exoticness liberates the White female protagonist. Myra ultimately departs from her husband to follow Steve deep into the Mexican countryside, proclaiming, "I want reality!" (*MS 318*, 3.20). Ironically, it is the myth of romanticized Mexico that Myra claims as her reality. In this final scene, again, Treadwell primes the audience for a social critique of capitalist patriarchy via deploying the Mexican stereotype of bandit, romanticizing the myth of the Mexican frontier, and exploiting the common Anglo-egalitarian archetype of colonial discourse.

The body of scholarship surrounding Treadwell's early works demonstrates what Treadwell herself intimated in the introduction to *Machinal*—that she is primarily concerned with exposing the plight of the ordinary "any woman" (*Machinal* xi). As a journalist and artist, she set about to expose the injustices within a system that was said to be catapulting the US onto the international stage during the "roaring" twenties. And it has been my intention to both laud and problematize Treadwell's endeavors. As she revealed the plight of one marginalized social group, she unwittingly re-articulated colonial discourses concerning the image of Mexico and the Mexican in the United States. A decade of social unrest in Mexico with the Revolution and the advent of the American cinema intersected to create a connecting point for the dialectics of reading, writing, and seeing the stereotypical Mexican—bandit and degenerate, inferior and helpless—fulfilling roles of both villain and subaltern in American media. By participating in and with discourses surrounding the stereotypical Mexican and the mythical, romanticized Mexico, Treadwell effectively liberates her female protagonists even as she ambivalently inscribes, fetishizes, and disavows the colonial subject in a process of narrating and re-narrating the story of the Other. By utilizing Western adventurer archetypes in plays displaying racial and social superiority over Mexican and hybrid Indian groups while also eroticizing them, Treadwell perpetuates the signifiers that maintain imperialist stereotypes.

To be clear, my reading is not an indictment of Treadwell but instead a warning. If the current political climate in the United States teaches us anything, it is that we are little removed from inclinations to perpetuate essentializing discourses about Mexico in order to serve colonial interests and assert the myth of European racial and cultural superiority. And we may even perpetuate such discourses with the good intention of defending the marginalized. The election of the current president may tell us more, but certainly no less, than this. In realizing that media and political entities still preserve the same stereotypes, we must be cautious to learn from Treadwell's work. To expose and unravel

harmful colonial discourses is thorny work, and if we do not examine our discursive practices scrupulously, we may unwittingly distribute and reify the same discourses we seek to destabilize. In short, we must pay closer attention to those absently present characters "offstage" upon *whom* an agenda in the name of social justice may be constructed.

Notes

1. Here, Weiss suggests that the "mechanical world around her [Helen] functions like electrotherapy" (9). Helen is agitated and "shocked" through her interactions within the rote machine-world, but these shocks, paradoxically, provoke her to an encounter with Roe; thus, the "electricity" is simultaneously disastrous and therapeutic.

2. Hunter makes an excellent case for how American mythology of the frontier West invests Roe and, by extension, Helen, with the artificial exoticness of frontier freedom—a manufactured freedom imperially taken from the Indians. For Hunter, this is the "classic subject of American sublimity: the frisson of experiencing the unknown" (64). Roe's physical, sexual, and metaphysical "superiority" is all linked to his Western imperial drive.

3. Jerry Dickey's further treatment of Treadwell's relationship with Mexico is more complex. In his book *Sophie Treadwell: A Research and Production Sourcebook*, he observes that "even though Treadwell deals openly at times with American racist attitudes toward Mexicans, most Mexicans in the play [*Gringo*] act in stereotypical ways, such as lying, stealing, and using pretense of civility to mask barbarous intentions" (38).

4. Alonzo uses William Randolph Hearst and the *San Francisco Examiner* as a case study, though he mentions *The Chicago Tribune* and *The Los Angeles Times* as being against revolution in Mexico as well. Hearst is a key figure in perpetuating degrading colonial stereotypes about Mexicans because of his influence with newspapers as well as his ownership in film production. Alonzo also notes that the Mexican Revolution threatened Hearst's own property and investments south of the border (48-49).

5. Though it is almost unnecessary to mention it, similarities between early twentieth century films' treatment of Mexico and Donald Trump's presidential campaign promises to build a border wall to stem the flow of Mexican immigrants are striking. In a *Time Magazine* article that tallied and recorded Trump's campaign remarks on Twitter concerning Mexico, Trump asserted that the majority of violent crime in American cities stemmed from "blacks and hispanics," [*sic*] (par. 4); called them America's "enemies" (par. 5); tagged them as "criminals" (par. 6); and labeled Mexicans as "terrorists" (par. 8). All

such labels, of course, are necessary in order to falsely render the colonial and racial stereotype as "fixed."

6. As Rey Chow observes in his study of the connection between film and primitivism in Chinese cinema, mythological origin stories arise in response to democratized media and information outlets because the sign of a traditional culture can no longer be tightly controlled. In response, "fantasies" are "played out through a generic realm of associations, typically having to do with the animal, the savage, the countryside, the indigenous, the people, and so forth, which stand in for the 'original' something that has been lost" (22). This, in a sense, affirms Bhabha's explication of stereotypes, ambivalence, and mimicry in that an anxiety produced by destabilized methods of signification results in aggressive (conscious or unconscious) action by traditional culture in order to shore up the fixity of colonial signs.

7. Many scholars have pointed out the use of props, lighting, and audio effects to enhance the machine-like world and existential crisis it produced in women.

8. Limón puts forth an interesting study of Mexican and Anglo-Texan folk balladry drawing on previous scholarship by Américo Paredes, and he also employs Bhabha's notion of ambivalence in colonial stereotype to expound upon the Anglo-Texan's *gringo corrido*. In the Anglo *corrido*, the cowboy, the degenerate Mexican, the virtuous Anglo woman at home (the cowboy's spouse), and the exotic Mexican female all play key roles. For Limón, three of these figures mark out an ambivalence that counters the cultural order: "the American cowboy, the Mexican female figure of forbidden sexuality, and the 'prim and proper' figure of the Anglo woman represents a scenario of ambivalence played out in partial and unconscious challenge to the ruling class" (111). Essentially, the cowboy of the ballads is the representative colonizer, expanding Anglo influence in the peripheral borderlands, and, in the end, he must leave the *señorita* and return to his Susie at home. But his desire for the Mexican female signifies a strain, or break, with colonizing ideology (represented in the Anglo woman at home). Thus, Limón contends, the *gringo corrido* renders the Anglo cowboy not as the unswervingly dominant hero but a conflicted, ambivalent character unconsciously anxious about his position as cultural authority and sovereign (113).

9. It should be noted also that Roe's cowardice and betrayal remove him from the position of the archetypal frontiersman; at the end of episode eight, it is essentially inconsequential. The Mexican stereotype has served its purpose. Moreover, the audience no longer has to see Roe. He is safe in the mythological borderland where his degeneration into primitive behavior can be imputed to his company.

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Let Us Dance under the Blood-Drenched Flag: AIPWA, Mass Politics, and the Aesthetics of Anti-Imperialism

John Maerhofer

This article analyzes the cultural politics of the All-India Progressive Writers' Association (AIPWA), a pan-Indian cultural movement launched in 1936 in response to both emergent anticolonial nationalism in India and the internationalist current of putting art and literature in the service of revolutionary politics. In the first part, I will trace an intellectual and political history of AIPWA, paying close attention to the formation of anti-imperialist aesthetics within the ranks of the movement and the broader implications of mass politics and class struggle both in the context of India and internationally in the interwar period. AIPWA not only concretizes the emancipatory potential of anti-imperialism unleashed in the wake of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, but it also anticipates some of the concerns of Third World revolutionaries of the "Bandung Era,"[1] leading up to but especially after World War II. I will then turn to the work of the author and Indian Marxist Mulk Raj Anand, one of the founders of AIPWA, using his 1936 novel *Coolie* to exemplify AIPWA's exigency that literature bring attention to issues of inequality, class/caste politics, and social justice, and that it galvanizes the political consciousness of the masses. While there has been considerable scholarship dedicated to the function of political art in Europe and the US, especially during the 1930s, little attention has been given to the fact that such debates were taking shape within decolonizing movements across the world, and particularly in India as the nationalist movement unfolded. In my concluding remarks, I will situate *Coolie* in the context of capitalist globalization (using India as case study) to grasp the continuing impact of anti-imperialist discourse as an intervening force in the ongoing debate about the function of committed art both historically and in the present moment.

To clarify the theoretical position in this essay, my analysis of AIPWA seeks to create a dialogue between questions of aesthetic form and anti-imperialist historicity to broaden the horizon of anticolonial modernity delimited by institutionalized postcolonial thought. Writing in opposition to "poco theory" proponents seeking to rescue decolonized subjectivity from the so-called clutches of pervasive Eurocentrism and

to reconstruct the identities of unrepresented communities affected by the colonialist legacy, this article rethinks the material legacies of anti-imperialist thought and revolutionary history against which postcolonialism has sought refuge as anti-totalizing textual and cultural critique. As Arif Dirlik argues, "to the extent that the postcolonial succeeds in this erasure of alternative histories, it does so by substituting textuality for history, and privileging certain kinds of texts over others," by which texts Dirlik means those that subscribe to Marxism within the tradition of Third World revolutionary thought (165-66). Building upon the seminal work of writers such as Aijaz Ahmed, Timothy Brennan, Crystal Bartolovich, Neil Larsen, Benita Parry, and E. San Juan, Jr.,[2] I argue that the postcolonial fixation on counter-modernity and the interstitial categories of subalternity and hybridity in some theories of the "postcolonial condition" obfuscate the intellectual and political lineages of anti-imperialist aesthetics and politics and their ties to revolutionary trends and movements, such as the ones under consideration here. The consecrated work of Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, and Dipesh Chakrabarty (among others) has focused on producing a theoretical break with Eurocentric modernity to create space for questions of identity, diaspora, and hybrid politics that oppose colonial misrepresentation. But this emphasis has had the effect of marginalizing materialist inquiries into the historically internationalist affiliations of writers, critics, artists, activists, and revolutionaries by privileging identitarian political platforming and post-foundational strategies of resistance. I argue that the literary works in question here cannot be understood without contextualizing them in the politics of anti-imperialism. That is, contrary to the postcolonial preoccupation with anti-Western sentimentality and de-historicized identitarian oppositionality, I argue these works intended to foster international solidarity with revolutionaries around the world who were focused on building radical politics across borders in the fightback against the rise of global fascism, residual imperialist policies, and systemic racism.

Reconsidering the implications of what Vasant Kaiwar calls the "political quietism" of institutionalized postcolonial theory, my analysis considers the implications of transnational unity working within the political interiors of the nationalist liberation movement in the interwar period in India as part of the historic struggle against imperialism, which proliferated after 1945 (153). Accordingly, I hope to revitalize such materialist orientations and reconnect them to an internationalist history of anti-imperialism, while also reaffirming the legacies of class-based struggle to which artists, writers, and intellectuals dedicated themselves during this period, using AIPWA as a symbol for such working solidarity. Furthermore, my focus on anti-imperialist histo-

ricity stems from what I see as a missing link in the scholarship on the question of internationalism intrinsic to the concerns of writers like Mulk Raj Anand, whose Marxist political outlook clashed with the emergent nationalism and Hindu-centrism of the Quit India movement. While the work of eminent scholars such as Priyamvada Gopal, Hafeez Malik, Aijaz Ahmed, Shabana Mahmud, and Sonia Perera have focused attention on the internationalist dimensions of AIPWA and many of the writers associated with the movement in the wake of India's Partition, their work sidesteps the broader implications of internationalism and its relationship to anti-imperialist discourse, as I will discuss in what follows.

AIPWA and Anti-Imperialism in Interwar Asia

I will start with a brief history of AIPWA, which was inaugurated in April 1936 in Lucknow, a city considered the substratum of anticolonial radicalism in India. Established with the intention of broadening the political scope of many pre-existing intellectual movements, AIPWA intended "to arouse a critical spirit" among the masses, while for some it also meant forging an international front against emergent fascist aggression taking place in Europe and Japan. Responding to the increasingly interlocking tensions of the anticolonial movement and the thrust of "Third Period radicalism" of the mid-1930s—in which writers across the world responded to the call to use literature as a vehicle for anti-fascist political agitation—AIPWA engaged with the immediacy of collective local struggles to produce a body of literature reflecting the social conditions in India, directed to the masses as part of the ultimate objective: to deepen the cause of anti-imperialism and Indian independence. These principles are stated in a 1936 manifesto:

> While claiming to be the inheritors of the best traditions of Indian civilization, we shall criticise, in all its aspects, the spirit of reaction in our country, and we shall foster—through interpretative and creative work (with both Indian and foreign resources) everything that will lead our country to the new life for which it is striving. We believe that the new literature of India must deal with the basic problems of our existence today—problems of hunger and poverty, social backwardness, and political subjection. All that drags us down to passivity, inaction, and unreason we reject as reactionary. All that arouses in the critical spirit . . . which helps us to act, to organize ourselves, to transform, we accept as progressive. (Mahmud 454)

Reinforcing the idea that the native writer has a "duty" to give expression to forms of political and social struggle within India, the organization set the principles in motion for building a cultural movement that utilized art as a weapon against the forces of oppression. As Pakistani writer and cofounder of AIPWA Ahmed Ali notes, the primary outlook of the organization "was largely political and stamped with a certain ideology," which for Ali means that aesthetic principles in the movement were born out of political concerns from a broadly conceived anti-imperialist perspective (Coppola 43). For Priyamvada Gopal as well, "Political forces that were organising around issues ranging from gender, caste and religion to labour, language and region—took place on the ground of nation, but they were inflected by phenomena of global dimensions: the struggle against imperialism in Asia and Africa, and the rise of fascism and resistance to it in Europe" (150).

Indeed, what underlies the significance of AIPWA is the confluence of aesthetic and political concerns as a way of exposing the conditions of caste inequality, systemic sexism within and imposed upon Indian society by colonialist ideology, and the plight of the super-exploited masses under the control of the British Raj. That the movement also galvanized writers from language traditions on the historic fringes of Indian society, such as those from Malayalam, Punjabi, and Telugu, among others, also reflects the need to channel literary phenomena into the experience of collective struggle, a component symbolic of an emergent anti-imperialist aesthetic coupled with political strategizing beyond nationalist and ethnic borders. As Priyamvada Gopal contends, "In their engagement with issues ranging from intercommunity romance and female sexuality to masculinity, morality and class mobility, each of these writers was concerned with the nation as an imaginative possibility and as a ground on which to stake a claim," one that sought to rethink the possibilities of the "emergent" postcolonial state, which was its terrain of struggle (150).

One of the many sparks that set AIPWA in motion was the publication of an anthology of ten short stories entitled *Angarey*, which is now considered a landmark in modern Urdu literature. Published in 1932, the authors showcased in the anthology drew much of their inspiration from European authors such as James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, and proletarian writers in Europe and the US, breaking with form and content of traditional modes of Urdu literature. Commenting on the significance of *Angarey*, the Pakistani author and critic Aziz Ahmed argues the collection "was a declaration of war . . . against the prevailing social, political, and religious institutions" that conformed to enforced cultural imperialism (Mahmud 447). Shabana Mahmud also argues that ". . . the courage, anger, and rebelliousness

that was expressed in the stories of *Angerey* ushered in a new generation that was not afraid to confront and expose issues which had previously been concealed" (453). Critics condemned *Angarey* for its harsh opposition to colonial authority, leading to the confiscation and banning of the collection by British authorities, while also compelling many other writers to align themselves with the emergent movement and consolidate their respective forces in the wake of the controversy. Resonating with the rebellious sentiment sparked by *Angarey* and its critical intervention in social and political reality, AIPWA's manifesto also states that "It is the object of our association to rescue literature . . . from the priestly, academic and decadent classes in whose hands they have degenerated so long; to bring the arts into the closest touch with the people; and to make them a vital organ which will register the actualities of life" (Coppola 10). Accordingly, while Urdu-based writers were the most represented in the first phase of the movement, a central tenet of AIPWA's program was "to establish organizations of writers in the various linguistic zones of India" to provide an inclusive space for the intellectuals who reflected the cultural diversity of voices across the Subcontinent, those collectively mobilized under the banner of internationalist anti-imperialism (Coppola 10).

Overall, whereas AIPWA was successful in rousing the leftist intellectual community across India both during the decolonizing struggle and in the wake of independence, the movement also exposed some of the political controversies of the era, such as the Urdu-Hindi debate, the issues of political agency and caste/class representation, and the question of nationalist identity, which became paramount in the wake of Partition in 1947. Far from being a utopia that equally represented India's divergent identities, the movement instead intended to encourage writers to engage in cultural production to draw attention to the political and social realities of the day, both in the local and global sense. As it became more and more subsumed by the driving force of anticolonial nationalism and the non-violent principles of Gandhi's Quit India organization, AIPWA split into camps based on political and linguistic affiliation in the wake of Partition. The tensions among the representative ethnic divisions also started to be articulated through the lens of state politics, often sparking intense debates over the focus of the anti-imperialist struggle and its ultimate implications for postcolonial India.

Let us look briefly at two aspects of these debates. First, Hindi writers within the movement, who mostly allied themselves with the nationalist struggle against the British, often clashed with the leftist wing of the organization, which sought to utilize AIPWA to raise awareness about global issues, a position advocated by Sajjad Zaheer and Mulk Raj

Anand, two of the foremost Marxist intellectuals in India and AIPWA's cofounders. As students and advocates of Marxism, they understood that an anti-imperialist movement must focus attention on animating political consciousness across the spectrum of class/caste relations, which meant also linking nationalist liberation to the internationalist current in an inclusive cultural front. Both Zaheer and Anand attended the International Congress for the Defense of Culture, an anti-fascist organization that met in Paris in 1935, where they established contact with many communist writers such as Michael Gold and Louis Aragon (Coppola 27-29), and it was there that Zaheer and Anand were inspired to organize a group that reflected both local and global concerns from an anti-imperialist perspective. As Zaheer later observed in his writing on the birth of the movement and the inspiration he and Anand got in France, "At the conference were writers of different beliefs and persuasions. On one issue, however, we were all united. All believed that writers should with every means in their power defend the right of freedom of thought and opinion" against the onslaught of both fascism and imperialism (Coppola 20). Anand's commitment to anti-fascism also brought him to Spain in 1937 where he met George Orwell and other writers fighting with the international brigades during the civil war (Dasgupta 2016). Although most of his time was spent chronicling the civil war, it was in Spain that Anand's commitment to Marxist internationalism deepened.

Charting a course that maneuvered between the acknowledgement of international concerns and the immediate issues of forging resistance against British colonialism distinguishes the initial stages of AIPWA's mission, one that would gain complexity as the nationalist movement intensified in the mid-1940s. This feature of the movement reflects a prime concern in the history of anti-imperialist aesthetics and politics in the interwar period across Asia and South Asia, extending worldwide. In this sense, contrary to Priyamvada Gopal's assertion that the organization was "inflected" by global struggles against empire, internationalism was the driving foundational constituent of AIPWA, not a contingent force that was then applied to the localized political and aesthetic forms of organizational struggle against British imperialism and its effects (150).

Second, I want to reconsider how political disagreements also become rooted in aesthetic concerns, particularly in relation to the question of the socialist realist form, which was a central means of reaching mass readership and part of the global debate over the requirements of literary production and the authenticity of working-class expression in "Third Period literary radicalism" (Foley 162-163). That is, much like the debates over the character of committed litera-

ture taking place in Europe and the US, among other locals, the internationalist branch of AIPWA argued that socialist realism could best awaken political consciousness on a mass scale. *Angarey*, with its focus on predominant social inequalities and the mores of institutialized colonialism, was itself the first attempt to rethink the scope of cultural production via social realism, ultimately geared towards mass mobilization (Mahmud 447). This debate over political art would compel some like Ali Ahmed to exit AIPWA altogether; in his reflections on the organization's significance, Ahmed states that his "creative ambitions" conflicted with the increasing pressure within the movement to adhere to "party-line aesthetic decrees" (Coppola 50). While it is true that some like Mulk Raj Anand were aligned with the Communist Party of India (CPI), founded in 1925, this affiliation did not represent the totality of views regarding the role of authors within AIPWA's organizational structure.

Ahmed's sentiments substantiate my claim that much of the debate here centers on whether literature should bear the burden of revolutionary consciousness while avoiding some of the overt didacticism associated with simplistic reflections of social reality. As Barbara Foley argues (in the American context), the "preoccupation with authenticity" and "anti-intellectualism" that characterized the attacks on literature had ideological roots, part of what she sees as an emergent anti-communism that flourished in the 1940s (140). Similarly, I argue that the disputes over the function of literary production and its intent also materialized as the push towards aligning with the nationalist movement intensified during the 1940s, particularly as the nationalist concerns conflicted with the leftist elements within AIPWA that drifted towards identifying with class issues and the plight of the Indian peasantry, symbolized by the 1946 Telangana Rebellion. These ideological roots enable an understanding of the drift of the movement into the 1940s, and they provide context for anti-imperialist thinkers who sought to contextualize the dialectic of art and politics within their respective locals while creating a bridge towards internationalism.[3]

Contrary to the notion that such disputes hindered the movement's objectives, I propose that AIPWA manifested the notion that the writer can no longer remain neutral in the milieu of the developing nation, and furthermore, that cultural production be enmeshed in the anticipation of recreating a "new" social identity for the marginalized and dispossessed masses in the wake of the anti-imperialist struggle. Akin to the seminal work of ant-imperialist writers like Ousmane Sembene, Chinua Achebe, Aimé Césaire, among a host of others in the interwar period, works like *Coolie* and many others not only contributed to the undoing of colonialist hegemony, they also form the bedrock of

what would become the "Third World Project," a radical experiment that galvanized the generation of postcolonial intellectuals into the 1960s, and was instrumental in the fightback against imperialism. E. San Juan, Jr., who argues that the development of Third World cultural praxis is born out of the recognition of its inextricable connection to the concrete situation of imperialist historicity, notes ". . . for the TW peoples confronted daily with degrading poverty, hunger, disease, racist bigotry, and genocidal weapons, art spells life or death" (*From the Masses, to the Masses* 86).

Thus, the centrality of art as social praxis constitutes the ideological basis upon which AIPWA simultaneously crystalized a revolutionary politics that unmasked the material conditions of imperialism while seeking to raise the consciousness of the masses to the level of committed and collective class struggle. It is through such a critical lens that I also concur with Aijaz Ahmed when he writes alternatively that AIPWA represents "a point of . . . confluence, so to speak, between socialist imagination, the progressive arts as they were evolving across the globe, the anticolonial movement that was its immediate political context, [and] the various reform movements that had preceded and lived alongside even the anticolonial movement as such." Citing what he calls "the permeation of the political in the aesthetic," Ahmed also argues that AIPWA's objectives coincided with the internationalism of the cultural fronts burgeoning across Europe and elsewhere, many of which formed under the tutelage of the Comintern in the interwar era (27-29). Thus, anticipating the question of integration and conscious alignment that would become paramount, particularly in the writings on committed art by figures such as Amilcar Cabral, Mao Tse-tung, and Franz Fanon, AIPWA's cultural intervention demonstrates how an organization fuses the concerns of decolonization and the determinations of united front politics. While not a direct influence on AIPWA—but written as part of the anti-imperialist *putsch* against Japan in the 1930s—a similar concern of how art and politics is fused in the struggle against imperialism is seen in Mao's "Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art." As Mao writes, "The revolutionary struggle on the ideological and artistic fronts must be subordinate to the political struggle because only through politics can the needs of the class and the masses find expression in concentrated form," a view meant to draw attention to the dialectic of art and revolution upon which an organization like AIPWA initiated the idea of building the confidence of the masses by integrating literary expression in the struggle for self-determination (Mao).

Similarly, utilizing the dialectical method in his masterwork "National Liberation and Culture," Amilcar Cabral reflects such con-

cerns when he writes, "The foundation for national liberation rests in the inalienable right of every people to have their own history. . . . For this reason, those who lead the movement must have a clear idea of the value of culture in the framework of the struggle and must have knowledge of the people's culture, whatever may be their level of economic development" (Cabral). As a means of restoring the historical significance of a people in revolt against imperialism, Cabral views the culture as "The seed of opposition, which leads to the structuring and development of the liberation movement." The notion that culture is the "seed of opposition" is intrinsic to the ideological line AIPWA advocates in its founding manifesto and which, again, can be understood as a decisive prelude to global decolonization in the post-WWII era (Cabral). For this reason, Anand's *Coolie* signals a radical departure from the standardized idea that writers within AIPWA were merely "inflected" by the internationalist current of mass politics taking shape particularly in Asia; rather, at the core of Anand's work lies the idea that class inequality upholds imperialism itself and needs to be reconciled as a constituent part of the anticolonial liberation project, a concern that troubled many aligned with what would become an ethnic-based nationalism of the Quit India movement. I turn now toward analyzing these issues as addressed in *Coolie*.

Mulk Raj Anand's *Coolie* and Class Struggle in South Asia

With the broader framework of AIPWA in mind, I analyze Mulk Raj Anand's 1936 novel *Coolie*, a work that demonstrates most importantly Anand's commitment to exposing the plight of the working class and to fostering political consciousness in the anti-imperialist struggle against the British Raj. For Anand, this commitment originated in his dedication to proletarian internationalism. Written largely as a counter-narrative to Kipling's *Kim*, the imperialist coming-of-age fantasy that buttressed the cultural modalities of British rule in India, *Coolie* follows the story of a teenage boy named Munoo who leaves his rural home in search of work, eventually ending up in Bombay where he sells his labor to whomever he can; Munoo thereby symbolizes millions of impoverished Indians subjected to labor precarity and super-exploitation under British colonialism. Structurally, Anand's work draws its power from the humanistic representation of exploited working-class figures who are rendered invisible in the era of British India. In his powerful first novel *Untouchable,* Anand addresses the controversy of caste inequality. In *Coolie,* Anand turns his insights towards the

struggle of the colonized working class, yet with the same penetrating critique of structural inequality, underdevelopment, and labor exploitation upon which the colonial system depended for its continuity. As Munoo wanders from job to job as a servant, a mine and factory worker, and then as a rickshaw driver for a ruling-class Anglo-Indian family, his unjust treatment at the hands of exploiters—mostly local bosses working under the colonial system—represents the plight of millions converted into indistinct cogs within the machine of imperialism.

