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CAPTIVE MINDS Normativities and Protests

guest-edited
by Małgorzata Poks

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TRAGEDY/IRONY

A Reflection on Engaged Poetry and Time

Unlike a few decades ago, today—safe in our privilege—we, the people of the western culture, are *allowed* to protest. Irrespective of the brutality of the riot police and despite evident instances of the abuse of justice, the consequences of participation in peaceful demonstrations are incomparably less serious than it was the case in the early 1950s, 60s or even 80s. And yet it would be impossible not to notice the profundity of the abyss between the palpable reality of desperate acts of self-immolation and the safety of Facebook-based philippics, between the individual tragedies of dying hunger strikers and the “intimate revolts”¹ of those who—having much too much to lose—speak out against the “collapse of essential values” in the serene sanctuaries of their homes. The tragedy of the irony of the self-fashioned righteousness seems to match the irony of the real tragedies: the (post)modern *hamartia* seems to be well illustrated by the difference between two musical interpretations of Ernest Bryll’s disconcerting confessional poem “Niosę jeszcze swe wiersze” [“I Still Carry My Poems”], first arranged and performed in the 1980s by a Polish bard, Tomek Opoka, and then reinterpreted and reinvented in 2009 by the a cappella group Banana Boat, whose version was included in an album created by Piotr Bakal in memory of the blind singer. The present reflections, therefore, address the phenomenon of the ironic protest, in which self-made heroes thrive, and tragic protesters become invisible, their humanity transformed into an icon.

Let me illustrate this with a brief analysis of the poem, whose simultaneous simplicity and sublimity make it one of the most

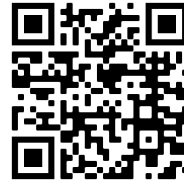
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1. I took the liberty of borrowing this term from Julia Kristeva, who developed the concept in her 2003 book *Intimate Revolt. The Powers and Limits of Psychoanalysis*, published by the Columbia University Press.

dramatic expressions of an existential dilemma that any ordinary honest person experiences when facing a choice between what is right and what is safe. However, before we explore the text, let us first make use of the technology available today to scan each of the two quick response codes below² and to *listen* to both versions of the song, concentrating solely on what the music itself communicates:



Irrespective of whether one understands Polish or not, the difference between the two performances is striking. While Tomek Opoka's harsh voice against the background of the unsophisticated sound of his guitar communicates existential drama, the close a cappella harmonies of the Banana Boat, conversely, are delusively soothing; they emanate tranquility. Opoka's performance, alluding to the style developed by such master singer-songwriters as Vladimir Vysotsky, Bulat Okudzhava or Jacek Kaczmarski (all of whom would often be compared to Lluís Llach, Bob Dylan, Georges Brassens, or Jacques Brel), suggests that the poem should be read and interpreted with the protest song tradition in mind. The version proposed by Tomasz Czarny and Paweł Konieczny, however, renders Ernest Bryll's lyric stylistically independent of the legacy of the great bards, thereby suggesting a reading context free from the connotations of *engagée* poetry.

Thus, the two musical arrangements may be claimed to call into existence two different philosophical statements. The first of these may be argued to correspond with the sentiments broadly shared

2. If you are reading the print version of this article, please use the QR scanner application in your cellphone to listen to each of the musical interpretations of the poem, or—if you are reading the pdf version of this text—click on the QR codes or hyperlinks below: Tomasz Opoka's version <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0X79t8bxajA> and Banana Boat's version <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YEnhfTabt2o> (both links are active).

by the generation of listeners who have experienced the “long 1968.” The second one lends itself to being read as an expression of the essence of the “intimate revolt,” embodying a reflection on the nature of one’s own moral inertia in the world where one may actively participate in a variety of forms of protest without any serious consequences, but too often chooses not to.

<p>Że nauczyłem się chytryści lisiej Że umiem mącić tak tropy pogoni W półprawdy czmychnąć jak w zeschnięte liście Do mysiej dziury by tam się uchronić</p>	<p>Although I've learnt the slyness of the fox on the run To con the hounds who follow my scent Hiding in half-truths like in fallen leaves I go to ground when the pack won't relent</p>
---	---

<p>Niosę jeszcze swe wiersze, jak kitę płomienia Ale to pożar tylko malowany Niosę też pysk swój rudy, w burzach wyczmuchrany I kłamstwo, co przywarło mi do podniebienia</p>	<p>I still carry my poems like a fox brush ablaze Yet the flame is only painted fire And I carry my own red muzzle weathered, uninspired And the lie stuck to my palate so abrasive</p>
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<p>Że nie zabiłem, to chciałem zabijać Że nie zdradziłem, to byłem jak żmija Co pośrodku trawy próżno się jadowi I nie ma szczęścia, by kogoś ułowić</p>	<p>Though not a killer I wished to be killing Though not a traitor, I was like a viper who amid tall grasses gnashes poisoned fangs Never to sink them in anyone's shank</p>
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<p>Niosę jeszcze swe wiersze, jak kitę płomienia Ale to pożar tylko malowany Niosę też pysk swój rudy, w burzach wyczmuchrany I kłamstwo, co przywarło mi do podniebienia</p>	<p>I still carry my poems like a fox brush ablaze Yet the flame is only painted fire And I carry my own red muzzle weathered, uninspired And the lie stuck to my palate so abrasive³</p>
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In this first person confession, the lyrical “I” struggles with his painful awareness of the dissonance between the truths romantically proclaimed in his exhortative poems and the “fox-like” survival

3. Translated by Paweł Jędrzejko.

strategies he has developed to avoid confrontation at all cost. Like a torch, his poetry sets the hearts of his audiences ablaze; it is the bright light dispersing the shadows of despair; it is a beacon of hope; it spells out what others think, but are unable to name; it is a call to which one cannot remain indifferent. The speaking “I” realizes that he is a *poet* and, like the Romantics before him, he is aware of his own role as the spiritual leader: his vocation is to inspire others. And yet, although his impassioned lyrics do arouse incandescent feelings in his audiences, although his songs, fervent and sublime, do urge individuals to fight the evil, even if it should mean that the community of the fearful would be ransomed with the blood of the brave few, the poet struggles with shame because he feels that he is *not* within their number and discredits his own poetry as a testimony to his own hypocrisy. Showing his fox-like, cunning face to the world, he hides his real sentiments among half-truths for fear of betrayal or denunciation. Perhaps camouflaging his true colors under the mask of the “safe” newspeak, he lives a lie that, although it has become an inextricable part of his everyday conversations, remains painfully “abrasive.” Although himself he has not denounced or betrayed anyone, the poet weighs words that could potentially put him in harm’s way, slithering in the underbrush of reality like a viper in the meadow: able to strike when cornered, but instinctively driven to run at the first sign of danger. Disappointed with his own weakness, he gives in to frustration: like Billy Liar in the machine gun scene of the film, he dreams of killing off all whom he hates, but, realizing that his hand better fits the pen than it does the Molotov cocktail, he suppresses his anger—and slithers on. Whenever in danger, he resorts to his cunning: the “goes to ground” when the relentless hounds pick up his scent.

And yet, at odds with his self-perception as a weakling, his protest burns in the realm of words. Despite all, he still “carries his poems” for others to follow. But although the spectacular “fox brush”—the object of desire of fox hunters throughout centuries—bears an uncanny resemblance to a torch ablaze, deep in his heart the poet feels that the flame is “only painted fire,” that it is unreal. He feels that while writing poetry, he is not taking any real stance: words, in his view, are not tantamount to tangible action.

Yet, to all those remembering the “long 1968” it is clear that Bryll’s fox-hunt metaphor is not simply a trope: those opposing the oppressive practices of the governments of the time—poets and protesters alike—would, indeed, be hunted down by secret services, state security, or police. Whether anti-communist or anti-capitalist, whether anti-Soviet or anti-white supremacist, active resistance at the time carried a very real risk of the first-hand experience of the riot police brutality, imprisonment, torture, or even loss of life. The choices made by those ready to face it were inevitably tragic and thus also their heroism was the heroism of tragic dimensions, even though history would rarely record the names of countless quotidian heroes, whose desperation or rightful wrath would drive them into the streets, irrespective of the price they were likely to pay, and which they often did pay.

The tragic heroism of these individuals is testified to by some of the most iconic photographs of the time, collected, for instance, by Talia Lakritz in her photostory “The Most Iconic Protest Photos of All Time,” by Leanna Garfield and Natalie Colarossi in their “20 Photos that Chronicle America’s Iconic History of Activism,” or in the extensive archives of such organizations as World Press Photo or Magnum Photos. Among countless touching, emotionally charged examples, perhaps the most well known are Malcolm Browne’s photo reportage of Thích Quang Đức self-immolation on June 11, 1963, the photo of the black student being attacked by police dogs at a civil rights demonstration, taken by Bill Hudson on May 3, 1963, Josef Koudelka’s photographs of the Warsaw Pact invasion in Prague in August 1968, John Filo’s photo of the aftermath of the Kent State shootings on May 1, 1970, or the photographs of a lone man standing up to a line of tanks in Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989, captured independently by photo reporters Jeff Widener and Stuart Franklin. What these and many other images of the time have in common is the sense of the authenticity: the reality of pain and the immediacy of death dominate the captured scenes not only in terms of the presence of the obvious attributes of oppression (such as police dogs, weapons, or dead bodies), but also in terms of the overwhelming sense of stern determination stemming from endless desperation etched into the sad

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or angry faces of the protesters, and unspeakable fear in the eyes of the accidental witnesses, unwilling beholders.

There is no doubt: contemporary images capturing street riots and physical clashes between the police and the protesters carry similar dynamics; certainly, casualties occur today as well as they did in the past decades. Still, today, in the countries of the West, the death of a demonstrator is an accident rather than a norm; armed units no longer invade university campuses shooting students, police no longer raid gay bars to arrest patrons for the display of same-sex affection, and instances of beating or other forms of torture at the police stations or local jails almost always result in more or less publicized protests. While protesters' lives and their essential rights used to matter rather little in the 1960s, 21st century march participants often make their statements by purposefully exposing themselves to being arrested, as if they were certain that their rights would not be violated in jail. Unless, of course, one represents one of the non-privileged groups, in which case such an idea could prove gravely misbegotten, and therefore taking the risk of being arrested requires serious determination and profound awareness of potential consequences.

Examples confirming the above observations could be multiplied. For instance, during the massive Chicago and Los Angeles immigrant-rights protests in 2006, documented, among others, by the photojournalists of the *LA Times*, the clarity of such a strategy became verbalized in a caption under a photograph taken on Sept. 26, 2006 (which made it to Garfield and Colarossi's top 20 list). The caption reads: "Protesters hold hands as they wait to be arrested by Los Angeles police officers, after refusing to leave a busy thoroughfare near Los Angeles International Airport while demanding unionization of mostly immigrant workers at a dozen high-end hotels in Los Angeles."⁴ Comprehensibly, the statement

4. See: Leanna Garfield and Natalie Colarossi, "20 photos that chronicle America's iconic history of activism," *Business Insider*, Jun 5, 2020, <https://www.businessinsider.com/america-activism-photos-2017-2?IR=T#protests-related-to-immigrant-rights-grew-in-the-early-2000s-in-2006-hundreds-of-thousands-of-people-proteted-against-anti-immigration-legislation-in-cities-around-the-us-including-los-angeles-and-chicago-13>. Accessed 10 June 2020.

made by the protesters holding hands in a gesture of solidarity is clear: “you cannot imprison us all.” And yet, the participants of the action, smiling, elated with the sense of communion, are aware of their safety. They do not *await arrest*: they *wait to be arrested*, as if being arrested were a social event, a value added to an otherwise joyful occasion. This observation, certainly, is not to diminish the value of the 2006 immigrant-rights protests, which in fact brought together in excess of 10 thousand protesters and effectively prevented the passing of the oppressive Sensenbrenner bill in the U.S. Senate.⁵ But it does shed some light upon how political activism has changed. Numerous examples demonstrate that arrest, which once was a very serious, and potentially life-threatening, consequence of one’s defiance of oppressive rule (as experienced by many peaceful protesters of the Martin Luther King Jr. era), in the western countries of today seems to be little more than mere inconvenience or, in some situations, a politically/socially desired outcome of one’s participation in the protest. While in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s arrests following sit-ins and other forms of non-violent protest could lead to a long term incarceration, today, in many cases, being arrested “counts” if it has been caught on a smartphone camera and uploaded to social media servers. With exceptions, street protests seem to have come to resemble happenings or theatrical acts rather than being a form of real resistance, for which there could be a very high price to pay.

An interesting case in support of the observation above has been described by Max Cea, who, in his 2017 article “Lemme take a selfie: The art and vanity of protest photography,” offers the following reflection on the reality of the Women’s March on January 21, 2017:

It’s embarrassing to admit now, but attending the Women’s March on Washington didn’t feel like an entirely safe prospect as late as last Friday afternoon. Hundreds of thousands of people were expected

5. See: H.R.4437–Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005 <<https://www.congress.gov/bill/109th-congress/house-bill/4437>>; see also: Mark Engler and Paul Engler, “Op-Ed: The massive immigrant-rights protests of 2006 are still changing politics,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 4, 2016 <<https://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-0306-engler-immigration-protests-2006-20160306-story.html>> (Access 10.06.2020).

to attend. Trump's inauguration rhetoric was divisive, escalating fragile tensions to a new nadir. There were rumblings about paid agitators; and, in fact, there was violence on Friday.

What ensued on Saturday was as peaceful and positive as could have been hoped for given the aforementioned factors and the higher than expected turnout. While it was a claustrophobe's nightmare, it was no radical protest. The most violent act of the day was arguably Madonna saying, "I have thought an awful lot about blowing up the White House" and singing that the new president should "suck a dick"—rhetoric which, it's important to acknowledge, the mainstream media likely would have looked at with more than a shrug if it had come from a cowboy-hatted conservative performer. (Cea)

Quite obviously, despite the ominous clouds of presidential rhetoric gathering over America, which, indeed, would allow anyone aware of the history of the U.S. political activism to realistically forecast a much more stormy reaction of the protesters, the atmosphere of the March itself proves far lighter than anticipated. In fact,

[f]or the most part, the day's mood was closer to a festival or parade than the 1960s protests that have come to define Americans' protest ideal. Because there were so many people and because it was unclear who the leaders were and what the protest's mission was, the main attraction at the Women's March was the signs. Every third person or so waved a sign, and the signs represented a diverse array of issues—the environment ("Clean air = healthy kids"), minority rights ("You can't comb over racism"), and, most of all, women's rights ("This pussy grabs back"). (Cea)

The discrepancy between the "protest ideal" of the 1960s and the "parade-like" demonstration becomes even more tangible when one considers the participant's secondary goals along with the "fringe benefits" that they enjoy—benefits, which the protests of the previous era technologically could not, but also politically would not, warrant:

To meander or march down Independence Avenue was to see and be seen. Almost everyone acted as a photographer, documenting with a smartphone; and the bearers of the signs with the wittiest messages or most artful designs were constantly being photographed. (Cea)

On the one hand, it is a positive symptom that civic education and the overall increase in social awareness among the western

populations have resulted in a far greater willingness of present day Americans and Europeans to speak out in support of causes that may not necessarily concern them directly, and that existing legal mechanisms facilitate such choices. The fact that technology makes it possible to record events and that short videos and smart-phone snapshots become immediately available to communities growing around social media is also beneficial to the protesters; manipulation of the facts recorded by thousands has become much more demanding and requires the development of far more refined PR strategies on the part of media serving the dominant political factions. However,

There's a cynical way to look at the use of photography at the march—that attending, for some people, was an act of vanity. There's a long history of aestheticizing protesting. In a 1970 New York magazine story, Tom Wolfe satirized how white liberals fetishized the Black Panther Party's "radical chic"—the Afros, militant garb and weapons chosen by the likes of Angela Davis and Huey Newton.

And indeed, many of the photographs published on social media or by news websites used appropriated grainy black and white filters and revolutionary imagery (raised fists and geometric alignment, for instance) to cast Saturday's protest in a radical light. Not only were these photos dishonest depictions; they undermined the burden of being a Vietnam War era or civil rights protester: Protesting and being photographed came with many more risks than it did on Saturday.

But there were too many photographs for the aesthetic choices of all those taking them to tarnish the effect of the images' whole. The flip side to the mass photographing was that when you look at the #Womensmarch feeds cumulatively, a more accurate story plays out: The diversity of grievances and sheer mass of bodies frames Trump's detractors not as a persecuted minority but as a persecuted majority. (Cea)

Again, Cea's article—despite its subtly critical edge—does not aim to demean the value or importance of the Women's March. Conversely, in conclusion it presents the overall, global outcome of the event, which gave the observers an impression that "Trump's detractors" are, in fact, in majority, and that this majority feels persecuted. The above notwithstanding, his reflections underscore a few important issues, such as the transformation of political activism from a high-risk form of engagement in the social process to a form of more or less politically-conscious entertainment,

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in which it is fashionable to participate, thoughtless appropriation of the ethos of the protesters of the previous era by the photographers of today, or the lack of non-ambivalent focus upon the cause. Conditioned by a diverse array of factors, some of these changes are largely related to the onset of the digital era and the tangibility of the coexistence of the actual and virtual planes of social contact. In the context of social and political activism, this phenomenon has been interestingly theorized by Justin Michael Battin and Elle Rystakova, who, in their article “Heidegger and Fan Activism. Unveiling the Presence of *Poiēsis* in Contemporary Online Social Mobilization,” analyze fan activism in contrast to what they dub “mouse-click solidarity” or “slacktivism.” Among others, the authors argue that

The widespread presence of virtual commitments incongruent with action on the ground is symptomatic of a greater issue. According to Herzogenrath-Amelung, modern social media use for activist purposes, with the emphasis on sharing, is increasingly propelled by *das Gestell* (the framework or enframing), by overt instrumental reasoning. She writes, “Heidegger’s concept of enframing [...] allows us to see the passionate Tweets, Facebook profile picture filters and other signals of solidarity in a very different light: as signs that what, according to Heidegger, uniquely characterizes human being-in-the-world has been reduced to a technologized parody.”⁶ Human beings are currently wading through a rather unique epoch, one driven by an overwhelming adherence to technocratic rationality and instrumental reason. In one of Heidegger’s more provocative pieces, he argued that since the philosophy of Plato and its emphasis on detached observation, western society had been steadily progressing towards a world where being had been forgotten. All things, including objects, catastrophes, and even other human beings have completely leveled; they become regarded as mere replaceable stock (*Bestand* [standing reserve]) and all meaningful distinctions that allow human beings to differentiate what is existentially critical for one’s self simply fade away. [...] The overwhelming presence of *Das Gestell* has led to a serious lack of investment, but also a decline in communal engagement, although the two of course are interconnected. (69)

6. The quotation comes from the following source: Heidi Herzogenrath-Amelung, “Speaking the Unspeakable: Heidegger and Social Media’s Mouseclick ‘Solidarity,’” in: *We Need to Talk About Heidegger: Essays Situating Heidegger in Contemporary Studies*. edited by Justin Michael Battin and German A. Duarte. Peter Lang Verlag 2018, p. 159, quoted in Battin and Rystakova (69).