Anand's aesthetic commitment to writing about vulnerable populations of Indian society was influenced by his own working-class origins and by his experiences abroad, mostly while living in England. In Great Britain, he witnessed the general strike of 1929 and started to recognize the necessity of class solidarity not only against emergent fascism, but also against capitalism as a system necessitating imperialism. His consistent reading of Marxist writers, along with the many contacts he made with writers on the Left in Europe, marks a crucial starting point for understanding the underlying form of *Coolie*. In this work, Anand uses emergent class consciousness as a foundation of the book's structure. And yet, in contrast to the typical character development of the proletarian *bildungsroman*—in which the protagonist ultimately materializes political awareness in the wake of struggle—Munoo's exploitation in the wasteland of industrial capital in India does not awaken his class consciousness. Rather, despite the exploiters' harsh treatment, Munoo fails to evolve into a revolutionary figure willing to fight against systemic inequality. As Anand is clearly pointing out, Munoo's ultimate tragedy is his inability to recognize his political potential as part of the local (and by extension international) working class movement. Instead, Munoo's only real ambition is to become a more efficient "coolie," a better worker for his bosses, stemming in part from his need to survive in the unforgiving landscape of class inequality fueled by the system of capitalist exploitation. Munoo's apathy disillusions readers expecting him to gain awareness and join the struggle unfolding all around him.

Contrary to the notion that he intentionally evades the prototypical epiphany of the working-class novel, which many anti-Marxists see as a dogmatic necessity of the proletarian aesthetic design, Anand instead reveals how imperialist domination obfuscates the complex relation between emergent class-consciousness and the reproduction of capitalist social relations. In other terms, Anand enables us to see how social relations under capitalist imperialism both foster and hinder political consciousness, what Tithi Bhattacharya in another context calls "the relationality of struggle," or how cultural and economic organizational demands interrelate. As Bhattacharya writes, "Capitalism does not just

produce commodities, but in order to do so in continuous sequence, it also needs to reproduce capitalist social relations. But every site of reproduction is a doubling where twin possibilities exist: that of reproduction of existing relations and the interruption of such relations" (Bhattacharya). While "new" forms of social resistance may culminate in political reconfigurations that can deepen impetus for revolutionary change, capitalism effectively confounds the possibilities of organized resistance, which is where we find Munoo at the end of the work. This is an aspect of Anand's work overlooked by scholars who focus mainly on Munoo's strange detachment from the world around him. I would argue that such a critical mis-reading stems from the postcolonial proclivity for seeking out identitarian formations while distracting us from the political implications that Anand seeks to deliver with clarity and precision. At the same time, as Sonali Perera points out, this tendency may explain why Anand's novel has not been fully recognized as part of the dynamic of proletarian writing in terms of time and space, an oversight Perera attempts to remedy in her work on the contemporary form of the South Asian proletarian novel (33).

Additionally, Munoo's inability to develop critical consciousness portrays the lack of solidarity within the working class under British colonialism. Anand demonstrates this disunity at the end of the novel with a strike by workers divided according to nationalist, religious, and ethnic lines. Showing how the British maintained hegemonic rule by using divide-and-conquer tactics, this narrative shift speaks to obscured processes of alienation and fragmentation to which both Munoo in particular and society in general are subjected in the complex dynamics of capitalist imperialism. Anand's subtle but powerful implementation of proletarian realism, while devoid of the epiphanic moment of "revolutionary transcendence" that we find in many works of political fiction, is meant to demonstrate the multifaceted relations by which revolutionary consciousness evolves in the context of struggle.

Zooming out to the novel's political context, I argue that *Coolie* relates closely to the AIPWA's use of socialist realist form and to the broader question of anti-imperialist aesthetics. While clearly Anand's sympathies lie with working-class struggles to build collective politics, Munoo's inability to cultivate political consciousness suggests Anand's lack of confidence in the potentiality of the masses: a justifiable conclusion. On the contrary, Anand shows cognizance of two simultaneous elements: 1) Anand strongly believed that the socialist literary form is more effective in representing the evolving context of anti-imperialist organization than in masking ideology with under-developed storytelling and dynamic characters; 2) *Coolie* is grounded in working-

class experience, showing that confidence in the revolution cannot be achieved and realized through political sloganeering alone. In fact, revolution results from what Mao would later call political *integration* among the masses, a process consistent with anti-imperialist strategies entailing two-way knowledge exchange that can in turn heighten class consciousness among working-class formations (i.e., between rural and industrial proletariat).

Moreover, I would like to draw attention to Anand's subtle but valuable critique of Gandhi's Quit India movement and the nationalist outlook that began to dominate the organization. The power of *Coolie* lies in its representation of the immense inequality between the haves and the have-nots, symbolizing the class struggle itself. As Munoo's uncle says early in the novel, "No, caste does not matter . . . There must be two kinds of people in the world, the rich and the poor," a statement that reflects the Marxist orientation of Anand's work, as well as his reading of Indian society generally (55). Furthermore, the novel's anticlimax describes how factory bosses avert strikes by spreading lies that divide workers along religio-nationalist lines. Here, Anand overtly draws attention to one of the central mechanisms by which capital can splinter class solidarity: using nationalism and identity-based politics. In other words, Anand argues the anti-imperialist struggle can only happen if class solidarity has been developed to a level that can consolidate worker-power across nationalist and religious affiliation; only such solidarity can crystalize politics on a mass scale. And while the nationalist movement did play the dominant role in ending British rule, it came with a tremendous price in the wake of Partition, an outcome I will elucidate below by examining anti-imperialism as well as the legacy of Anand and AIPWA in contemporary India.

Coolie, Postcoloniality, and Anti-Imperialism Today

Thus far, I have foregrounded AIPWA's anti-imperialist internationalism, using *Coolie* to further exemplify how aesthetics is used in the service of building mass politics. In what follows I would like to situate my argument in the context of what some term "institutionalized postcolonialism," which disavows materialist investigations of anti-imperialist history by favoring "textualist" mediations on subaltern interstitiality and "hybridized" political platforming. For Neil Larsen, the structural coordinates of postcolonial orthodoxy have undermined the radical potentiality of anti-imperialist internationalism by replacing class-based antagonisms with the search for regionalized cultural difference. The intention here is to nullify the assumed hegemony of

Marxist-driven ideology in the search for "postcolonial" alternatives to Eurocentric conceptions of universality. Here, Larsen draws a parallel between the demise of the Third World project and the rise of "the postcolonial" as a political stratagem, one that remains confined by its institutional utilitarianism:

> The retreat from historical standards of thought and critique implicit in such 'textualist' strategies responds, defensively or not, to a historical crisis of third worldist nationalism that has left even the most historicizing oppositionalities in a condition of strategical uncertainty. The under- or antihistoricism of postcolonial theory is, ironically, true, up to a point, to its own historical subtext. And while it is wrong to conclude from the phenomenological shrinkage of national-historical space that existing nations themselves are no longer sites of emancipatory possibility (tell that to the Zapatistas, or to striking telephone workers in Puerto Rico), there is also a strong historical case to be made for the progressive reconfiguring of 'historical spatiality' along postnational, more transparently global axes. The so-called 'third worldization' of the metropolitan centers of global capital resulting from massive labor migrations and the intensifying immiseration of 'native' working populations—a trend no one disputes—carries with it profound, if still undertheorized strategical implications. (48)

Larsen draws attention to two crucial points: first, that postcolonialism has obscured the materialist origins of anticolonial nationalism, marking "the postcolonial" as site of emancipation from the ubiquity of *imperializing* "western" discourse. Second, such identitarian strategizing reproduces its own "unreality," which can only gain traction within its own politics of textual subversion, whether via the liminality of Homi Bhabha's "third space enunciation" or in the taciturnity, fragmentation, and unrepresentability of Spivak's subaltern subject.[4] Similarly, as E. San Juan, Jr. writes, "Postcolonial paradigms of hybridity . . . are unable to offer frames of intelligibility that can analyze and critique the internal contradictions embedded in the neoliberal reality and manipulated operations of the 'free market,'" a process that coincidentally valorizes the flexible accumulation model of globalized capitalism and thus precludes political praxis forged in the context of universal liberation. San Juan, Jr. goes on to argue, "Disavowing modernity and the principle of collective human agency, postcolonialism submits to the neoliberal cosmos of fragmentation, individualist warfare, free-playing monads, and the regime of indeterminacy and contingency" (*Beyond*

Postcolonial Theory 5). While the totality of his rejection of institutionalized postcolonialism is evident, San Juan Jr. intends that his radicalizing outlook draw attention to the reified formations on which much of institutionalized postcolonial theory rests, a view that appears to run counter to Robert Young's claim that the resonance of postcolonial politics, what he terms "postcolonial remains," is constantly unsettling because it forces us to reconsider questions of inequality, exploitation, dispossession, and systemic oppression, especially in the current era of global crisis, while also marking a noticeable break with Marxist political orientations (19).

Nowhere perhaps are such implications about India and postcoloniality more evident than in the work of Partha Chatterjee, most notably in his *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*, in which he argues that the anticolonial-nationalist movement in India (along with the bulk of its supporters) gave birth to a certain subaltern "Indianness" that defied the imposition of Western subjectivity upon the colonial other, a critique via postcolonialism proper that seeks to save anticolonial history from a modernity that drips with Eurocentric bias. An obsession with "peripheral" modernities can be utilized to counter the universality of Eurocentric models of resistance, a move central to institutionalized postcolonial thought. An author like Homi Bhabha sees this move as the "liminality of the nation-space" existing always-outside the pre-dominance of colonialist agential positioning. On the contrary, I submit that re-writing political agency through the lens of essentialized identity and cultural difference simply sidesteps the revolutionary antecedents of anticolonial modernity and the implications of anti-imperialist historicity on the present. Such privileging of the indeterminate and "ontological" position of postcolonial subjectivity, according to Tim Brennan, renders a portrait of anticolonial engagement as something to be celebrated as long as it lingers as a "desperate plentitude" existing in a vacuum of anti-Western self-aggrandizement (17). Writing against the poststructuralist appropriation of subalternity from which postcolonial criticism sustains its institutional grit, Neil Lazarus also reminds us that anti-imperialist writing is not "merely" the reflection of a "nationalist consciousness" but opens itself up to what he calls "transcultural solidaristic affiliation," the ultimate outcome of anticolonial modernity (65).

To what extent, then, does AIPWA and the specificities of Anand's work enable us to shed what Fredric Jameson calls the "reified spectacles" (175) of our collective present beyond the textual dynamics of institutionalized postcolonialism? Arguing against the emphasis on counter-modernities and interstitial identities that contradict the ubiquity of Eurocentric plentitude, my analysis here intends to evalu-

ate the radical political praxis of Anand's work in the present context of capitalist globalization and India's postcolonial present. In particular, *Coolie* pushes us beyond the postcolonial fixation on the *primacy of discourse* and the interstitiality of postcolonial phenomenology, which obfuscates a material explanation of intensified divisions of labor upon which capitalist globalization thrives. Instead, Anand's insistence that artistic expression be put in the service of revolution stems from his intimate understanding of state power and the variegated levels of struggle within the horizons of proletarianization, compelling us to rethink the limits of political organization and strategy that rely upon reified subalternity and the indeterminacy of "third space" enunciation, positions that continue to be held up by practitioners of postcolonial orthodoxy as radical politics *par excellence*. Here I agree with Timothy Brennan when he writes, "subalternity . . . becomes not an inequality to be expunged but a form of ontological resistance that must be preserved—but only in that form: in a perpetually splintered, ineffective, heroic, invisible, desperate plentitude" (17). The history of the counter-revolutionary backlash in the "post-turn" period reveals that such positioning conveniently avoids questions related to imperialist doctrine and systemic racism, resulting in appropriative and imaginary forms of revolutionary antagonism, what Vasant Kaiwar rightly labels the "strategy of containment" of postcolonial politics (62). To the extent that the postcolonial turn has in fact silenced subalternity, redirecting attention from the assumed Eurocentrism of Marxist "grand narratives" and the historical centrality of class struggle towards questioning the textual contours of agency as an ideological construct, Nivedita Majumdar writes,

> What this amounts to saying is that postcolonial theory should not be described as a theory that systematically dismantles master narratives. Instead, it should be taken as functioning with its own preferred narrative—a distinct unease with class and organized politics, whether as an analytical category or as a form of political engagement. This anxiety with class also sits well with the general intellectual climate in which postcolonial theory has developed and flourished.

In other terms, the postcolonial theoretical tendency is to undermine the potentiality of class struggle and militant organizational strategizing, allowing us to recognize the extent to which counter-revolutionary mechanisms have become endemic in "radical" thought in the post-1968 era of institutionalized theory.

Considering the critique of antihistoricism of "the postcolonial" outlined above, I would like to situate *Coolie* and the broader intentions of AIPWA in the context of contemporary India to explicate more fully the necessity to rethink the potentiality of a materialist conception of anti-imperialist aesthetics beyond the institutionalized parameters of postcolonialism's textual politics. First, to outline the current state of things in India, I find that despite its claims to be the "largest democratic country in the world," the neoliberal paradigm that paved the way for rapid capitalist growth in India has caused the displacement of millions of people for the benefit of a small elite that works alongside multinational corporate interests. Contrary to the mainstream story of "India Shining" and the pernicious myth of the neoliberal trickledown revolution, which ends up celebrating the advent of middle-class consumerism and the few who have reached millionaire/billionaire status, what we find is that wealth accumulation is even more divided along class/caste lines, negatively affecting the historically vulnerable Dalits, Tribals, and other minorities. Since the implementation of neoliberal reforms in the 1990s and the subsequent conditions imposed by multinational corporations like the agro-business giant Monsanto, India's rural farmers have been compelled to grow highly state-subsidized cash crops like GMO cotton, forcing them into debt in order to keep up with demands of market-driven agriculture. As a result, over 300,000 farmers have committed suicide.[5] Amplified forms of caste/class inequalities have driven millions of Anand's Munoos into highly exploitative laboring pockets of the economy, imposing on them even higher forms of *alienated* labor.

In more particular terms, neoliberalism is the most recent manifestation of capitalist imperialism, yet it has left the most visible forms of wealth inequity, precarity, dispossession, and economic devastation in its wake, especially in India, but across the entirety of the historic Third World. John Smith highlights this point in recent work by arguing that transnational corporations have been able to valorize megaprofits via the super-exploitation of labor in the global South, and it is the centrality of this "labor arbitrage" that defines 21st century imperialist practice. The current phase of capitalist imperialism, or what Smith calls "the globalization of capitalist imperatives" is thus defined not simply in terms of powerful nation-states dominating "weaker" ones, in the classic sense of the term; rather, to use the words of the late Ellen Meiksins Wood, "actually existing globalization . . . means the opening of subordinate economies and their vulnerability to imperial capital, while the imperial economy remains sheltered as much as possible from its obverse effects" (qtd. in Smith 150; Wood 134). Citing the supremacy of super-exploitation in the current phase of capital-

ist globalization, Smith broadens Marx's insights into the derivation of extracted surplus value to analyze the North-South divide in terms of wealth accumulation, thus rendering a materialist explanation of intensifying levels of mass impoverishment across the global South during the past forty years, particularly in the industrial belts of China, India, Bangladesh, and South East Asia, where millions toil in factories and other key industries central to the reproduction of capitalist globalization. As Smith writes,

> Global labor arbitrage is capitalist imperialism *par excellence*. . . . Super-exploitation—that is, forcing down the value of labor power, the third form of surplus-value increase, is now the increasingly predominant form of the capital-labor relation. The proletarians of the semi-colonial countries are its first victims, but the broad masses of working people in the imperialist countries also face destruction. (198, 250)

While workers in the global South have been the most ill-affected by capitalist globalization, Smith argues contemporary imperialism signals an attack on the working class as a whole in two fundamental ways: first, as a result of the creation of a massive reserve army of labor in the global South where industrial production has re-entrenched itself, workers in the imperialist cores are forced into competition with Southern labor in terms of wage differentials, while (and this is the second point) reinforcing the supremacy of the billionaire capitalists who reap the benefits of deterritorialized divisions of exploited labor.

Unsurprisingly, then, capitalist globalization has spawned "new" forms of ultra-nationalism and religious fundamentalism across the globe, with the blatant rise of neo-fascist movements from the US to Japan that have gained institutionalized legitimacy. These ideologies are necessary to undermine the ability for people to grasp how capitalist globalization has created a breeding ground for mass inequality and violence. India is a case in point. Fulfilling Anand's prophecy about the abuse of religio-nationalist ideology and its connection to market fundamentalism, India has seen the rise of an ultra-nationalist movement bent upon eradicating any opposition to Hindutva principles like casteism, which buttresses deepening levels of economic inequality. Uultimately, the neo-fascist agenda both in India and around the world exerts power over working-class mobilization by implementing divide-and-conquer tactics to secure the interests of global capital's elites. According to John Bellamy Foster, the neo-fascist *Gleichchaltung* intends to restore control over state apparatuses to eliminate social heterogeneity and opposition, a "synchronization" of composite forces

so that they realign with the totalitarian agenda. As Foster writes, "neo-fascism today . . . has as its aim a shift in the management of the advanced capitalist system, requiring the effective dissolution of the liberal-democratic order and its replacement by the rule of representatives of what is now called the "alt-right," openly espousing racism, nationalism, anti-environmentalism, misogyny, homophobia, police violence, and extreme militarism" (2016). In India, rightist groups primarily employ racism-as-casteism, Hindu fundamentalism, and ethnocentric identitarian politics to divide the dispossessed masses in order to continue maximizing profit, as the gap between the richest and the poorest grows steadily, a trend Anand foreshadows in *Coolie*.

Without exaggerating his political sagacity about the need for a radical collectivity that challenges late capitalist hegemony, I reiterate that reading Anand's *Coolie* through the lens of India's postcolonial present allows us to trace a history of unabated dispossession and exploitation, while also recognizing that the alignments of ruling-class authority needed to maintain domination in the present were set in motion during the immediate aftermath of independence. More and more we see how "NGO-ization" and the ballot box, not to mention the exclusive focus on restoring the notion of the "commons" without instituting the necessary strategies of collective antagonism and organizational political models, constrain the possibilities of restorative justice and the promises of systemic change upon which uprisings are often founded. Similarly, the consolidation of power by Hindutva neofascists, whose political extremism gratifies market rationality in the moment of capitalist crisis, will not flinch to use a heavy hand to discipline "troublesome" workers, students, as well as undercastes, Maoists, and Kashmiris. As Arundhati Roy writes on the current state of India, "Almost from the moment India became a sovereign nation it turned into a colonial power, annexing territory, waging war. It has never hesitated to use military interventions to address political problems. . . . Tens of thousands have been killed with impunity, hundreds of thousands tortured. All of this behind the benign mask of democracy" (124). And while the ruling class has historically drawn from the toolbox of fascism to exact punishment against political dissidents through state authority, particularly in the time of crisis that has spawned neo-fascism across the globe, what often goes unnoticed is the extent to which fascism also relies on insipid forms of identity politics and reified principles of democratic sovereignty to pursue its dogmatic objectives.

Anand's work thus reignites a conversation about the centrality of art as social praxis to unmask the material conditions of social inequality, a conversation that has been undone by the hegemony of postcolonial theory and its proclivity towards a celebratory antihistoricism.

Specifically, anti-imperialist movements in the present must continue to emphasize the symbiotic relationship between capitalist globalization and its reliance on sexism, racism, and class oppression to accumulate super-profits and to perpetuate uneven development, especially in the global South, where the brunt of neoliberal restructuring has been most felt. We must insist that racism and sexism exist in capitalist globalization by design, in order to address the specifics of such mechanisms in local communities. Such a community-global interpretation would facilitate a more fluid understanding of levels of exploitation and the particulars of class composition in the re-building of radical collective agency central to globalized anti-imperialism. Positioned in the milieu of institutionalized class inequality and the attack on intellectuals, students, and writers in the midst of emergent neo-fascism, *Coolie* thus speaks to the present as a chilling reminder of the power of rhetoric in emboldening counter-revolutionary forces, as it also allows for a conversation for addressing escalating levels of systemic inequality. As the crisis in capitalist globalization deepens, leaving in its wake perpetual war, inter-imperialist rivalry for control of dwindling resources, environmental disaster, and expanding impoverishment, activists need to incorporate universal class struggle as a strategy of opposition to the unsustainability of the existing conditions. Such collective rethinking may allow us to refocus attention on strategies for creating material spaces of liberation beyond the paradigms of reformism that are often reabsorbed by counter-revolutionary mechanisms that enable the maintenance of hegemony.

Notes

1. "The Bandung Era" refers to the period of mass decolonization that came in the wake of the 1955 conference of African and Asian states in Bandung, Indonesia.

2. See Works Cited for a list of works by these authors.

3. See Harkishan Singh Surjeet's *March of the Communist Movement in India: An Introduction to the Documents of the History of the Communist Movement in India*. National Book Agency, 1998, for more on the role of the communist movement during the anticolonial struggle.

4. See Homi Bhabha's *Location of Culture* and Gayatri Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak."

5. See P. Sainath's *Everybody Loves a Good Drought: Stories from India's Poorest Districts*. Penguin, 1996 for an analysis of the impact of neoliberal restructuration on Indian farmers.

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Police, Politics, and Anti-Art: The Case of Berlin Dada

Leticia Pérez Alonso

This essay examines Berlin Dadaists' engagement in political activities by drawing on the concepts of *police* and *politics* that Jacques Rancière postulates in *The Politics of Aesthetics* (2004). Rancière's philosophical ideas deepen an understanding of Dadaist anti-art as an aesthetic practice that challenges the status quo of artistic and political fields of action. According to Rancière, police is based on the *distribution of the sensible*, that is, "the very manner in which something in common lends itself to participation and in what way various individuals have a part" (12). This system establishes the social functions and positions of groups in a community, separating those who play a role from those who are left out. Politics, on the other hand, "revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time" (13). It hinges upon acts of disagreement that challenge the parts and positions designated by the established order. To use Rancière's terminology, the Dadaists altered the police by giving voice and visibility to forms of perception excluded from a community. They engaged in acts of dissidence and violence promoted in soirées, manifestos, journals, and exhibits that disrupted public life. The convulsive historical situation Berlin was living at the outset of the twentieth century shaped the politics of Dada. Some of the events that motivated their action and reaction against the regime of the Weimar Republic included the outburst of the Great War, the Spartacist uprising of 1919, and the assassinations of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg.

These incidents gave rise to political activism channeled by the visualization of anti-art activities that disputed acceptable aesthetic conventions and served to expose systemic crises. As Peter Bürger argues in *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1984), Dada practices efface boundaries between aesthetics and reality, while revealing a tendency toward self-criticism that negates art as an institution in bourgeois society (53). For instance, Richard Huelsenbeck took advantage of the possibilities offered by Club Dada to launch his "Dadaist Manifesto" so as to staunchly critique movements he believed to be essentially aesthetic rather

than socially and politically committed. In this same vein, art journals helped propagate Dadaism's main ideas and events. *Der Dada* harshly criticized and interfered with the government agenda. Opposing the Weimar Republic as well as military forces that caused the outbreak of World War I, Dadaists formed a political party named Dadaist Central Union for World Revolution and launched a pamphlet titled, "What is Dadaism and What Does It Want in Germany?" In addition, they showed their discontent with the League of Nations and called for an anarchist revolution. Movement members such as Johannes Baader were precisely attracted to insurgence. Fond of disruptive actions and provocative performances, Baader threw down leaflets onto the delegates at the German National Assembly at Weimar in 1919. Lastly, exhibits such as The First International Dada Fair of 1920 opposed military and capitalistic institutions that inflicted violence upon minorities.

These anti-art venues manifested the rejection of conventional artistic standards such as art institutions, attitudes, and stylistic divisions between high and low aesthetic genres. The Dadaist project illustrates the *aesthetic regime of art*, which Rancière defines as "the regime that strictly identifies art in the singular and frees it from any specific rule, from any hierarchy of the arts, subject matter, and genres" (23). This aesthetic category distinguishes itself from the *ethical regime of images* [1] and the *representative regime of the arts*[2] to the degree that it abolishes the hierarchies of artistic disciplines in favor of democratic methods, making visible and audible that which was previously excluded from artistic disciplines and definitions. With their anti-art and inflammatory venues, the Dadaists thus appeared to open a space that reclaimed not only the irruption of the political into the police order but also art forms that furthered the equality of subjects, genres, and styles. Art thus made an impact on the status quo, while attaching the same importance to aesthetic categories and topics.