The above notwithstanding, the authors do not content themselves with diagnosing the present day society as in decline of communal engagement. On the contrary, they see a future in virtual activism, which does not have to automatically be reduced to the level of a parody of the Heideggerian being-in-the-world. In fact, the concurrence of the virtual and the actual in our lives, which is undeniable, opens up a new niche for activism: one that does not replace or eliminate the real-life, actual engagement, but adds an important virtual dimension to it. Beyond doubt, one may choose to fashion oneself as an Internet Hero and remain a slacktivist, but one may also use the social media to organize and document actual protest actions, thereby choosing to leave one's comfort zone.

The comfort, however, seems to be fading away. Legislations in many European countries, including Poland and Hungary, have already changed: strict laws protecting politicians against "defamation of character" have been introduced, which practically means that Madonna's bold words uttered during the Women's March on January 21, 2017, if proclaimed publicly in Poland with respect to the Polish president, could land her in jail. The freedom of speech we still enjoy in the western world is being evidently curtailed, and whether we choose to see it or not, the idea of the protest as a "festival" may soon become painfully invalidated by the creeping reality of life in neo-totalitarian regimes.

Our discomfort today, indeed, is still relative. *Still*, because today we may enjoy the "social occasions" of protest marches, simultaneously "doing the right thing." Ironically, people who lost their lives, who were maimed, incapacitated, or imprisoned in the aftermath of the protests of the 1960s, 70s and 80s, people who were vanished after they had been identified as participants of illegal marches, countless brave individuals who lost their jobs as a consequence of their defiance, a league of artists who would be refused the possibility to practice their art as punishment for their non-conformity, academics who were offered one way tickets abroad—all of them paved the path for us to be able to "rebel safely." And yet, even more ironically, we choose not to act far too often. Our expression of solidarity with underprivileged groups or individuals often takes the form of a mouse-click, as if struggle for gay rights or the rights

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of the victims of worldwide crises were not the struggle for our own, human, rights. After all, historically speaking, tables may turn before we know it: many of those who had thought that Auschwitz was built to exterminate the Jews, very soon saw members of their own, non-Jewish families deported there. Many of those who are content with boosting their own sense of morality by clicking “like” under Facebook posts exhorting the community to participate in protests leveled at “beautiful walls,” allegedly protecting our homelands against the influx of the “dangerous aliens,” may at some point find themselves locked within a neo-Nazi prison of the size of a country, without any route of escape.

Today, we do not need to exercise the slyness of the fox. We do not need to slither. We are still well within our rights to rebel against mobbing or sexual harrasment at work, as the most serious consequence of our rebellious actions may be temporary loss of work or income. No one will pull our nails in jail if we are arrested during a peaceful demonstration, no one will sentence us to decades of prison for speaking out against injustice. Yet, if we choose to go to ground now, when no hounds follow our trail, our freedom to protest may come to an end sooner than we think. Ironically, perhaps.

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CAPTIVE MINDS

Norms, Normativities and the Forms of Tragic Protest in Literature and Cultural Practice (Introduction)

As a foundation and product of grand narratives, norms apply to any and every aspect of individual, communal, and social life. They regulate our behaviors, determine directions in the evolution of arts and philosophies, condition intra- and cross cultural understanding, organize hierarchies. Yet—when transformed into laws—norms become appropriated by dominant discourses and become “truths.” Those in control of language always construe them as “universal” and, as such, “transparent.”

The usefulness of norms stems from the fact that they facilitate our orientation in the world. In the long run, however, they are bound to block our imaginative access to alternative ways of living and thinking about reality, thus enslaving our minds in a construction of reality believed to be natural. In a world so determined, dissenting perspectives and pluralities of views threaten to disrupt norms and normativities, along with the order (patriarchal, racist, sexist, ableist, speciesist, etc.) build into them. Benefactors of a normative worldview and average individuals busily trying to fit in police the perimeters of the accepted, disciplining nonconformists, rebels, and nonnormative individualists of every stripe. “Assent—and you are sane,” quipped Emily Dickinson in her well-known poem, “Demur—you’re straightway dangerous—And handled with a Chain—”(209).

Notorious for their inimical attitude to repressive majorities, artists, philosophers, academics, and other “marginal” persons have always challenged deified norms. Opening up liberatory perspectives, they have tried to escape mental captivities and ima-

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gine the world otherwise: as a place where difference is cherished and where justice reigns. Polish writer Olga Tokarczuk, winner of the 2018 Nobel Prize in literature, imagines an alternative reality whose inhabitants, Heterotopians, constantly suspend commonly held beliefs in order to examine their validity. Passive perception, argues Tokarczuk, “has moral significance. It allows evil to take root” (43). Without a periodical suspension of belief in truths so deeply naturalized that they look like Truth Itself, we become perpetrators of the evil glossed over by narratives whose veracity we take for granted.

The concept of the captive mind became famous in mid-twentieth century due to another Nobel Prize laureate, Czesław Miłosz. In his book entitled *The Captive Mind*, first published in 1953, the Polish writer comments on the plight of intellectuals under communism. Comparing the crushing of independent thought in the Soviet Block to the effects of a Murti-Bing pill invented by a fictional Mongolian philosopher¹ to induce bliss and obedience in a conquered population, Miłosz writes: “A man who used these pills changed completely. He became serene and happy. [O]nce tormented by philosophical ‘insatiety,’ [he] now entered the service of the new society” (4). In the context of totalitarianism, the captive mind Miłosz writes about is one which chooses to adapt and stops asking perplexing questions. In the long run, however, conformist adaptation to a new regime of truth cannot but lead to schizophrenia.

Another influential formulation of the idea of the captive mind originated in the postcolonial world. In his 1972 article “The Captive Mind in Development Studies,” Malaysian sociologist Syed Hussein Alatas² argued that, trained in Western-dominated institutions, the postcolonial mind was unable of raising independent problems and, as a result, applied the Western template to problems of the non-Western world. This kind of mental captivity, in contrast to the one theorized by Miłosz, is unconscious. As demonstrated by a recent wave of protests in the postcolonial world—The Dakota Access Pipeline protests on the Standing Rock Indian reservation immediately come to mind—the nations

1. A character in the novel *Insatiability* (1930) by Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz.
2. For details see Giorgio Mariani’s article in this issue.

of the Third World are becoming increasingly aware of and ready to break with the legacy of intellectual captivity.

Most of the articles published in this issue of *Review of International American Studies* originated as keynote lectures and academic papers presented at the 2018 edition of the International Conference of the Institute of English Cultures and Literatures of the University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland. The conference was an invitation to identify aspects of mental captivity in literature and cultural practice and examine the various ways in which the oppressive norms and normativities delineating mental captivity can be and have been contested.

In the opening article, “Emerson’s Superhero,” Giorgio Mariani clarifies the various meanings of mental captivity to set the stage for the discussion of Ralph Waldo Emerson’s relatively unknown essay “War.” The author finds that essay helpful to understand the challenges we face when, equipped with an intellectual apparatus forged in the “old” world, we try to imagine a “new” one of peace and justice. Ultimately, what Mariani worries about is that an anti-war protest pursued to its utmost limits risks becoming another form of enslaving mentality. Beyond the uncompromising heroism of the hero, however, Mariani discovers the liberating perspective of the Emersonian superhero, who, renouncing heroic dogmatism, is willing to make violence stop with her/him.

“Mailer, Doctorow, Roth: A Cross-Generational Reading of the American Berserk” by John Matteson zeroes in on the idea of public protest as quintessentially paradoxical within the USAmerican³ cultural and literary practice. A nation founded on dissent and the love of liberty, the U.S. exhibits intolerance towards those who expose its double standards, domestically and abroad. Protest is seen as indecent and unpatriotic, asserts Matteson. As a consequence, the scorned and criminalized protester falls into the trap of oppositional politics. Drawing his evidence from three novels shaped by the American military intervention in Vietnam: *Armies of the Night*, *The Book of Daniel*, and *American Pastoral*, Matteson examines the motives and contradictions of protest. To round up

3. Since most of the essays gathered here deal with USAmerican perspectives, the terms American and America will be henceforward used as synonymous with USAmerican and the USA respectively, unless otherwise stated.

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the historical perspective, the author casts a self-conscious glance at Trump's America to find even the well-intentioned, law-abiding individuals complicit with the forces of destruction.

Equally critical of the narrative of liberty as supposedly foundational for America, North and South, Manuel Broncano Rodriguez identifies "allegories of the gestation of the *homo americanus*" in the early *captivity* narratives. The author provocatively declares the existence of an—as yet unwritten—history of mental captivity in the US, within which he situates his discussion of Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*. With one eye on contemporary U.S. politics and the other on literature, Broncano Rodriguez finds an "arcane association" between President Trump bowing to Russian President Putin during the 2018 Helsinki summit and Cormac McCarthy's Judge Holden attempting to master his "ludicrous disciple" the Kid. Bold and sparkling with wit, the article takes us on a rollercoaster ride along the associative paths of the author's questioning, dissenting mind.

Protest contextualized as an alternative lifestyle is theorized by Monica Kocot in her "A Celebration of the Wild: on Earth Democracy and the Ethics of Civil Disobedience in Gary Snyder's Writing." In times of unprecedented ecological crisis, we would be well-advised to seek life-saving wisdoms wherever they can be found. Gary Snyder's integration of Taoist and Buddhist wisdom traditions with resistance to harmful Western normativities provides guidelines for liberation: freeing ourselves from captivity to the ego, we may open ourselves to the inner and outer wildness that co-constitutes us and return to living in communion with all earth beings, animate and inanimate alike, like our premodern ancestors did.

Place-based sense of interconnectedness of all earth beings is also crucial for the indigenous wisdoms of North America. Reading Louise Erdrich through the lens of critical animal and critical decolonial studies, Małgorzata Poks, in her article "'Where Butchers Sing Like Angels': Of Captive Bodies and Colonized Minds," argues that normativities are most harmful when they are no longer visible. Human mastery over the animal(ized) other is, arguably, the most invisible of them all, because it is foundational to the maintenance of all other dichotomies of the Western world.

The ubiquitous—and invisibilized—violence against the animal, argues Poks, the result of an undeclared species war, is directly related to the constitution of the “human” as an elitist concept. As a corollary, building the “world of the you” requires the dismantling of speciesism and a return to pre-modern cosmologies of interconnectedness. We will never be fully human without the ability to relate to the nonhuman as part of ourselves.

Within the cultural context of the West, and most specifically in the US, the naturalization of prejudices against people of African origin is a practice of long standing. Still, a (tragic) protest against racial discrimination risks replacing one set of cultural stereotypes with a different one and thus ending up as another form of mental captivity. The paradoxes of essentializing the racial experience are foregrounded in Sonia Caputa’s article “Resistance and Protest in Percival Everett’s *Erasure*.” The novel, argues the author, demonstrates the collusion of the publishing industry, the media, and the academy in the construction of canonical, unitary, politically-correct “blackness,” while it attempts to ironize and subvert this collusion.

Cultural stereotyping is also the focal point of Eric Starnes’s “Black Flag under a Grey Sky: Forms of Protest in Current Neo-Confederate Prose and Song.” Starnes reverses the politically-correct paradigm and attempts to re-read the “civic religion” of white nationalism as a form of protest against normative historiographies about the American South written by “liberals.” Subjecting to scrutiny popular cultural expressions of the neo-Confederate sentiment, Starnes finds “an undercurrent of tragedy” there. Contestatory of the hard-won neo-liberal narrative (in the singular), this article challenges some of the cherished contemporary beliefs. As an imaginative exercise involving switching perspectives, it would probably be of interest to Olga Tokarczuk’s *Heterotopians*. They would learn something from it. But what would that lesson be readers need to determine for themselves.

Michał Kisiel’s article “Violence Hates Games? Revolting (Against) Violence in Michael Haneke’s *Funny Games U.S.*,” dwells on the subject of protest against the norms of the mainstream cinema. Haneke’s film, asserts Kisiel, resists reading violence as retributive or cathartic. By overloading violence, *Funny Games*

U.S. foregrounds the concept of *acting* violence in order to destabilize the positions of perpetrators and victims. Haneke's film "manifests a dramatic protest against the disturbed norms of violence in the contemporary cinema and the growing apathy that intoxicates the spectators."

Norms and normativities governing the production of the "natural" human body are under scrutiny in Murat Göç-Bilgin's "Posthumanity and the Prison-house of Gender in Douglas Coupland's *Microserfs*." Enlisting the help of posthumanist theories, Göç reads Coupland's 1995 novel in terms of protest against essentialist definitions of the human body. Donna Haraway's cyborg haunts the pages of *Microserfs*, which promises the body's liberation from restrictive norms of humanity. Göç believes the novel sketches the coordinates of a new being, "more human than human."

Finally, Monika Kołtun returns us to the concept of tragic protest in her attempt to define the perimeters of the protester's impossible choice between "a life of constant suppression of conscience" on the one hand and conscientious action which shakes the very foundations of his or her life on the other. "The Tragedy of a Whistleblower: Adamczewski's *Tragic Protest* and the Case of Chelsea Manning" aptly demonstrates the stakes involved in blowing the whistle on criminal systemic practices. Yet, democracy, perhaps life itself, depend on people who can repeat after Manning: "i want people to see the truth... because without information, you cannot make informed decisions as a public."

This issue of *Review of International American Studies* is rounded up by two articles in the Varia section: Federica Perazzini's "Paradigms of Otherness: the American Savage in British Eighteenth-Century Popular and Scholarly Literature" and Antonio Barrenechea's "Dracula as Inter-American Film Icon: Universal Pictures and Cinematográfica ABSA." Perazzini examines the changing cultural representations of the indigenous peoples of North America as reflective of the successive stages of the construction of British imperial hegemony. The chief merits of this article are a meticulous analysis of literary and cultural sources which illustrate the thesis and an engaging discussion of the cultural and philosophical context of the colonial encounter, all thrown against a broad historical canvas. In turn, Antonio Barrenechea's

essay explores the vampire cinema of Hollywood and Mexico as a phenomenon of “hemispheric provenance, and proportion.” Following an intriguing cultural analysis, this article concludes with the vision of the vampire as an inter-American specter of modernity.

REVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL AMERICAN STUDIES

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EMERSON'S SUPERHERO

OF BONDAGE AND THE INTELLECT

When, in his hyper-canonical “The American Scholar,” Ralph Waldo Emerson asked men (and perhaps women, too) to achieve the condition of “Man Thinking” and resist becoming “the parrots of other men’s thinking” (*Essays* 54), going on to lament that Americans had for too long listened to “the courtly muses of Europe” (*Essays* 70), he was performing an early post-colonial critique of what we may well call the American captive mind.¹ Though to my knowledge Emerson never used the phrase anywhere in his work, one could easily argue that the danger of seeing one’s own mind captivated by some force external to the self, was his life-long, obsessive preoccupation. As he put it in the same lecture, “I had better never see a book than to be warped by its attraction clean out of my own orbit, and made a satellite instead of a system. The one thing in the world, of value, is the active soul” (*Essays* 57). Colonialism, for Emerson, was not only that emanating from European models, which made the “spirit of the American freeman [...] timid, imitative, tame” (*Essays* 70). When Emerson lamented that writers had “Shakspearized [sic]” for two centuries, he was

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1. An earlier version of this essay was presented as a keynote address at the “Captive Minds. Norms, Normativities and the Forms of Tragic Protest in Literature and Cultural Practice,” held on September 20–23, 2018, in Szczyrk. I wish to thank Małgorzata Poks and Paweł Jędrzejko for the invitation. I am greatly indebted to Masturah Alatas, who not only discussed at length with me the notion of mental captivity and its use across different disciplinary fields, but also read and commented in detail on an advanced draft of this essay.

referring not so much to American writers imitating British models, but to “the English dramatic poets” themselves, who were after all only a symptom of a more general problem affecting people and culture everywhere. “The literature of every nation bear me witness” (*Essays* 58). For Emerson there is a force we may call ‘subliminal colonialism’, which is operative not only within one’s own culture, but even within one’s own self, which can captivate our mind, enslaving it to norms and rules that do not emanate from one’s own innermost—or, as Emerson put it in “Self-Reliance,” “aboriginal”—self. To quote again from “The American Scholar,” “Genius is always sufficiently the enemy of genius by over influence” (*Essays* 58).

Even based on such a cursory presentation of Emerson’s preoccupation with the self’s integrity, it would be possible to draw some connections with Czesław Miłosz’s notion of the captive mind, though neither Emerson nor Thoreau nor any other Transcendentalist are anywhere mentioned in Miłosz’s book. Notwithstanding the widely different socio-historical contexts their respective work grew out of, both Emerson and Miłosz were troubled by what seems to be a nearly instinctual habit on the part of most human beings to conform to the ruling ideas and concepts of a given historical epoch. Though Emerson lived in what is commonly identified as one of the world’s earliest modern democracies, he was aware that the mind could easily become captive also in what was, to a certain extent, a free society. Emerson knew of course that the pre-Civil War United States could not be really called a free country as long as slavery was tolerated, and in a famous (to some infamous) journal entry of 1852, he wrote of having woken up at night “& bemoaned myself, because I had not thrown myself into this deplorable question of Slavery, which seems to want nothing so much as a few assured voices,” adding however that this would mean “my desertion of my post, which has none to guard it but me. I have quite other slaves to free than those negroes, to wit, imprisoned spirits, imprisoned thoughts, far back in the brain of man,—far retired in the heaven of invention, and which, important to the republic of Man, have no watchman, or lover, or defender, but I” (Emerson, *Journals* 437). According to James Read, “This passage reveals, not indifference toward

slavery, but instead a fierce battle between two duties, both of which Emerson recognizes as legitimate, and which come into conflict because the time demands of fulfilling each duty are enormous" (161). Whether we agree with Read's defense of Emerson or not, what is worth noting here is that, instead of contrasting his own condition as a free subject to actual physical and political slavery, Emerson worried about the "imprisoned spirits, imprisoned thoughts" which only with an utmost and constant psychological exertion he could hope to liberate. His own mind, if not properly guarded and cultivated, could become captive too, and he too could lapse from the status of Man Thinking to that of the slavish bookworm.

Minds, then, can become captive under totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, where, due to sheer fear or with the scope of securing some personal advantage, individuals pretend to embrace the ideologies of the ruling party. However, from an Emersonian viewpoint, one wonders whether these individuals could be called captives. When one's conformism is merely formal and not substantial, the individual mind would appear to preserve a degree of freedom and even though Emerson would not hesitate to call cowards the people afraid of speaking their minds, he seems far more preoccupied by those who cannot even begin to think because they blindly accept and introject whatever norms and ideas they receive from traditions, books, political leaders, public opinion and other forces. So, before looking more closely at what can be made of Emerson's thinking when it is applied to the context of political protest, I would like to dwell for a while longer on another influential use of the concept of the "captive mind" that is perhaps less familiar to Western scholars, but which I believe is important to mention in this context because it once again raises the issue of the extent to which a mind may remain captive under by and large democratic conditions.

In two articles appearing in the early 1970's in *The International Social Science Journal*, the Malaysian sociologist Syed Hussein Alatas analyzed at length what he described as the problems created by "the captive mind" to the development of what nowadays we refer to as post-colonial countries. In his essays, Professor Alatas—whose work became more widely known in the West

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after Edward Said discussed it in a key chapter of his own *Culture and Imperialism* (see Said 245–61)—lamented that an uncritical acceptance of the former colonial powers’ ways of seeing, studying, and conceptualizing the world, was hindering the “creative development” of many Asian societies, both culturally and politically. Alatas provides a long list of the defining traits of the “captive mind.” I will quote only three entries: “[1] A captive mind is the product of higher institutions of learning, either at home or abroad, whose way of thinking is dominated by Western thought in an imitative and un-critical manner. [2] A captive mind is uncreative and incapable of raising original problems. [...] [3] It is unconscious of its own captivity and the conditioning factors making it what it is” (“Creative development” 691) All this sounds pretty much Emersonian to me, notwithstanding the fact that Alatas never refers to American transcendentalism in his articles. While the Emerson connection has never been explored, scholars and writers have speculated about the extent to which Alatas may have been inspired by Miłosz’s widely known book. According to Syed Hussein Alatas’ biographer, Masturah Alatas, Miłosz’s and S.H. Alatas’ captive minds are quite different. The minds of people captivated by the totalitarian Communist regimes of which Miłosz spoke, “were minds at risk if they allowed themselves to remain captive.” But at least some of these minds “were still, nevertheless, great minds” (122), she writes in her book, *The Life in the Writing*. For Professor Alatas, instead, “a captive mind is not a great mind yet because it cannot think creatively and originally, and is held captive by western paradigms of thinking” (Alatas, *Life* 122). A similar point is made in an essay by Clive Kessler: “The Stalinist apologist of whom Miłosz wrote knew his own situation but was clever enough, and too clever by half, to suppress his knowledge of it, while for Alatas the immobilized postcolonial citizen was blocked culturally and intellectually, only in part by his own consent, from knowing his own situation” (135). On the other hand, when emphasis is placed on the captive mind’s unawareness of its own captivity, the resemblance with Emerson is striking. Alatas, like Emerson, is addressing the context of countries whose formal independence is only a few decades old, and rather than simply rejoicing at this newly acquired freedom, very much like Emerson,

he laments the uncreative spirit infecting the former colonies, and hence their inability to provide original solutions to the cultural, social, and economic problems they are facing. I would not want to push the comparison too far. Emerson's stubborn and irreducible individualism, his praise of "Whim," and his disregard for all forms of "foolish consistency" are always on the verge of flowing into an anarchism that either seems to ignore the need for social cohesion or else is at risk of striking a merely intellectual pose, with little or no purchase on the real world. These are traits that a sociologist and a committed political thinker like Alatas would have had trouble relating to. However, some of Emerson's writings are by no means indifferent to the ethical and political questions that any theory of the captive mind must sooner or later confront. For example, thanks especially to the work done over the last two decades by scholars like Len Gougeon, Emerson's contribution to the anti-slavery and abolitionist movement has been duly emphasized.² Here I want to focus, however, on an aspect of Emerson's work that has received comparatively little attention: his contribution to pacifist and anti-war *thinking*.

I put the stress on the word *thinking* because I believe that Emerson's importance lies mostly, if not exclusively, at the level of theory. Unlike Thoreau, Emerson never went to jail for refusing to pay a poll tax in opposition to the Mexican-American War (and slavery). Indeed, many believe it was Emerson himself who paid Thoreau's tax, thus limiting his pupil's prison experience to one single night. Moreover, when the Civil War came, Emerson not only did not oppose it—he was its enthusiastic, perhaps even somewhat cynical supporter. "Ah! sometimes gunpowder smells good" ("Notes" 579), he famously exclaimed in 1861, as he campaigned for "the most absolute abolition" of slavery. Emerson's conversion to the necessity of war—which he did know to be a form of evil—to abolish what he considered the even greater evil of slavery, may have been largely responsible for the neglect visited by scholars on his early essay "War," an address he originally delivered at the invitation of the American Peace society. I have analyzed in some detail this text in my recent book *Waging War*

2. Besides Gougeon's *Virtue's Hero*, more generally on Emerson's politics see the essays collected in Levine and Malchuk.

on War. *Peacefighting in American Literature*, and I am not going to rehash my entire argument here. I will only say that in the book my main preoccupation was to show how Emerson worked hard to oppose the notion of peace as being synonymous with inaction. “The peace principle”—Emerson explained—“can never be defended, it can never be executed, by cowards. The manhood that has been in war must be transferred to the cause of peace, before war can lose its charm, and peace be venerable to men” (“War” 171). If one looks at this passage from what I would like to call a captive mind perspective—something that I did not do in my book but I would like to do here—it could be argued that in order to emancipate humankind from its tragic fascination with war (a fascination that Emerson explains on both historical and psychological grounds in the early parts of his essay), individuals must first undergo a veritable cultural revolution that would enable them to get rid of the notion that war is something full of charm as well as to understand that peace is fully compatible with what Emerson calls “manhood.” The term is unfortunately inescapably masculinist, but I think it could be shown that for Emerson it is not so much connected with being male as with terms such as force, energy, mental and physical prowess. Here Emerson’s mind, too, is in part imprisoned by the times’ entrenched beliefs, though we should not forget that, from the Enlightenment onwards, pacifists have routinely been accused of being weak, ineffectual, sentimental—in a word, “feminine.” Emerson’s insistence on the manhood of the anti-war militant, like Mohandas Gandhi’s belief that peace fighters had to be trained like soldiers and display an even higher courage than the latter, as well as Martin Luther King’s own insistence on the *power* and *force* of non-violence, are all attempts at sabotaging the deeply held conviction that only through war and violence—paradoxically and ironically enough—can peace be obtained.³

Emerson was keenly aware of the contradictory position he was forced to occupy by his argument in favor of peace and against war. He wanted the abolition of war, but he knew that was equivalent to advocating going to war against war.

3. I have analyzed in some detail the Emersonian echoes of Gandhi’s ideas about war, violence and non-violence, in the second chapter of *Waging War*.

As Kenneth Burke, one of the most brilliant American critical minds of the past century, would put it nearly a century later in one of his perhaps most Emersonian moments, one can never think of war and peace as being “at peace” (*Grammar* 337). It was both practically and logically impossible. Peace and war could only be “at war,” irreducibly opposed to one another. Here was—and it is still with us today—an apparently insoluble challenge for any mind that did not wish to be captive to the lure and “charm” of martial ideas. If, as both the fiercest warmonger and the tamer students of warfare would argue, peoples and nations go to war to secure some kind of “peace”—if, in other words, all wars are at bottom conceptualized as wars to end war—how can we distinguish the “good war” that the anti-war or pacifist thinker wishes to wage on war itself, from the “bad war” of the pro-war camp? At least a partial and tentative answer to this question may be found in the hortatory conclusion of Emerson’s “War” essay:

The cause of peace is not the cause of cowardice. If peace is to be defended or preserved for the safety of the luxurious and the timid, it is a sham, and the peace will be base. War is better, and the peace will be broken. If peace is to be maintained, it must be by brave men, who have come up to the same height as the hero, namely, they will carry their life in their hand, and stake it at any instant for their principle, but who have gone one step beyond the hero, and will not seek another man’s life; men who have, by their intellectual insight or else by their moral elevation, attained such a perception of their own intrinsic worth that they do not think property or their own body a sufficient good to be saved by such dereliction of principle as treating a man like a sheep. (“War” 174)

Long before Gandhi and King, and with a clarity that not even a thinker much more popular among pacifists like Thoreau would ever achieve, here Emerson laid out the challenge facing the man (or woman) who truly wished to take that perhaps fatal though necessary, “step beyond the hero.” Emerson’s mind is here trying hard to liberate itself from one concept (that of heroism) not by banning it from its conceptual vocabulary but by redefining it to make room for a different way of looking at the world of strife and conflict. Faced with a situation that Syed Hussein Alatas would describe as one of “intellectual bondage and dependence” (“Creative development” 692) on an apparently unshakable tradition, Emerson chooses to proceed through “constructive imitation”: he resorts

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to what Kenneth Burke defined as a “homeopathic” approach, which, unlike an allopathic strategy, is based “on the feeling that danger cannot be handled by head-on attack, but must be accommodated” (*Attitudes* 45n). Hence, rather than rejecting the notion of “heroism” à la Brecht (“Unhappy is the land that needs a hero”), Emerson takes it to a higher level. If the hero is the one who is not afraid to die for one’s country and one’s beliefs, which hero would be greater than the one who would go into battle ready to risk his life without abdicating his belief in non-violence, and therefore unwilling to stoop so low as to think the salvation of his property or even his own bodily integrity a sufficient cause for hurting others? Killing a man is equivalent “to treating a man like a sheep.” The true hero would be the one who, having gone one step beyond the heroes of old, would in fact no longer be called a hero but would be someone for whom no term yet exists. For the time being, we may think of her as a kind-of—literally—*ultra* or *super* hero, someone who has ventured *beyond* charted behavioral patterns and embraced a *higher* moral principle.

Emerson’s “War” was written roughly a century before Gandhi, first, and King, a couple of decades later, turned his visionary statement into political practice. Though neither Gandhi nor King (except at the very end of his life, when he took a stand against the U.S. military involvement in Indochina) were primarily engaged in anti-war protests, they were opposing the daily violence which colonialism, racism, and imperialism visited on millions of people belonging to the “darker” races. And they did so, for the most part, asking the protesters they led not to respond to the violence of the army or the police that confronted them. They asked, in other words, not one or two exceptional individuals, but masses of thousands of people to take, in Emerson’s terms, “one step beyond the hero,” even when they saw their own infants or loved ones brutalized and sometimes murdered before their own eyes. As both King and Gandhi argued, images of this one-way violence would shock world public opinion, and civil rights and independence would be obtained with much less bloodshed than the one following any attempt to put up an armed resistance.

Let me say at once that, much as I admire the unbelievable courage displayed by those who took part in the demonstrations

in India and the American South, I am not convinced that the strategy of absolute non-violence Emerson theorized, and Gandhi and King tried to apply in actual practice, can always be adequate to redress wrongs, and achieve peace and social justice. Yet, this is not my main concern in this essay. All I wish to emphasize here is that, at the end of the day, not even non-violence can be as violence-free as we may at first think. In other words, while we may believe that, as Emerson put it, once we are unwilling to strike our opponents, no matter how vicious they might be, we resist treating them like sheep, we are in fact ready to let our oppressors treat *us* like sheep. It is certainly no accident that in his address Emerson resorted to the image of an animal that immediately evokes the scene of sacrifice. One may very well argue that, without ever mentioning him, Emerson is asking us to be like Christ: to rebel, but to do so by accepting that our desire to speak the Truth may force us into the position of the sacrificial lamb. The problem appears to be insoluble. We can renounce violence—we can turn ourselves, our bodies and our minds into a living embodiment of Peace. But as long as we will be struck, maimed, and killed by our oppressors, it is War that will continue to triumph. To the extent that opposition to violence requires a sacrifice of self, it paradoxically reinforces the logic it wishes to escape. All we can do is hope that, by breaking up what René Girard has identified as the circle of mimetic violence, our enemies may be tempted to mirror *our* behavior: to imitate, that is, our non-violence.⁴ Historically, there have been indeed cases in which non-violence has worked this way. But this is far from being the norm. As the American theologian Kelly Denton-Borhaug has noted in a discussion of how we may find alternatives to the sacrificial system of war, proclaiming one's willingness to die for the cause of peace may be a way to reinforce rather than undermine the logic of sacrifice. This is obviously also the case with Emerson's new "hero," whose renunciation of violence takes on heroic—or better, super-heroic—proportions by virtue of his readiness to become a pacifist martyr.

It is certainly no accident that thinkers as diverse as the aforementioned Girard and Denton-Borhaug, as well as the American

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4. See especially his seminal *Violence and the Sacred*.

Protestant theologian Walter Wink and the Italian Catholic dissenter Enzo Mazzi, and many others, have all taken issue with the *ideology* of sacrifice that is generated by the *sacrificial* reading of the Passion. While many would disagree with Girard's claim that "There is nothing in the Gospels to suggest that the death of Jesus is a sacrifice," there is a broad agreement among Christian pacifist theologians that "The passages that are invoked to justify a sacrificial conception of the Passion both can and should be interpreted with no reference to sacrifice in any of the accepted meanings" (*Things Hidden* 180). This is no mere terminological dispute. To construct the Passion as a sacrifice that all super-heroic human beings may wish to imitate would entail accepting the inevitability of violence rather than trying to imagine the conditions under which violence may be, if not altogether eliminated, at least contained and moderated. To return to Emerson's superhero, the point is by no means to diminish the extraordinary novelty of his imagined figure, produced by a mind trying to think beyond the commonsense of his day, but simply to suggest that even such a superhero would be at risk of being captivated by an ideology at odds with Emerson's rebellious spirit. The ideology of sacrifice has in fact been historically deployed either to promote war and violence (because, as Girard has taught us, violence *is* the sacred) or else to invite people to acquiesce and obey to the powers that be. To put it in different terms, there is no guarantee that even pacifism may not be incorporated, paradoxically, in a logic of war.

The lesson to be drawn from the argument I have made thus far is a simple, though hard one. War and Peace need to be constructed as irreducible opposites. They need and must be, to reiterate Kenneth Burke's point, "at war" with one another. To imagine the two "at peace," is to imagine the age-old scenario of war as the only instrument that can guarantee the peace. On the other hand, to imagine the two "at war" means to accept that even peace has something warlike about it, and it cannot claim to be as pure and absolute as we may wish it to be. This is a contradiction, or even better, a foundational antinomy we must accept. We cannot extricate ourselves from such a double-bind, but we can certainly keep our eyes and minds open so that both the violence that is "structural" and internal to any society, and the violence of outright warfare

that nations deploy against other nations, may be superseded by forms of conflict and disputation from which physical violence may be banned, or banned for the most part. Let me be clear. I am by no means suggesting that anti-war struggles are ineffectual as long as they remain peaceful or, on the contrary, that to wage war on war we must resort to the violence we wish to be free of. The point is rather to acknowledge that, given the inescapably and necessarily conflictual nature of all human societies, the goal of anti-war cultures and practices must be that of transcending the “antagonistic” framework of war by adopting what Chantal Mouffe, in her book *Agonistics. Thinking the World Politically*, identifies as forms of “agonistic” confrontations that will not erase conflict but will “sublimate” it into a contest between adversaries who respect each other, not enemies whose ultimate desire is to destroy one another. This ideal condition may be described as one of bloodless warfare, or, seen from an opposite perspective, as a form of agonistic peace, and it is indeed an ideal depending on the good will of both sides to settle disputes through dialogue and political negotiations rather than through war and violence. It is a condition that is hard to achieve, but most European nations, after the apocalypse of World War Two, with a series of limitations and contradictions, have been able to achieve it, *grasso modo*.