Origins of Berlin Dada: Club Dada and the Political Aesthetics of Soirées

Berlin Dada emerged toward the end of World War I after the defeat of Germany at the hands of the Allies. Despite the fact that Wilhelm II's monarchy was overthrown in favor of a democratic government in the Weimar Republic, the nationalistic, oppressive forces that contributed to the debacle of the country still took control of state affairs. In 1918 Richard Huelsenbeck transported the movement from Zurich to Berlin, where a series of artists joined forces to develop the political

project of Dada. At stake was his contact with George Grosz and John Heartfield, who were related to the journal *Neue Jugend* (*New Youth*), a pro-war Expressionist venue edited by Wieland Herzfelde from 1916 onward. Through the journal *Die freie Strasse* (*The Free Street*, 1915), Huelsenbeck also met Raoul Hausmann, who introduced him to Hanna Höch and Johannes Baader. Particularly influential on *Die freie Strasse* were the anarchist and psychoanalytical ideas of Otto Gross, an anti-Freudian critic who associated the deficiencies of capitalism with the repressive attitudes of patriarchy. A few years later, all these figures would become the core members of Berlin Dada (Biro 27-30).

The Dadaists became politically involved in Berlin's society and adopted the potential of the soirée of Zurich Dada as a vehicle to interfere with everyday life as well as to unsettle public order. In these events the Dadaists brought into play the possibilities of performance in order to engage in political activities. The soirée takes advantage of theatrical conventions, which, as Rancière remarks, is the privileged medium in Plato's ethical regime of art, given that, unlike the muteness of writing, speech involves the presence of an interlocutor and is thus infused with life. The soirée would be linked to "a regime based on the indetermination of identities, the delegitimation of positions of speech, the deregulation of partitions of space and time," since it offers a play of simulacra that also disembodies aspects of everyday reality (13-14). The delivery of Dada lectures and speeches in Berlin disrupted the *ochlos*, namely the obsession with a unified community in favor of democracy. For Rancière, the *dēmos* is to be understood as a form of *dissensus*, a fracture in the established order promoted by those devoid of power. Precisely, the Dadaists were marginal artists, yet they made themselves visible by way of tumultuous acts targeted at the system of the Weimar Republic and the German Empire.

According to historical and bibliographical data, Berlin's Dada originated on January 22, 1918, when Huelsenbeck delivered his "Erste Dada Rede in Deutschland" ("First Dada Speech in Germany") in I.B. Neumann's Graphisches Kabinett (Graphic Cabinet) as a meeting place. The lecture was published later in the 1920 *Dada Almanach*. In this reading Huelsenbeck explained the international character of Zurich Dada, comprised of poets such as Hugo Ball and Emmy Hennings, the painter Marcel Słodki, and the Romanians Marcel Janco and Tristan Tzara, who either performed or made contributions to the Cabaret Voltaire. Cubist and Futurist experimentations heavily influenced Tzara, who invented the simultaneous and the static poetic forms. Meanwhile, Huelsenbeck created the concert of vowels, bruitist poems, and the dynamic poem. As Huelsenbeck's speech shows, the Dadaists were concerned with superseding the aesthetics of Apollinaire

and Marinetti. Yet they developed an antiwar politics based on the disagreement with institutions and classes that participated in the military conflict. Given the humorous character of the movement, dissent was expressed ironically, as Huelsenbeck's words evince:

> Wir waren gegen die Pazifisten, weil der Krieg uns die Möglichkeit gegeben hatte, überhaupt in unserer ganzen Gloria zu existieren. Und damals waren die Pazifisten noch anständiger wie heute, wo jeder dumme Junge mit seinen Büchern gegen die Zeit die Konjunktur ausnützen will. Wir waren für den Krieg, und der Dadaismus ist heute noch für den Krieg. ("Erste Dada Rede" 106)

> We were against the pacifists, because the war gave us the opportunity to exist in our utmost glory. And at that time the pacifists were even more decent than today, where every stupid young boy wants to utilize economy against time with his books. We were against the war and Dadaism is today in favor of war. (my trans)

In these lines, Huelsenbeck discloses the contradictions of Dadaism: it proclaimed itself an antiwar movement, yet it actively reacted against any form of institutionalized power. In fact, Dada evenings were characterized by the chaos of their provocative performances.

After the gathering at I.B. Neumann's Graphisches Kabinett, more soirées were popularized thanks to the efforts of Club Dada, founded by Huelsenbeck, Jung, and Hausmann at Jung's home in March 1918. Artists and writers such as George Grosz, Jefim Golyscheff, Johannes Baader, and Walter Mehring joined the Club. The rapport of each member is reflected by the eccentric pseudonyms they used as forms of address. Hausmann and Höch respectively chose the terms "Dadasoph" and "Dadasophin"; Baader, "Oberdada"; Huelsenbeck, "Weltdada"; Grosz, "Propagandada"; Heartfield, "Monteurdada"; and Mehring, "Pipidada." Club Dada was always at risk of censorship due to the uncertain political situation. This risk might explain why the first meeting was clandestine—not without good reason—since Huelsenbeck's initial manifesto was eventually confiscated. The gatherings that followed once took place at the Malik Verlag publishing house as well as Huelsenbeck's and Hausmann's apartments, where the Dadaists thought through their aesthetic and political project (Bernard 62-63).

In addition, a formal soirée that came after the one held at I.B. Neumann's Graphisches Kabinett was organized at the Berlin Sezession

on April 12, 1918 (Huelsenbeck, *Dada* 26). In this meeting Huelsenbeck read his "Dadaistisches Manifest" ("Dadaist Manifesto"), which was modeled on his first speech. He criticized the Expressionists for using abstraction as an excuse to elevate their soul, when, according to him, their art escaped from daily life and recoiled not only at motivational aspirations but also at any attempt to convey content. In opposition, he explained, Dada "stehet zum erstenmal dem Leben nicht mehr ästhetisch gegenüber, indem er alle Schlagworte von Ethik, Kultur, und Innerlichkeit, die nur Mäntel für schwache Muskeln sind, in seine Bestandteile zerfetzt" ("By tearing apart all those clichés of ethics, culture, and interiority, which simply cover weak muscles, Dada has for the first time put an end to aesthetic attitudes towards life"; Huelsenbeck, "Dadaistisches Manifest" 38-39). Huelsenbeck thus believed that art should be integrated into life as it has the ability to interfere in the police order (to use Rancière's terminology) and to modify occupations and positions. For this reason, he criticized Expressionism due to its escapism from daily affairs. As an alternative, Dada committed itself to social activism in the name of equality.

Other inflammatory performances that took place during the same evening were Else Hadwiger's reading of Futurist war poems, which was accompanied by the noise of trumpets and rattles Huelsenbeck used to provoke the audience. In this same evening Hausmann delivered his manifesto "Das neue Material in der Malerei" ("The New Material in Painting"), published in *Am Anfang war Dada* (*In the Beginning Was Dada*, 1972) under the title "Synthetisches Cino (*sic*) der Malerei" ("Synthetic Cinema of Painting") (Lippard 59-62). Read before a furious audience, this speech insisted on an alternative to oil paint that allowed for experimentation with new materials, just as Cubism and Futurism had already done in the name of aesthetic freedom.

On June 6, 1918, Baader organized a matinee at the Café Austria, where Hausmann exhibited a montage and recited his phonetic poem "Seelenautomobile."[3] This type of poetry was made out of a random combination of letters usually printed on posters in preparation for their later performance. Owing to their irrationality, the public felt offended and reacted negatively against the Dada recital. The soirée of April 30, 1919 held Jefim Golyscheff's anti-symphony at the Graphisches Kabinett. Divided into three movements that negated the symphonic harmony, namely "Provokatorische Spritze" ("Provocational Injections"), "Chaotische Mundhöhle oder das submarine Flugzeug" ("Chaotic Oral Cavity or Submarine Aircraft"), "Zusammenklappbares Hyper-Fis-chen-Dur" ("Clapping in Hyper F-Sharp Major"), this musical piece was built upon kitchen utensils such as pans, pots, and cans, to name a few, and included a performance by Hanna Höch (Roberts

174; Rasula 76). In a similar fashion, Mehring and Grosz played their bizarre instruments on the evening of May 24, 1919. In the form of a Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the show was performed on a stage decorated with Baader's preliminary drawings for the Hagenbeck Zoo.

On December 7, 1919 at the Tribüne, Hausmann delivered a speech titled "Klassische Beziehungen zu Mittelstandküche" ("Classical Relations of the Middle Class in the Kitchen"), which condemned German culture, literature, and cuisine. This lecture satirized high discursive practices rooted in rationality and attacked those dogmas that constituted bourgeois morality. Scandalized by Hausmann's audacity and impudence, the audience burst out onto the stage and confronted the Dadaists in a fit of anger. One day later at the Schall und Rauch (Noise and Smoke) cabaret, the Dadaists presented a play titled *Einfach Klassisch! Eine Orestie mit glücklichem Ausgang* (*Simply Classic! An Orestia with a Happy Ending*). Written by Mehring, the work not only mocked Aeschylus's tragedy but also criticized the regime of the Weimar Republic. The show included John Heartfield and Waldemar Hecker's performance, which made use of puppets created by Grosz (Biro 51-52). Mehring's play overturns the classical system of representation as exemplified by the tragic genre. As Rancière states, the Aristotelian tragedy responds to the "visibility for an orderly world governed by a hierarchy of subject matter and the adaptation of situations and manners of speaking to this hierarchy" (18). As opposed to the Greek paradigm, Mehring's work downgrades the high status of tragedy in favor of a performance that explores the clownish and grotesque as popular categories charged with a powerful political message that usually confronted the lifestyle of viewership and the state. In subsequent events, Dada became less confrontational, although their shows and tours continued scandalizing the public both in Germany and Europe.

All these illustrations of Dadaist soirées demonstrate the political subversiveness of the theatrical production as well as the organization of a community based on visible forms of performativity. As Rancière argues, these practices might be interpreted in terms of "bodily positions and movements, functions of speech, the parceling out of the visible and the invisible" (19). The stage allowed for the projection of an aesthetics that contravened the classical taste of the bourgeois. By antagonizing art and politics of the state, Berlin Dada rethought democracy as a form of dissent that provided a possibility for change at all levels of life.

The Political Pamphlet and Revolutionary Art: Towards a Dada Lifestyle

Dadaism participated in political events affecting the state, taking advantage of the pamphlet as a medium to call for necessary social reforms. This artistic movement concocted revolutionary acts that modified the distribution of the sensible in the police order as well as conventional aesthetic categories. Politics and aesthetics shared similar fields of action, exchanging forces that paved the way for a radical transformation of society. The Dadaists harshly opposed the government of the Weimar Republic as well as the military forces that years earlier contributed to the outbreak of World War I. After the bellicose conflict, the situation in Germany was tense. In late October 1918, the Naval Supreme Commander Admiral Reinhardt Scheer, with the assistance of a few allies, planned an attack against the Royal Navy's Grand Fleet in order to recover the supremacy of the German Navy. Nevertheless, rumor of the attack spread and knowing that a confrontation with the British squadron could end in a disaster, sailors refused to take part, which led to the Kiel Mutiny on November 3, 1918. Soon enough news of the riot reached Hamburg, Bremen, Lubeck, and Munich, triggering what was known as the German Revolution (November 1918–August 1919).[4] Councils were founded in order to call for political reform, including the building of economic growth and democratic participation, as well as bringing on the end of the war and the monarchy. These incidents caused the downfall and subsequent exile of Kaiser Wilhelm II, whose abdication was forced by Chancellor Max von Baden. Seeing the difficulties in obtaining a peace deal, von Baden delegated his responsibilities to Friedrich Ebert, yet he did not consult with the administration. As a member of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), Ebert, as the new chancellor, might have aimed to stifle the radical left that had already triumphed in several German cities. However, it was Philipp Scheidemann, rather than Ebert, who added fuel to the fire by proclaiming the Weimar Republic without giving previous notice to the cabinet. This proclamation did not sit well with Spartacists such as Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, who broke with the SPD due to its agreement with bourgeois conservative attitudes that defended the necessity of the war while opposing the program of the 1917 Russian Revolution that would lead to a German Soviet state. Disputes with the SPD gave rise to the formation of the KPD (Communist Party of Germany). By January 5, 1919, the Spartacists precipitated an uprising [5] in Berlin that was backed by 500,000 inhabitants. Despite this support, Liebknecht did not have a well-defined strategy about how to access power, and the SPD took advantage of the Spartacists' lack of action to

suppress the revolution with the help of militias known as *Freikorps*. The leaders of the uprising, Liebknecht and Luxemburg, were captured and brutally assassinated, actions that severely critiqued Ebert's government. The revolution came to an end in May 1919, when members of the *Reichswehr* (Imperial Defense) and the *Freikorps* crushed the communist government that had taken power in Munich owing to the general chaos generated in Southern Germany.

These events motivated the social consciousness in Dada because "the individual subject has to erase its individual self and to subjugate itself to the external reality in every respect" (van den Berg 48). By launching the political party Dadaistischen Zentralrat der Weltrevolution (Dadaist Central Union for World Revolution), the Dadaists actively engaged in the defense of the Spartacist struggle in opposition to the government of the Weimar Republic. In doing so, they showed their concern with the problematic events of Berlin. Their pamphlet "Was ist der Dadaismus und was will er in Deutschland?" ("What is Dadaism and What Does It Want in Germany?") [6] linked the aesthetics of Dadaism with the politics of Communism. As a genre of written literature, the political pamphlet represents mute signs addressing an unknown audience—in contrast to vibrant and immediate speech directed at an interlocutor. In Plato's ethical regime, speech was given priority over the fixity of written symbols since it was based on a direct exchange of words. In contrast, Rancière points out that this understanding of writing was eventually overturned in order to dispute the privilege of the sayable over the visible (15-16). In fact, writing embodies the values of democracy through being targeted at every member of a community, without distinctions. It implies a singular distribution of the sensible in which direct speech is substituted with printed forms. As seen in the Dada pamphlet, mute signs are also invested with life, as they have the ability to alter the police order by creating acts of subjectivization [7] that legitimize the positions of those excluded, thus promoting change on a perceptual and social level. Precisely, this written document acted in a similar fashion to the force of the *dēmos* in the Greek police to the extent that it voiced the demands of a group, namely the Berlin Dadaists, who rallied against the ruling classes and the government to make their place visible in the public sphere in the name of equality.

This desire for recognition and change is noticeable in the Dada pamphlet, which sought "die internationale revolutionäre Vereinigung aller schöpferischen und geistigen Menschen der ganzen Welt auf dem Boden des radikalen Kommunismus" ("the international revolutionary union of all creative and intellectual people in the whole world premised on radical Communism"; der dadaistische revolutionäre

Zentralrat 29). The manifesto also demanded the gradual implementation of unemployment through mechanization. Likewise, it proposed the expropriation of all property, communal feeding, and the creation of cities that released individuals from the shackles of society. The main ideas of der dadaistische Zentralrat der Weltrevolution integrated social components ranging from free meals for artists and intellectuals, to the imposition of Dada principles upon the clergy and teachers, to the resistance to the classical and bourgeois values of the movement der Sturm (Storm). Council members favored the creation of a state art center that freed individuals from concepts of property and the appropriation of churches to perform bruitist, simultaneist and Dadaist poems. With its protest, this political party transformed into a form of resistance that not only unsettled the distribution of the sensible, but also vindicated a place in the social order to implement change. The convergence of writing as a form of authority and the theatricality of Dada acts made it possible to render aesthetics as a lifestyle that affected politics and vice versa.

Der Dada: The Political Aesthetics of Anti-Art and Dada Marketing

Der Dada was the main journal that marketed Dadaist anti-art politics, which revolved around the utilization of the written word and image as a subversive method to transform society. Given the ability of the media to access a large audience, the Dadaists availed themselves of the printed text in order to influence public opinion, tastes, and values. The journal thus became a political instrument contesting the established order and disputing issues at the heart of the Weimar Republic: prevalent militarism, deficient democracy, bureaucracy, and bourgeois conventionalism. The circulation of the printed text, to quote Rancière, "opens up a space of random appropriation" that threatens the legitimacy of the representative regime of art, namely, the communication of the message from the appropriate transmitter to the designated addressee. Instead, writing is to be understood as a type of "disincorporation" based on dependence on its own materiality. Furthermore, writing is the medium through which aesthetic and social hierarchies fall apart. Neither words nor subject matter belonged to high or low categories anymore, since the "ordered system of appropriateness between words and bodies" had been extinguished (55, 57). The democratic character of *Der Dada* relies upon its accessibility to anybody who wishes to purchase it. Likewise, writing breaks with the distinction between respectable and lighthearted topics by deriding serious

genres, and it takes advantage of the popularity of print media to reach the masses. Just as the aesthetic regime of writing put an end to the priority of subject matters and artistic categories, so *Der Dada* became a valuable political source to speak of communal life while raising its voice against the police order embodied in the Weimar Republic. By attacking political institutions, the bourgeoisie, and previous forms of art, *Der Dada* altered the distribution of the sensible by mapping "trajectories between the visible and the sayable, relationships between modes of being, modes of saying, and modes of doing and making" (Rancière 39). As Rancière asserts, those in power have usually worried about the ability of writing to cause chaos, which is reflected in several bans *Der Dada* and other journals suffered as a result of incendiary claims that upset traditional newspapers and the police (Konzett 206; Motherwell 142). The three issues of the Berlin-based journal acted as a catalyst that threatened the foundations of the state, while opening a space for dissent as a form of propaganda.

The first issue of *Der Dada* was edited and published in June 1919 by Raoul Hausmann and included contributions by Baader, Huelsenbeck, Tzara, and Hausmann himself that ridiculed the political situation of Germany. For instance, on the lower left-hand corner of the cover, the words "Jahr 1 des Weltfriedens" ("Year 1 of the World Peace") appear to satirically allude to the harsh conditions to be adopted by Germany after signing the Treaty of Versailles. Likewise, the article titled "die Jungfrau Maria um Schutz Deutschlands angerufen" ("The Virgin Mary Called for the Protection of Germany") criticizes the fact that the SPD would be willing to embrace the Catholic faith should Pope Benedict XV intercede in favor of better conditions for Germany. Notwithstanding, the text ironically remarks that this possibility would only come true if the SPD accepted the paradigm of the Virgin Mary as the religion of the state. The report supposedly elaborated by the Prussian Minister, Konrad Haenish, comes to the conclusion that "die unbefleckte Empfängnis das eigentlich sozialdemokratische Grund-Dogma darstellet" ("the Immaculate Conception represents the essential social democratic dogma"; n. pag.). To extol the union between religion and the state, the Dadaists announced that a meeting would take place in the National Assembly, which the Virgin Mary would be willing to attend both in substitution for the Pope and even in the presence of the Oberdada (Johannes Baader). The article concludes by suggesting that "Reichswehrminister Noske wird die Ehrenkompagnie stellen und die Dadaisten werden den Choral 'Eine feste Burg ist unser Gott' blasen" ("Minister of Defense Moske will be an honorary company and the Dadaists will hum the hymn 'A Solid Castle is our God'"; n. pag.) in order to celebrate the event. The sarcasm of these lines relates

to the fact that both Pope Benedict XV in the Vatican and the SPD in Germany appeared to be competing for a distinct role in promoting a peace agreement after the Great War. Therefore, the Dadaists felt that both parties were utilizing peace for legitimizing their positions and purposes.

After this article a poem, written by Hausmann, shows an unusual arrangement of letters that threatens the prevalence of informational language. The poet utilizes illogical combinations of sounds and syllables that might correlate with the chaotic situation Germany was undergoing after World War I:

kp' eri um lp'erioum

nm' periii pernoumum

bpretiberrerrebee onnooooooooh gplanpouk

komnpout perikoul

rreeeeeeeeerreeeee a

oapderree mglepadonou mtnou

tnoumt (Hausmann n. pag.)

This poem is followed by an account titled "Venit creator spiritus ..... dada," which Baader wrote to criticize the Peace Treaty of Versailles for imposing harsh conditions upon Germany. The fragment echoes the Latin hymn with the same title usually sung in the Catholic Church in Pentecost to invoke the Holy Spirit. However, that creator spirit, according to Baader, stands for Dada as compared to the trumpets "des wirklichen Weltgerichts; nicht der Harlekinade von Versailles" ("of the real world justice; not the Harlequinade of Versailles"; n. pag.). Next, Baader's reaction to Scheidemann's speech is registered to show his indignation towards the political measures adopted after World War I:

> Das Volk, das durch Sie vertreten wird, hat kein anders Schicksal verdient, als völligen Untergang. Trotzdem sage ich heute: 'Sie sind zugrunde gegangen, weil Sie mich verkannt haben; die Entente wird an dada sterben!' (Dada n. pag)

> The people, whom you represent, have not earned any other destiny than a complete downfall. Nonetheless, today I say: 'You have failed to understand me; the entente will die from dada!' (my trans)

Regarding the criticism of the entente, "Legen Sie Ihr Geld in dada an" ("Invest Your Money in Dada") invites one to provide funds for Dada as "die einzige Rettung vor der Sklaverei der Entente" ("the only salvation from the slavery of the entente") that resists the "Souveränität der interallierten Wirtschaftskommission" ("the sovereignty of the interallied economic commission"). In a mordant fashion, the text explains that credits will be processed via Versailles to the Vatican, where "der heilige dada sie segnet und sie der heiligen mama in den Schoß schiebt" ("the holy dada blesses them and thrusts them into the holy mama's lap"). This article illustrates the efforts of the Dadaists to publicize the main figures of the movement by comparing Dada to the spirituality of the Tao and Brahma, while asserting its legitimate financial practices as opposed to those of capitalism (Zentralamt des Dadaismus n. pag.).

The second issue of *Der Dada*, edited by Hausmann in September 1919, displays the active potential of print culture to attract readers to the journal and involve them in the political affairs of Germany, while promoting anti-art aesthetics such as sound poetry and the photomontage. The cover acts as political propaganda by claiming "Der Dada siegt" ("Dada wins") and encouraging the reader to join Dada ("Tretet dada bei"). Between these two messages is Hausmann's collage composed of cuttings and excerpts from newspapers, one of which uncovers the word "Spiesser" (i.e., "philistine" or "bourgeois"), a topic addressed in the next page under the caption "Der deutsche Spiesser ärgert sich" ("The German bourgeois is annoyed"). The main target of the Dada critique is Expressionism as it was an art they associated with the bourgeois usage of vague abstractions and an inconsequential sense of ethics that, in their view, eventually sought the profit of the war industry. The Dadaists did not believe in either rationality or traditional aesthetics based on questions of taste, since they appeared to be of the opinion that excess of reason and limitations to aesthetic judgements would result in a lack of enthusiasm and creativity. This cynicism led to the proclamation of the death of art and the Dadaists' contradictory feelings towards the movement: "wir sind Antidadaisten, weil für uns der Dadaist noch zu viel Gefühl und Aesthetik besitz" ("we are Anti-dadaists because the Dadaist still possesses too much feeling and aesthetics" n. pag.).

Following this article, the journal presents an advert for the *Dadaco* anthology and an article titled "Tretet Dada bei" ("Join Dada") signed by

Club Dada that evokes the words of the cover. Next, Baader's "reklame für mich. (rein geschäftlich)" ("advertisement for myself. [for lucrative purposes]") includes a photomontage titled *die Erscheinung des Oberdada in den Wolken des Himmels* (*The Appearance of Oberdada in the Clouds of the Sky*). In the center of the illustration is the head of Baader surrounded by dates that stand for remarkable historical events. Baader mentions his candidacy for office in the Reichstag in 1917, the year when he also declared himself the president of Christus Gmbh. This company linked conscientious objection with Christian martyrdom in an effort to defend pacifists and war deserters. On November 17, 1918, Baader enraged the public at the Berlin Cathedral with his performance *Christus ist euch Wurst* (*You Don't Give a Damn about Christ*), which led to his arrest. Hausmann wrote a letter to the Minister of Culture justifying Baader's right to freedom of speech, which eventually made his release possible. As a reaction to the Treaty of Versailles on June 28, 1919, Baader brings to mind the publication of his *Buch des Weltfriedens* (*Book of World Peace*), also known as *Handbuch des Oberdada* (*Handbook of the Oberdada*) or HADO. This event was immediately followed by the interruption of a meeting in the National Assembly, where Hausmann provided Baader with a manifesto titled "Dadaisten gegen Weimar" ("Dadaists against Weimar") that was circulated a few days before Ebert became the president of the Reichstag. On July 16, 1919, Baader burst into a session of the National Assembly and handed out pages of his "Grüne Leiche" ("Green Corpse") pamphlet (Weikop 814-815). To the astonishment of the audience, he proclaimed his presidency in the following terms: "Der Präsident des Erdballs sitzt im Sattel des weissen Pferdes Dada" ("the president of the terrestrial globe sits on the white saddle of the Dada horse"; n. pag.). After the narration of the main landmarks related to the history of Dada, the article ends with an invocation of the "dada-Reklame-Gesellschaft" ("Dada-Advertisement-Society"; n. pag.). Baader's account reveals that promotional strategies had the political purpose of subverting the police order embodied in the government of the Weimar Republic, while attempting to invest Dadaism with a proactive role in society. Furthermore, as Hanne Bergius observes, the disturbance and disorder provoked at institutional venues recreated the proletarian uprisings the Dadaists identified with as opposed to the bourgeois (371). The documentation of Dadaist activities and creative production in the journal is significant to the extent that the printed word gives visibility to a group struggling to play a key role in German society.

In addition to these marketing tactics, the last page of the journal gives room to Huelsenbeck's poem "Ende der Welt" ("End of the World"), which announces the end of the world in terms of irrational images

that contrast with the fatal vision of the Doomsday: "Soweit ist es nun tatsächlich mit dieser Welt gekommen / Auf den Telegraphenstangen sitzen die Kühhe und spielen Schach" ("This is what things have come to in this world / On the telegraph poles the cows are seated and play chess"; n. pag.; Werner 189). As Florian Werner argues, the cows playing a strategy game on telegraphic lines of communication speaks about an "upside-down world order" that elicits the chaos generated by World War I (190). Other simultaneous events prove the absurdity of the world: a cockatoo singing sadly under the skirts of a Spanish dancer, cannons expressing their lament all day, the celluloid being compared to a changeling, etc. Similarly, a Cherry-Brandy is given priority over decisions concerning war and peace, whereas courage is demonstrated by the image of pulling out the tail feathers of a streetcar. Ultimately, the poem shows a reversal of the police order that modifies the positions, activities, and occupations during the Great War, which results in a revolutionary distribution of the sensible.