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“PEACE” LITERATURE

One would be foolish, of course, to ignore that nowadays Europe is threatened by the resurgence of vicious nationalisms, not to mention the increasing structural violence plaguing its societies internally, and which is most visible in the xenophobic sentiments embraced and fanned by many European governments. More generally, one could observe that, far from ushering in an era of everlasting peace, economic globalization has turned out to be largely responsible for sparking armed conflicts in many areas of the planet. Whether one agrees with the notion advanced by Italian political scientist Carlo Galli in *La Guerra Globale* that “globalization is a world of war” (55, my translation), it would be impossible to deny that, from Africa to the Middle East, from Afghanistan to the Ukraine, the planet is shaken by violence

and endemic, apparently endless, conflicts. The question of how to oppose war and promote peace is therefore as urgent as ever and it may be symptomatic of this need that over the last few years no less than three major anthologies of pacifist and anti-war writings have appeared in the United States. I cannot discuss these works here in any detail. I do wish, however, to briefly dwell on some general features shared by these anthologies, because they seem to further substantiate the point I have been trying to make so far. To put it bluntly, taken together, these three praiseworthy efforts to create a canon of “peace literature” capable of providing a counter-balance to the much more studied, revered, and popular “war literature,” offer a literal textbook demonstration of the thesis I have presented here concerning the impossibility—in both theory and practice—to think the tension between “peace” and “war” as an absolute opposition. As I hope to have shown in my observations on Emerson’s (and others’) attempt to forge an alternative to the war-peace dichotomy, it is well-nigh impossible to trace a clear-cut, insurmountable line between these two concepts, just as it is hard at times to understand where non-violence ends, and violence begins. The idea of “peace” that emerges from these three anthologies is deeply conflictual. What these works suggest, I propose, is that peace must be defined as the real movement which, to abolish the present state of war, must be itself pugnacious, courageous, and ultimately willing to take that daring, dangerous “step beyond the hero” we have so far discussed. At the same time, however, the writings collected in these volumes offer a clear indication of how, historically regarded, anti-war movements have been anything but struggles of Beautiful Souls against an Ugly World.

The intention animating the collections under consideration is perhaps no better illustrated than in one of Bill Watterson’s “Calvin and Hobbes” comic strips reprinted on page 621 of Lawrence Rosenwald’s *War No More. Three Centuries of American Antiwar & Peace Writing*, the richest of the “peace literature” anthologies I just mentioned. The widely known characters created by Watterson are a six-year old boy named Calvin, and his stuffed tiger Hobbes, who in Calvin’s imagination is a living, speaking being, endowed with his own independent personality. In the first table

of the strip, Hobbes asks an equally helmeted Calvin, “How come we play war and not peace?” This question is answered by Calvin with a sagacity that goes well beyond his supposedly infantile consciousness: “Too few role models.” As Rosenwald writes in introducing the strip, “Anyone making an anthology like this one is responding to the problem Calvin identifies, and hoping to offer a partial remedy: to help people learn how to “play peace” if they so desire” (621). Since we learn how to play a game by imitating those who are already experienced players, the role of a “peace literature” canon must necessarily be that of providing inspirational models even though, as will become clear in a moment, the models showcased by the three volumes differ widely not only because of their respective historical groundings, but also in terms of temperament, ideological affiliations, and, most importantly perhaps, of the position they occupy along the continuum running—to resort to Duane L. Cady’s useful terminology—from Warism to Pacifism.

All three anthologies put on full display, rather than hide, the contradictions and ambivalences around which they are built. *We Who Dared to Say No to War. American Antiwar Writing from 1812 to Now*, published in 2008, is the outcome of the collaboration between a scholar from the Left (Murray Polner) and a Conservative (Thomas E. Woods, Jr.). This is an interesting choice because, first, it calls into question the belief that anti-war thinking is an exclusive prerogative of the Left, and, second, it makes room for a substantial number of anti-war pronouncements which have come from the Right. This ideological openness is to be found also in the other two collections. For example, both *Not in Our Name. American Antiwar Speeches, 1846 to the Present*, edited by Jesse Stellato, and *War No More*, which published Barack Obama’s 2003 speech against George W. Bush’s “dumb war” against Iraq, as well as Senator Robert Byrd’s elegant oration against the same war. These two texts are also printed in the Murray and Woods anthology and, at this point may well be defined as “classic” anti-war addresses. I can easily imagine many objecting to the inclusion of figures like Obama—the president who continued the Afghanistan war, who helped tear apart Libya, and who master-minded the drones’ war—and Byrd, a conservative Democrat who, in his youth joined the Ku Klux Klan (which he later regretted), and also supported

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with no hesitation the Vietnam War (and, of this he never repented). What is perhaps the unintended goal of these anthologies is to show that, when we look closely at the historical record, many anti-war militants were by no means absolute pacifists, and even the absolute pacifists were, at times, either ambivalent about the morality of their position or else stood accused of being interested in saving only their own personal sense of morality, regardless of their choices' practical consequences. As you see, Emerson is by no means an exception. Many others were sincere in loving peace but found that under certain conditions such an inclination could not be followed through.

In sum, not all the "role models" found in the pages of these three impressive collections are some version of Emerson's pacifist superhero. Some authors do live up, or struggle to live up to that ideal. Think for example of all those, from Eugene Debs to Bayard Rustin, from Don Benedict to the Berrigan brothers, who spent time in prison for resisting war and the draft. Yet, many are the men and women whose choices were often circumstantial, and who, like former U.S. president Barack Obama, not only were selective in their opposition to war, but never tried to hide this fact. If one reads carefully his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech—a text understandably not reprinted in any of these three anthologies, because, notwithstanding the occasion and the obligatory nods to Martin Luther King, it is no anti-war address but actually an argument in favor of "just wars"—one realizes that to call Obama a hypocrite will not do. One may be—like I am—very critical of his presidential conduct both at home and especially abroad, but Obama, like many other authors who appear in these anthologies, would most likely contend that "absolute pacifism" of the kind preached by the early Emerson, in its Christ-like purity, is, regrettably, not always applicable.

We may, as I already noted, be troubled at seeing separated by only a few pages authors as different as, on the one hand, Dwight D. Eisenhower—who was Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe during World War Two—and, on the other hand, Don Benedict and David Dellinger, who served harsh prison sentences for refusing to serve in Eisenhower's army. And yet, not only the latter's denunciation of the "military-industrial complex" has become

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a text often quoted by anti-war and left-wing activists all over the world, but many *contemporary* anti-war writers and militants may be—ironically enough—more sympathetic to Eisenhower than to those pacifists who, like Dellinger or Bayard Rustin, believed that not even the fight against the Nazi and Fascist menace justified going to war. Of course, when one reads about the prison ordeal of a young man from a very rich family like David Dellinger, who, as he put it, “went straight from Yale to jail” because, like fellow war-resister Milton Meyer, he considered war to be the essence of Fascism, it is difficult not to admire his commitment to the pacifist ideal. No serious reader would dare call Dellinger a coward for refusing to serve in the so-called “Good War.” Indeed, he would certainly be a fit candidate for the role of Emersonian superhero. However, the book that has most recently defended pacifist and anti-war activity in the West before and during the early phases of World War Two—Nicholson Baker’s *Human Smoke*—has been attacked by commentators on the Right, the Center, *and* the Left. In fact, the Baker essay reprinted in the Rosenwald anthology and devoted to “The Dangerous Myth of The Good War” (Rosenwald 736–55) was originally written also as a response to Katha Pollit, who, in the widely-circulated leftist U.S. magazine *The Nation*, had confessed, after reading Baker’s book, that she “felt something [she] had never felt before: fury at pacifists.”

World War Two is of course an ultimate test case for both pacifists and anti-war thinkers, because if not a “Good War” it would seem to come pretty close to be the ideal “just war.” No wonder that in his essay Baker refers to it as “pacifism’s great smoking counterexample,” the archetype invoked whenever America decides that a new “Hitler” like Saddam Hussein, Slobodan Milošević, or Osama Bin Laden looms on the horizon and must be confronted with military force. However, even granting that from the Allied perspective the *jus ad bellum* during World War Two was unimpeachable, this still leaves open the question of the *jus in bello*—of the way in which Great Britain and the U.S. conducted the war.⁵ Baker’s controversial book raises several objections regarding not only the morality of the relentless pounding and eventual fire-bombing

5. These concepts are elucidated in Michael Walzer’s classic *Wars Just and Unjust*.

of German cities but is also skeptical regarding their effectiveness. The Allied air-raids were *objectively* as savage as the German Blitz on London, and to boot, as a member of Churchill's cabinet observed as early as 1941, "Bombing does NOT affect German morale." On the other hand, as General Raymond Lee argued, it was good for "The morale of the British people [...] if the bombing stopped, their spirit would immediately suffer" (Baker 434). Now, any criticism of how the Allies fought the war is likely to elicit *reductio ad hitlerum* counterarguments, as if questioning, say, the fire-bombing of German cities is tantamount to arguing that Hitler and Churchill were war criminals of the same ilk. They obviously were not, and it strikes me as somewhat intellectually dishonest to argue that this is what Baker wishes to suggest. This is not to say, however, that we should not feel free to investigate the morality of the Allied conduct of the war, and more so precisely because, since the fall of the Soviet empire, references to World War Two have constantly been employed to provide the moral capital necessary to promote the wars waged by the U.S. and its allies.

There is also a more general question that is worth asking given the present essay's focus on issues of mental captivity. How useful is a theory of the "captive mind" to discuss these thorny, perhaps undecidable problems? As has been the case with all wars, immediately before and during the Second World War pacifist and anti-war militants split into different factions. Absolute pacifists like David Dellinger and Bayard Rustin could have easily claimed that those who converted to the necessity of opposing militarily the Nazi-Fascist barbarity had been too easily seduced by the appeal of the very martial ideologies they had formerly pledged to resist. But for the interventionist front, the minds of absolute pacifists were imprisoned in an ideal which, under the circumstances, could not bring about the peace and justice they all desired. I think it is to the credit of thinkers and activists like Dellinger and Rustin that they hardly accused their former comrades of betrayal. They stuck to their principles and paid a very heavy price for doing it, but while they defended their choices both in writing and in practice, they did so without striking any fundamentalist pose. They qualify as Emersonian superheroes not only because they did not respond violently

to the violence of the state that imprisoned them, and to the jailers who taunted or beat them, but most importantly because they believed they had first and foremost to answer to their conscience. This, however, should not blind us to the fact that along with many who went to war simply because that is what they were told to do by the state, there were several who chose to go only after a period of torturous self-scrutiny. The passages in the Rosenwald anthology from Don Benedict's *Born Again Radical* are both exemplary and moving in this regard. "Coming out of a quarantine as a known pacifist serving my second term," he writes, Benedict was assailed by doubts regarding the correctness of his decision not to serve. Placed under confinement, he ruminates that "Violence ought not to be stopped by violence.... Nevertheless, my belief in pacifism as an absolute was shaken. How could I stay in solitary if I was unsure that what I was doing was right? What if I were wrong?" (Rosenwald 595). After spending 366 days in the Danbury Federal Correction Institute, in 1943 he finally enlisted in the Army Air Corps, serving in the South Pacific. As he recalled the moment of leaving the prison, many years later, he wrote: "Something fine was being left behind. Also certitude. Also my youth. I knew I would never come back" (Rosenwald 595). Benedict did not claim to have finally found the *right* answer to his dilemma. In fact, he claims that "certitude" left him the moment he chose to give up on his protest. He went on to fight, but his doubts and his uncertainties were not left behind. This is perhaps the ultimate sign of a mind that is not captive—the mind that knows that its own freedom is always questionable; the mind that knows that Thinking, with an Emersonian capital T, means also to think *against itself*. The only way to avoid intellectual bondage, that is, is to leave always within one's mind some room for doubt.

If we think of the non-captive mind as one which, while holding fast to some basic moral principles, is endlessly, even mercilessly scrutinizing itself—as a "mind on fire," to quote the title of Robert Richardson's intellectual biography of Emerson—many (though by no means not all) of the writings collected in these anthologies, for all their passionate and unswerving commitment to the cause of peace, would also deserve to be identified as exercises in what Herman Melville's Ishmael would have called "earnest thinking,"

which “is but the intrepid effort of the soul to keep the open independence of her sea” (97). I don’t know whether, as Rosenwald writes, the letters exchanged by Yvonne Dilling and Mary Jo Bowman (two Christian activists participating in the anti-imperialist movement in Central America at the time of the Sandinista revolution), are “the greatest American conversation on violence” (Rosenwald 567). Yet there is no question that they comprise an exemplary dialogue in which, their different views notwithstanding, the two writers always contemplate the possibility of being wrong about their choices. If both share the belief that a rigorous Christian vision is irreconcilable with an instrumental conception of violence, Dilling, working in close contact with the Sandinistas, realizes that no matter how theoretically reprehensible, armed resistance seems at times inescapable. Bowman, on her part, does not answer by simply reiterating the dogmas of non-violence, and she is willing to acknowledge that these, too, have their limits. At times she even comforts her friend, writing, “I doubt that any of the classical proponents of nonviolence on your list would condemn the use of armed confrontation in a desperate resistance to tyranny” (Rosenwald 580). She respects her friend’s agonizing self-doubting, but she also warns her (rightly, to my mind) about the danger of a revolutionary rhetoric equating the revolution with the coming of the Kingdom of God. She is particularly troubled by the legendary poet and revolutionary Trappist monk Ernesto Cardenal’s argument about armed struggle being not only an instrument of justice but an act of love. “Is it possible”—Bowman wonders without irony—“to love one’s enemies by killing them?” (Rosenwald 581).

Though she is less willing than her interlocutor to set aside her belief in the principle of non-violence, Bowman knows all too well she cannot extricate herself from the condition in which both history and her own personal vicissitudes have placed her. She does not think even for a moment that by sticking to what her conscience tells her, she is thereby innocent of the violence around her:

In a very real sense there is blood on my hands, my bloody pacifist hands. I am guilty of murder. Forgive me if I seem to overdramatize, but consider this: our federal tax dollars have been used time and again to fund

thousands of atrocities.... I have never carried a gun [...] but my money has supported and my silence has allowed some of the most brutal violence in the history of the world....

The more I allow myself to face that truth about my participation in a violent world, the more my faith and my intellect call me to humility and compassion rather than to doctrinaire ethics. I cannot hope for a clear conscience. I can only hope that my ethical choices are motivated by love rather than fear....

The crucial question is What does it mean to hold up Jesus' model of resisting evil by dying rather than killing, amidst a world so permeated with violence—whether it be verbal threats on the streets, psychological violence done to minorities, institutionalized violence inflicted on the unemployed, or bombings plotted to counter Central American insurrectionists? (Rosenwald 583)

As Bowman insists, the condition of “peace” enjoyed by those who are not actively involved in violent actions can hardly absolve them from the obligation to question their “passive” participation in the systemic-structural violence around them. To her credit, it is Bowman herself—the one less willing to give up on non-violence—who formulates the sharpest critique of “peacetime pacifism”: “I know that a pacifism untested is an affront to those who suffer. I must take sides, on behalf of the victims of the oppressive powers. I must either be willing to take on suffering or keep my mouth shut” (Rosenwald 584).

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TRAGIC CHOICES?

The adjective that first comes to mind to describe the dilemmas that serious war resisters had to face and the impossibly difficult choices they had to make is, I suppose, “tragic.” And as the fate of both King and Gandhi attests, the ranks of *peace* warriors have indeed suffered tragic losses. This is not surprising since at the heart of tragedy there is conflict and conflict is what any form of protest—including, as I have insisted, peaceful protest—is bound to fuel. Though I think it would be an exaggeration to say that all protest has at bottom a tragic character, protest of the kind Emerson had in mind in his “War” essay, or Thoreau envisioned when he called for our lives to be the “a counter-friction to stop the machine [of government]” (“Civil Disobedience” in Rosenwald 73) can indeed be tragic. Whenever we feel we must put at stake our own

lives in defense of a just cause, our protest would seem to take on a tragic character. One might argue that also facing the possibility of being jailed, exposed to police brutality, or simply dealing constantly with the hostility or the indifference of our fellow citizens are all unpleasant consequences a protester or dissenter must face, though I would not consider all these circumstances “tragic,” or tragic in the same degree.

In what I have just said, I have used the terms “tragedy” and “tragic” as referring in a general way to sad, painful events involving death or suffering. What I would now like to do, however, is investigate what happens if we adopt a more technical use of these terms. To do so, I will draw on an example from literary history. Building on Thomas Mann’s idea that the centrality of tragedy in modern German culture was a consequence of a weak national state, literary scholar Franco Moretti has written that this condition resulted not only in “a tragic version of political struggle” but also “[i]n the notion of conflict as something which must inevitably lead to a crisis, and of crisis as the moment of truth” (253). In Moretti’s view, the world of modern tragedy—the world of Ibsen and Strindberg, to quote two notable examples—stands in opposition to the world of the novel, where there is no single “moment of truth.” In his view, that of the novel is the world of bourgeois compromise, a social environment of conversation and conventions, with no apocalyptic flashes or revelatory crises. “The interdependence of truth and crisis in tragedy,” instead, paves the ground in Moretti’s view for “the classical rhetoric of revolutionary politics” (258), which he sees exemplified in Georges Sorel’s *Réflexions sur la violence*, with its theory of the General Strike. “The superior ‘morality’ of the General Strike—Moretti argues—lies in its forcing social actors to their ultimate forgotten ‘truth’. It is never conceived by Sorel as a process (as in Rosa Luxemburg’s roughly contemporary writings), but as a single, ‘instantaneous’ event. As an Apocalypse: the Moment of Truth” (258–59). It is a sad though well-known fact, Moretti adds, that the “tragic image of revolution as the Moment of Truth—with the inevitable corollary that social truth can only emerge in the crisis of a civil war” (259) found admirers on both the Left and the Right. To those who would accuse him of implying that Right and Left

share the same culture, Moretti replies that this is by no means his point. What he is arguing, instead, is that "it is virtually impossible to extricate the Left from the Right *whenever the Left adopts a 'tragic' worldview*" (260). A non-tragic world view is not, however, one that necessarily excludes the possibility of revolution or other moments of crisis. It is, instead, one that would consider "the moment of crisis neither as the *only* moment of truth, nor as the moment of the *only* truth" (260).

As Moretti writes in the penultimate paragraph of his essay, his concern with these matters is by no means only literary or theoretical, as his example of a Left adopting a tragic worldview is no other than Italian left-wing terrorism, a destructive and self-destructive phenomenon that has left a deep scar on his (which is also my) generation. The "supposed uniqueness" of the revolutionary crisis, "in its superstitious intractability [...] blinded us to the reality of much of the world around us, because it suggested that it was a 'false' world, an untrue one. In order to escape its misleading appearances, we basically had to make our way, no matter how, towards the moment of crisis, and then Social Truth would finally emerge in all its unequivocal clarity" (261). Here lies the fatal flaw of the tragic worldview: the naïve belief that the enormous complexity of our social universe may be transcended by finding some "unique" critical juncture that would allow us to bring down the whole edifice of lies, deceits, and compromises that clouds our vision. My readers may wonder at this point why I dwell on a notion of the tragic that may well be relevant to the context of terrorism but would seem to have little to do with the forms of protest I have been discussing in this essay. The reason is twofold. To begin with, a fascination with the tragic may infect even pacifist and anti-war thinking. For example, Emerson's moment of revelation, which has been so important to my argument, could also be constructed as one of fanatical pacifist martyrdom in which *only* the superhero can attain a Truth unavailable to those who lack her courage. To the extent that, as I mentioned earlier, a sacrificial aura continues to hover over Emerson's passage, the temptation to see political protest as a moment of personal redemption should never be discounted. The consequences of this may not be even remotely

as tragic as the ones deriving from the embrace of terrorism, but to expect super-heroic qualities from masses of people may be unrealistic and counterproductive. Sacrifices like the ones Gandhi and King asked for may be possible only under exceptional conditions and in any case should not be imagined as a value in itself (how could the willingness to be clubbed or shot at, be perceived as a value?) but as the possible *consequence* of a set of values—the ideal of non-violence—upheld in very specific circumstances (cfr. Moretti 260).

The second reason has to do with the need *not* to see the complex, and as we have seen, at times self-lacerating choices anti-war militants had to make, as “tragic” ones. When Mary Jo Bowman had to decide whether to embrace or resist an armed revolution, and when Don Benedict, in his solitary confinement, literally tortured his own soul wondering whether he had to join the Allied cause or not, we may be tempted to say that they were confronted with “tragic” choices. They both felt they could not, at one and the same time, hold on to the imperative of non-violence and the need to alleviate the suffering of those they wished to save. But, in fact, their predicament was far from the tragic one Moretti describes. If a tragic worldview is one that sees the moment of crisis as the moment of *truth*, then the crises experienced by militants like Bowman and Benedict were anything but tragic, as they did not end in some moment of illumination. Quite the opposite. Benedict tells us that it is precisely “certitude” that he lost as he left the jail to join the army, and, consequently, also a life of doubt. Bowman, on her part, ends with silence, wondering whether she should simply “shut up.” She has made a choice, but she is by no means sure that it is the *right* choice. We could be no farther from the scenario of apocalyptic illuminations which, according to Moretti, is a feature of modern tragedy. The decisions taken by both Benedict and Bowman are based—as they know all too well—on a form of moral *compromise* which is the opposite of the tragic devotion to an uncompromising Truth. Bowman and Benedict simply do not know whether they will be more morally correct and politically effective by sticking to non-violence or by giving it up. They have no way of predicting which choice will yield the most desirable results. Theirs is not a choice between

courage and cowardice, but one between two different ways of displaying their courage.

To reject the notion of political protest as a form of tragedy, therefore, is not to say that those who fight for peace and social justice will not be faced with difficult, at times very painful choices, nor to suggest that—because they cannot be altogether sure of the moral ground on which one stands—their opposition to the status quo would only be weak and tentative. Just because we remain open to the possibility that our choice may not be the most appropriate or effective one, does not mean we should not stand by it with all our hearts and minds. It simply means that we should act responsibly but not fanatically. Most importantly, perhaps, it means that we need to acknowledge that we live in a world in which many different historical, social, and cultural conditions coexist, requiring a variety of differently nuanced approaches to be amended. As far as one of the questions that has preoccupied me the most in this essay—that of the relationship between violence and non-violence—I would like to conclude by quoting a passage from an essay by Simon Critchley which I think captures much of what I have been trying to argue:

There are contexts where a difficult pacifism that negotiates the limits of violence might be enough. But [...] there are also contexts, multiple contexts, too depressingly many to mention, where nonviolent resistance is simply crushed by the forces of the state, the police, and the military. In such contexts, the line separating nonviolent warfare and violent action has to be crossed. Politics is always a question of local conditions, of local struggles and local victories. To judge the multiplicity of such struggles on the basis of an abstract conception of nonviolence is to risk dogmatic blindness (239).

The risk we face, in other words, is that of letting our mind become captive once again. Emerson himself wrote in “The Uses of Great Men” that “every hero becomes a bore at last” (*Essays* 627) Under given circumstances, perhaps, even a superhero may not be our best role model.

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MAILER, DOCTOROW, ROTH

A Cross-Generational Reading of the American Berserk

What does a white, upper-middle-class American man say to an audience in Poland about captivity and, more specifically to the problems of our current time, resistance to it? One needs only to read Czesław Miłosz's *The Captive Mind*, the text whose soul inspired and pervaded the conference at which this paper was initially given, to know what a monumental gap divides the United States of America from Poland on this subject, both in terms of history and the attitudes that history ingrains. It is admittedly and abundantly true that the United States has produced more than its share of captive lives: the millions who groaned under more than two centuries of slavery; the Japanese citizens restricted to internment camps in the early 1940s; the Native Peoples still shunted off and invisible on reservations; and the present-day American prison population that is, shamefully, the largest in the world. All these were and are deliberate and legally maintained systems of captivity, and their stories, told and untold, cast a shadow over the self-described land of the free to which, as a boy, I daily pledged allegiance. But the United States has never been compelled to regard itself as a captive *nation*. It has never experienced the existential threats to its being of the kind that Miłosz minutely details in *The Captive Mind*. The Captive Minds conference marked my fifth visit to Poland.¹ On each of these visits, I have felt

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1. An earlier version of this text was delivered as a keynote address at the International Conference of the Institute of English Cultures and Literatures of the University of Silesia in Katowice held under the title of "Captive Minds."

a deepening bond with this country and an evolving realization that no nation on earth has fought so hard and borne so much in its pursuit of independence for itself and freedom for its people. When I consider how and at what cost the Polish people have defended their homeland; when I reflect upon the history of the Warsaw Uprising and of the Solidarity movement and of the sacrifices both great and small that this nation has bravely undergone, I feel an admiration, a sympathy, and a love that mount to overflowing.

We live in a moment in which freedoms, both East and West, are under attack in ways that could not have been imagined a generation ago. As the future of representative democracy hangs in an uncertain state, I feel that what brought us together in Szczyrk was more than a conference. We were united, I would argue, by a declaration of faith and an assertion of purpose. By our presence, we who assembled there affirmed our wish to abolish the very concept of the captive mind. We declared our commitment to the simple but essential right of people across the globe to think and to speak and to teach as their research and knowledge guide them and as their conscience dictates. In those proceedings, we rededicated ourselves to transacting the serious business of freedom.

As we are all aware, freedom is far from tidy. The free expression of opinion, even in its more polite forms, can be contentious, and it can be uncomfortable. When societies try to correct themselves from within, they often do so in spasms that are intensely painful to watch. This fact begins to explain why protest, which our intellect may tell us is essential to a vibrant and healthy society, can strike some of its most cultured members as deeply unsavory. Of all American paradoxes, none is greater than this: the typical American cherishes free speech but is also gravely offended by public protest, which he regards as at best lacking in taste and at worst an outright crime. A nation founded on dissent; America is exquisitely uncomfortable with ill-mannered disagreement. I find myself today a citizen of a country whose president has asserted on the subject of protesters, “I don’t

know why they don't take care of a situation like that. I think it's embarrassing for the country to allow protesters" (Sonmez). This same president has more recently denounced peaceful protesters as anarchists and, in the streets of Washington and Portland, has sent troops to assault them in clashes reminiscent of warfare. Embarrassment, it seems, can have many causes. More than freedom itself, an American is likely to value moral insularity and absolution: he wants to live his life free from ethical challenge. He seeks suburban anesthesia, a life of commercial abundance untroubled by the pain inflicted elsewhere to maintain it, whether through military aggression or the global exploitation of labor. The American hopes to be reminded that he is good and blameless—and quickly condemns his critics as envious or mad or driven by dark agendas. As by an unwritten law, he denounces protest as an offense against his *amour propre*.

This condemnation, *ipso facto*, makes a figurative criminal of the protester, who, when her efforts are scorned, finds herself not trying to persuade, but acting in a variety of modes that are notably unlikely to persuade. The first two forms of protest are essentially apologetic. They are either excessively polite, in which case they are largely ignored; or they are immersed in a kind of farcical irony, as if to say, "Yes, I am protesting, but you won't take me too seriously, will you?"—in which case the protest either collapses under its own frivolity or drives the conservative bystander deeper into his reflexive dread of the unfamiliar. Or, finally, the protester may resort to a spirit of resentment and self-vindication. She sees any act by her countryman that does not challenge the social system as intolerable evidence of complicity and collaboration. The spirit of compromise vanishes, and the protester risks falling into the attitude of outright and total rebellion that Philip Roth has described as "the American berserk" (Roth 86).

This, then, is an address about protest: its motives, its excesses, its internal contradictions. It takes as its main texts three American novels, each of them either forged amid or shaped by the social cataclysm engendered by the Vietnam War. Considering *The Armies of the Night*, I observe Norman Mailer's reaction the tendency of left-wing American protest either to excessive politeness or puerile frivolity. Turning to E. L. Doctorow's *The Book of Daniel*, I assess

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the text's contention that the position of the citizen vis-à-vis the state is always and already one of antagonism and undeclared warfare. Concluding with Roth's *American Pastoral*, I return to the well-intentioned complacency of the affluent American who never dreams that he, too, may be subject to the karmic calamities of history.

I begin, however, with a few thoughts inspired by Miłosz's commentaries on the West in *The Captive Mind*: observations that preceded the escalation of American involvement in Vietnam by more than a decade, but which were relevant to that struggle and remain pertinent in the lamentable, perennially appalling age of Trump. In 1951, Miłosz wrote the following lines:

More than the West imagines, the intellectuals of the East look to the West for *something*. Nor do they seek it in Western propaganda. The *something* they look for is a great new writer, a new social philosophy, an artistic movement, a scientific discovery, new principles of painting or music. They rarely find this *something* (Miłosz 37).

One may well add, almost seventy years later, that there is a class of Westerners (though I speak now specifically of Americans) who look for this something within their own ranks and also rarely find it. And the question deeply perplexes them: just how is it that generations of prosperity; absence of formal censorship; and, except for one horrific day, the absence of large-scale foreign attack, have failed to more regularly produce instances of that *something*? Why should the fruits of such good fortune so often take the form of cheeseburgers, superhero films, and instantly forgettable trash fiction? The *something*, I would argue, exists in the United States if one looks hard enough to find it. Yet it seldom if ever captures the imagination and enthusiastic embrace of the public.

The mystery behind this absence of something is partly solved by Miłosz's own ruminations, beginning with his thoughts on the Murti-Bing pill, a metaphoric anodyne imagined in the 1930s by his countryman Stanislaw Witkiewicz. As many of you know, whoever consumes the fanciful pill becomes impervious to metaphysical concerns. These pills become an antidote to spiritual hunger, permitting the user to live amid cultural conditions that are at once empty and chaotic, and to feel no distress or existential dread.

The medicine operates as the fodder of post-modern lotus-eaters. I would argue that societies of great material abundance, such as the United States has long been and as Poland has set itself upon the path to becoming, naturally transform into prodigious consumers and producers of Murti-Bing pills. Often, the pills are literally pills. Statistics indicate that about one of every nine Americans over the age of twelve uses antidepressant medications. But more ubiquitously, the pills come in the form of a profusion of consumer goods. A besetting plight of modernity is encapsulated in the following question: how do human beings fill up their emptiness? The most fortunate among us use love. Disaffected thinkers use words. But the stuffing of choice for many is things, the more ostentatious the better. The condition satirized by Simon and Garfunkel in 1967 continues apace today:

Well there's no need to complain,
 We'll eliminate your pain
 We can neutralize your brain
 You'll feel just fine
 Now
 Buy a big bright green pleasure machine! (Simon 29)

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Feverish in their pursuit of their pleasure machines, the addicts of Murti-Bing are simultaneously apathetic. As their appetites sharpen, their sensitivities deaden. And the cultural soil within them grows barren. To the minimally thoughtful person, the purely material satisfactions produce no satisfaction at all. For those who blindly accept them, conceiving of nothing better, an insensate, porcine existence awaits.

As a scholar and a careful thinker, one pauses before making sweeping, peremptory statements. However, it is arguable that all American protest is somehow affected by the Murti-Bing of material culture, though the relation between protest and consumerism is not always openly adversarial. It can be both symbiotic and sinister. Commercialism has a way of insinuating itself into American protest, absorbing the pulsations of radicalism into the mainstream and thereby warping their significance. It is this complex relation, both tension and symbiosis, that Norman Mailer deftly explores in *The Armies of the Night*.

Even to discuss the work of Norman Mailer in 2020 poses an ethical problem. Spectacularly gifted as a writer, Mailer was often an appalling human being. In public appearances, where he sometimes turned up drunk, he could be shockingly condescending, irascible, and abusive. He is also a man who stabbed his second wife, nearly killing her, and growled at a man who tried to help her, “Get away from her, let the bitch die” (Wright 202). It is difficult at best to approve of Mailer as a human being. It is impossible to disregard him as a voice of his era and culture. The following remarks pay no homage to the man; they seek to understand him, and through him, his time and the nature of American protest.

Mailer’s *The Armies of the Night* aspires to a unique artistic duality. Subtitled “History As a Novel; the Novel As History,” it makes claims both as non-fiction and fiction—and blithely declines ever to explain where one leaves off and the other begins. Tacit in Mailer’s structure is the inference that the reportage of events is never entirely, objectively true: that even the most conscientious effort to narrate history is colored and shaped by one’s opportunity to observe, one’s perceptions, and one’s prejudices. As insights go, it does not seem especially earth shattering. Even the mildly sophisticated reader understands the concept of the unreliable narrator. What adds gravity to Mailer’s melding of fiction and nonfiction is the circumstance in which it occurs. In 1967, Mailer was writing both for and about a more credulous country than the one that exists 53 years later. Not only did Americans trust the evening news, but they also had a stronger confidence that truth was knowable and could, at its core, be agreed upon. In retrospect, it is impossible to read Mailer’s history-cum-novel without the same foreboding that one might get from observing the first crack in a gigantic dam. Mailer recognized that he was bearing witness as American trust was starting to crumble, compromised by the incipient paranoia both of the Lyndon Johnson administration and of a rising generation that was vowing never to trust anyone over the age of thirty. The spiral downward has been a long, slow one, but it has now reached a place in America that amounts to a confederacy of spin: the widespread discrediting

of fact and a noxious presumption that all that remains is fraught and angry opinion.

Mailer's book strives for honesty—some of its vulgarity seems to emerge from a genuine desire for candor. He is pushing hard against a kind of pervasive falsehood, in sympathy with a generation that, thanks to television, has been raised on an ethically arid, junk-food representation of reality. Camus argued that rebellion is based not on resentment of authority *per se*, but rather a nostalgia for an authority that one may call legitimate. Yet in the Pentagon marchers Mailer saw a more purely negative principle. His analysis merits being quoted at length:

Their radicalism was in their hate for the authority—the authority was the manifest of evil to this generation. It was the authority who had covered the land with those suburbs where they stifled as children while watching the adventures of the West in the movies, while looking at the guardians of dull genial celebrity on television; they had had their minds jabbed and poked and twitched and probed and finally galvanized into surrealistic modes of response by commercials cutting into dramatic narratives, and parents flipping from network to network—they were forced willy-nilly to build their idea of the space-time continuum (and therefore their nervous system) on the jumps and cracks [...] which every phenomenon from the media seemed to contain within it. The authority had operated on their brains with commercials, and washed their brains with packaged education, packaged politics. [...] The shoddiness was buried in the package (*Armies* 86–87).

From junk-food culture and politics comes junk-food revolution: the purported, nonsensical goal of the March on the Pentagon was, through a series of ludicrous incantations, to levitate the building three hundred feet in the air. Mailer's novel, then, confronts the incomprehensible: a free and wealthy nation glutted on its own consumerism and verging into madness, in a way not grandly tragic but cartoonishly trivial. He writes:

Either the century was entrenching itself more deeply into the absurd, or the absurd was delivering evidence that it was possessed of some of the nutritive mysteries of a marrow which would yet feed the armies of the absurd (*Armies* 54).