The third issue of *Der Dada* was published in April 1920 by Wieland Herzfelde's Malik Verlag, and it is characterized by the tendency to fill the entire surface of every page with textual and visual details, in such a manner that it brings to mind a *horror vacui* effect. The cover of the journal is illustrated with Heartfield's photomontage titled *Das Pneuma umreist die Welt* (*The Tire Travels around the World*; see fig. 1). The visual composite is formed by the image of a tire crashing into a variety of objects flying about at random, which might explain the image of Hausmann screaming in terror. The names of Dadaists such as Baader, Grosz, and Hausmann are also visualized in an attempt to promote the main leaders of the movement. Other words like "Ankunft" (arrival), "Umschwung" (change of tendency) and "Zirkus" (circus) might prelude the arrival of a new time advanced by the carnivalesque aspect of Dada. In parallel with Jung and Bakhtin, the Dadaists believed that western men had become extremely rational creatures that repressed their festive, instinctual side. The oblivion of this "psychophysical power," as Richard W. Sheppard argues, results in violent acts of war and revolution (116). The Dadaists, therefore, returned to the carnival to engage in political disobedience as a means of shaking the social structure to the core and disembodying its flaws.

In the second page George Grosz advertises a political map that contains nine points satirically focusing on God as the protector of Dada, encouraging Germany to participate in the war front, defending the proletariat, and vindicating democracy. Other acts of publicity include Hausmann's "Dada in Europa," which ironically calls to mind the inception of Dada and its relation to bluff as "praktische Selbstentgiftung" ("self-detoxification") and "Wahrheit" ("truth"). For Hausmann, Dada

is "eher ein Lebenszustand, mehr eine Form der inneren Beweglichkeit, als eine Kunstrichtung" ("more a lifestyle, more a form of inner motility, than a direction taken by art"; n. pag.) and it takes a stand against the hypocrisy of tragedy or science. To conclude, the article vindicates the "unbesiegbare Macht der Ironie" ("invincible power of irony"; n. pag.) to develop our outmost human potential and reach all the ambitions we cherish. In addition to Hausmann's account, Huelsenbeck's "Ein Besuch im Cabaret Dada" ("A Visit to Cabaret Dada") parodies a Dada cabaret and explains the audience's hostile attitude to the shows held in that place due to their offensive nature and their tendency to provoke the attendees.

Fig. 1.

Heartfield, John. *Das Pneuma umreist die Welt*. Cover of *Der Dada* 3, April 1920. *The Comics Journal*, classic.tcj.com/history/wheels/.©The Heartfield Community of Heirs / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2018. Accessed 17 January 2018.

Der Dada 3 also published poetry by Herzfelde and Huelsenbeck as well as a sketch by Hausmann that took advantage of advertising to advance the movement and its leaders. For instance, Herzfelde's "Das Dadalyripipidon" is a nonsensical poem that combines syllables "da" and "pi" to perhaps allude to Mehring's nickname, "Pipidada": "Da & Pi, Dapi, Pida, Pidadapi" (n. pag.). Huelsenbeck's "Dada-Schalmei" ("Dada-Shalm") depicts a natural landscape dominated by the moon and the presence of crickets and birds chirping. Eventually the scene transforms into a jocular one: "Nenn es Wehmut, nenn es Quatsch, — O / Mensch, du irrt so lang du Brot ißt" ("Call it melancholy, call it nonsense, — O / Man, you err, as long as you eat bread"; n. pag.). Huelsenbeck concludes by inciting the reader to think about Tzara, Arp, and himself as means of marketing Dadaism and its main members. In line with this idea, the names of the direc-

tors of the Malik-Verlak are shuffled immediately before Huelsenbeck's poem. Grosz appears as "groszfield," Heartfield as "hearthaus" and Hausmann as "georgemann," emphasizing the all-inclusive project of Dada. As to Hausmann, he wrote a brief sketch titled "Der Geist im Handumdrehen oder eine Dadalogie" ("The Spirit in the Blink of an Eye or a Dadalogie") that presents a scene between the Monteurdada (Heartfield) and the Dadasoph (Hausmann), who caricature the political reality of Germany while having an argument about a recitation for the third issue of *Der Dada*.

The three issues of *Der Dada* show the interconnection of politics and print culture—the latter an art form that erases distinctions between high and low genres while addressing the most significant events affecting German society. The Dadaists utilized the journal as a promotional venue to make their project known and advance transformations on an aesthetic and political level. *Der Dada* not only generated financial gains, but it also participated in political acts of subjectivization that confronted the police order by threatening its very structure and producing innovative creations.

Erste Internationale Dada-Messe: The Heterotopic Distribution of the Sensible

The Erste Internationale Dada-Messe ("First International Dada Fair") was a Dada exhibit of 174 artworks that took place at the gallery of Otto Burchard in Berlin-Tiergarten from June 30 to August 25, 1920. Given that the Fair was held in the context of a display room, it might well be defined as a *heterotopic* distribution of the sensible, in the sense that it projects a real place that disrupts the hierarchical order of art in favor of the affirmation of difference. According to Michel Foucault, a *heterotopia* refers to a real place "in which all the real arrangements, all the other real arrangements that can be found within society, are at one and the same time represented, challenged, and overturned" (353). In line with Foucauldian heterotopia, Rancière rethinks it in relation to the distribution of the sensible as a "proper place" based on principles that determine what is visible and audible as well as what is supposed to be said, thought, made, or done. Accordingly, politics and aesthetics project fictions to be realized in a future (39-40). In just such a case, the gallery of the Dada Fair constitutes a physical space in society, yet dislodged from it, that strives to approximate the utopian vision by implementing different rules and codes of behavior that modify hierarchies and occupations. Not only is the reorganization of structures noticeable in the anti-art forms advocated by the Dadaists, but it is also dis-

cernible in the slogans and methods of address targeted at interfering with the police order. Although Foucault and Rancière do not attribute purposiveness to heterotopias, the Dadaists clearly invested the gallery with the intended end of redefining the distribution of the sensible by taking an attitude to resistance and insubordination.

In the heterotopic space of the gallery, the usage of nicknames was particularly effective to define the identity of Dada in terms of ironic gestures that defied the sobriety of German morality. Dr. Otto Burchard was known as "Financedada" due to his investment of 1,000 marks in the event. The main members of the Dada Club, who happened to organize the Fair, also used nicknames as a means of calling attention to particular aspects they sought to project onto the public. George Grosz was called "Marshall," Raoul Hausmann "Dadasoph," and John Heartfield "Monteurdada." Apart from these iconoclastic forms of address, they covered the walls with aggressive slogans intended to upset the public: "Dada ist politisch" ("Dada is political"); "Dada kämpft auf Seiten des revolutionären Proletariats" ("Dada is fighting on the side of the revolutionary proletariat"); "Nieder die Kunst" ("Down with art"); "Dilettanten, erhebt euch gegen die Kunst" ("Dilettantes, revolt against art"); and "Die Kunst ist tot" ("Art is dead") among other messages (Blythe and Powers 5). These catchphrases were direct attacks on the government of Ebert and Scheidemann and incitements to proletarian revolt. The gallery thus acted as a microcosm that strived for the condition of a perfect state opposing any form of repression and abuse of authority.

During the time the exhibit lasted, several acts of irreverence and provocation transpired. Hausmann wrote parodies of reviews in the catalogue of the Fair that basically dissuaded the reader from attending the exhibit. At the gallery, the visitors were shocked by the *Preußischer Erzengel* (*Prussian Archangel*)—a dummy with a military uniform and a pig's mask hanging over the ceiling. John Heartfield and Rudolf Schlichter, the piece's creators, were accused of insulting the army, just as George Grosz, Johannes Baader, and Otto Burchard were denounced for their troublesome objects. In fact, Grosz and Herzfelde were charged 900 marks in fines after their conviction in April 1921 for having defamed the German army with the display of Grosz's portfolio *Gott mit uns* (*God with us*) (Biro 173-174; Herzfelde and Doherty 94). These events prove the heterotopia of the Dada gallery was an unstable site invaded by the police order with the purpose of reestablishing the status quo and combatting acts of dissent directed at institutions of power. In Rancière's thinking, this is precisely the moment when the aesthetic-political expectations of change are frustrated by an im-

posed consensus that abolishes any form of disagreement or political subjectivization.

From a lucrative point of view, the exhibit failed to generate substantial income. However, the Dadaists succeeded in publicizing the event by photographing the show and including the pictures in international venues: Amsterdam, Milan, Rome, and Boston. In addition, it caught the attention of Katherine Dreier, a well-known art patron who planned to showcase works from Berlin Dada in the "First Exhibition of Modern Art" of the Société Anonyme, Inc. at 19 East 47th Street in New York (Herzfelde and Doherty 93-95). The critiques that followed the Erste Internationale Dada-Messe entailed the beginning of Dada's decline. The movement exceeded noise and provocation, the members becoming too superficial in their performances. In order to continue shocking their audiences, the Dadaists were forced to exaggerate their statements, which eventually led each of them to go their separate ways. The Malik-Verlag, the publishing house that promoted Dada, even came to a stop owing to the lack of organization in *Club Dada* (de Visser; n. pag.)

During the years the Dadaists were actively committed to the movement, they produced outstanding contributions. In the Fair the photomontage was one of their most significant creations, defining the political identity of Berlin Dada. As an extension of the photo scrapbook, this composite picture incorporates photos and clippings from newspapers randomly assembled for any political or aesthetic purpose. Indeed, the photomontage succeeded in utilizing pieces of print culture to practice social criticism. The highest exponents of Dada photomontage were Hanna Höch and Raoul Hausmann, who excelled at challenging the museum institution with this type of anti-art.

Hanna Höch's *Schnitt mit dem küchenmesser DADA durch die letzte weimarer Bierbauchkulturepoche Deutschlands (Cut with a Kitchen Knife Through Germany's Last Weimar Beer Belly Cultural Epoch*, 1919–1920; see fig. 2) [8] overlaps clippings from magazines, newspapers, and advertisements associated with the government of the Weimar Republic and German military forces. This disparate juxtaposition of elements is a critical response to a time of popular protest and political turmoil based on the confrontation between the Socialist and Communist political parties. In the center of the photomontage the head of Kathe Kollowitz, a reputable German Expressionist, appears to be dancing over her own body, generating a convulsive movement possibly related to the revolutionary atmosphere in Berlin in 1920 as well as to a critique of Expressionist art, which Höch might symbolically seek to deprive of its bourgeois intellectualism. On the left appears the head of Albert Einstein surrounded by messages that read, "Legen Sie

Ihr Geld in Dada an" ("invest your money in Dada") and "He He, Sie junger Mann, Dada ist keine Kunstrichtung" ("hey young man, Dada is not an art trend"). On the right of Einstein is the head of Friedrich

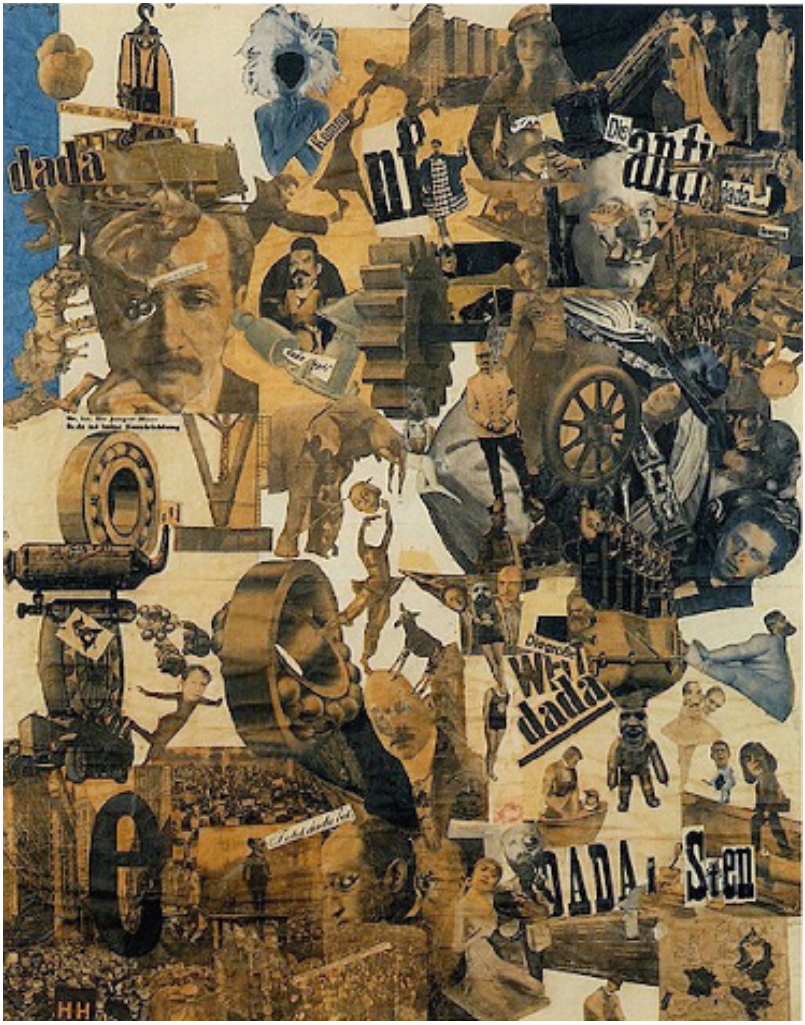

Fig. 2.

Hanna Höch, *Schnitt mit dem Küchenmesser DADA durch die letzte weimarer Bierbauchkulturepoche Deutschlands*, 1919, Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin.

Ebert, the President of the Weimar Republic, placed on top of a topless ballerina.

The lower-left corner is presided by Karl Liebknecht, one of the Communist leaders tortured and assassinated in January 1919 after the Spartacist uprising. In the upper-right corner is the head of Kaiser Wilhelm II, whose moustache is composed of two legs. Below the German Emperor is the head of General Hindenberg on top of a dancer. Center-right are the head of Lenin with the Dadaist Johannes Baader and the Communist Karl Radek on top of women's bodies. Next to Radek is Karl Marx seemingly screaming "die große Welt Dada" ("the big world Dada"). Towards the right is the art critic Theodore Däubler placed on an infant's body. Surrounding Marx are Dadaists such as George Grosz, Wieland Herzfelde, and Raoul Hausmann, as well as John Heartfield bathing with a woman. Finally, in the lower-right corner are the countries where women achieved the right to vote in a gesture of defiance towards patriarchy.

This photomontage exhibits the maximum exponent of the aesthetic regime of arts insofar as it eradicates the hierarchy of subject matter and the aesthetic genres, including the primacy of speech over writing or visual art. Verbal and optical sources constitute cases of an egalitarian distribution of the sensible that integrates art into life by drawing on elements from everyday reality: i.e., newspapers and advertisements containing references to the political situation of Germany in the years following World War I. In Höch's work, aesthetics and politics coalesce in order to refer to the disintegration of German society, artistically illustrated by the photomontage, and the allusions to the main public figures that contributed to such decline. In opposition to the representatives of the police order, Berlin Dadaists emerged as the antidote to the crisis by threatening the system and calling it into question.

All in all, the Dada Fair and its anti-art practices embodied heterotopic spaces as they occupied real positions and modalities in the distribution of the sensible, yet they had the intentional purpose of making an impact on the social order by reconfiguring modes of perception that could give voice and visibility to the deficiencies of the system. To that effect, the interdependence of the aesthetic and the political is a necessary condition to reshape society by creating a heterotopia that rethinks fields of possibility for an ideal future based on the democratic premise of equality.

Conclusion

Berlin Dada is an illustrative example of vanguardism that succeeds in integrating politics into artistic creation by justifying the necessity of dissent. The members of the movement were well aware of the potential of the soirée as a theatrical form that actively disrupted the police order in favor of social criticism. As opposed to the direct speech embodied in the soirée, the Dadaists also took advantage of written media such as manifestos, pamphlets, and journals to reach the masses, while making visible and audible their experience, as they did not occupy a prominent position in the police order. Writing thus represented a democratic expression of the life of the community that purported to affect the status quo and promote change. Finally, exhibits such as the First International Dada Fair effectively enacted a heterotopic space that not only questioned the reality of the Weimar Republic but also offered a method of action to reorganize society by conferring a primordial role upon the proletariat and the Dadaist artist. In addition, the display of photomontages corresponds to an expression of anti-art that calls for an aesthetic-political revolution by adding social commentary to the artwork in the form of clippings and cut-outs from newspapers. To that end, Dada erased the boundaries that separated the purely artistic from the political in order to prove that the interconnection of both disciplines is indispensable in moves to contest the police and effect radical transformations at the heart of society.

Notes

1. Rancière claims that in the ethical regime of images, these "are the object of a twofold question: the question of their origin (and consequently their truth content) and the question of their end or purpose, the uses they are put to and the effects they result in" (20). Rancière draws on Plato's definition of art as ways of doing and making that separate artistic simulacra from true arts. The former are based on the imitation of appearances, whereas the latter serve the purpose of educating citizens, emphasizing their position in the community.

2. The representative regime of arts hinges upon the notion of representation or *mimēsis*, understood not as an exact copy of the original, but rather as "a fold in the distribution of ways of doing and making as well as in social occupations, a fold that renders the arts visible" (22). In other words, the representative regime of art focuses on the hierarchy of genres and subject matter as well as the proclivity to give priority to speech over visible imagery.

3. "Seelenautomobile" was later published in *Der Dada* 3 (1920). This phonetic poem utilized alliterations to appeal to emotional suggestiveness as opposed to the intelligibility of the conceptual nature of language.

4. For further information on the origins and results of the German revolution, see Pierre Brouâe's *The German Revolution 1917–1923*.

5. For a counterargument to the Spartacist uprising, see Eric Waldman's *The Spartacist Uprising of 1919 and the Crisis of the German Socialist Movement: A Study of the Relation of Political Theory and Party Practice*.

6. The manifesto was originally published as an attachment to *Der Dada*, no. 1, June 1919, n. pag.

7. By subjectivization (also translated as subjectification or subjectivation), Rancière refers to the identification of a wrong and the efforts to effectuate equality for those lacking a place or an occupation in society.

8. For an in-depth interpretation of Höch's photomontage, see chapters 2 and 5 in Biro's *Dada Cyborg: Visions of the New Human in Weimar Berlin*.

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The Public Stage: The Working Class in Theatrical Representations and the Fear of America's Declining Public Sphere

Wesley R. Bishop

Introduction

The history of the United States' working class is, in large part, the history of actors stepping onto stage and confronting roles scripted by prevailing social norms. Thus, the way in which society imagines social actors, the public sphere, and how political dramas unfold influences the support and development of certain democratic actions and groups. For example, in Israel Zangwill's 1908 play *The Melting Pot*, one character explains his "vision" of America and its various social groups as follows:

> America is God's Crucible, the great Melting-Pot where all the races of Europe are melting and re-forming! Here you stand . . . fifty groups, with . . . fifty languages and histories . . . But you won't be long like that . . . for these are the fires of God . . . Germans and Frenchmen, Irishmen and Englishmen, Jews and Russians— into the Crucible with you all! God is making the American. (37)

Zangwill's vision of the ideal American populace was one stripped of differences, amalgamated to a prescribed ideal, and therefore made fit for democratic action. Such a vision of multiple ethnic groups, racial identities, and socioeconomic classes melding into a commensurable, universal identity of "American" speaks to a deeper philosophical assumption of what is required to make democracy work.

Yet, this vision elicits larger questions. Why would differences need to be removed in order to make American democracy work properly? How did most Americans fit into this conceptualization? Where would this supposed democracy take place?

Fears concerning America's democratic health have persisted throughout much of American thought and culture. From Jeffersonian

views of an agrarian republic, to the Whigs' concern over populist sentiment in Jacksonian democracy, to the divisions in the Civil War— the United States' popular political culture is subject to a surprisingly persistent expression of fear that democracy is at risk of decline. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this concern took the form of the "labor question," a social concern regarding how American democracy would survive the emergence of clear, permanent class divisions.

American working-class portrayals in theatre changed during the *fin de siècle* to reflect this broader concern manifested in the labor question. Working-class characters transformed from largely heroic artisans into the source of America's democratic decline. Increased immigration, growing economic class divisions, new political possibilities for African Americans, increased presence of women in public, and the rise of organized labor and corporate capital initiated a crisis in American thought over exactly how the public sphere would operate with social actors speaking past one another. Henry Blake Fuller in his 1895 novel *With the Procession* articulated this fear, arguing cities like Chicago needed to "skirt the edge of all this Babel," while Theodore Dreiser referred to the inner city as a populace with a "babel of tongues" (Kraus 9).

This imagining of Babel as the new specter for the country and its democratic public carried consequences for how labor was viewed in the Gilded Age and Progressive era. The biblical allegory of Babel's tower spawned an imagining of American democracy dependent on non-partisan actors capable of civic and political commensurability. In this imagining, citizens were atomized individuals who should enter a public sphere free of economic, racial, ethnic, and gender tensions. To prevent the US from becoming a new "Tower of Babel," American citizens, therefore, needed to amalgamate into a social melting pot, not so much to create a new society, but more to preserve the ideal of the prevailing political order. This fear was nothing short of an existential crisis: the US could become a true democratic republic, with a robust public good, or the democratic exercise could become a half-finished edifice, paralyzed by divisions, unable to reach its promised paradise. For movements such as labor, which saw inherent divisions in society based on class, this dire alternate narrative meant that the rhetoric of organized workers could easily be construed as alien and "un-American." Brought to Babel's base, the working class were portrayed in theatrical productions, both high and low, as a problem to be overcome for the sake of America's democratic health.

This cultural change, of course, had a strong basis in historical materialism. Beginning in 1800, the percentage of the self-employed labor force dropped dramatically. From a level of nearly sixty percent of the overall workforce in 1800, by 1860, entrepreneurs represented less than forty percent. Consequently, the number of wage earners rose exponentially. In 1800, those who labored for wages made up little more than ten percent of the labor force, but by 1860 that percentage had grown by a factor of four. The beginning of the American Civil War coincided with a rare moment when the nation had an equal percentage of wage-earning and self-employed workers. After the War, the process continued unabated, until in the early 1900s wage earners constituted nearly eighty percent of the overall workforce, compared to only twenty percent who were still self-employed in some remnant of proprietary-based capitalism (Lebergott 292).

Given this decline in the percentage of self-employed workers, many of whom had been (or would have been) small scale, skilled artisans, it is not surprising that economic artisan republicanism emerged as a common feature of political rhetoric and social ideals in the years prior to the Civil War. Reflecting as much a political ideal as a social reality, this notion that via the ownership of one's own shop or farm a beloved community would arise among economic equals was even older than the American republic itself. Dating back to some of the earliest writings of the Enlightenment, the belief in a possible agrarian republic was more a normative claim for how democracy should work than an accurate description of actual society. Multiple stage productions during the antebellum period contributed to this republican ideal, showing exactly how it should govern social interactions. Plays such as the *Carpenter of Rouen*, *The Gladiator*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and the *Surgeon of Paris* all posited workers as independent noble actors, besieged in a world at risk of destruction due to specific social forces. As Spartacus tells his captors in *The Gladiator*, upon reflecting on Rome's worth,

> Rome had never been great! Whence came this greatness, but from the miseries of subjugated nations? How many myriads of happy people . . . were slain like the beasts of the field, that Rome might fatten upon the blood and become *great*? . . . I will not fight . . . I will not slay a man for the diversion of Romans. (Bird 245)

Spartacus communicates here an artisan mentality. His labor belongs to him. Rome is not great, for it has benefitted from the works of others. His vision of his own worth, and the worth of others, is tied to the concept of independence. Even as a slave, he is an independent laborer. He sees himself as free to employ his labor (in this instance combat) or withhold it whenever he deems necessary.

Given that *The Gladiator* was staged in 1832 during the era of American slavery, its focus on one of the world's largest slave revolts could not have been coincidental. *The Gladiator* did not deal with the question of universal human liberation necessarily, but was instead focused on a question of labor. Human dignity arose from this work, but did not necessarily precede it. In other words, human worth originated in one's work and how that work reflected a certain social ideal. Spartacus's repeated denouncements of Roman civilization spoke to this sense, seeing social worth arising from a free people working independently in their community. The public good, therefore, was generated through the willing participation of the laborer.

Although the play's author Robert Montgomery Bird frequently depicted violence, he rejected the idea that hierarchies in Northern industry and Southern slave plantations should be overthrown through violent revolution. Following the success of *The Gladiator*, Bird wrote, "[Some] six to eight hundred rebelling slaves under Nat Turner . . . murdering, ravishing, and burning in Virginia. . . . If they had a Spartacus among them to organize the half million [slaves] of Virginia, the hundreds of thousands in other states, and lead them . . . what a blessed example might they not give" (240).

In 1852 George L. Aiken's adaptation of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* premiered, and although some reviews like the *New York Herald* stated it was "an exaggerated mockery of southern institutions calculated to poison the minds of our youth with the principles of abolitionism," many other reviews received the staging favorably (qtd. in Gibbs 246). Set in the United States and not Rome, many of the characters' monologues nonetheless resembled Bird's *Gladiator* sentiment. As George Harris, the soon-to-be runaway slave, states in the opening scene,

> My master! And who made him my master? That's what I think of! What right has he to me? I'm as much of a man as he is! What right has he to make a dray-horse out of me? To take me from things I can do better than he can, and put me to work that any horse can do? He tries to do it; he says he'll bring me down and humble me, and he puts me to just the hardest, meanest, and dirtiest work, on purpose. (Aiken 360)

This passage is noteworthy not only in the ways it portrays race and slave rebellion, but also in the way it treats the institution of slavery. The crime of the South, much like the crime of Rome, was not so much a transgression against a people for their race, but rather a crime against chattel laborers better suited to work as free wage earners. Remembering George's ingenuity, another character remarks, "He worked for me some half a dozen years in my bagging factory, and he was my best hand, sir. He is an ingenious fellow, too; he invented a machine for the cleaning of hemp— a really valuable affair; it's gone into use in several factories. His master holds the patent on it" (371).

In this way, George's race equates to Spartacus's nationality. According to both these narratives' logic, race and nationality are superficial and undemocratic markers to be ignored for the more pressing question of how a society respected an individual's potential labor power. This was directly related to how a society then treated that labor power's use for individual and collective benefit. As Steven Watts has argued, this focus on the individual laborer, so clearly seen in various theatrical productions in the antebellum period, provides an understanding of how the US could shift from agrarian republicanism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to corporate capitalist liberalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[1]

Such concepts as natural rights, contracts, and autonomy provided a vehicle to transform early republican thought into a social outlook compliant with corporate capitalist needs of labor markets. Republican "civic virtue" was principally, both then and now, a view that individuals could further the "public good" by cultivating self through work, simultaneously benefitting the individual and the idealized agrarian republic of small scale producers. This individualism had to lead to a commensurable and universal status to guarantee a homogeneous body politic.

This depiction of specific individuals, imbued with the simultaneous qualities of individualism and commensurable civic virtue, is also apparent in many other productions from the period that do not deal with slavery. In *Carpenter of Rouen,* Marteau, a carpenter and the play's protagonist, defends the dignity of skilled laborers:

> A mechanic, sir, is one of God's [noblemen] . . . Who opens the secret chambers of the deep and makes the tractless ocean a highway for nations? The mechanic! Who holds the elements of fire and water in subjection and at his command makes sea and air the playthings of his power? The mechanic sir . . . The Supreme Ruler of the Universe is himself the Great Mechanic. (Watts 9)

The artisan laborer is a hero capable of altering the landscape. In addition, the audience views the characters as they labor in provincial settings. *The Carpenter of Rouen* places Marteau in his tidy carpenter shop. In *Ernest Malravers* (1838), Ernest and his wife live in a small village, while in the *Surgeon of Paris* we see an artisan in his shop. The gladiators in Bird's work appear in the opening scene discussing their plot to retake control of their lives below the pit. In *Nick of the Woods* (1838), the action takes place in a pastoral Arcadia, a small village dotted with humble shops. Stage directions describe the setting as "Forest glade and log hut, cattle grazing; trees lying about; Sunset" (Medina 4).

These settings depict either a utopia with men controlling their labor, freely engaging with one another as relative independent equals, or men prepared to reassert their independence and return to that egalitarian ideal. The world has reached equilibrium. That is, until a sinister force such as slavery appears, or other agents of undemocratic hierarchies manifest. In the *Surgeon of Paris,* the Catholic queen of France orders troops to attack unarmed Protestants. Soldiers then go through the corpses of the slain, taking money and jewels. "Here is a diamond in this woman's ear," one solider says. "Tear it out," orders the captain (*Surgeon of Paris* 26).

In the *Carpenter of Rouen,* artisans, honoring their trade and independence, combat the evil threatening the people. Marteau and the other skilled laborers initiate their young apprentices to the secret association of the Confrée, using symbols and tools of their trade. Marteau rouses his fellow workers then by exclaiming, "Citizens of Rouen . . . Shall these lords in power choose for you the time and place of labor; and as they do their cattle, work ye when they will? . . . Let rulers know they are not the masters of the people: strike for your rights . . . Strike for your country! Strike for your altars and your homes! As you would deserve heaven's grace, and man's name, strike" (27-28)! These workers' associations, then, are not so much organizations grouped around a specific sectarian or partisan identity and concern. Instead, they are tools through which to maintain the social status quo. The agents keeping true order for how civil society *should* operate as commanded—as though by natural law and divine will.

The greatest risk to the public good perennially presents itself as a set of large forces working against the common man. Although women were portrayed in these productions, doubtlessly these plays view the hero as decidedly masculine. Strength, courage, self-control, sense of worth, and appropriate use of violence embody the male laborer characters. Many laboring women characters, when they did appear,

were shown as the males' partners. Taking care of an idealized private sphere, women were often depicted as separate from the public sphere.

The public sphere, therefore, offers an open and accessible space where these workers, independent and relatively equal, work for themselves and for the mutual benefit of society. Hierarchical forces like the slave owners of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the *Gladiator,* as well as the aristocrats of *Carpenter of Rouen* and the *Surgeon of Paris,* threaten this public sphere. The independent artisans, villages, proprietary shops, and small towns form part of a broader social imagining of a democratic arena of communication, action, and thought at risk to figures who wish to control it for their own gain. Women and children live as dependents in this ordering. People of color are largely portrayed as living outside of this arena. Native Americans are completely outside of this social organization due to Anglo-America's narrow conception of civilization. Insofar as African Americans are portrayed sympathetically in this social ordering, it is within a context based on the ideal of white, independent artisans.

These themes of independent worker republicanism not only shaped the plays of the period but also influenced popular mass actions such as the anti-abolitionist Farren Riots of 1834 and the Astor Place Riot (Shakespeare Riot) of 1849. As historians like Bruce McConachie and Lawrence Levine have noted, these riots demonstrate the potential of the working class to view themselves as social actors combatting widespread conspiracy and shaping cultural productions. Rioters argued that like the characters of the plays they were besieged by threatening forces. Participants in riots, therefore, used white supremacy and nativism as justification for their actions because they were "protectors" of the public good.

Thus, these antebellum plays enable an understanding of how playwrights and audiences articulated and consumed republican ideals through examining how white citizens viewed their role in protecting the supposed "public good." This portrayal was markedly different from how plays post-1860s presented the American working class. Whereas in the antebellum period the public sphere and America's ability to maintain its democratic society was shown to primarily be at risk due to conspiratorial forces, the theatrical productions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century depicted a different threat.

At Babel's Base

Immigration to the US has never been a steady stream that continually increased the population. Instead, immigration, especially in the nine-

teenth century, was a sporadic increase of multiple peoples, followed by relative lulls, and then followed once again by increased influxes. The result has been an ever-diversifying American populace.

Post-1860 theatrical productions reflect this growing cultural tension over a fragmented and increasingly diverse civil society. Productions such as *Across the Continent*, *A Temperance Town*, and *The Mulligan Guard Ball*, along with the vaudeville and popular minstrel shows, were markedly different in tone from their predecessors a few decades earlier. Whereas earlier plays depicted workers as individualistic, heroic beings, these productions depicted the workers themselves as a threat to the functionality of the public sphere, and therefore to the greater public good.

Across the Continent illustrates this fear of fragmentation quite well. The play opens in a slum in Five Points, New York, where Agnes, a "virtuous wife," scolds her husband George for drinking away their money. "Have you any money in the house?" George asks. "Not a penny," Agnes answers. George appears confused. "What has become of the money I got for shoveling the snow on Chatham Street?" "Gone— all gone. Spent by yourself at Adderly's [the saloon] for liquor" (McCloskey 507). Agnes, angered over George's careless spending, confronts the saloon owner Adderly over his "immoral" business.

This opening scene differs drastically from the idyllic counterparts of the antebellum depictions of working class gathering. The saloon, an increasingly popular site for workers to gather in the late nineteenth century, was a frequent target of criticism by upper-class reformers. In Charles Hoyt's *A Temperance Town* (1892), a drama unfolds between a town's upper-class reformers and the local saloon keeper Oakhurst. The publican is a decorated veteran of the Civil War, but in order to provide for his family, he is forced to operate a saloon. The play is sympathetic to Oakhurst and his working-class customers while being critical of their alcohol use. Depicting the saloon, ultimately, as a site of social corrosion, the play argues that the working-class customers must exercise self-control in order to be productive community members.

In the second act, the scene opens on the saloon, a quiet and sage place for men to meet and talk after work. The town's working-class men discuss shared concerns, the state of the community, and recent news. Eventually the dialogue gives way to joking, which adds to the relaxed nature of the surroundings. However, Bingo, a young worker, starts to take a drink then remembers a young woman who had earlier chastised him for wasting his wages on drinks rather than saving them:

> Perry: I say, Bingo, what does that little gal up to the house say to you?

> Bingo: [Dropping glass from mouth slowly] She said if I stopped drinking and took care of myself, folks would respect me and wouldn't call me Bingo any more.
>
> Mink: Ain't you going to drink?
>
> Bingo: No, I ain't. I'm going to take this money home to mother. Any fellow that lets his mother work as hard as mine does and don't try to help her is of no account.
>
> Worth: If that boy had been raised right, he'd have made a good man. (Hoyt 644)

Hoyt was largely anti-temperance in his politics. Yet despite intending the play as a "sophisticated" critique of temperance and its advocates, the play nonetheless argues that workers need to change in a fundamental way if they are to be productive, full members of society. Unlike the saloons, then, of *Across the Continent*, Hoyt depicted vice as being self-inflicted by workers. Mink, a regular saloon-goer in Hoyt's drama, summarizes the play's politics in his angry diatribe following Oakhurst's arrest by city officials: "You think you are right when you deprive people of their personal liberty. . . . If a man ain't born a man, you can't make him one by law! . . . As long as you try to reform me by law, I'll drink! And I'll get it too, and no darn city legislature can stop me either!" (646) Supposedly liberating, this working class "agency" was hardly empowering. No Progressive-era reform, Hoyt argued, would improve people in the working class. Only the impetus of the workers could lead to improvement. Yet, if workers controlled their own behavior, then that naturally meant any issue arising from the working class was the fault not of society, but of workers themselves.

The role of the working class in theatrical productions was therefore reversed. Whereas the threat to the public sphere and America's democratic health had been powerful undemocratic hierarchies in the antebellum period, the new threat in the Gilded Age and Progressive era was the working class itself. The working class had the herculean task of overcoming its own "nature" in order to be productive, fully independent, democratic actors in society. Therefore, the working class was no longer the assumed protagonist fighting for preservation of the public good, but instead a conflicted character whose ultimate fate was questionable at best. Gender also played a role in this imagining.

In antebellum plays, keeping with republican idealism, there was a clearly demarcated line between private and public spheres. Republican citizens (largely white and male) possessed the virtue through their

status as independent laborers to preserve the public good and maintain a democratic society. Yet as dependent wage earners, and representatives of a broader sampling of ethnic identities, workers formed part of a fragmented public sphere, a body politic in need of regular infusions of democratic virtue to become better. Women, like Agnes and Bingo's love interest, became catalysts for this necessary change in public behavior. Femininity, with its assumed focus on the family and moral virtue, replaced the artisan ideal as the social glue of the body politic. Women, therefore, entered the stage of theatrical representation of the period by becoming burdened messengers of civic morality. This portrayal was far from a liberating turn.

Ruth, daughter of one of the temperance advocates in Hoyt's play, is one of the few upper-class characters who support Oakhurst. Her father disowns her for her actions, but he eventually forgives her, saying "Woman is a creature of instinct, and I believe, that sympathy led you to your foolish act. I cannot forgive, but I will condone! And now, I ask you if you will return" (654). Ruth is eventually vindicated when it is discovered that Oakhurst is a hero of the republic for his service in the Civil War, having even saved a member of Ruth's family in battle. Her father then pleads for forgiveness, agreeing his political beliefs had been too harsh. Ruth's compassion and insistence that if Oakhurst merely had another way to provide for his family that he would quit the vice of the saloon, is thereby vindicated.

This ethics could also be inscribed in the behaviors of certain men who applied the logic of nurturing to others in society. In *Across the Continent*, an Irish working-class man named Denny argues with his wife Madalia about the importance of helping others in need:

> Denny: . . . Have you any more bread in the house, my darling?
>
> Madalia: Yes, but I've only got enough for the children's breakfast, and I don't know where we will get any more.
>
> Denny: [Takes bread from table] There was never a door shut up but what there was another open.
>
> Madalia: Would ye be after takin' the bread out of your own children's mouth?
>
> Denny: Go to sleep, my cuckoo. Your dreams will be all the swater fer partin' wid' half a loaf.

> Madalia: I wouldn't think you could sleep at all for robbin' yer own flesh and blood.
>
> Denny: That'll do it now. I'll give you a slap in the jaw.
> Madalia: Ye'd better not, or I'll put such a head on you that yer mother wouldn't know ye.
>
> . . .
>
> Madalia: Faith, and he takes better care fer them brats downstairs than he does fer his own. (McCloskey 508)

Denny and Ruth both possess the appropriate characteristics and social outlook to make them fit actors in social affairs. Though not similar to Spartacus or Marteau, these characters instead transcend partisan politics, ethnic identity, and self-interested private concerns to promote the public good. The ethos that protects the public good, and therefore enables the possibility of a democratic public sphere, shifts from a masculine hero to a compassionate figure capable of broad-based affinity with others. This shift, while allowing for a changed role for female characters, often fell short when it came to women of the working class.

This focus on women in public was also evident in the vaudevillian acts of the time, and it provides among the most interesting conceptualizations of how working-class women fit into these new ideals. Acts such as "Dangerous Mrs. Delaney," "The Irish 400," and "The Adventures of Bridget McGuire" largely focus on Irish working-class women of the period. In "Dangerous Mrs. Delaney," Mrs. Delaney and her daughter, Irish working-class women, are thrown into the upper class due to a large legal settlement. Delaney's daughter adjusts quickly to the customs and behaviors required of her new social standing, while Mrs. Delaney struggles to navigate their new-found ascension. Mrs. Delaney spits in public, brawls with men, and yells profane insults. However, Mrs. Delaney emerges as the hero of the story due to her ability to see behind the façade of the upper class. In a 1902 version of the sketch, Mrs. Delaney saves her daughter from a suitor who, despite his flowery language, is only interested in her money. As M. Alison Kibler has argued in examining these productions, "These sketches thus feature the rough, immigrant clown as hero, casting a positive light on ethnic pride and working-class allegiance" (104).

Nevertheless, despite this potential for positivity, these sketches do present a problem of working-class representation when it comes to the characters' ability to operate as democratic actors in the public sphere.

In an 1897 version of the "Irish 400," the character Mrs. Murphy repeatedly embarrasses her daughter by behaving poorly in public. Female characters like Mrs. Murphy achieve their comedic potential because they do not fit into the broader society. On display in these productions, then, is a basic argument that due to class and ethnic identity there remains an inseparable gulf between working-class women and their upper-class counterparts who infuse the public with needed civic morality. Although the heroes of their own stories, the working-class women of these productions are alienated from the more sophisticated functions of social and political life. As Robert Allen has argued, these representations can hence be perceived as "polyvalent, not only directed against those conceived of as 'above,' but constructing another yet another object of subordination" (105). Kibler relies heavily on Allen's observation, and he makes an important and much-needed argument— femininity is bifurcated along class lines, leaving working-class women outside the realm of polite, civil society and by extension, outside avenues of civic debate, democratic discourse, and broader public spheres. Although Delaney, Murphy, and the other working-class women of theatrical depictions may be somewhat sympathetic protagonists, their heroic qualities stem from the idea that they add stress to public spheres due to their escalating, permanent alienation. In other words, the rich may be dishonest charlatans in these productions, but the working-class women of these sketches do not conduct themselves in a conventional manner. Through their existence, these characters argue that there are differences among people: class, race, ethnicity, and sex. When the characters come into contact with one another, the results may be humorous or disastrous, but there is no doubt that their differences remain the most notable feature.

The Mulligan Guard Ball offers another example of this fragmented public sphere in working-class communities. The play focuses on a young German woman and a young Irish man wishing to wed despite their families' ethnic tensions. Unlike a Shakespearean tragedy, the German and Irish families are not sworn enemies. In fact, they are both members of the same fraternal organization— the Mulligan Guard. However, this commonality does not enable the union of culturally disparate families. The play is equal parts comedy and romance as the fathers have altercation after altercation in a series of public spaces such as saloons, the barbershop, and the fraternity's meeting space. A subplot laces the story together: a rival fraternal organization plans to hold its ball on the same night, in the same hall, in order to confront the Mulligan Guard.No consideration of sharing spaces is given; various characters battle to control spaces and subjugate other groups. As one rival fraternal member states about the predominantly

Irish Mulligan Guard, "I don't see why de government can't quarantine such people as dese. Dey land too sudden' dar ain't enough fumigation" (Harrigan 554).

The authors' diversity lends another unique quality to these productions. Vaudevillian acts were often authored and performed by descendants of working-class immigrants. Hoyt was an upper-class writer and political figure whose productions were noted for aiming to please mass audiences. *Across the Continent* was a collaborative effort. Edward Harrigan, the author of *The Mulligan Guard Ball,* came from working-class roots. Despite this relative diversity of authorial backgrounds, all of the plays contain the same underlying assumption: the working class and their place as fully independent democratic actors in the public sphere was a fraught aspiration.

Harrigan's biography is particularly interesting in this regard. Learning the theatre trade from amateur nights at the Bowery, he based many of his early dramas on his experience growing up in Manhattan's Lower East Side. Harrigan would eventually be known as "American Dickens" by many theater reviewers because of his focus on the working class, but instead of depicting workers with nuance, or critiquing the rise of capitalism, as Dickens often did, Harrigan surveyed the city and concluded that a multiplicity of cultures had weakened its sphere of exchange. Ethnic tensions, class divisions, religious differences, and political disputes made democratic practice within the majority of the working class nearly impossible. The only hope Harrigan could conjure were young lovers; for instance, his lead characters in *The Mulligan Guard* could strengthen the possibility of a melting pot.

Once understood in this way, these theatrical productions cease merely illustrating political attitudes and begin to enable labor historians to more deeply understand anti-labor sentiment. If the liberal bourgeois public sphere is an idealized state that serves as a universal stage for various actors to meet, discuss, and decide democratic action for the greater public good, then movements seen as identity-based or partisan pose a threat to their gaining traction in the broader culture. Labor movements not only recognize specific divisions in society, but they also insist that such divisions are the real social foundation of modern life. When successful, Labor has often been able to tie its specific pleas to the greater good, but this connection usually requires returning to antebellum narratives in which Labor, combatting the hierarchies of capital, safeguards democracy. When Labor is unable to make that connection, when public opinion does not readily align against capital, then Labor returns to a partisan entity with a self-serving agenda.

Organized labor is pressured to act as purveyor of civic virtue, public good, and the anvil upon which a democratic society will be shaped. Skirting the threat of fragmentation, elements of the labor movement can, and have, advanced notions of civic homogeneity based in racialized nationalism. Consequently, Zangwill's call for assimilation of the other into a hegemonic norm of "American" understands the subtler mission of advancing a specific national politics, a particular conceptualization of democratic practice, and a prescribed notion of nationalism through the medium of staged theater. Peoples who could not be reformed into this ethnic and political nationalism, therefore, were permanently outside the borders of democratic life.

In *Across the Continent* these racial tensions are patent, and it is noteworthy that the antagonism permanently fractures public life. Joe, one of main antagonists, confronts Giovanni, an Italian immigrant who forces orphaned girls to work in the streets. Before his altercation with Joe, Giovanni stabs Billy the bartender,

> Billy: So, signor— you like this country?
>
> Giovanni: Yes, me like the country. Me maka da plenty money.
>
> Billy: But don't you think these girls steal from you sometimes?
>
> Giovanni: Oh, everybody steal in dees country.
>
> Billy: What's that, you Italian organ-grinder and ring-tailed monkey dancer? Take back those words or I'll make you eat them.
>
> Giovanni: Never! I no take back! (McCloskey 516)

Giovanni then stabs Billy. Characters labelled only as the "Coon," "Dutchmen," and "the Dude" then enter and engage in minstrelsy such as singing, slapstick, and one-liners. These are caricatures of various ethnic and racial identities, and their actions fill the background as Joe fights Giovanni to free the young girls in his employment.

Racial caricatures appear throughout the play. In the final act, the Goodwin family leaves the modern-day Babel of New York to settle in California. Bringing their African American servant Caesar, the white Goodwins repeatedly remark that they cannot understand Caesar. Other minstrelsy is performed by caricatures of Chinese laborers and a Native American raiding party. Various groups—white settlers, black and Chinese laborers, and displaced Native Americans—converge on a

small rail station where violence erupts. Antithetical to amalgamation, the drama depends on an assumed fracture among different classes, ethnicities, and genders that clash with one another. The play closes with the Goodwin's telegraphing the Union forces to come and save them. "What do I want?" Joe shouts as he uses the telegraph, "I'll tell you what I want . . . I am surrounded by Indians. I have two helpless women to protect, and only about four fighting men. Lose not a moment if you would save human life" (532). The play concludes with Caesar and the Chinese fighting the Native Americans as Union troops rush off the train and fire their weapons, scattering all but the white characters— the Goodwins, Joe, and his fiancée.

Several contemporary theatre critics noted the use of the telegraph, arguing the drama effectively incorporated new technology in order to propel the plot. They rarely, if ever, observed the irony that a communication technology heralded for its ability to bridge geographical divides appeared in a play centered on communication failures.[2]

Of course, lack of communication was a theatrical trope long before the labor question of the late nineteenth century. One need only examine the oeuvre of playwrights like William Shakespeare to see this commonplace. Comedies and tragedies hinge on characters misreading, mishearing, and misunderstanding conversations, identities, and actions. From Malvolio to Othello, characters initiate disastrous and humorous events based on their failures to communicate. A folly played out by fools, these missteps manifest in particular and avoidable circumstances. Compare this trope to civic fears created by a perceived fractured public sphere. The miscommunication is by design, a presupposed reality of the character's dialogue. It is not a folly based in individual failure. It is a farce because the characters are literally incapable of communication. They are not integrated bodies; they are bodies adrift. In the off-chance they come into contact, they collide violently, not in the mélange of a melting pot.

Conclusion

James L. Huston has argued that the turn of the twentieth century was a period of reimagining how the American political economy should operate. He observes that in the final decades of the nineteenth century, a republican ideal was finally laid to rest by a majority of the nation's inhabitants. Specifically, Huston sees the republican discourse of wealth distribution finally abating, stating:

> [the] concern over the distribution of wealth was prompted by a . . . political philosophy of republicanism. In contrast to nations in which monarchs and aristocrats dominated the state, republics embodied the ideal of equality among citizens in political affairs, the equality taking the form of citizen participation in the election of officials . . . Americans believed that if property were concentrated in the hands of a few in a republic, those few would use their wealth to control other citizens, seize political power, and warp the republic into an oligarchy. (1080)

Huston contends this tension can be most readily seen by past figures wary of strong bureaucracies and centralized governments. Many Americans believed these sites of political power were potential tools for aristocrats to accumulate wealth for personal gain. It remained the duty of people to assiduously preclude this danger. However, as capital and labor gained more attention in the late nineteenth century, government changed from a threat to political equality into a possible means of guaranteeing a continuation of democracy. The republican ideal remained present in American thought as manifested in belief in individual freedom and relative social equality, but the methods by which the system could sustain itself would change. By examining several American theatrical productions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, we see a shift in working-class representations in this regard. From heroic individuals fighting undemocratic hierarchies to fractured pieces of an unintelligible whole, the working class ceased to act as principle agent of protecting American democracy due to its increasing diversity and consequent perceived inability to work as a homogeneous entity within a broader public sphere.

As the late thinker Kenneth Burke stated, concerning how the public's use of communication operated: ". . . [it] must lead us through the Scramble, the Wrangle of the Market . . . rhetoric is concerned with the state of Babel after the Fall" (qtd. in Stob 236). Babel, of course, refers to the mythological tower in Genesis that was supposed to take the inhabitants to paradise. God, angered by human hubris, cursed the masses to speak different languages. No longer able to communicate, the people were forced to abandon the tower. No longer unified, they went their separate ways to populate the earth, now with paradise out of reach.

The myth has powerful connections to nineteenth-century fears of American democratic decline. Representations of the working class contributed to a circuit of exchange that positioned the working class as a source of democracy's ills due to its corrosive effects on a robust

public sphere. In order to avoid this issue, certain cultural productions argued the working class must fundamentally change certain aspects of itself. This view of the working class as a work in progress was also not a product only of "highbrow" theatrical works, but also appeared in so-called "lowbrow" productions.

Conceding the highbrow-lowbrow binary, we would expect a highbrow work to offer a strong message of needed social uplift and change, with the cultural sites becoming the secular pulpit to reshape, reform, and guide the populace. Lowbrow works, the reasoning would follow, could in turn be a site to challenge this reform. Upon closer examination, however, a more complicated circuit of exchange emerges. Highbrow plays continued to criticize aspects of the hegemony, while the lowbrow acts in areas like vaudeville posited arguments that narrowly depicted large sections of the working class. The republican concern ran through all of these productions, lacing the high and low elements into a broader discourse on American democracy.

An inherent tension exists in the way Americans have thought about and articulated their conceptualization of the democratic public sphere. On the one hand, American democracy has an established fear of powerful, undemocratic hierarchies seizing control of social and political life. On the other hand, American democratic thought conceals a fear that due to social fragmentation and partisanship the populace's commensurability will be lost. Hegemony will take political power, while babble will crumble the streets. Both of these fears, alternative poles on the axis of a declining public sphere, have consequences concerning portrayals of working class social actors.