He intimates that his book is written in and about “one of the crazy mansions, or indeed *the* crazy house of history.” (*Armies* 54)

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The Armies of the Night has two principal subjects: the author himself (in both his grandiose expansiveness and his self-despising littleness) and his participation in the 1967 March on the Pentagon that resulted in his arrest and brief incarceration. The novel begins with Mailer on stage at a Washington D.C. theater, delivering a profanity-laden harangue to a restive audience. Apart from his evident intoxication—he is drinking straight whiskey from a coffee mug—there appears to be no motive for his loutish behavior. And yet there is one—one that becomes clear only as the book unfolds. Mailer is reacting against what he perceives as an ingrained habit of decorum in American protest—what he later identified in an interview with William F. Buckley as “a cult of propriety” that had descended over American dissent. He was attempting to dislodge the excess of good manners among the American intellectual left wing, a code of behavior that predictably undercuts the seriousness with which protest is both undertaken and regarded.

I was appalled, you see, by the general air of the occasion. There was a pall that hung over the Left, because they were in terror. [...] You know, people on the left are more law abiding than anybody else. [...] It's exactly because their lives are so middle class and full of propriety that their political ideas become more and more powerful. [...] There's something about a proper life that tends to make one a little more radical in one's opinions. And I've always felt that this has been the disease of the Left. Just as the disease of the Right is greed, bigotry, insensitivity and general stupidity, so the disease of the Left has always been excessive propriety [...] excessive obedience to all the small laws of daily life. [...] They think of overturning society because they do not know how to break a few small rules and laws (*Firing Line*).

In so saying, Mailer simplified and exaggerated to the point of caricature. And yet the truth at the core of his observation merits consideration, perhaps now more than when he first made it. In the March on the Pentagon, Mailer found himself in the company of “a respectable horde of respectable professionals, lawyers, accountants, men in hats wearing eyeglasses” (*Armies* 94) They represent an endless stream of organizations—this fellowship, that movement, such-and-such a society, the fill-in-the-blank guild. He registers mock surprise when, prior to the March, “there were no drinks being served” (*Armies* 98). Mailer himself spends a good deal of time during the protest checking his watch. He has

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scheduled a dinner party at his home in New York and is wondering whether he can catch a commuter jet in time to make it.

Among the younger marchers, Mailer observes less cocktail-party decorum, but in its place a decadent, enervating irony, spawned perhaps by the intuition that history is becoming absurd, and that the only apt response to it is more absurdity still. In their outward displays, at least, many of the younger marchers revel in their own freakishness. Mailer writes:

The hippies were there in great number [...] many dressed like the legions of Sgt. Pepper's Band, some were gotten up like Arab sheiks, or in Park Avenue doormen's greatcoats, others like Rogers and Clark of the West, Wyatt Earp, Kit Carson, Daniel Boone in buckskin [...] and wild Indians with feathers, a hippie gotten up like Batman, another like Claude Rains in *The Invisible Man* [...] One hippie may have been dressed like Charles Chaplin; Buster Keaton and W. C. Fields could have come to the ball; there were Martians and Moon-men and a knight unhorsed who stalked about in the weight of real armor (*Armies* 91–92).

There is a festive aspect to these displays. However, Mailer sees past the raucous pageant and sees a pathetic haplessness—a fatal mismatch between well-intentioned, somewhat stoned idealism and massive, indifferent power:

Still, there were nightmares beneath the gaiety of these middle-class runaways, these Crusaders, going out to attack the hard core of Technology Land with less training than armies were once offered by a medieval assembly ground. The nightmare was in the echo of those trips which had fractured their sense of past and present. [...] [N]ature was a veil whose tissue had been ripped by static, screams of jet motors, the highway grid of the suburbs, smog, defoliation, pollution of streams, over-fertilization of the earth, anti-fertilization of women, and the radiation of two decades of near-blind atom busting (*Armies* 92–93).

It wasn't a fair fight, and Mailer knew it. Instead of high-minded innocents, the Pentagon protesters were characterized in the national media as ugly, vulgar provocateurs. Every rock thrown was emphasized; every broken window, though there were few of them, was counted and thrown back against the protesters as an indictment of their methods and, by extension, their cause. Instead of prompting outcry against President Johnson, the March stirred sympathy for him. It also stirred the bland TV watchers

of the heartland either to greater fear of long-haired, drug-crazed radicals, or merely to reach for another beer and change channels.

For Mailer, then, to rise up in protest was not so much an assertion of power but an experience of impotency. The protesters in *The Armies of the Night* are haunted and handicapped by the knowledge that their only power lies in the possibility of persuasion, and that they inhabit a nation that finds nothing more persuasive than the application of well-financed, superficially legitimized force. Mailer's vision of the March on the Pentagon is the stuff of a political catastrophe: a recognition that America has sold her promise and that the efforts to buy it back are either excessively urbane or pointlessly puerile. His novel ends with a jeremiad, decrying the crisis that has set

the military heroes [...] on one side, and the unarmed saints on the other! Let the bugle blow! The death of America rides in on the smog. America—the land where a new kind of man was born from the idea that God was present in every man not only as compassion but as power, and so the country belonged to the people; for the will of the people—if the locks of their life could be given the art to turn—was then the will of God (*Armies* 288).

But Mailer at last looks down with profound unease upon the corruption of that will, and he worries that the great national spasm he is observing is not a death throes at all, but rather the start of a fearsome labor that may give birth—I use his words —“to [...] the most fearsome totalitarianism the world has ever known” (288).

Mailer's prophecies were, in his time, overstated. The next two decades brought Nixon and Watergate and the have-a-nice-day cruelties of the Reagan administration, but no totalitarianism. Indeed, even now, as unsightly as the leprosy that has descended over America has become, the actual demise of its republican democracy, though far more probable than it was only a few years ago, feels currently unlikely. (The previous sentence was written in 2018. The author is, in 2020, less confident of his country's future). Yet Mailer's reflections on American protest remain pertinent and haunting. The day after the gross, repellent spectacle that was Donald Trump's inauguration, I attended the Women's March in Washington, D.C.—to date the largest

protest in the history of my country. It was an astonishingly crowded, genial, warm-hearted gathering. It seemed to make all the participants whom I saw and spoke with feel extremely good. Yet it seemed to be almost exclusively about good feelings. The marchers were fresh-faced and affluent. One had trouble imagining that any of the political issues that had brought them together really felt to them like life-or-death concerns. The unbearable lightness and politeness of the Left that Mailer decried was stronger and more neutralizing than ever.

The March on the Pentagon also figures, though more hauntingly, in Doctorow's *The Book of Daniel*. *The Book of Daniel* is a brooding novel, taking as its subject the tormented life and reflections of Daniel Isaacson, the child of a Jewish-American couple executed for espionage. His parents are, of course, modeled on Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who, in 1953, were subjected to the death penalty for their collusions with Russia. Old as the tragic form itself is the clash between fidelity to one's family and allegiance to the nation. It is the conflict that ruins Agamemnon and shatters Oedipus. What distinguishes Doctorow's treatment of the clash is that, in the work of Aeschylus and Sophocles, the prerogatives of the state are presumed to be legitimate. Indeed, service to one's society asserts the superior claim on the subject's loyalty. For Isaacson, however, the implied social compact of loyalty is impossible to honor, for the state demanding his fealty is the government that has electrocuted his mother and father.

And Isaacson is shaken not merely by the knowledge that the government has destroyed his family. In Greek drama, the state is typically presumed to be a fragile structure, so much so that a single act of disloyalty to one's obligations can bring the civic down to the dust. Daniel Isaacson's understanding of the state is far different; he knows that opposing the American military-industrial complex of the late 1960s is like assailing the sun with a peashooter. Now a graduate student at Columbia University, Isaacson travels to the March on the Pentagon and narrates many of the same events witnessed by Mailer: the turning in of draft cards; the interminable speeches; the gaudy, costumed freak show of the March itself. Even Mailer himself makes a cameo appearance in Doctorow's fiction: Daniel notices him sitting outside the Justice

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Department, his forearm on his knee, listening to the speakers. But Daniel's experience and narration of the March differ deeply from Mailer's. Both narrators convey a sense of detachment from events. But whereas Mailer's detachment is principally ironic and intellectual, Daniel's sense of distance is founded on emotion, and it is immense. Especially when compared with Mailer's exuberant style, Isaacson's descriptions of the March feel curiously flat and lacking in interpretive vigor. Of all the thousands of protesters who have come to the Pentagon, none has greater reason than Daniel Isaacson to wage an impassioned personal war with the establishment. Yet the rally against the war leaves him largely numb and apathetic. He explains:

I come under the awful conviction of everyone else's right to be here. I feel out of it. It seems to me that practically everyone here, even [my wife] Phyllis listening past the point of normal attention to the endlessness of the droning speeches, has taken possession of the event in a way that is beyond me. I feel as if I have sneaked in, haven't paid, or simply don't know something that everyone else knows. That it is still possible to do this, perhaps. Or that it is enough (Doctorow 254).

And of course, it is not enough. Daniel spends the day of the March, as he states, looking for satisfaction. Needless to say, he does not find it. In the journey to the Pentagon, others seem to feel momentary release or exhilaration or a passing sense of their own valor. Daniel, however, feels his very attendance has "robbed the day of its genius" (Doctorow 255). As he drops his draft card into the pouch and announces his name into the microphone, he feels an artificiality in the heart of his gestures. He tells himself, "What a put-on. But I have come here to do whatever is being done" (Doctorow 252). It occurs to him that there is no escape from oppressive orders and orthodoxies and that, no matter what marches and sit-ins might accomplish in the short term, the most they can ever hope to do is to institute a new pattern of conformity, finally no more satisfying than the one it has replaced. Ruefully and with jaded ennui, he proclaims:

No matter what is laid down, there will be people to put their lives on it. Soldiers will instantly appear, fall into rank, and be ready to die for it. And scientists who are happy to direct their research toward it. And keen-witted academics who in all rationality develop the truth

of it. And poets who find their voice in proclaiming the personal feeling of it. And in every house in the land the muscles of the face will arrange in smug knowledge of it. And people will go on and make their living from it. And the religious will pray for a just end to it, in terms satisfactory to it (Doctorow 255).

In this moment of dark revelation, the particular character of the system in power seems to Daniel to be irrelevant. The sole thing that matters about any given force is that it is a force. Anything large enough to command will exercise command. Whether the ship sails under colors of peace or war, the same barnacles will seal themselves to its hull.

In Isaacson's narration, the ship is sailing toward sinister shores. Like Mailer before him, Doctorow recounts the incident after night has fallen on the Pentagon march, which Mailer dubs the Battle of the Wedge. After most of the older marchers—and, more significantly, most of the reporters—had gone home, military police outside the Pentagon formed a wedge and, with clubs and rifle butts, drove into the remaining crowd of marchers, methodically beating them and hauling them bleeding into waiting wagons. Witnesses said that the troops were especially focused on attacking young women. In a tour-de-force description, Doctorow tears the veil from the sick ballet of oppression, placing particular emphasis on the exquisite preparation of the weapons and the proper golf-swing precision of the quasi-sexual assault:

And suddenly [Daniel] is there, locked arm in arm with the real people of now, sitting in close passive rank with linked arms as the boots approach, highly polished, and the clubs, highly polished, and the brass highly polished wading through our linkage, this many-helmeted beast of our own nation, coming through our flesh with boot and club and gun butt, through our sick stubbornness, through our blood it comes. My country. And it swats and kicks. And kicks and clubs—you raise the club high and bring it down, you follow through, you keep your head down, you remember to snap the wrist, complete the swing, raise high bring down, think of a groove in the air, groove into the groove, keep your eye on the ball, eye on balls, eye on cunts, eye on point of skull, up and down, put your whole body into it, bring everything you've got into your swing, up from your toes, up down, turn around, up high down hard, hard as you can, harder harder: FOLLOW THROUGH! (Doctorow 256)

The task for Daniel Isaacson is to find a mode of living that is not, in one way or another, blasphemous. How is he to remain

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an American, without blaspheming against the memory of his parents? How can he continue to live an American life in a way that does not place him in a perpetually antagonistic relationship to his country? And how can he make peace with a country that, in his eyes, is itself the ultimate blasphemer? As to the second question, whether he can live an American life that does not thrust him into conflict with his government, he concludes that an answer does not exist. Not greatly surprising as it applies to him, this conclusion becomes remarkable when Daniel argues that it is true, not only for him, but for all Americans. And not only for Americans. Pushing out against the very frontiers of political radicalism, Daniel urges that a citizen under any political regime whatever is *ipso facto* that system's enemy. It is the government, he reminds us, that puts the rifle in the hands of the citizen-soldier, that "puts him up on the front, and tells him his mission is to survive." He continues, "All societies are armed societies. All citizens are soldiers. All Governments stand ready to commit their citizens to death in the interest of their government" (Doctorow 73) Every man, he argues, "is the enemy of his own country" (Doctorow 72-73).

Daniel's insight, telling him that the individual and the state are in a constant state of war, does nothing to make him a good or enlightened person. He behaves toward his wife in a spirit of humiliating violence. He relates to his infant son in a spirit of dominance and the imposition of fear. Daniel and his family, he confesses, are "not nice people" (Doctorow 7). Daniel's sister Susan is even more irremediably damaged. A tiny child when she witnessed the arrest of her father, when all she could do was to scream helplessly, "Why they do that to Daddy?"—Susan Isaacson attempts suicide as a young adult (Doctorow 116). In the asylum where she is trying to recover from the slashing of her wrist, she has but one line of observations for her brother: "They're still fucking us, Goodbye, Daniel. You get the picture" (Doctorow 9). Having failed once at suicide, she tries again and succeeds. Daniel lists her cause of death as "a failure of analysis" (Doctorow 301).

Doctorow's verbal camera captures big events. But his novel matters because it remembers that all sensation finally takes place on a personal, individual level. Yes, the tragedy of the Rosenbergs is seen as a national one: a failure of justice, a crime against

the Constitution. But the blank misery of Doctorow's story resides in its never forgetting that the real victims of the incident are little people—tiny in their relation to the forces of history that overwhelm them, but deeply significant in the way that all human beings are. Daniel muses regarding his family, "I could never have appreciated how obscure we were. A poor family in the Bronx, too hot in the summer, and too cold in the winter" (Doctorow 93). The thing we abstractly call history feasts upon the fortunes of obscure people, and in an instant, it can make us its plaything. For me, the signature moment of Miłosz's book *The Captive Mind* is the image of a beautiful young Jewish woman, moments away from being gunned down by German troopers, running down a Warsaw street and shrieking the word *No! No! No!* (Miłosz 184) She did not ask for or deserve this moment. She cannot believe that this horror was meant for her. Perhaps at the heart of all protest is this sense that the promise of the universe has somehow failed us—that we had a kind of idea of how things ought to be for us, and that this is not how they are. We look around and at ourselves, and it seems quite obvious that we were meant to be happy and to live forever. But one day, be it early or late, we discover that it isn't so, and the frightened cry of the young woman in the Warsaw street, in less dramatic fashion, becomes our own.

The works of the three authors are united by fire. In *The Armies of the Night*, Mailer avers to a small knot of journalists, "We are burning the body and blood of Christ in Vietnam" (*Armies* 214). Earlier, he has dazed the reader with the nightmare vision of a church-going, but nevertheless soulless grandmother at the great metaphorical American casino, her dyed "orange hair burning bright" as she works a one-armed bandit, feeding an endless stream of half-dollars into a slot machine. The scene unfolds in surreal horror. A disembodied voice intrudes: "Madame, we are burning children in Vietnam." The grandmother retorts, "Boy, you just go get yourself lost. Grandma's about ready for a kiss from the jackpot." The burned child is brought into the gaming hall on her hospital bed. "Madame, regard our act in Vietnam." "I hit! I hit! Hot deedy, I hit! Why, you poor burned child—you just brought me luck. Here, honey, here's a lucky half-dollar in reward. And listen, sugar, tell

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the nurse to change your sheets. Those sheets sure do stink [...] Hee hee, hee hee. I get a supreme pleasure from mixing with gooks in Vegas" (*Armies* 151–52).

In *The Book of Daniel*, Daniel's sister Susan, anguished by the Vietnam War, exclaims, "We're in this horrible imperialist war. We're burning people" (Doctorow 80) (The narration also alludes to the self-immolation of a Buddhist monk in the streets of South Vietnam. And, at the end of the novel, when Doctorow returns us in flashback to the execution of Paul Isaacson, he tells of the smoke rising from the prisoner's head as the death chamber fills with the odor of burning flesh. The scene comes just a page after the attorney general of the United States has told the Chief Executive, "Mr. President, these folks have got to fry" [Doctorow 296]).

An equally indelible fire occurs in the pages of Philip Roth's *American Pastoral*, in which Merry, the ironically named daughter of Seymour "the Swede" Levov, is set on the road to radicalism by a vision of horror brought to her living room by the evening news. We still recognize the real-life event that *American Pastoral* recalls. A Buddhist monk in his sixties, his head shaved and his limbs adorned in a simple saffron robe, sat with quiet dignity on a street in Saigon, as another monk doused him with flammable fuel. Moments later, the monk struck a match, burning himself to death, and burning his image into the history of the world. The monk neither screamed nor writhed as the flames consumed him. The incongruity between his otherworldly calm and the horror of the flames remains astonishing to this day. Inwardly at peace, the monk sends a shock wave that reverberates endlessly in the heart and mind of eleven-year-old Merry. Too frightened even to cry, she can only throw herself into her father's lap and repeat, in the stutter that has plagued and blighted her childhood, "These gentle p-p-people [...] these gentle p-p-people." When the agitation in her heart at last enables a more coherent thought, Merry asks in anguish, "Do you have to m-m-melt yourself down in fire to bring p-p-people to their s-senses? Does anybody care? Does anybody have a conscience? Doesn't anybody in this w-world have a conscience left?" (Roth 154)

Her parents, being good, understanding, liberal parents, tell Merry she has a well-developed conscience and “It’s admirable for someone your age to have such a conscience” (Roth 155). But what they do not tell her is that the conscience of an upper-class person is a strange attribute, one that is typically treated more as a superficial adornment than as a set of uncompromised beliefs and best exercised in tasteful moderation, not in actually disruptive activity. It is, Mr. and Mrs. Levov believe, fitting and proper to feel vague sorrow over global injustice. For a pubescent girl to have and express such feelings in abundance is positively charming, even if her own parents tacitly presume that, in time, she will mostly outgrow them. However, to treat such feelings as a spur to action, in any way inimical to the comfort of one’s affluent lifestyle is another matter. One would not precisely call it unthinkable. More precisely, it is not thought of.