The working class in the first scenario becomes members of an assorted cast, fighting the demagogue and assuring the health of the republic. The second scenario views the working class as an obstacle that must be overcome in order for democracy to flourish. Fragmented along lines of class, race, ethnicity, and gender, the working class must overcome itself for democracy to survive. Such an explanation thereby contributes not only an understanding of the theatrical literature's depictions of the working class in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but also the broader issues contained in popular political beliefs of American democracy, the public sphere, and our positioning of the populace in these designs.

Notes

1. See Steven Watts's argument in *The Republic Reborn: War and the Making of Liberal America, 1790-1820*. The John Hopkins Press, 1987.

2. See Richard Moody's argument in *Dramas from the American Theatre, 1762-1909*. The World Publishing Company, 1966.

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The Ethics of Alternate History: Melodrama and Political Engagement in Amazon's *The Man in the High Castle*

Zachary Michael Powell

With Hulu's adaptation of Margaret Atwood's 1985 dystopia *The Handmaid's Tale*, winner of the 2017 Emmy for Outstanding Drama Series, television's political engagement in the era of digital streaming became stronger than ever. The show premiered April 26, 2017, between the January 21st Women's March and the October advent of the #MeToo movement, and it created political resonance with these protests by adapting an older novel. Similarly, Amazon's adaptation of Philip K. Dick's 1962 *The Man in the High Castle* sought to use a science-fiction premise for political engagement in our zeitgeist. And while dystopias like *The Handmaid's Tale* generally use the future as the setting for grim and politically-charged content, *The Man in the High Castle* (*MHC*) uses the past instead—a dystopic alternate world in which the Nazis won WWII. Although the show may fumble slightly in the handling of television's treatment of melodrama and seriality, it nevertheless challenges the growing "alt-right" presence in the US and Europe. It does so through the power of *estrangement*, the ability to consider something already known in a new way.[1]

In *The World Hitler Never Made*, Gavriel D. Rosenfeld discusses *alternate histories* that revolve around Nazi Germany winning World War II, claiming that these are not about the past but the present: "Alternate history is inherently presentist. It explores the past less for its own sake than to utilize it instrumentally to comment upon the state of the contemporary world. When the producers of alternate histories speculate on how the past might have been different, they invariably express their own highly subjective present-day hopes and fears" (10). Rosenfeld argues that, unlike works by historians, alternate histories give up their "mimetic relationship to historical reality" for one that is "estranging" (5). Lastly, he advocates that these works are worthy of critical attention because they are popular, and "it is highly likely that mass-market historical narratives are shaping popular historical awareness to a much greater extent than the histories produced by professional historians" (14). While Rosenfeld published his book in 2005

and discusses Philip K. Dick's 1962 novel *The Man in the High Castle*, Amazon released their streaming television adaptation of Dick's book in 2015.[2]

I argue that while the show's handling of television's melodrama and seriality occasionally obscures its commitment to ethics, Amazon's first two seasons of *MHC* adapt the book's alternate history to inspire an ethical response from viewers in the US within the contemporary political context. As I agree with Rosenfeld that alternate histories are historically conditioned and that their constructions respond to their own historical moments and crises, I find the show's overall moral imperative comes from alternate history's ethical power. Therefore, in the first section, I present Hayden White's narratological view of historiography and his understanding of how the past is used to address contemporary conflict. Additionally, White recognizes that the practice of fictional historical representation can promote ethical decision-making in the present. Second, I look at the adaptation of Dick's novel and its ethics of what I call a double estrangement in the context of Donald Trump's presidency through the show's use of both alternate history and historical fiction. Finally, I explore how the show's ethical implications collide with the melodramatic tendencies inherent in all narrative television and the importance this collision has for the show to reach audiences in 2017 and beyond.

Rosenfeld divides alternate histories into two categories: those that use the genre to moralize, and those that use it to normalize the Nazi regime as the product of larger historical movements and structures (23). He sees the latter process as becoming an increasing trend in the US since the 1970s and as having no ethical content (25). And while I agree that Amazon's *MHC* does occasionally normalize in its use of the melodramatic conventions of television, I argue that the show, *at the same time*, works overall towards a political engagement with its audience that is ethical and tied to a historical political moment, one that has witnessed the growth of the alt-right and Trump's ascendance to the presidency. Additionally, Karen Hellekson, in her reading of Dick's original novel, asserts that the book makes readers aware of their relationship to time and history (75). She believes that "the psychological effects of reading the alternate history are important: it could have happened otherwise . . . and individuals find themselves making a difference in the context of historical movements" (111). Like Hellekson, I agree that alternate history deepens audiences' awareness of time and history as well as their own choices within both, and I find Amazon's *MHC* emphasizes this awareness for viewers in the current US political context.

In the show, Japan and Nazi Germany have won WWII and have divided America in half. Japan occupies the western states; Germany, the eastern, which it conquered by dropping an atomic bomb on Washington DC. In between, The Rocky Mountain States form a neutral zone with no central authority. The show opens with characters worrying about whether an aging Hitler will die, for his death could bring about nuclear war between Germany and Japan. The show's main plotline concerns Juliana Crane, who receives a film canister containing newsreel footage of the Allies winning the war. She takes the film to the neutral zone and becomes engaged in a series of challenging events in which she eventually meets Hawthorne Abendsen, a man with access to other films: in these films, different worlds are shown, such as ours, as well as the world of *MHC* and its possible futures. Abendsen tells Juliana that the only reel he has watched of their world's future that does not end in the nuclear destruction of San Francisco is a film in which a man, whom Juliana recognizes, dies in an alley in New York. Therefore, Juliana must defect from Japan's Pacific States to Germany's American Reich and look for this man. Escaping conflict with the Nazi leader of the US, an American intentionally named John Smith, she must kill the man she saw in the film, a resistance member. This action sets in motion a chain of events, detailed in the show's many plotlines, that averts nuclear war by the end of the second season. Many of these subplots are closely or loosely adapted from the novel, while others are invented.

Throughout, the alternate history and different characters' conflicts and growth within the narrative demonstrate the show's ethical and political engagement. I conceive this engagement as follows: according to social reality theorists, reality is a construct of societal beliefs (Barnsley 97), and "moral codes that are operative" in different societies become "actualized, or institutionalized, in the normal activities of the society" (Barnsley 354). Thus, a society's ethics becomes reified in its governmental system. For Karl Popper, after the authoritarian governments that led to the devastation of WWII, leaders launching utopian plans is problematic, for these plans are based on only one group's vision that, when confronted by dissent, will ultimately lead to violence and authoritarianism (484). Instead, he argues that political goals should ease "human misery" through "rational public policy" (485). Thus, Popper advocates for a reasonable process of democratic change, one seeking to improve the well-being of as many different groups as possible. I believe the path towards this betterment is education, whether institutionalized through classrooms or used in cultural forms of storytelling such as television. According to Paulo Freire, education is tied to ethics in that it can "promote a universal human ethic"

centered around decision making (25). This universal human ethic constitutes one's ability to grow beyond self-concern and to see others as similar to or a part of one's self (26). Moreover, Freire emphasizes that this "responsibility does not mean that we are not conditioned genetically, culturally, and socially. It means we know ourselves to be *conditioned* but not *determined*. It means recognizing that History is time filled with possibility and not inexorably determined—that the future is *problematic* and not already decided, fatalistically" (26). Thus, education allows one to better understand one's own positionality regarding the world and its historical context. This realization leads to perceiving the importance of one's own choices and one's ability to positively affect others. Therefore, television, as a popular storytelling medium, can educate or ignore this universal human ethic. If producers and writers choose to educate via challenging political conceptions and choices, they could help viewers deter would-be authoritarians from reshaping social reality towards a path that leads to violence and social misery; they could instead steer these viewers toward democratic agency.

Hayden White and the Ethical Use-Value of Alternate History for the Present

As opposed to dystopias set in the future, Amazon's *MHC* creates estrangement by locating the story not only in the past but in an alternate history of that past; in so doing, it encourages Americans to evaluate the ethical demands of a democratic society by comparing past abuses to the present. To unearth how the show accomplishes this feat, I look to Hayden White's model of history, for White sees historiography as a narrative construction, and he emphasizes how storytelling allows audiences to compare historical facts with the contemporary moment. Thus, alternate history provides a similar comparative strategy since it allows audiences to consider the differences between historical fact and fiction and to compare both to the current moment—it thereby increases the power of the past's use for the present.

The use of history in the present starts with ethically-charged choices regarding the organization of historical facts. In *Metahistory*, White accounts that when writing history, historians plot out a story that involves a beginning, middle, and end (5); this choice allows them to comment upon and shape historical facts into a representation of history, and this is not an objective inalterable history. In his conclusion to *Metahistory*, White displays "an explicitly ethical consciousness that can be read retrospectively into the work" (Doran 117), for White argues

that historians' ability to choose the structure and/or narrative allows them to shape history based on their own "moral and aesthetic aspirations" (*Metahistory* 434). Hence, the structuring of history is an ethical as well as an artistic process.

Similarly, how history is represented influences its use for the present. Hence, White argues that the past can be used by "individuals or members of groups [to] draw upon in order to help them make assessments and make decisions in ordinary everyday life as well as in extreme situations" (*Practical* xiii). History is used to confront and negotiate present problems. For instance, White discusses Toni Morrison's *Beloved* as an example of well-crafted fictionalized history, and he interrogates the use of historical "facts of Margaret Garner's life for insight into the ethical issues with which a black woman in her situation and in her time had been confronted." White understands that facts alone are not as useful as fiction's power to be "a goad to ethically responsible action in the present" in regards to race, gender, and parenthood (*Practical* 21-22).[3] Thus, the artistic and moral choices the historian/storyteller makes become all the more salient in regard to how history is used in the present, for at moments of political duress, there is frequent recourse to defining moments in history, such as the events during and leading up to WWII. For example, considering the current political situation in the US, Timothy Snyder claims democracy is under threat from Trump's presidency and uses analogies to WWII-era fascist regimes ("Donald"). In *On Tyranny*, Snyder includes a chapter entitled "Take Responsibility for the Face of the World," in which he uses an example from Nazi Germany in 1933: when businesses were mandated to be marked as "Jewish" or "Aryan," non-Jewish German citizens became complicit with the "murderous future" to come (34-35); Snyder urges his readers to make ethical decisions in regard to their own society by challenging unethical policies and actions. Therefore, historical fact is shaped into representations potentially used to promote ethical decision-making in the present, but what if the depiction uses the science-fiction subgenre of alternate history?

For White, the ability to use innovative approaches when presenting history can give its use-value to the present a stronger ethical charge. Innovative approaches include the decision of experimental filmmakers to forego an "accuracy of detail" ("Historiography" 1199), akin to Morrison's use of magical realism in *Beloved*. And while historical fiction creates alternate personal stories alongside real ones, alternate history creates fictional personal stories set inside alternative political situations. Similarly, Hellekson evokes White's ideas when she argues that "alternate histories combine a historian's strategies with a fiction writer's strategies, often so successfully that readers find themselves

hard pressed to tell where one ends and the other begins" (29). History and fiction can be combined, but Richard T. Vann uses White's ideas to critique a historical work containing time travelers, contending that it did not "rise above the level of arbitrary intrusions" of the fiction (186). However, Vann gives an account of another highly fictive book and endorses it because it uses the poetic with a purpose (187). Consequently, shaping history through fictional license is justified, provided it works towards an ethical purpose. For example, Rosenfeld argues that Dick's novel is an "eloquent portrayal" with an ethical purpose, and he canonizes it as one of the primary examples of moralizing alternate histories (108). Alternate history stands as a highly ethical form when it has a moral purpose, such as using historical and fictional representations to promote ethical decision-making in the present. And since the moving image participates in historical representation as well, the adaptation of Dick's book into a television series allows for this ethical practice to reach mass audiences through online streaming. Amazon's *MHC* becomes, in Nietzsche's understanding of critical history, a historiography that can "break up the past, and apply it, too, in order to live" (21). Similarly, alternate history breaks the past by disrupting nostalgia, which is a powerful undercurrent exploited by growing alt-right ideologies.

Adaptation, Double Estrangement, and Donald Trump's Abuse of History

At the end of 2015 when Amazon released the first season of *MHC*, reviews were poor. Noah Berlatsky criticized the changes from Dick's original book, and Adi Robertson saw the series as simply a way for "white middle-class Americans" to pretend "to be underdogs." However, reviewers changed their tune a year later when Amazon released the second season. James Poniewozik gave a positive review regarding the show's importance in contemporary America, citing news events such as the rise in hate crimes, white supremacists yelling "Hail Trump" on video, and a Trump supporter's justifying the need for a Muslim registry by evoking the Japanese internment camps of WWII. Similarly, Matt Wilstein claimed the show was "the reality check we need." These reviews suggest that, when we look closely at the show, we see that its alternate history becomes a history with a type of use-value for the present in its urging viewers to resist the rising tide of alt-right fascism in the West, and its eliciting reflection on individual ethical choices. It does so using alternate history's power of estrangement, adapted from the original novel.

Donald Trump's election and the forces that attended it—fear of immigrants and Muslims as well as the faltering of American geopolitical and economic dominance—created a different political context in the US that will have consequences if not countermanded. For example, Timothy Snyder wrote for *Time* in March 2017 that Trump and his supporters are threatening America's concept of democracy ("Donald"). This opinion was carried over to the beginning of 2018, when Matthew Yglesias fretted over the Republican Party's continuous collusion with Trump and the detrimental effects it will have on American democracy. Thus, commentators have—and will continue to—predict that Trump will be America's biggest test since its founding.[4] Furthermore, the support that led to Trump's presidency included a campaign employing conservative nostalgia. Trump's "Make America Great Again" slogan has been widely discussed for its whitewashing of America's past, ignoring racial inequality and recalling only the supremacy white citizens had in the world post-WWII. The *MHC* television series challenges this nostalgic myth.

On nostalgia and history, Fredric Jameson argues that representations of the past can be non-political, and perhaps non-ethical, if they aestheticize or romanticize the past for easy consumption. Jameson claims that contemporary representations of the past "in their various ways affirm the past as being essentially the same as the present, and do not yet confront the great discovery of the modern historical sensibility, that the past, the various pasts, are culturally original, and radically distinct from our own experience of the object-world of the present" (284). In other words, the past, in films like *Barry Lyndon*, gets "reduced to so many glossy images" that erase "historicity" and cause "exhaustion of yesterday's events and of the day-before-yesterday's star players" (285). In light of late capitalism, and because of the postmodernist and technological media-happy society of the twenty-first century, Jameson calls to attention how historical representations privilege aesthetics and nostalgia rather than cognizance of history and its varied moments and conditions. While this observation describes the nostalgic abuse of the past used in Trump's campaign, the estrangement of *MHC*'s historical representation avoids nostalgia and forces viewers to consider historical conditions.

Regarding this estrangement, *MHC* adapts the novel and chooses to maintain the alternate history's setting in the 1960s. This setting allows estrangement to work on the level of science-fiction as well as history. First, Dick's novel shows an alternate history of its published date of 1962, and the show chooses to keep this date. This choice allows the show to be not only historical fiction *but also* alternate history. Commenting on Dick's alternate history of the author's own contem-

porary moment, Carl Freedman, in *Critical Theory and Science Fiction*, champions the science-fiction novel's estrangement as not simply about its contemporary moment but also about American history and America's status as international power. Freedman argues that the use of alternate history "forces a cognitive reexamination of actual historical events by questioning . . . whether America did win World War II after all—in the sense, that is, of really triumphing in the name of those values of freedom and peace most widely upheld in postwar American nationalism" (191). For Freedman, the book allows Americans in the 1960s to consider their distance from the authoritarian and violent regimes they fought against in the war.

In adapting the book's alternate history into a 2015–2016 television show and keeping the events in 1962, the estrangement is made stronger as it defamiliarizes history itself. For example, as historical fiction, *Mad Men* estranges audiences of the 2000s with 1960s images of a family littering nonchalantly after a picnic, enabling viewers to see changing attitudes towards littering as indications of progress in environmental awareness. Thus, Amazon's *MHC* estranges audiences in two ways in order to comment on the present: it creates an alternate world where the Axis won, and it puts this world at the moment of our history's Cold War as well as America's business dominance. As viewers watch, they compare contemporary American society and politics to the parallel version they see, one where Japanese or Nazi authorities have complete control and have mandated racial laws. Then, they transfer this vision to what they know of real history by comparing how these alternate events are similar to or different from the real historical past, where American democracy allowed Kennedy's election but racism and inequity were still rampant. Thereby, this double operation uses the past for the present and increases the power of the book's alternate history as the show is set in the audience's past, not simply an alternative present. This strategy allows viewers to better question their own historical moment as well as the efficacy of American power and values.

As an example of using alternate history alongside historical fiction, consider the character of Robert Childan. With him, the television show creates a *double estrangement* to erase nostalgia for a past permeated with bigotry and racism. Childan's character illustrates the white male's change of status in the occupied Japanese Pacific States. Childan must maintain his place subservient to a Japanese lawyer, and he gets angry when he is not allowed in the front door but told to go in the white servants' entrance. In an interview with the actor who plays Childan, Brennan Brown appreciates how the character estranges race in the US; Brown remarks,

> It's an incredibly effective way to say truths through a lie, which is what art is. By showing you the world, but in a crazy, reverse way, the show is able to say incredibly multi-layered things about racism and imperialism and colonialism and the taking away of human rights and class structures and all of that. But you're seeing it in a reverse mirror where everything takes on more significance. (qtd. in Wilstein)

Debuting at a moment when Trump and his followers' call to "Make America Great Again" exemplifies white American exceptionalism while ignoring past ills—the Native American genocide, slavery, the Jim Crow South, the Vietnam War, and much more—*MHC* continually dredges up the inequalities of America's past and estranges them. As another example, a second-generation Asian-American character confides that she was imprisoned in Manzanar, a Japanese internment camp in California, calling attention to the US's racial malpractices during World War II. Similarly, the show sees the Final Solution extended to America as the eastern half of the United States exterminates its Jewish population. One character confirms that mobs were lynching Jews overnight in Boston. As for Black Americans under Nazi rule, the show alludes to genocide. In Dick's book, Black Americans are forced into slavery again (Dick 22), and the African continent undergoes medical experimentation and genocide (10). In the series, only the latter is mentioned, through an oblique reference. The series depicts and hints at a past where atrocities have taken place—the internment of Japanese Americans, America's failure to stop the Holocaust, the lynching of Black Americans—in order to elide conservative nostalgia. Therefore, the alternate history is not the only horror of the show; America's real history of inequality is as well.

Because of the double estrangement, Amazon's *MHC* adapts Dick's alternate history but keeps it in the 1960s to address the political anxieties of the current moment under Trump's presidency. This double estrangement seeks to undermine a nostalgia for the post-WWII period by juxtaposing America's past with Nazi and fascist tendencies for viewer contemplation. The question emerges: how well does Amazon adapt the alternate history into television seriality while maintaining the balance between artistic and ethical purposes? In other words, in what ways does the series use alternate history as a practical past for promoting universal human ethics today, and in what way is it simply being entertaining?

The Ethical Implications of Good and Bad Melodrama

When a text contains contradictory ethical implications, it does not mean that it must be condemned indiscriminately. As a tool to disentangle the good and bad, critical and theoretical engagement allows for the investigation of "ethico-political significance" (Doran 3). For example, at the Heidelberg conference of 1988, Derrida and others publicly discussed Heidegger's Nazism, and Derrida found it important to consider in what way Heidegger's work is implicated in Nazism, and in what way it is not, offering his theory of deconstruction as a tool to discern such factors ("Force" 243). In other words, Derrida offers deconstruction as "ethical thought . . . a thinking *with* but also—and simultaneously—*against* Heidegger" (Doran 78). While I do not intend to delve into the depths of Derridean deconstruction, I do intend to advocate discernment of virtuous aesthetics and ethics from their unvirtuous counterparts, especially when they are intertwined within the same source. In this way, audience interaction with politically-engaged television requires a similar aesthetic and ethical critique—with and against. Per Rosenfeld, alternate history can be moralizing or normalizing in function, and Amazon's *MHC* participates in both because the melodramatic content tends, at times, to normalize Nazism while, at others, to make an ethical charge that allows viewers to become more aware how their individual choices maintain and promote an ethical social reality. Thus, while the melodramatic structure of television does implicate certain aspects of the show as normalizing fascism for entertainment purposes, its narrative nevertheless calls for a political and ethical response.

Linda Williams, in her book on *The Wire*, argues that the HBO series rises above "the conventional melodrama of crime genres and soaps" while still participating in the formal requirements of "seriality, televisuality, and melodrama" (3). In such cases, Williams argues that these aspects are a part of television but that effective shows rise above "bad melodrama" and create a "melodrama of social good and evil" that allows "glimpses of a . . . utopian good" (220-221). Thus, television's melodrama can be crafted towards ethical content that seeks to better the world. In Amazon's *MHC*, the attempt to rise above poor melodrama is evident in its double estrangement invested with political commitment, but the show still contains some banal acting and overdramatic scenes, such as those involving the interaction between Frank Frink, Juliana, and their friend Ed. Hence, when balancing aesthetics alongside ethics, the show falls short of achieving the "masterpiece" status Williams bestows upon *The Wire* (221). But even overdramatic

scenes are less of a concern than the way the show adapts the novel into television seriality, at times normalizing Nazism. Jason Mittell, in *Complex TV,* sees melodrama involved in a process where characters are built through long-form narrative structures that develop their complexity and allow viewers "emotional engagement" with them (244). Because of this process, *MHC*'s creators chose to develop John Smith, a character not in Dick's original novel, to allow fuller access into the show's world. Although Smith does the work of challenging American beliefs and values, the show depicts him in its second season as becoming close to an antihero, a Nazi with whom audiences align and possibly become sympathetic toward. In this regard, the show confirms Rosenfeld's belief that some alternate histories normalize Nazism.

Hence, three characters show how high- and low-quality melodrama both manifest in the show. John Smith's character registers how Nazism replaces American democracy, but in so doing, aligns viewers with a character who complicates the show's political engagement by normalizing Smith's Nazi status. Second, Mr. Tagomi crosses over to our world's 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis and is dismayed at what he finds; this outcome highlights the show's double estrangement most keenly as Tagomi decides that our world is worse off than the alternate history he inhabits. Lastly, Juliana Crane, at the second season's ending, presents the strongest attempt to distinguish ethical content from melodramatic functions in the show's summary and commentary on her caring behavior. Thus, through this appraisal of different characters, the first two seasons not only stress ethical responsibility towards a democratic society but also depict weaknesses in adapting a story for television, obscuring the ethical commitment.

First, John Smith demonstrates how fascism arises from capitalism's instability, similar to the alt-right's growth from the economic downturn in 2008. Across the US and in Western Europe, the forces of the alt-right, with their fascist and discriminatory elements, are on the rise. Due to the prominence of politicians like France's Marine Le Pen or those like Nigel Farage who brought on Britain's Brexit vote, it is clear to many that this turn is part of the historical moment, a frightening sea change that elicits comparisons to the rise of Nazism during The Great Depression. Thus, the forces of fascism are presented as latent in the political and economic systems of Western capitalist countries, and *MHC* interrogates this latency. Freedman claims the novel exposes the "quintessential Western will to domination with the horrors of genocidal Nazism" as a "forceful estranging device" (188-189). Capitalist power and domination, at their extreme, could find that all roads lead to Auschwitz. This potential exists because "capitalism, after all, is necessarily driven by an expansionist and dominative dynamic, and

even in its most liberal versions is inescapably dependent upon violence" (189). Moreover, if Dick's novel seeks to comment on the fascism supposedly inherent in America's ideology and governmental power, the television series extends this critique with the invented character John Smith, an American soldier turned into the Greater Nazi Reich of America's head of police. From the beginning of the series, Smith's calculating, evil actions are foregrounded. In the first episode, he has a resistance agent beaten to death so that the resistance thinks the man did not talk and that Smith does not already have the information. However, as Smith's wife tells another character, the tough times after the stock market crash, when Smith's father lost all the family money, forced Smith to make his own way in the world. This bootstrap mentality, created by an instable market system, allowed him to easily convert to the Nazis once they dropped an atomic bomb on Washington so that he could remain a successful man (which seems analogous to a corporate merger). Additionally, when commenting on the American medal he received fighting the Japanese during the war, Smith explains that he keeps the medal to remember the failure of command, a flaw he finds that Nazi authoritarianism solves. Therefore, Smith becomes a prescient reflection on how fascism is latent in Western capitalist countries, particularly during rough economic times. This reflection connects directly with contemporary politics: 1) tough economic times have turned many Americans to the far right in the belief that forceful rhetoric and austere policies will get the nation back on track; 2) privileging a white narrative entails the scapegoating of immigrants for economic woes. In this way, John Smith becomes an estranging mirror of conservative America.

Thus, Smith's estrangement shows an investment in today's political climate, particularly in the show's first season. For example, it is easy now to disagree with Berlatsky's comparison of 2015's first season to Dick's novel. Berlatsky sees the novel and not the show as engaged in a forceful critique of the zeitgeist. As for the show, Berlatsky claims it merely allows viewers to congratulate themselves about their own superiority and distance from Nazi evil.[5] However, our political terrain has shifted, unfolding events such as the Unite the Right Rally in Charlottesburg, Virginia in August 2017. A re-evaluation of the television show sees it actually making clear how latent Nazi and fascist tendencies exist *inside* America's hegemony. For example, the Smiths celebrate VA day, which honors the Nazi victory over America (or as Hitler announces on TV, when the Germans "freed America from their plutocrat overlords"). This holiday easily replaces the war-celebration trappings of the Fourth of July just as pagan holidays have been historically replaced by Christian ones. The American flags that hang out-

side every house on the Smiths' street are similar to the ubiquity of flags post-9/11, but their stars are replaced by one white swastika. Boy Scouts are now the Hitler Youth, and their members are legion, including Smith's son. When the boy is shown at school, the classroom's walls are lined with the normal plethora of ideological standards, but now they are about "Purity." The school tests students on how many slaves Washington and Jefferson owned, and the students pledge allegiance to Hitler. The ease with which America conforms to Nazism in the show gives a disturbing warning, and the most troubling part is that it rings true in the current political climate.

Nevertheless, in the second season, the show's melodrama depicts John Smith as an antihero similar to *Mad Men*'s Don Draper. Just as Draper tells people what they should think through advertising, Smith does the same through police-state authoritarianism. Like Draper, Smith has assumed a new identity in war, switching from the American Army to the Nazi invader's force, and this identity also allows him more power in the post-war world. Additionally, Smith's new identity makes him into, as a resistance member in the show says, the most "evil bastard" in Nazi America. Just as audiences feel aligned and invested in Draper's story, the second season aligns viewers alongside Smith: they feel an "allegiance" created through the serial format, which allows intimate knowledge of Smith's struggles (Mittell 144). For example, when his son is diagnosed with muscular dystrophy, a degenerative disease that means the boy will be euthanized as dictated by Nazi purity laws, Smith kills the family doctor and attempts to save his son by sending him to Argentina. Also, Smith stops Nazi troops from wiping out Atlanta in retaliation against the resistance, an act that turns him suddenly into a good guy who does not want to see American lives wasted in the name of terror and subjugation. Lastly, the show depicts Smith exposing not one but two coups in his attempt to stop a possible nuclear war between Germany and Japan, and he is heralded worldwide by the Reich for doing so. By using the melodrama of television seriality, the show depicts a callous and amoral man in the first season who becomes sympathetic in the second by aligning viewers to his cause. This situation normalizes, in Rosenfeld's context, Nazism as sympathetic, and it brings us to the question of why? Why make a Nazi character grey, or even sympathetic, during a contemporary context when the alt-right threatens to change America's political and moral status in the world? The answer seems to be that such a move makes for compelling television—an answer that embroils the show's uses of Smith in questionable ethics.

The second focal character Mr. Tagomi enters our world during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 and combines the dangers of poorly-

wrought melodrama with the ethical dimension of alternate history's double estrangement. In Dick's novel, "our world and the world of [the book] are buried within each other . . . But by the logic of his dualism, Dick is also saying that fascism has won in our world, and in the United States . . . in particular" (Canaan 397). Canaan's reading, one that shows the novel's politics, hinges on understanding a Japanese trade official's crossing over into our 1962: "Mr. Tagomi's vision ironically presents our world, not his, as a fallen, shadowy, illusory existence . . . Dick thus exposes American society and political hegemony by having Mr. Tagomi experience it as a 'tomb-world' compared to the Nazi-controlled world that he inhabits" (Canaan 393). Thus, in Amazon's adaptation, the moment when a character crosses from the show's alternate history into our own moment portrays America negatively, exposing our nation's ills and estranging the reader from its myth of greatness. Continuing this pattern, Amazon's series allows multiple characters to cross back and forth and sees Tagomi spend most of the second season in our world. While Tagomi's family was killed in the war, his wife and son are alive in our world, and our world's Tagomi has been upset about the loss of his son's Japanese identity. His son in our reality has married Juliana Crane, and they have had a son of their own. When Tagomi crosses over to our world, he finds his wife wants a divorce, and his son will not let him near the baby because of a drunken incident our-world's Tagomi had with the child. This family melodrama stretches throughout most of the second season and raises questions such as whether or not the Tagomi from our-world's history committed suicide or got replaced by the Tagomi viewers know. As in a soap opera where evil twins appear at random, viewers must suspend disbelief to go along with Tagomi's subplot as he makes amends with his angry family. This tawdry melodrama develops Tagomi's character and increases viewer interest.

At the same time, Tagomi's experiences in two different histories increase the power of the novel through double estrangement. As the Cuban Missile Crisis transpires, Tagomi's son and Juliana protest to ban the bomb in our history. After observing this crisis and making amends, Tagomi says goodbye to Juliana and crosses back to the Axis-controlled earth. In his office, he realizes his assistant, a man with burn-scarred hands, has also crossed from our world's destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to the Axis-controlled world. This assistant believes the world of the show to be happier and better, since his family is still alive and was not killed by an atomic bomb. Tagomi tells the man that he came back because he saw that the US and USSR had made even larger atomic weapons, and he fears "they will eventually destroy themselves." Also, he comes back with his own plan to save his world

from Nazi domination. Therefore, Tagomi's crossing adapts the book's travelling between worlds by providing more complexity. For in the show, whether one world is good or bad depends on the observer and his or her social reality.[6] Although Tagomi's family is in the other world, he still returns—as Dick's character did—because he saw our world as more flawed and made an ethical choice to try to save his own world. The implications of his actions are important, for they show, through the device of alternative realities, the ability to learn from different possibilities and seek to correct one's own world through ethical decision making. They also continue the double estrangement of America's past as a place of nostalgic perfection by showing how someone might refuse it as too scary and out of control. Therefore, though Tagomi's crossing in the second season is hampered by bad melodrama, it does combine the show's double estrangement with the idea of ethical decisions and it thereby strengthens the power of the original novel for the present.

Finally, Juliana Crane's trajectory and resolution in the second season most strongly emphasize the importance of ethically-motivated individual choices. Though Dick's novel and Amazon's show differ in their presentations of alternative worlds, the show's ethical impact is like the book's because it stresses ethical choices. For Rosenfeld, the novel ends bleakly because it forces characters to recognize "the fictionality of their own existence" and casts "doubt upon the likelihood of any escape from political oppression" (108). However, while the book might end pessimistically, the show does not negate political action; instead, the ending becomes another call for individuals to wake up to their own participation in history *by realizing its mutability and subjective construction*. In the show, Juliana must go against the resistance, who are planning to kill her, and she must shoot another resistance member who plans to inform the Nazi authorities that John Smith's son should be euthanized according to the health code (given his muscular dystrophy). However, Juliana refuses to let the resistance member harm the boy, telling him he is no better than the Nazis. By killing this man, she sets in motion a chain of events that allows Smith to topple a coup and avert atomic war. Hellekson comments on the novel by saying, "By conceiving of the world as something constructed by an individual mind . . . Dick throws notions of reality and history into flux" (63), or in other words, "history only exists as a construction" (73). Similarly, the show places obvious historical subjectivity alongside ethical choice so that viewers can see how both are connected in social reality. The book's choosing between histories becomes the show's choosing of the most ethical path. While this brings about a melodramatic ending that resurrects Juliana's sister from the dead (she has been in our world all

along), the writers stress choice in Abendsen's speech, which espouses the virtues of goodness and empathy:

> You were always you . . . a woman who would bet on the best in us, who bet on people, no matter what the world said about who they were, who they should be. That woman would do anything to save a sick boy—a Nazi boy, even—because she would believe he deserved the chance, as slim as it might be, to live a valuable life . . . millions of people will live because of the choice you made, the goodness in you, Juliana.

While this ending may be saccharine in its melodrama, its ethics are firm and resolute: make prudent choices that do not just benefit oneself but are for the betterment of society. Therefore, the second season's ending challenges viewers to consider the nature of history and reality and the viewers' stake in them, their ability to change their way of looking and acting via a goodness and an empathy that cuts through the rhetoric of the alt-right discourse of exclusion and aggression.

Overall, like *The Wire* or *The Handmaid's Tale*, Amazon's *MHC* promotes ethics by displaying a past that shatters the illusion of nostalgia; however, it falls into melodramatic moments that normalize Nazi evils. Through White's understanding of the past used for the present as well as Rosenfeld's and Hellekson's emphasis that alternate history is for acting in the present, Amazon's series has important ethical implications for our current social reality and historical moment. If, for Rosenfeld, it is Dick's "longstanding commitment to exposing the historical evils of Nazism and to fighting its contemporary manifestations in the present" that made the book "the era's most eloquent portrayal of the horrific character of a Nazi-ruled world" (108), then this portrayal is still seen in the series, even if it is not aesthetically perfect. The rise of Trump and the invigorated elements of bigotry and oppression take their cue from economic decline, the same as the Nazi regime did after the financial failure of the Weimar Republic. In response to these frightening conditions, serial TV has the potential to create a strong moral engagement and develop an ethical consciousness about the world and a viewer's choice within it. While *MHC* uses an alternate history format to do this, strengthening it for today's post-truth world by attaching moral culpability and ethical responsibility, the use of TV melodrama can hurt this engagement if done only with an eye for entertainment or reproducing successful formulas such as antiheroes. Echoing Derrida's advice on reading Heidegger, a viewer must be astute in distinguishing the good and bad elements of politically-engaged television regarding the content's ethical importance to the contem-

porary. Between the writing of this article and its printing, Amazon will have released a third season of the show. In it the creators have an ethical choice of their own to make. As they have depleted Dick's novel's content and exhausted its moralizing functions, they must carefully navigate the melodrama of television seriality to avoid normalizing Nazism further through characters like John Smith. Their choices have the power to invoke thought through estrangement in viewers' minds at the most pivotal moment of Trump's presidency (Snyder qtd. in Devega), during a mid-term election that could stem the tide of his administration's power. In this third season, the creators can use television's serial format and melodrama successfully by continuing to stress ethical choices and actions through the power of alternate history.

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Notes

1. Science-fiction theorist Tom Moylan says estrangement is "the mechanism of the utopian text whereby it focuses on the given situation but in a displaced manner to create a fresh view" (33). Therefore, estrangement takes place when the differences of the society presented pull readers or viewers outside their own society, allowing them to reexamine it. This leads to critical thinking, epiphanies, and the education of desire. Another theorist on the topic Ruth Levitas calls utopia and estrangement tools that provide an education of desire, which is not to say that the text must call for direct "political action" because, first, "desire must be transformed into hope, the wish for change into the will for change and the belief that there is agency available to execute it" (200).

2. As of this writing, only two seasons exist of the show. However, by the time of the article's publication, a third should be released. Thus, while I will only discuss these two seasons, my analysis has important implications for critiquing the third.

3. Similarly, White mentions Cormac McCarthy, and one could argue that *Blood Meridian* revises the genre of the Western through the lens of war atrocities such as the Holocaust and Vietnam. This shaping of historical fiction promotes an ethical argument because the reader also sees it through the lens of historical consciousness-strewn miseries that remain, like trauma, in societal memory.

4. Daniel W. Drezner's "Now, We Test America's Constitutional Democracy" in *The Washington Post* is a post-election point of view, and "Stress-Testing American Democracy: Nine Months of President Trump" by John Cassidy is a late 2017 opinion.

5. Berlatsky claims,

> That truth, or at least one possible truth suggested by Dick, is that there is no radical disjunction between his alternate history and our own. The TV show encourages us to congratulate ourselves on our horror at the Nazis, and our distance from them. But Dick's novel suggests, disturbingly, that the defeat of the Nazis did not, in fact, truly transform the world. Their evil was not banished; it's still here with us, a dystopia we can choose, and that many of us do choose, every day. ("*The Man*")

6. In "But Why Is Our World Better?" Tim Jones discusses the subjective experiences of people to explain what might account for one world being seen as better than another, why one might choose the Axis-controlled world, based on one's own trauma or experience; however, in the end, he confides that he believes our world better because of its slow processes towards trying to make the world a better place with less suffering versus the depiction shown in the television show's alternative world.

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Between the Students and Me: Experiencing Political Literature in the Classroom

Julia S. Charles with Sarah Pitts

"You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read. It was books that taught me that the things that tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were ever alive or had ever been alive."

—James Baldwin

In the midst of the bipartisan political warfare that defines this current moment in our country's narrative, political literature is a vital tool through which to interrogate the systems that undergird American government. This essay is about encouraging and facilitating the deliberate confrontation of two seemingly distant worlds—the political and the literary—and the impact of that confrontation on the Black professor and the white student. In a United States that has never been race-free, and in this particular political moment that is fraught with racial tension, we read bodies like we read books. And we read these bodies visually and in color; white is the protected category and non-white is a marker of difference. But our country's racial discourse is centered by white silence—therefore necessitating a classroom that brings Black literature into white spaces, turning on its head that seemingly one-way phenomenon of unmediated white access to Black bodies and Black spaces.

Here we are creating a dialogue between Black professor and white student, using the literature as a vehicle to move beyond the rigidity of the already-published, fully-iterated text-as-artifact into the dynamism of a conversation that collapses the boundaries of the conventional classroom. Traditionally, the classroom hinders both professor and student from presenting their unmediated political selves, despite the fact that the literature—particularly that by Black writers—necessarily situates itself within the pre-existing narrative of race politics

in the United States. This taboo on politics has led to the silence that refuses the truth of an America whose metanarrative relies on the fiction of white superiority and the continuing exploitation of the Black body. By intentionally bringing our various, unedited, intersectional identities into the classroom, we move the conversation beyond the materiality of the text into the reality of the moment, shifting the classroom structure from fixed to mutable, from monument to movement. Therefore, this essay proposes a new way to disrupt the quiet that engenders apathy, arguing that the literature can move us beyond the culture of silence that defines and defeats us.

Now, we examine our encounters with overtly political texts in order to remark on the usefulness of political literature as a springboard for productive discussions on race in the United States. Consequently, if the coming sections seem imbued with more passion than academic writing traditionally tolerates, we intended it to be so. For in our (dis) comfort with the political literature, we observed that deliberate confrontation with the text is necessary for our growth beyond the confines of the university generally and the classroom in particular, making this article a measured meeting of passion and pedagogy.

Grounded in the reflections of our encounters with the overtly political writings of James Baldwin and Ta-Nehisi Coates, we explore the fears, failures, and the successes of unabashed politics in the classroom. As unavoidable moments of contention surfaced, we found ourselves clinging to Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time* in order to remain attentive to our fundamental objective: humanity first. In his closing passage, Baldwin boldly declares, "If we—and now I mean the relatively conscious white and the relatively conscious blacks, who must, like lovers, insist on, or create, the consciousness of others—do not falter in our duty now, we may be able, handful that we are, to end the racial nightmare, and achieve our country, and change the history of the world" (105). And so, as a class, we worked tirelessly to understand one another and to cultivate a space that was primarily concerned with the human condition, and we did this through encounters with various Black writers who left us room to interrogate their experiences.

Dr. Charles on the Black Professor and the Paradox of Natality

There exists a question within the American university regarding the place of politics in the classroom, and this question grows ever more contentious in an increasingly polarized American political system

and public sphere. Because political ideology tends to divide rather than unite us, it is often considered an unmentionable subject for the classroom. Or perhaps it is the reverse—our refusal to talk politics has created this division, and our ongoing silence continuously deepens the country's ideological rift. At the very least, the study of political themes must be managed cautiously.

Indeed, we cannot talk about politics in America without talking about race in America, which perhaps explains why we prefer silence. The creation of a racial hierarchy was fundamental to the creation of an American political system whose economic dominance depended absolutely upon the forced free labor of enslaved Black bodies. The myth and perpetuation of white supremacy, then, depends upon the myth and perpetuation of Black inferiority. Frankly, there has never been a raceless or race-free United States, but America (i.e., white America) has fabricated the falsehood of a post-racial state, effectively silencing any productive and honest conversation about race. This silencing means that white Americans can regard the past as just that—the past—without making amends for it, all the while quietly retaining the structures of white supremacy that institutionalized racism has built.

However, integral to the election of Barack Obama in 2008 was the country's tacit consent to talk about race in public spaces. For the first time in US history, the country would have a Black person holding its highest political office—and, beside him, an equally educated, unapologetically Black woman as First Lady. The United States was in a position to make a significant leap away from its disturbing racial past. This potential inspired even the most cynical, including Ta-Nehisi Coates:

> Instinct warned me against hope. But instinct had also warned me against Obama winning Iowa, and instinct was wrong. And if we had misjudged America's support for a black man running to occupy the White House, perhaps I had misjudged the nature of my country. Perhaps we were just now awakening from some awful nightmare, and if Barack Obama was not the catalyst of that awakening, he was at least the sign. And just like that, I was swept away, because I wanted desperately to be swept away, and taking the measure of my community, I saw that I was not alone. (*Eight Years* 56-57)

Indeed, this notion of desiring to be swept away, or, dare I say, *saved* somehow by a Black man—shifting the metanarrative of salvific whiteness—is one the nation struggled to understand. Yet, as Obama's 2008 campaign slogan "Yes We Can" grew louder in its insistence, the nation braced itself for a shift in power. This paradox of hope undergirding

the entire campaign season was a sentiment that even Michelle Obama shared before the Wisconsin primary in February 2008, saying, "For the first time in my adult life, I am really proud of my country because it feels like hope is finally making a comeback" (Thomas 1). For the record, the future First Lady came under fire for announcing such a delayed pride. Republicans used her remarks to suggest a lack of patriotism—a cardinal sin in United States political culture. Consequently, not even the two-time Ivy League graduate could make public comments, even implicitly, on race while her husband stood for election to the nation's highest office.

The election of President Obama meant that what was once a hidden truth—America's aversion to nonwhite people in positions of power—necessarily became visible, removing the political muzzle on race the day he took the oath of office. Before then, a candidate could discuss race only if the discourse were coded to make it palatable to the American people. Having the Obamas in the White House signified an important turn away from an all-white power structure. Consequently, while they represented for some a turn toward a post-racial America, for others they represented a threat to American national identity—by default, white identity. Yet, while we understand the possibility of post-raciality as erroneous, there still remains the optimism to which Michelle Obama referred with her provocative claim that "hope is finally making a comeback." Indeed, if ever there existed the possibility of a post-racial America, the Obamas no doubt would have been the faces of it. And so, their rise in political power necessarily meant an upsurge in public conversations by, about, and around Black people regarding the state of race relations in the United States. Naturally, those conversations filtered from mainstream media and popular culture to academic scholarship and the undergraduate classroom, resting directly on the hope to which our former FLOTUS had alluded in 2008.

In consideration of this context, the task in my Black Revolutionary Literature classroom became how to create a syllabus and an environment that, on the one hand, invited and nurtured conversations about these political shifts, and on the other hand remained mindful of how these turns impacted students as individuals with varied experiences and expectations. Suffice it to say, this was not an easy navigation, because we learned in the process of our classroom community's individual and collective growth that people fear the language more than they fear the work. Which is to say, if the language is politically charged—connoting something viewed as depraved, corrupt, or morally bankrupt—then the lesson would suffer.

Language can, and often does, obscure what we had hoped it would elucidate. It creates labels—boxes, biases, and restrictions—more

often than it facilitates freedom of expression. And Ta-Nehisi Coates—placed strategically as the first author on my syllabus—conveys this message in his award-winning book *Between the World and Me*:

> But all our phrasing—race relations, racial chasm, racial justice, racial profiling, white privilege, even white supremacy—serves to obscure that racism is a visceral experience, that it dislodges brains, blocks airways, rips muscle, extracts organs, cracks bones, breaks teeth. You must never look away from this. You must always remember that the sociology, the history, the economics, the graphs, the charts, the regressions all land, with great violence, upon the body. (12)

Indeed, it became (first) my goal and (later) my students' goal to create a classroom space that wholeheartedly rejected the compulsory silence we have been taught is respectful, or, at the very least, professional. Rather, we elected to reevaluate, revise, (re)create and, where necessary, embrace the language of race in order to reflect and express our encounters with it. That process resulted in the awakening and development of a new social and political consciousness, or what philosopher Hannah Arendt calls "natality"—a conceptual moment when one is born into the political as the sphere where acting together can create the truly unexpected (Champlin 150). In her article, "The Paradox of Natality: Teaching in the Midst of Belatedness," Natasha Levinson explains the idea this way:

> The paradox of natality alerts us to the many frustrations inherent in these efforts to navigate the racial divide. Coming to grips with the paradox of natality reconfigures these supposed "failures" in ways that draw attention to the fitful and decidedly nonlinear nature of educational progress.
>
> "Natality" is Hannah Arendt's term for the human capacity for renewal. Since the desire to contribute to the re-creation of the world is what motivates political action, natality is one of the conditions of political action. At the most fundamental level, natality refers to the fact that people are constantly born into the world and are continually in need of introduction to that world and to one another. This is why Arendt writes that natality is the "essence of education." (13)

And so, it was there—in a staunchly Red state in the American South emblematic of all that history has to teach us about the Black freedom struggle, in a region that lost the American Civil War in the 1860s (and with it, the right to own other humans and regard them as chattel), in a place that publicly lamented the loss of the presidency to a Black man in both 2008 and 2012—on a resolutely and proudly conservative campus that, despite our memories of the past and our fears of the present, together, we took up the race question. And that question demanded a crucial interrogation of the language of race.

As an English Professor, I am a part of a small faction of people who have made it their life's work to study language. Which is to say, we track the key unit of communication, of comprehension, and—perhaps most critically to our encounters with one another—of naming. The latter of which has tremendous power. Part and parcel of that exploration is the insistence on words rather than individual letters. Taken together, letters create words, and words mean things; they have the power of their contexts behind them—power that can, and often does, expand the distance between groups who use words without regard for their complicated and harmful histories. Indeed, words are imbued with the ghosts of their pasts, and the ones we consider taboo are too often divisive rather than unifying. The acrimony that lives in forbidden words is what some crave because it incites a spectacle of trauma; rarely, if ever, does forbidden language encourage harmony. We rely on words to capture the emotions we feel, yet our reliance comes with the unsettling truth that words often fail us, or are, at best, inadequate to capture the dogma of a moment—in this case, the moment in our nation's history when our President was Black. When dealing with the pain and power of words together with the taboo of race, naturally, we came upon an unavoidable moment, one that demonstrated for us the inadequacy of language and the fragility of whiteness. The truth that even words have their limits has perhaps never been clearer than when a white male student announced to the class that he regularly used "the n-word" and that he meant no harm.

About midway through our examination of James Weldon Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, a student asked a question about the n-word. The student wanted to know what, if any, was the real harm in using it. "I use it all the time," he said. There was a gasp—one that I am certain was not just reacting to the boldness of his truth, but rather because each student had her or his own history with the word. If nothing else, each student was aware of two things: (1) the loaded history and ensuing controversy surrounding contemporary uses of the word, and (2) this white male student talking to a Black woman professor who has, as far as they had (rightly) assumed, been harmed

by the use of the word at various points. That one question, which, in tone, was more announcement than interrogation, would change the course of the semester in a way that gathered together both all we feared and all I hoped for—and thereby thrust us into real, emotional dialogue, facing together the arcane language of race. Naturally, my response had to be thoughtful and measured, different even from the culture of unabashed honesty and forgiveness we had cultivated in our classroom up to that point. We were moving from theory to practice.

Despite having dedicated my life to the pursuit of language, I still felt unprepared for the day we confronted racially-charged language in the classroom. In this student's defense, we had spent the entire semester creating a classroom that wholeheartedly rejected certain taboos. To be sure, such an atmosphere is not simple to design, one in which students feel comfortable expressing politically unpopular or socially objectionable opinions. I have since learned that creating a space like this comes at a great cost to a Black woman professor. In this class discussion on racial performance, I was shocked to hear from this student; he rarely spoke. Nevertheless, this was the day he chose to make his presence felt. And feel it we did.

As we reflected on this moment of confrontation of race and space, when the clash between theory and practice threatened to upend any progress we had made as a class, I had to decide what came first: the literature or the lesson. I chose the lesson. After all, what is the purpose of such poignant political literature if not to encourage learning.

Sarah on the White Student in the African American Literature Classroom

My first encounter with African American literature came in my sophomore year of college, when I registered for an Early American class that was cancelled and replaced by a course titled "American Renaissance: Black and White," which put works by Black (male) authors in conversation with white (male) authors. It was taught by a white man. Prior to this, I had read the requisite popular literary theories on race and ethnicity—Frantz Fanon's "The Fact of Blackness" and Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s *The Signifying Monkey*—meaning that, in an academic sense, I was aware (or so I thought) of the Black experience in America. I supported President Obama. I had Black friends. I passively espoused equality in a noncommittal, theoretical way. But race was not a topic I ever *actually* thought about. To be clear, it was not that I avoided thinking about it—and this is impor-

tant—it was that, as a white-skinned person, my race did not play an integral role in my daily experiences and therefore was something I never *had* to think about. When we talk about race in America, what we are actually talking about is non-white, because white skin is the assumed default. This is the reason we distinguish between American literature and African American literature.

Indeed, it was my engagement with African American literature, in a class full of white students taught by a white professor, which brought about my awareness of my not-thinking about race. As a blonde-haired, blue-eyed, pale-skinned girl who grew up in a white suburb, matriculated through a majority-white school system, and read only the literature of white authors, I had never truly confronted what it meant to *be* white because I had never thought on what it meant to *not* be white. Questions of race did not concern me—so I thought. But after reading Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, and Nat Turner, I began for the first time to realize that the history I was taught in school (the one that skated over slavery as a small blemish in America's past) was an inaccurate, or, at least, an incomplete history made palatable to white people like myself who could pretend for their own peace of mind that the Civil Rights Movement had solved all of America's problems of racial inequality. It was by looking to the history in the literature that my eyes were opened to the present.

When I realized, as much as a white person can realize, the extent of the systemic abuse and disempowerment of Black people intricately interwoven with the metanarrative of America itself, I began to question the structures that continued to put me at an advantage purely because I am white. Consequently, I registered for another African American literature course—this time, on purpose. The course on Black Revolutionary Literature was taught by a Black woman, the first Black teacher I had had during my fifteen years of school. It was in this classroom that the literature met the political in a visceral sense. We moved from the theoretical constructs of the academic study into the concrete language of lived experiences, which was certainly not the easiest of moves to make. It required that we take each of the overtly political, unapologetically Black texts and dissect them not only in the context of the past, but also within the reality of the current moment. It was the current moment that some of us feared most.