But Merry does think of it. She feels the imperative of acting upon her thoughts, and her dogmatic sincerity brings about the fall of the House of Levov. She starts leaving home on weekends and fraternizing with fringe radicals in New York City. The cataclysm comes in 1968, when, in an effort to, as her father puts it, “bring the war home” to American suburbia, she detonates a bomb at her local post office, destroying the general store where the office is housed and killing a singularly luckless man, Dr. Fred Conlon.

We are given to understand that, in the use of the moral tools at their disposal, Swede Levov and his wife can only be regarded as innocent. Roth’s narrator, Nathan Zuckerman, calls them a family “full of tolerance and kindly, well-intentioned liberal goodwill” (Roth 88) He describes the Swede as living a life of “carefully calibrated goodness,” a man whose earnestness, hard work, and adherence to law and popular norms have showered him with prosperity (Roth 86). The Swede appears to personify the insufficiency identified by Miłosz: “The man of the East cannot take Americans seriously because they have never undergone the experiences that teach men how relative their judgments and thinking habits are. Their resultant lack of imagination is appalling” (Miłosz 29). He is, equally, the type of man who stands accused by Daniel Isaacson’s friend Sternlicht in *the book of Daniel*:

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You cannot make connections between what you do and why they hate you in Chile. [...] You think you are a good guy. You're not prejudiced. You believe in making money honestly. [...] YOU THINK THERE'S PROGRESS. YOU THINK YOUR CHILDREN HAVE IT BETTER. YOU THINK YOU ARE DOING IT FOR YOUR CHILDREN! (Doctorow 138)

As the Swede gazes with pride over his beautiful wife, his elegant farmhouse, and his small but solid business empire, Zuckerman can only admire his accomplishment: "He was really living it out, his version of paradise. This is how successful people live. They're good citizens. They feel lucky. They feel grateful. God is smiling down on them" (Roth 86) Roth concludes his novel with two unanswerable questions, "And what is wrong with their life? What on earth is less reprehensible than the life of the Levovs?" (Roth 423)

Except that the questions are not completely unanswerable. The Swede himself, though he cannot clearly perceive any fault in the way he has lived his life or raised his daughter, still feels as if the novel's catastrophe is "founded on some failure of his own responsibility." Indeed, we discover that the Swede is a preternaturally responsible man, "keeping under control not just himself but whatever else [has] threaten[ed] to be uncontrollable, giving his all to keep his world together" (Roth 88).

It would be ignoring a significant fact to fail to mention that the three American writers under consideration in this address were Jewish. It is indeed a matter of some interest to note the degree to which Jewish authors have, since the Second World War, shaped and expressed the conscience of American writing. Yet on the subject of Jewishness, Swede Levov presents a curious case. He becomes his community's hero in large part because he seems physically so outside that same community. From the outset of the novel, the Swede is ostensibly non-Jewish; he is introduced first through his blond hair and blue eyes—what Roth calls his "steep-jawed insentient Viking mask" (Roth 3). But it is not enough for the Swede that his physiognomy fits effortlessly into the American ideal, one that has always had Teutonic underpinnings. The Swede's backstory is one of persistent ethnic dis-identification: he strives silently and persistently to purge himself of his Jewishness and simultaneously to immerse

himself in an antiseptic wash of whiteness. He marries a Catholic girl, the former Miss New Jersey, no less; he moves to a WASP suburb and politely declines to notice all the ways in which the locals subtly exclude him. He wants, quite simply, to be a flag-waving all-American kid made good. As he protests to his wife:

I go into those synagogues and it's all foreign to me. It always has been. [...] [My father's] factory was a place I wanted to be from the time I was a boy. The ball field was a place I wanted to be from the time I started kindergarten. [...] Why shouldn't I be where I want to be? Why shouldn't I be with *who* I want to be? Isn't that what this country's all about? [...] That's what being an American is—isn't it? (Roth 315)

Put simply, the Swede wants a life and an America divorced from history, where Jewishness doesn't matter, where America's imperialist policies don't matter. He wants, in a somewhat empty-headed way, to live and be free to pursue happiness: Jefferson's political creed, magically stripped of its politics. And he does not for an instant regard these wants as ignorant or selfish.

While we may concede that Swede Levov has done everything in his power to earn and to deserve his wealth and ease of life, yet still there are forces at work in his existence, indeed in the life of any materially comfortable person, that make a mockery of the ideas of earning and deserving. What Merry sees with incandescent clarity—and what her father cannot afford to see without permitting his moral system to collapse—is that the prosperity of one part of the world always rests upon the discontent of another. She senses, too, the inequality and exploitation that arise from this configuration of power and privilege and that the guilt that they imply is all but inexorable. She becomes aware that conscience, as it is experienced and expressed in leafy suburbs, is a highly relative and contingent value. While it extends to keeping one's lawn tidy and returning one's library books on time, it equips one not at all for dealing with self-incinerating monks or air strikes against Cambodia.

The reader's moral compass is likely to tell her or him that Merry's bombing of the post office is appalling and inexcusable. And yet as we follow the steps that lead her to plant her bomb, we can have the queasy feeling that Roth has given her the better arguments. The bombing is preceded by a series of conversations

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between Merry and her father, in which he tries in vain to convince her to stop seeing her radical friends and to become a contented, middle-class sixteen-year-old. They talk about responsibility, and the Swede maintains that the Vietnam War is not his responsibility. Merry counters that her friends do feel responsible when American bombs blow up villages. With deep frustration, she points out that her father cares only about the well-being of his own little world and his own little family. She rejects the moral mathematics by which Vietnamese are being daily destroyed, “all for the sake of the privileged people of New Jersey leading their p-p-peaceful, s-s-secure, acquisitive, meaningless l-l-little bloodsucking lives.” With heart-breaking diligence, the Swede tries to reason with and to understand his daughter, only to be countered by Merry’s declaration, the declaration that might issue from the lips of any teenager: “I don’t want to be understood—I want to be f-f-f-free” (Roth 107).

After planting the bomb that kills Dr. Conlon, Merry doesn’t stop. She vanishes into a life of radical renunciation, joining the radical underground and making bombs that kill three more people—people who are guilty only as the Swede is guilty, of passively accepting the benefits of living in a nation that creates benefits by forcing its will upon others. But arguably it is the life of the Swede she most effectively destroys. Disgracing his family name, renouncing all that he considers good and earnest, she becomes

The angry rebarbative spitting-out daughter with no interest whatever in being the next successful Levov [...] initiating the Swede into the displacement of another America entirely, the daughter and the decade blasting to smithereens his particular form of utopian thinking, the plague infiltrating the Swede’s castle and there infecting everyone. The daughter who transports him out of the longed-for American pastoral and into everything that is its antithesis and its enemy, into the fury, the violence, and the desperation of the counterpastoral—into the indigent American berserk (Roth 86).

Merry’s mad reactions shock the conscience. And yet, at the same time, they carry a perverse thrill that is absent from any moment in *The Armies of the Night* or *The Book of Daniel*. It is the thrill of watching someone do *something*, of observing, at last, an assertion of power. If this essay has pointed to any conclusion again

and again, it is that, in a nation obsessed with power, the persuasive efforts of reasonable people count for little. As Reinhold Niebuhr observed in *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, “It is impossible [...] ever to rely altogether on reason or conscience in politics. Pressure must be used” (209). Reluctantly, Niebuhr concluded that violence or the threat of violence was practically necessary to the accomplishment of social change. He added, however that, if violence is used, “its terror must have the tempo of a surgeon’s skill and healing must follow quickly on its wounds” (Niebuhr 220). Yet one suspects that controlled violence and surgically applied terror are oxymorons. More likely, the violence comes in moments of manic fever, with all the mature judgment of a high school girl who bombs her village’s general store.

As I read over these remarks before giving them in Szczyrk, I became aware of how they both express my ideas and push against my innate character. I gaze into the abyss yet remain in a bubble of personal optimism, for I, too, am a version of the Swede. Like Roth’s hero, I relish private success and the insularity of a prosperous life. Like him, I feel the attraction of a life lived outside of history, in which hard work, upright behavior, and warmth and compassion toward the people I encounter every day might be thought sufficient to the structure of a good man. But I cannot confine the features of my identity to the attributes of father, writer, and professor. I am also a citizen of the America of Trump, and this in itself is a status that invites self-accusation. I speak now, I believe, for millions of Americans who, in their childhood, saw America as a promise but now regard it as a trap—who have been stunned to realize that, no matter how we may seek to live lives of personal goodness, we are the daily servants of a force that, through the greed of its appetites and the ignorance of its leaders, pushes the world inexorably toward darkness. We do our work. We raise our children. We try to better ourselves and others. But where, at long last, shall be our redemption?

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A LITERARY HISTORY OF MENTAL CAPTIVITY IN THE UNITED STATES

Blood Meridian, Wise Blood,
and Contemporary Political Discourse

On July 15, 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump and Russia President Vladimir Putin held a summit in Helsinki that immediately set off a chain reaction throughout the world.¹ Even though the summit was all but forgotten for the most part in a matter of months, superseded by the frantic train of events and the subsequent bombardment from the media that have become the “new normal,” the episode remains as one of the most iconic moments of Donald Trump’s presidency. While the iron secrecy surrounding the conversation between the two dignitaries allowed for all kinds of speculation, the image of President Trump bowing to his Russian counterpart (indeed a treasure trove for semioticians), along with his declarations in the post-summit press conference, became, for many observers in the U.S. and across the world, living proof of Mr. Trump’s subservient allegiance to Mr. Putin and his obscure designs. Even some of the most recalcitrant members of the GOP vented quite publicly their disgust at the sight of a president paying evident homage to the archenemy of the United States, as Vercingetorix kneeled down before Julius Cesar in recognition of the Gaul’s

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1. The present article is partly based on a keynote lecture presented to the audiences of the “Captive Minds. Norms, Normativities and the Forms of Tragic Protest in Literature and Cultural Practice” International Conference of the Institute of English Cultures and Literatures of the University of Silesia in Katowice, held on September 20–23, 2018, in Szczyrk, Poland.

surrender to the might of the Roman Empire. The late Senator John McCain, the most outspoken critic of Mr. Trump in the ranks of the Republican Party, fell short of accusing the president of high treason in the statement he released immediately after the press conference:

Today's press conference in Helsinki was one of the most disgraceful performances by an American president in memory. The damage inflicted by President Trump's naiveté, egotism, false equivalence, and sympathy for autocrats is difficult to calculate. But it is clear that the summit in Helsinki was a tragic mistake. . . No prior president has ever abased himself more abjectly before a tyrant. Not only did President Trump fail to speak the truth about an adversary; but speaking for America to the world, our president failed to defend all that makes us who we are—a republic of free people dedicated to the cause of liberty at home and abroad. American presidents must be the champions of that cause if it is to succeed. Americans are waiting and hoping for President Trump to embrace that sacred responsibility. One can only hope they are not waiting totally in vain.

In this essay, I reexamine the Helsinki presidential summit through the lens of Cormac McCarthy's novel *Blood Meridian* (1985) and Flannery O'Connor's *Wise Blood* (1952), two novels that anticipate the current political climate almost prophetically. In the process, I briefly revisit some key texts in the American canon that fully belong in the history of "mental captivity" in the United States, yet to be written. It is my contention that the Helsinki summit, and Trump's administration at large, represent a prime example of "mental captivity" as a driving force in U.S. domestic and foreign policy, as I hope to prove in the pages that follow.

SOME PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT CAPTIVITY
AND THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

That such a history should be written I have no doubt. The literature of the United States, and probably of the Americas at large, is a sustained chronicle of captivity in the guise of freedom, of imprisonment under the illusion of liberty, of entrapment in the delusion of agency. The foundational discourse of the United States articulates the American experience as the grand narrative of a people liberated from captivity and engaged in the construction of a community upon the pillars of freedom and unbound

opportunity. Both the Pilgrim Fathers and the Puritans inscribed their migration to the New World as a new chapter in providential history, a renewal of the covenant God made with the people of Israel by which God declared the Israelites his chosen people and granted them the Promised Land where they would flourish as a holy nation. God assisted them in their flight from Egyptian bondage, as He later assisted the Pilgrims and Puritans in their flight from European religious intolerance. In exchange, the Israelites and Puritans entered a new form of bondage, as made explicit in the commandments inscribed in stone that God delivers to Moses and in the covenants that the Puritans undersigned, first conceptually with the Lord, and then literally with the local church. In the so-called “theocracies” of New England, citizenship and the right to own property were dependent on church membership, and membership was only granted to those individuals who provided tangible proof of their sincere conversion and expressed their commitment to church and community through a sacred oath (see, for example, Miller). In the programmatic speech he delivers upon arrival in the New World, John Winthrop establishes the supremacy of the community over the individual as the cornerstone of their social contract:

It is by a mutual consent, through a special overvaluing providence and a more than an ordinary approbation of the churches of Christ, to seek out a place of cohabitation and consortship under a due form of government both civil and ecclesiastical. In such cases as this, the care of the public must oversway all private respects, by which, not only conscience, but mere civil policy, doth bind us. For it is a true rule that particular estates cannot subsist in the ruin of the public.

In these theocracies, the church became the state, its power and legitimacy stemming from the Bible, its visibility inscribed in the very design of the towns, invariably built around the church and the common, where all streets converged. As Nathaniel Hawthorne reminds us in his *Scarlet Letter*, a building housing the prison would usually stand next to the church and the churchyard, completing the symbolic nucleus of the town center. That central circle stands as the physical representation of the eye of God that sees the most recondite secrets of the human heart. A divine eye that observes through the eyes of the community, always

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watchful for any sign of corruption in any individual, an early version of Orwell's Big Brother subjecting each citizen to permanent scrutiny and always ready to apply harsh chastisement onto the deviants. In "Main Street," a sketch about the development of a Puritan town from a rude frontier settlement to a busy urban center, Hawthorne refers to the town church in quite sardonic terms:

Their house of worship, like their ceremonial, was naked, simple, and severe. But the zeal of a recovered faith burned like a lamp within their hearts, enriching everything around them with its radiance; making of these new walls, and this narrow compass, its own cathedral; and being, in itself, that spiritual mystery and experience, of which sacred architecture, pictured windows, and the organ's grand solemnity are remote and imperfect symbols. All was well, so long as their lamps were freshly kindled at heavenly flame. After a while, however, whether in their time or their children's, these lamps began to burn more dimly, or with a less genuine lustre; and then it might be seen how hard, cold, and confined was their system,—how like an iron cage was that which they called Liberty. (69)

It is little wonder, then, that the "captivity narrative" became the most popular of literary genres in Puritan New England and that its foundational text, Mary Rowlandson's autobiographical account of her forced sojourn among the Narragansett Indians (1682) became the first best seller in American letters. Furthermore, I have little doubt that captivity narratives contain the seed of genuine American fiction, distinct as they are from the European tradition. If Hemingway was accurate with his affirmation in *Green Hills of Africa* that all American writing comes from Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, the thesis I have just stated is equally accurate. Twain's novel tells the story of two characters, one white, the other black, who flee from their captivities and set out on a quest for freedom: Huck from Aunt Sally's asphyxiating morals and his father's murderous immorality, and Jim from his bondage as a slave. Together they embody the most archetypal of American experiences, as is the escape from forced confinement and the search for liberty. Illiterate as they are, they carry in their baggage the whole library of Western civilization, and most especially, all American literature, past and future. Huck is the putative son of Emerson and Thoreau, of Whitman and Paine, of Thomas Morton and Roger Williams, of Cervantes and of the Spanish picaresque, while Jim

is heir to Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs, Olaudah Equiano and Phillips Wheatley, but also of Moses and the Israelites, etc.

If Mary Rowlandson is the putative mother of the American novel, Latin American novelists are the direct descendants of Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, whose prodigious experience as failed conqueror and enslaved European does indeed contain the seed of what we know today as ‘magical realism’ for lack of a better term. Their autobiographical accounts articulate symbolically the birth of the true “American” self and, as such, Cabeza de Vaca and Mary Rowlandson stand as the Adam and Eve of the New World, the forebears of a lineage born out of the clash between two worlds and two incompatible semiotic universes. For both, their traumatic captivity leads to a metamorphosis or rebirth. Rowlandson is the archetypal Puritan, and her ordeal as a true descent into hell through which her faith is put to the test. Cabeza de Vaca, on the other hand, embodies the imperial project of Catholic Spain, and his loyalty to God and the emperor remains steadfast despite the trial by fire of his nine years of wanderings in the wilderness of the American Southwest.

In their accounts, both Rowlandson and Cabeza de Vaca take pains to prove beyond doubt that, despite their prolonged cohabitation with the Indian other, they remained unwaveringly faithful to their call and duty, unblemished in body and soul. Their narratives become allegories of endurance and the resistance of the Christian soul, but also allegories of the gestation of the *homo americanus*, a new species peculiar to the New World, a symbolic hybrid of European and Indian characterized by not being, rather than being (neither white nor Indian). In her narrative, Rowlandson reveals—even if unconsciously—the extent of her transformation, or rather, “indianization,” as she acknowledges quite candidly her increasing admiration for the natives, which some scholars have diagnosed as an early case of Stockholm syndrome. Cabeza de Vaca, on the other hand, undergoes such a radical metamorphosis that, upon his reencounter with Spanish soldiers at the end of his ordeal, those soldiers do not recognize him as one of them and neither do the Indians who escort him by the hundreds. Thus is the *homo americanus* born.