At that time, with Barack Obama in the seventh year of his presidency, the national media was concerned with racial topics such as police brutality, the Black Lives Matter movement, the war on drugs, mass incarceration, and the Confederate flag. All fell under the umbrella of white supremacy. This is how a Black woman led a room full of white students on a strongly conservative and majority-white Southern

campus to engage in honest conversations about race and racism: by beginning with the textual—the comfortable and static literary artifact—then moving into the actual—the uncertain and the dynamic human emotion and experience. We experienced inevitable growing pains as we moved into this new territory.

One day, our conversation shifted somehow into the taboo territory of racial language. We somehow suddenly found ourselves, as a class of white students and Black professor in a conservative, academic, and professional space, talking candidly about the n-word. One white male student, who sat in the back row and who seldom spoke, raised his hand to weigh in on this particular conversation. It was striking, the extent to which these two categories—his whiteness and his masculinity—manifested the passive power that allowed him to speak with such candor about the n-word. He represents an identity that has never had to be careful or gentle in reaching for words to talk about race.

It was and is shocking to speak about this word—a word so harmful I do not even dare (or desire) to spell it out here—but that label gets to the root of our discomfort in talking about race in America. In America, we strategically avoid conversations of race while continually engaging the language of racism unquestioningly. The n-word and its pervasive use in music, television, and social interaction epitomizes this idea. Arguably, this word stands as the most racially charged and historically contentious expression in all of American English, a language coded with explicit racialized categorization and used in a country obsessed with the political and social distinctions between Black and white.

At this moment in our classroom discussion, as this student told about his use of the n-word in his daily life, he immediately began to explain himself. He knew—and this knowing was meaningful—that this confession demanded a justification and absolutely could not stand on its own. And this was the story of why this white male student used the n-word but felt okay about it—okay enough, even, to say to his Black professor:

> My friends and I use it with each other, but just as a replacement for 'bro.' I use it with my Black friends *and* my white friends, because we all watch *Comedy Central* and Donald Glover has this skit about using the n-word and who can say it. Glover decided to reclaim the n-word and create a new use for it that everyone can say without being offensive. I thought that was cool, and that's why my friends and I use it.

As he spoke, I felt my body freeze in space and time. I did not know where to look and so, in an act of escape and self-reflection, I looked inward.

I did not know what to say and thus remained silent. Even though the n-word will never be linked to the degradation or marginalization of my white skin, I felt at that moment a shadow of the interpellative power of racist language that Fanon speaks of in "Fact of Blackness." I became bodily aware of the protective curtain of whiteness, the presence of which allowed my peer to initiate this conversation.

Frozen as I was, I did not see the reactions of the other students around me—but I felt them. I felt the air shift as the young man to my left turned his full body to look into the speaker's face. I felt air leave the room as the girl behind me sucked in forcefully. I felt the tension in the shoulders of the girl in front of me as they stiffened involuntarily. We collectively became a coil, wound tight and tense, full of unknowable potential energy, looking to Dr. Charles to save us from ourselves and somehow make our classroom right again. Her face was a mask. At this moment of painful, fracturing intimacy, she lay bare and exposed before a class of white faces; we had approached a crossroads—we could now either venture beyond the literature into a conversation we were not (and perhaps never would be) ready for, or we could simply close the book and walk away.

But even in the literature classroom—or especially in the literature classroom—life is not a text we can put down when we feel tired or uncomfortable. Indeed, life is just the opposite; it is lived experience Black writers, and, indeed, most writers, capture. And so, the day the professor encouraged us to talk about the n-word, despite the obvious trauma through which she taught us, was the day the clash between the material text and the lived experience made us better. After that day, no topic was off limits. No experience was invalidated. No student was made to feel small. What had been all talk (or hope) of this classroom being a safe space to mediate and appreciate cultural difference was actualized that day. It is not lost on me that our growth was almost certainly at the expense of the Black professor in some ways. Had it not been for the white male student's attempt to make the n-word acceptable for use, and had it not been for a Black woman professor who decided to use the moment to demonstrate the power and problem of language, we would have likely been the same students—the same people—we were when we arrived in this course on Black revolution, and the classroom would have failed as a true space of learning and growth.

Julia S. Charles with Sarah Pitts

Creating the Conscious Classroom

The classroom, much like the body, is a space of interpretation and revision. Both a theoretical space and a material one, the classroom serves as a location where identities, literatures, and lives clash, sometimes violently, in order to create a newer, more capable space for learning. We often think of it, though, in narrower terms, as the four walls within which books, students, and professors become conversant in some magical way, and students are assessed based on their abilities to perfectly (if temporarily) recall the text and analyze it.

In *Between the World and Me,* Coates reveals, "The classroom was a jail of other people's interests. The library was open, unending, free" (48). This dichotomy the author creates between the classroom and the library—both houses of learning—speaks, quite candidly, to certain pathologies inherent in the classroom. The classroom has become a space rigidly "free" of politics and race, despite the fact that the country itself is fraught with racial disharmony; the library, in contrast, is mutable, changing as times demand. Each year, new books—which is to say, new ideologies, new thought experiments, new suggestions, new characters, and new imaginations—are added to the library, making it a space that welcomes conversations across texts, times, and tensions. The library comprises what the classroom must create: a consciousness. While the consciousness of the library seems as diverse as the books it holds, its singular consciousness rests on its refusal to erase certain narratives—making it a quintessentially *political* space.

When we take the text from the library to the classroom, we also take it, ostensibly, from political to apolitical—even those texts by Black writers who are political by virtue of the fact that their bodies are always already in conflict with the white world around them. And so, as we teach these texts, we must teach them in view of their political zeitgeist then and our political zeitgeist now. The former is how they were born; the latter is how they birth us. The classroom space we are to create must be welcoming of the politics that inspire growth. Indeed, our classroom should be honest about the journey ahead, relentless in its care for the human condition, and forgiving of our failures when we seriously try.

When teaching political literature, educators often have a tendency to romanticize the traumas of America's past while attempting to absolve her of culpability for our current hyper-racialized space. However, our Black Revolutionary Literature classroom (and the political texts at its center) intended to remedy the deficiencies that encourage the quiet, the fearful, and/or the apathetic students and the—at least during class time—apolitical professor. And it intended to do so by

always speaking truth to power and encouraging substantive discourse with those who politically disagree.

For instance, a couple of years ago, I taught a class called "Taking the Stage: Racial Performance and the Black Passing Novel." In it, we looked at the work of Black authors like Charles W. Chesnutt, Frances Harper, James Weldon Johnson, Nella Larsen, and Jessie Redmon Fauset. Our objective was to appreciate how these authors presented race as performance and then to interrogate how identities are performed in a twenty-first century context. I approached the class with these framing questions in mind:

> 1. What makes you most uncomfortable here and why?
>
> 2. What truths/lies (historical, political, social, etc.) is the author attempting to address here?
>
> 3. In what ways, if any, is the text reflective of the current political moment?
>
> 4. If you answered "none" to the previous question, then how and why do these social and political moments differ?

In one of the most memorable early scenes from Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, the unnamed narrator learns his racial identity—or rather, he learns what he is not: white. As the students and I grappled with questions of race, we came face-to-face with the problem of naming and belonging—of Othering. Toni Morrison puts it this way:

> What is race (other than genetic imagination) and why does it matter? Once its parameters are known, defined (if at all possible), what behavior does it demand/encourage? Race is the classification of a species and we are the human race, period. Then what is this other thing—the hostility, the social racism, the Othering?
>
> What is the nature of Othering's comfort, its allure, its power (social, psychological, or economical)? Is it the thrill of belonging—which implies being part of something bigger than one's solo self, and therefore stronger? (15)

Morrison's questions formed the basis for our discussions throughout the course of the semester. And so, as Johnson's narrator peppered his

mother with questions about his pedigree saying, "Mother, mother, tell me, am I a nigger?" (12), and later realizing, "He is forced to take his outlook on all things, not from the viewpoint of a citizen, or a man, or even a human being, but from the viewpoint of a colored man" (14), we—students and professor—were forced to interrogate our own racial definitions and the complexities of language. We saw how such an interrogation can reveal and obscure truths, how it rejects and imposes boundaries, and, most of all, how it can hurt and heal.

At the end of each semester I invite students to reflect on the framing questions from the course. For that class, I did the same. The students stood in a circle and tossed around a ball of yarn as they recounted the most impactful or frustrating moments of the semester. They held onto a piece of the string as they tossed the ball away, creating a web throughout the room. When it came the turn of the student who with his defense of the n-word inspired our most difficult and perhaps most rewarding class, he reflected in this way:

> Of all the literature, of all the required reading, and even of the films we discussed, none had as great an impact on me as the day we discussed the n-word, when you taught us that language is never divorced from the body that is using it. That day changed my life. I have decided never to use the n-word again, not even in what I thought was a harmless way. I learned that it is not harmless just because I say it is. So, thank you.

As more and more students held their strings and threw the yarn ball, the web grew more complex, stronger. They had one task left—to hold up two differently-weighted balls using only the web and the strings it was made of. This was relatively easy to do with something as light as a beach ball. What they noticed, though, was the heavier the ball, the tauter the string needed to be in order to support it. They observed that the denser the matter, the closer they had to lean in to each other. Instead of quitting, and bolstered by the reality of their growth, the students leaned in together to hold up the weightiness of this denser ball. In reflection, we all agreed that the literature without the context is relatively easy. It does not require as much work or as much unity; the characters are just characters. But the literature in the context of the political moments in which they were published and the moments in which they are encountered requires quite a bit more leaning in—more conversation, more clarifying questions, more room for interpretation, more accountability, more forgiveness for failing when one tries. In short, it requires a sincere desire to accurately understand each other.

Confrontations on a Conservative Campus

It is difficult for any university to guarantee absolute safety from confrontations sparked by differing opinions; that would require anticipating every eventual encounter. However, universities can (in theory, at least) provide a safe space within which to engage in respectful, productive dialogue across ideological borders. Still, it is one thing to move beyond the text and into difficult conversation within the safety of the classroom, and another thing altogether to put into action the convictions developed through conversations within and about these texts. Yet, in the safety of the classroom, within four walls and with the professor to keep students in check, no measurable progress is made, because in the classroom students are measured by what they know rather than how they act. Certainly, convictions developed in dialogue precede action; it is just a question of whether to act or to remain in the comfort of passivity. To create a course that not only goes beyond the text, but that also goes beyond the classroom itself—that is where revolution begins.

And revolution became the theme of our political system with the rise to power of the 45th President of the United States and the ensuing fray. Donald Trump purposefully, to the concern of many, rallied white nationalist voters through social media platforms and public speeches aimed directly at dismantling the legacy of the Obama presidency. Indeed, revolting against President Obama was the basis of Trump's presidential campaign. Coates says it this way:

> To Trump, whiteness is neither notional nor symbolic, but it is at the very core of his power. In this, Trump is not singular, but whereas his forbearers carried whiteness like an ancestral talisman, Trump cracked the glowing amulet open, releasing its eldritch energies. The repercussions are striking; Trump is the first President to have served in no public capacity before ascending to his perch. But more telling, Trump is also the first President to have publicly affirmed that his daughter is a 'piece of ass.' . . . But that is the point of white supremacy—to ensure that that which all others achieve with maximal effort, white people (particularly white men) achieve with minimal qualification. Barack Obama delivered to Black people the hoary message that if they worked twice as hard as white people, anything is possible. But Trump's counter is persuasive: work half as hard as black people, and even more is possible. ("First White President")

Trump's dictum to "Make America Great Again" became a rallying cry for the "alt-right" revolution, resulting in Hitler salutes at national rallies as white supremacists rose from their strategic hibernation in order to reclaim their places at the top of America's social and political food chain.

When Trump was elected President in November 2016, Auburn's mostly conservative, white, Southern student body rolled Toomer's corner with toilet paper—an act of celebration of a major victory, an act usually reserved for the ritualistic festivity of football victories. To be absolutely clear: this act was viewed by some as a celebration of white supremacy and all that comes with it. The events of this election night marked the birth of an ideological battleground on the site of our campus, and the university became microcosmically significant against a political backdrop defined by division. This significance made itself more apparent when Richard Spencer, de facto leader of the alt-right movement and proponent of "peaceful ethnic cleansing," decided to give a speech on Auburn's campus in Spring 2017.

On April 12, 2017, *The Auburn Plainsman* published a story revealing that a college student from Georgia had rented Auburn's Foy Hall on behalf of Spencer, a fact unknown to the University or its students until days before the speech was scheduled to take place. After an email campaign to the university's administration called attention to the danger of Spencer's visit for targeted groups, the university nullified his reservation and banned him from speaking on university property. Debates erupted on campus, with one side shouting in defense of free speech and the other advocating for the safety of vulnerable peoples. However, bracketed by a fleet of neo-Nazi supporters and a federal judge's ruling that forced Auburn administration to allow the event, Spencer descended upon campus April 18, 2017.

Sarah's Thoughts on these Events

This drama transpired within the span of one week and touched every single person on the campus, but many were unprepared or unsure how to act. However, students from the Black Revolutionary Literature course, specifically myself and a white male peer, placed ourselves at the center of the action on campus. We planned an event, the Auburn Unites Music Festival, to occur concurrently with Spencer's speech, effectively denying him a large audience. In this way, his hatred gave birth to a demonstration of love unlike any I have seen before on our campus. We created this unity event because we knew, from our encounters with the literature, that our white skin provided us a neces-

sary protection in the fight against the degradation of People of Color. The classroom conversations had prepared us for this moment, but we could not rely on the literature alone to do the actual work of addressing social injustice and racial violence.

The political reality outside the classroom became my work that day. This was a moment that transcended the classroom's four walls, a critical moment in the development of my political self in which I could either, as Audre Lorde notes, "define myself for myself" or "be crunched into other people's fantasies for me and be eaten alive" (135). I was very aware of my body on that day. I felt every inch of myself, every bit of the white skin that protected me from Spencer and yet, against my permission, made me the beneficiary of his ideology. As a white person unfamiliar with intense bodily awareness, I became quickly fatigued from my heightened physical state, reminding me of earlier conversations between my professor and me about her unending hyper-awareness of self.

My co-organizer and I met with administrators, peers, and professors; we picked up barricades, food, and equipment; we relayed information, wrote emails, and fielded interviews; we solved the immediate problems of a hastily-organized event, as if these solutions meant something symbolic in the fight against white nationalism. I moved ceaselessly because I knew that stillness would overcome my momentum in this microscopic moment of extraordinary significance. As I moved, I felt more and more bodies synchronize with mine, coming together in solidarity and support. My campus—my predominantly white, conservative campus—was aligning itself with humanity in an unexpected synchrony of white and Black, Christian and non-Christian, conservative and liberal, and people all along the spectrum of sexual orientation and gender identity. Before Spencer arrived on campus, we could feel his touch on everything; his work had been done—but so had ours. We were ready.

Hundreds of students, faculty, and community members filed onto the campus greenspace in protest and support that affirmed the humanity of those whom Spencer sought to humiliate and destroy. In this moment of community, there happened an instance of intimacy between my white male co-organizer and our Black woman professor, who came to our event despite the potential of danger to her physical body.

Dr. Charles on the Confrontation

When I walked up, people were busy with preparations for the event. I was terrified for my students and for myself. What had I done by using the literature of great Black writers to teach these students about the power of their own voices, both singular and collective? Were they in danger now? If so, was it my teaching that put them there? Still, they were here now, and I knew I needed to be here, too.

When I spotted my students, I saw a mix of fear and pride on their faces—the former is proof of the power of white supremacy; the latter a testament to their role in actively undoing racism. We walked toward each other, and my white male student said, "Dr. Charles, you're here! I can't believe you're here. Thank you." To which I responded, "No, thank you, for doing all of this." He said, "I was so worried bringing all of these people out here on a night like this, but seeing you here makes me feel so much better." "Well, you showed up for me, so . . ." I looked away from him briefly because I felt the tears welling in my eyes. He too was on the verge of tears. He looked at me again and said, "I just need you to know that I would never have done this if it weren't for you; I never would have been brave enough if it weren't for your class. And," his tears began to fall, "I want you to know that I'll never be silent again. This is who I am now and I thank you." And then he hugged me and, with our gratitude for each other filling the small space between us, we cried. His co-organizer, who had witnessed this entire moment, not just the one on the campus green, but also the literature inside the classroom and the tension in anticipation of Spencer's arrival, joined us in both tears and embrace. It was a day I will never forget.

There was much that the literature and the classroom conversations prepared us for, but there were still other things for which we had to equip ourselves. We need political literature because, as we saw, apolitical spaces do not exist, especially not on a college campus. What came of Spencer's visit was not a white nationalist revolution, as he had intended, but rather the awakening of a nascent awareness on Auburn's campus of the role of students in (re)creating the world around us, and a recognition of the role of the classroom in the awakening of our politically active selves. On a day when passivity could have torn our campus apart, the strategic action of coming together saved us.

Between the Students, the Literature, and Me

There is a distance between the academic and the political that we call "professional," which encourages the evasion of potentially divisive conversations within the classroom in the name of maintaining

academic decorum. But there is a danger in this distance. Avoiding difficult conversations—though comfortable—does not change the political realities. In our bipartisan political system, confrontation is inevitable, and if we do not use the classroom as a space to mediate differences and stimulate dialogue, then we risk students being ill-prepared for life beyond the university walls. If the most basic role of the university is to prepare students to enter the professional world, then the classroom must engage a two-way conversation between professor and student, theory and practice.

In a nation whose racial discourse favors political correctness and strategic silence, overtly political literature necessarily disrupts that to which we have become accustomed. As a Black professor and a white student, we have discovered that these conversations, though they may push us into discomfort, are vital in order to defeat the silence that engenders indifference to a political system that demands participation even beyond the ballot box.

In our classroom, our primary confrontation was not with the literature; rather, we looked to the words on the page for the language we needed to speak about the world beyond. Coates with *Between the World and Me,* Baldwin with *The Fire Next Time,* and Lorde with *Sister Outsider,* each of which anchored the semester's syllabus, each do similar work in getting the reader to understand, respect, and see the humanity of Black people, of all people. They each also consider the costly impact of quiet. As Lorde puts it, "Your silence will not protect you" (41). That each of the works on the syllabus in a class on revolution addressed the dangers of silence suggests that the authors themselves desire to be part of a conversation. By refusing silence, we accepted painful conversations and the responsibility to act.

Sarah's Concluding Thoughts

For a white student who has moved about the world uninhibited and free, silence and ignorance—both of which were options for me—certainly would have been easier. But when I encountered Black revolutionary authors in a classroom that pushed me beyond my passive comfort, I could no longer avoid, as I had successfully done to that point, a necessary interrogation of self. I could no longer claim blindness to the function of race in our country. But the work of this class was not to demonize my whiteness; instead, from this class, I learned how to leverage my privilege in the political sphere in favor of those without the protection that my white skin affords. The great tragedy of racism is that we are all human, and that we all lose a piece of our humanity,

whether we are the beneficiary or victim of systemic hatred. The solution to this tragedy is to talk about it and, by talking, to reaffirm the humanity that racism would steal from us all. Allowing politics in the classroom did not tear us apart, but strengthened us as students of the humanities and as human beings.

Dr. Charles's Concluding Thoughts

In a class dedicated to the literature of Black revolutionaries, we became conversant in an age-old debate about our individual and collective rights to simply *be*. We discovered through our exchanges that the literature was but the springboard, and that the work of the revolutionary resides outside the material text. As challenging as it was for me as a Black woman professor to daily come face-to-face with what my students thought of me before they ever knew me, there was also something incredibly fascinating, if at times exhausting, about our classroom space. We encouraged one another to confront what was both beautiful and ugly about ourselves and to do the endless work that being a student—and we are all students—of the humanities requires. While we were not always comfortable, or even safe, we were always together, with the same Black writers, engaging the same history, and believing in the same cause—our humanity. And that is why this class worked: it reduced the distance between the students and me, making me trust the vulnerability that was, to that time, forbidden in the classroom.

In this post-Ferguson political moment in which the Academy is forced to grapple with the relationship between the undergraduate classroom and the political reality within and outside of it, we are aware that our contemporary moment is always already in dialogue with that past. My success in dislodging erroneous ideas of white supremacy and Black inferiority depended upon my commitment to creating spaces of healthy exchange. That success was evidenced by the students' reactions to disparaging language and Richard Spencer's invasion of their educational space. Of course, the purpose of allowing politics in the classroom was not to push students toward any specific politics. Rather, it was to inspire healthy and productive exchange despite sometimes-disparate ideologies. The goal, then, is to reach students before they enter a world that encourages the silence of their political voices, and in turn, engenders their apathy.

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Novels in the Time of Democratic Writing: The American Example. By Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018. 264 pp. $55.00 (hardcover).

The early American novel from the 1780s to the 1820s has secured a prominent place in the world of cultural studies, but does its peculiar form still disqualify it from serious consideration in the tradition of the theory of the novel? While American literary and cultural studies has virtually shrugged off the tendentious formal questions that the canon masters of the twentieth century used to dismiss the early American novel as didactic and derivative, Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse approach the question of form from a new axiom in their book *Novels in the Time of Democratic Writing: The American Example*. Drawing on the biopolitics of Michel Foucault, the rhizomes of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, the politics of literature of Jacques Rancière, and network theory, Armstrong and Tennenhouse develop a theoretically complex account of an early American novel form that is not imitative but consciously contentious, countering "move for move" the conventions of the British novel. They argue that the early American novel scrambles the coordinates of property, nationality, and identity on which the British novel relies and imagines new ways for a nation in flux to connect and manage the flows of people and readers.

The theoretical foundation that Armstrong and Tennenhouse lay in the first three chapters constructs a definition of early republican "democratic writing" in dialectical opposition to the property-bound conception of the British novel. In the first chapter, "Style," the authors argue that Jane Austen's depiction of claustrophobic country homes and overly regulated relationships are incapable of "recruiting a readership" in the early republic, but Charles Brockden Brown's novels resonate because they feature a "rhizomatic" style of relationships in which characters find security in the motion of unregulated encounters between strangers "unrestricted by the need to acquire and maintain an identity" (26). In Chapter Two, "Refiguring the Social Contract," James Madison's pluralism performs the same deterritorializing function that Brown's rhizomatic style does. Like Austen's possessive individual "style," the Lockean paradigm of social contract constructs the "man of property," which proves inadequate to organize a large republican political society. The paradigmatic subject for the United States is rather the constitutive "man of interests," a subject more suited to manage regional diversities and rivalries. The most compelling of these early chapters, Chapter Three, "Novels as a Form of Democratic

Writing," situates Armstrong and Tennenhouse's definition of "democratic writing" by weaving a compelling thread of novel theory through Claude Levi-Strauss, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Georg Lukács, to Jacques Rancière, whom they draw on for the term. According to Armstrong and Tennenhouse, in order for a novel to qualify as democratic writing, it has to "remain open to new connections, acknowledge the multiplicity of partial perspectives it afforded, and distribute agency throughout the network to whomever it was likely to make connections" (80). As democratic writing, the early American novel functions like a network, unplugging from the deep roots of constituted property and identity and enabling readers to imagine themselves as more adaptable and loosely connected to each other in a diverse, mobile, and large republic.

Each of the next five chapters tracks a formal trope or aspect of democratic writing that the early American novel deploys as part of its struggle to deterritorialize the British aspects of the novel and establish horizontal connections and "weak ties" that enable the mobilization of multiple constitutive identities. Chapter Four, "Dispersal," and Chapter Five, "Population," analyze the ways early American novels create lines of flight for characters who feel captive in their closed communities and who have a "drive to circulate widely and combine freely" (89). This mobility depends on constitutive identities utilized in performative relations in Herman Melville's *The Confidence-Man* and with racial passing in William Wells Brown's *Clotel*. But if lines of flight and constitutive identities liberate characters from the captivity of possessive individualism, how do they avoid total isolation and disintegration? Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight, "Conversion," "Hubs," and "Anamorphosis" detail how the early American novel forms "limitless and lasting social network" (120). For example, though Robin, the main character in Nathaniel Hawthorne's "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," loses his path to property inheritance, he is presented with the possibility of formulating new pathways to securing means through merit. He is thus "converted" from a "man of property" to a "man of interest." This new security in mobility is ensured by "hubs" like Mary Conant's mixed-race household in Lydia Maria Child's *Hobomok* and Hester's refuge for outsiders in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. Each household functions as a hub by keeping dispersion from becoming dissolution and to sustain the diverse outsider communities as they move from place to place. And to ensure that no dominant perspective is privileged, these novels provide "conjoined incompatible perspectives of the same event to make a composite reality" (163), or anamorphosis, to ensure a horizontal perspective inclusive of multiple peoples.

In what is perhaps their most intriguing chapter, Armstrong and Tennenhouse conclude the book by making a case that James Fenimore

Cooper established a national tradition of literary pluralism through a kind of third-way triangulation. Like the British tradition, he establishes "rules of appropriateness" that signal to those readers resistant to the multiple clamorings and contentions of democratic writing. And yet he incorporates the anamorphosis of democratic writing that allows him to capture multiple perspectives and ultimately depoliticize or "artfully euthanize" them. The result is a novel based on the "selective principle of literary pluralism" (212).

Though the works that resonate most with their theoretical foundation tend to fall outside of their proposed time frame (1798-1825), and though democratic writing is characterized as a struggle against just one, very limited, ideological framework rather than a more complex, decentralized struggle, Armstrong and Tennenhouse have nevertheless made an exciting and theoretically updated case for the formal relevance of the early American novel.

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