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“The freedom of birds is an insult to me,” exclaims Judge Holden in one of the most memorable passages in *Blood Meridian*: “I’d have them all in zoos” (196). The statement is a follow-up on Holden’s earlier verbalization of his totalitarian creed, by which he impersonates God and his almighty power to decide over the fate of every living creature: “Whatever in creation exists without my knowledge exists without my consent” (195). The Judge is an avid collector of the most varied objects and creatures he comes across in his wanderings, which he carefully records in his ledger or desiccates and then puts away in his wallets. As some scholars have suggested, Holden embodies the European Enlightenment and its scientific mentality, and in truth, he is engaged in the composition of an encyclopedia or comprehensive catalog of all things American. Oftentimes, he draws expertly on the pages of his ledger sketches of the artifacts he finds, accompanied by detailed notations of the what and the where and the how. Once his entry in the ledger is finished, he puts away the items, or more likely, just destroys them, in order to “expunge them from the memory of man” (134).

Holden seems to possess a great erudition and he quotes the classics as well as contemporary authorities in diverse disciplines, from philosophy to botany, from geology to law. He is also a polyglot who speaks several living and dead languages, and has engraved on his rifle the Latin proverb *et in Arcadia ego*, an inscription that acquires quite an ironic twist on the silver plate mounted on his weapon for it is an apt reminder of the inevitability of death, even in the most idyllic of gardens. The Judge ambitions to become the “suzerain” of the earth, the supreme ruler over life and death, and his project is to turn the world into an inescapable prison and confine all life inside: “In order for it (life) to be mine nothing must be permitted to occur upon it save by my dispensation” (195). Unchecked freedom must be eradicated, for it subverts order and induces chaos and resistance. Holden is the prophet of imperial USA, whose manifest destiny is to subjugate all nations and all peoples under its regime of absolutist democracy and its simulacrum of individual and collective liberty.

Blood Meridian is set in the aftermath of the Mexican War, and the main action begins in 1849, barely a year after the signature of the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which sanctioned the annexation of over half a million square miles of Mexican territory to the United States. The war and the resulting treaty represent the first episode of the American expansionist agenda, the response to Winthrop's call to build a city upon a hill and spread its civilizing light across the world. While it is an eminently historical novel, *Blood Meridian* is also an allegorical tale of the time-old fight between good and evil, of God and Satan, reenacted in the wastelands of the American Southwest. In this respect, Judge Holden finds his nemesis in the Kid, the unnamed protagonist whose life we follow from birth to death. Like the characters of a medieval allegory, the Kid (and later, the Man) lacks a proper name and acquires an archetypal dimension as the representative of the Christian soul in its journey to salvation, pretty much like Everyman in the morality play of the same title or Christian in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. In fact, Cormac McCarthy invokes in the novel a wealth of intertextual links that include the picaresque, the allegorical tradition, the parable, the Western, the captivity narrative and the Indian war narrative, among others. The result is a collage of literary genres and modes converging in a truly Bakhtinian text, a polyphonic and carnivalesque representation of a new world emerging from the ashes of an older one. In this respect, Holden's ledger becomes a surrogate Book of Genesis that intends to rewrite the biblical account in terms dictated by the Judge and the Judge alone. The novel is populated by transvestites, half-wits, impostors, freaks and a myriad other beings who compose a true exercise in grotesque aesthetics, as if it were a recreation of a painting by Brueghel or Bosch. Upon entering an unnamed town, the narrator describes the human landscape that Glanton and his men encounter in terms highly evocative of those post-medieval artists who portrayed the tensions and contradictions inherent to a world about to undergo a profound transformation:

There was a bazaar in progress. A traveling medicine show, a primitive circus. They passed stout willow cages clogged with vipers, with great limegreen serpents from some more southerly latitude or beaded lizards with their black mouths wet with venom. A reedy old leper held up hand-

fuls of tapeworms from a jar for all to see and cried out his medicines against them and they were pressed about by other rude apothecaries and by vendors and mendicants until all came at last before a trestle whereon stood a glass carboy of clear mescal. In this container with hair afloat and eyes turned upward in a pale face sat a human head. (65)

Cormac McCarthy takes the reader quite explicitly into a medieval landscape inhabited by malformed and infirm creatures who mirror the utter decay of a civilization about to be erased by both the “savage” Indians and the civilized invaders from the North. In fact, *Blood Meridian* displays a language remindful of the old crusades or the so-called “Reconquista” of the Iberian Peninsula during the Middle Ages. For the Mexicans, the Yankees are knights fighting the Comanche and Apache barbarians who are wreaking havoc in their towns and haciendas: “You are fine caballeros [...]. You kill the barbaros. They cannot hide from you” (96). However, the Mexicans who at first welcomed the Americans as true liberators soon realize the real nature of those mercenaries hired to hunt and kill Indians who prove to be even more destructive than them, and conclude: “Mejor los indios” (166). Categories are thus dissolved in a text with a highly subversive vein that fits quite notably Linda Hutcheon’s definition of historiographic metafiction. The reader—along with the Mexicans—soon realize the emptiness of the terms that have supported since antiquity the superiority of the white, Caucasian race over all other races, mere subalterns in need of the redemptive power of Judeo-Christian, European civilization. Such terms as “civilized,” “savage,” or “barbarian” prove to be mere signifiers devoid of a signified, words lacking meaning. If we extrapolate this and apply it to language at large, we can conclude that language is a useless epistemological and ontological tool, a simulacrum for communication. Furthermore, as Faulkner suggests through the character of Addie Bundren in *As I Lay Dying*, language becomes an obstacle or barrier between the self and the world, to the point that it is either the word or the thing, speech or experience. Motherhood, Addie claims, is a word needed by those who have never had the experience of being a mother, for those who have do not need the word to account for it. The same applies to love, or fear, or hate, etc.:

That was when I learned that words are no good; that words don't ever fit even what they are trying to say at. When he [Cash] was born I knew that motherhood was invented by someone who had to have a word for it because the ones that had the children didn't care whether there was a word for it or not. I knew that fear was invented by someone that had never had the fear; pride, who never had the pride (99).

This passage represents the precise moment in which the modernist Faulkner becomes the postmodernist Faulkner, anticipating the irruption of the postmodern in literature by several decades.

This unsurmountable gap between language and reality, between the word and the thing, lies at the heart of Judge Holden's sinister project to subject the universe to his will. Each time the Judge inscribes an object into his ledger book and then destroys the object itself, he is depriving the signifier of its signified, emptying the word of its meaning, or rather, returning the world to its original condition as text. God created the world through speech, his building materials mere words that were devoid of meaning, of signifiers that created their own signified through utterance: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (The Bible, *New International Version*, John 1.1). "Let there be light [...] and there was light" (Gen. 1.3). Holden pursues to reverse the process and, in so doing, rearrange the order of the universe, thus displacing God as the author and ruler of all that exists. And existence is only granted, as I mentioned earlier, to those who make their way into the ledger by the Judge's approval.

There is little doubt that *Blood Meridian* is a historical novel. After all, it recounts the story of real-life Captain Joel Glanton and his party of mercenaries, hired by Governor Trías of Chihuahua to cleanse the territory of marauding Indians right after the signature of the Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty. A large amount of the information about the scalp hunting exploits of Captain Glanton and his twelve mercenaries McCarthy drew from Samuel Chamberlain's memoir, *My Confession: Recollections of a Rogue*. Chamberlain's manuscript is the only known source for the character of Judge Holden, who is briefly mentioned by the former member of Glanton's gang in his account. *Blood Meridian* also invokes the various filibusters who ambioned to appropriate additional territories in Mexico in the aftermath of the war, through the fictional Captain White and his ill-fated campaign in Mexican territory.

Through *White*, McCarthy reproduces the rhetoric of Manifest Destiny and divine duty displayed by newspapers and politicians to justify and promote the war against Mexico:

What we are dealing with [...] is a race of degenerates. A mongrel race, little better than niggers. And maybe no better. There is no government in Mexico. Hell, there's no God in Mexico. Never will be. We are dealing with a people manifestly incapable of governing themselves. And do you know what happens with people who cannot govern themselves? That's right. Others come in to govern for them. (33)

When the Kid signs up with Captain White's doomed party of filibusters he becomes the unconscious agent of the expansionist creed that had led to the annexation of the Southwest and turned the territory into the testing ground of an empire that was in the making.² A creed that was articulated in racial, but also religious terms, as was the case with the totalitarian regimes that would emerge in Europe and Latin America some decades later. In his article "Wars and Rumors of Wars," John Wegner writes: "His [the Kid's] movement from Tennessee to Texas begins directly after the Mexican/American War (1846-1848), and he participates in various filibustering gangs whose goals are to rid the earth of the heathen tribes below the newly-formed border and make a little money while doing it. [...] In essence, the Kid actively participates in American expansion West and South." The Kid enlists unknowingly as a crusader in White's divine mission of recovering the holy land from a "bunch of barbarians" who represent a degenerated, "mongrel" race that is unable to govern itself, a people that needs to be Christianized and taught the basics of civilization. In exchange, every man in the company will get some of the best land in the world, in which gold and silver is as abundant as in the El Dorado of the conquistadors' chimeric

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2. In his article "Wars and Rumors of Wars," John Wegner writes: "His [the Kid's] movement from Tennessee to Texas begins directly after the Mexican/American War (1846-1848), and he participates in various filibustering gangs whose goals are to rid the earth of the heathen tribes below the newly-formed border and make a little money while doing it. [...] In essence, the Kid actively participates in American expansion West and South." In E. T. Arnold & D. C. Luce, *A Cormac McCarthy Companion: The Border Trilogy*. University Press of Mississippi, 2001, p. 74.

imagination (*Meridian* 33–34). Despite the time-gap between the events of the novel and those of history, Captain White is most probably based, at least partly, on Henry Alexander Crabb, a former U.S. senator, as well as former general of the U.S. army. A private enterprise without American official support, Crabb's plan was a failure from the beginning, since he was unable to recruit more than a hundred colonists for what he termed the Gadsden or Arizona Colonization Company. On the other hand, when Pesqueira took control of Sonora, he disengaged himself from the arrangement and turned against Crabb and his expedition. To make a long story short, Crabb and his men were ambuscaded by Sonorans in the vicinity of Caborca, and after a six day siege in the adobe house where they had sought refuge, the Americans surrendered. The next morning, April 7, Crabb and the other survivors were executed. Only fourteen-year-old Charles Edward Evans was spared, and perhaps this youngster served as the inspiration for McCarthy's protagonist in *Blood Meridian*. After his execution, Crabb's head is said to have been exposed in a jar filled with mescal or vinegar, like Captain White's in the novel. In his inflammatory discourse, White verbalizes the jingoistic vision underlying the "manifest destiny" assumption as formulated by journalist John O'Sullivan in his 1845 call for the annexation of Texas, as well as the Monroe Doctrine as announced by the U.S. president in 1823, which articulated the ideological principles that sanctioned the war against Mexico in 1846. His speech reproduces almost verbatim the rhetorical fallacies propagated by yellow journalism in the U.S. Thus, for example, in the May 1858 issue of *The United States Democratic Review*, an editorial titled "The Fate of Mexico" reads as follows:

[Mexico] became free and the world looked for another Washington Republic in the West. [...] She started with every chance in her favor except one—*her people were not white men—they were not Caucasians*. [...] They were a bad mixture of Spaniards, Indians, and negroes—making an aggregate containing few of the virtues of either, with most of the vices of all. [...] *Such men did not know how to be free*: they have not learned the lesson to this day, nor will they learn it, till they are taken into the district school of American Democracy, where the master will govern them till they learn how to govern themselves. They must pass their novitiate. [...] Mexico cannot govern herself. [...] The time has come when it is as imperatively our duty—made so by Providence—to take control of Mexico, and wheel her into the train of the world's prog-

ress, as it was ever our duty to plant the Caucasian race on this soil, and open its illimitable bosom to the sun. [...] No race but our own can either cultivate or rule the western hemisphere. [...] [It] is a work which the Almighty has given us to do. (340–343)

This editorial reveals the atmosphere of racial bias and territorial ambitions that still remained in the U.S. well after the official signature of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, which far from satiating the American appetite for expansion, became a call for further expansion into Mexican territory and even for the annexation of the whole country. White's speech is thus but an accurate reflection of what the newspapers stated about the ungovernable and unruly southern neighbor. Dianne Luce states: "A significant aim for McCarthy in these works [*Blood Meridian* as well as the *Border Trilogy*] is to waken his American readers from the cultural blindness that has long excused aggression against our southern neighbor and the cultural amnesia that allows us to see border transgression today as a uniquely Mexican sin." In other words, in the Southwestern cycle McCarthy confronts the official history imposed by the State with the apocryphal, or intra-, history of those who were victimized by the creed of Manifest Destiny, and therefore deprived of a voice.

During the 2016 presidential campaign, and throughout his presidency, Donald Trump has revived such rhetoric in quite undisimulated ways, awakening the most atavistic ghosts of racism and intolerance that currently pervade the political landscape of the United States, a dangerous turn that may lie at the heart of the mass shooting that took place in El Paso, Texas, on August 3, 2019, in which twenty-two people were killed and two dozen injured. Most of the victims had Hispanic last names, and eight were Mexican nationals. The suspect had allegedly published a manifesto on social media minutes before the attack, titled *An Inconvenient Truth*, in which he declared: "This attack is a response to the Hispanic invasion of Texas. They are the instigators, not me. I am simply defending my country from cultural and ethnic replacement brought on by an invasion" (Politi). And after his voluntary surrender, the suspect declared that he had intended to kill "as many Mexicans as possible" (Francescani). In the context of the political discourse prevalent during the Trump administration, which

demonizes Mexicans and Hispanics as a threatening horde ready to invade the United States, the whole El Paso episode acquires a sinister and ominous tinge, as if it were a conscious response to Trump's repeated calls to defend the country against the barbarian intruders at whatever cost, in what we can label as the "rhetoric of the wall" that the president has deployed quite effectively for his political ambitions.

BLOOD MERIDIAN, WISE BLOOD, AND AMERICAN MESSIANISM

Blood Meridian is a complex exercise in intertextuality, a narrative strategy characteristic of postmodernist metafiction. Furthermore, rather than history itself, it is the story of history, history turned into story, that lies at the core of the novel. Thus, the borderline between historical and fictional discourse is so blurry that it disappears, revealing both discourses as one and the same. For Linda Hutcheon, this is precisely the most distinctive feature of historiographical metafiction.³ The historical Glanton can be made accessible to us only through the fictional Glanton, and the historical invasion of Mexico by the United States can only be accounted by means of the story of that invasion. And if this is so, then we can conclude that the world itself can only be perceived through the narrative that we tell ourselves; we may even conclude that we can only figure out ourselves and our place in the world by means of a narrative in which we are both narrators and protagonists. In other words, we are an allegory of ourselves, and only thus can we find meaning in us and the world we inhabit. In one of his numerous speeches, Holden states:

The truth about the world [...] is that anything is possible. Had you not seen it all from birth and thereby bled it of its strangeness it would appear to you for what it is, a hat trick in a medicine show, a fevered dream, a trance bepopulate with chimeras having neither analogue nor precedent, an itinerant carnival, a migratory tentshow whose ultimate destination after many a pitch in many a mudded field is unspeakable and calamitous beyond reckoning. (242)

3. "The term postmodernism, when used in fiction, should [...] best be reserved to describe fiction that is at once metafictional and historical in its echoes of the texts and contexts of the past. In order to distinguish this paradoxical beast from traditional historical fiction, I would like to label it 'historiographic metafiction'" (Hutcheon 3).

Judge Holden is a charlatan in the guise of a philosopher, a dictator in the guise of a theologian, and his gospel of war has the power to entice men as if Holden were the new messiah in this new world—the American Southwest—that is being created under his spell. Hence, for example, his quasi-miraculous fabrication of powder out of sulphur and human urine—a process through which the Judge reveals the alchemist he has in him—turns Glanton and his men into converts to his catechism of warfare and racial cleansing, true acolytes of Holden’s demoniac doctrine: once the “devil’s batter” is dried and ready, each man in the party of Indian hunters approaches the Judge and gets his share of the powder “like communicants.” Holden is the prophet announcing the new faith, but a faith that is as old as the world itself, and certainly older than men: “It makes no difference what men think of war [...]. War endures. As well ask men what they think of stone. War was always here. Before man was, war waited for him. The ultimate trade awaiting its ultimate practitioner. That is the way it was and will be. That way and not some other way” (245). Holden’s creed holds the sacred truth that “War is God” (246) and it demands from its acolytes full commitment to the holy dance that only true warriors can dance, those who have divested themselves of all mundane concerns and have purified their body and soul through the shedding of blood, theirs as well as their enemy’s: “Only that man who has offered up himself entire to the blood of war, who has been to the floor of the pit and seen horror in the round and learned at last that it speaks to his inmost heart, only that man can dance” (323). It is little wonder that Judge Holden adopts as his protégé, his most faithful disciple, a cretin who had been kept for years in a cage by his brother, until the Judge sets him free. Ever since, the cretin follows Holden wherever he goes, oftentimes both fully naked except for a hat, as if the cretin were a grotesque reflection of the Judge and his incoherent grunts a parodic repetition of Holden’s grand but empty speech.

Once the Kid is released from the San Diego jail, he becomes a lone wanderer who travels aimlessly from one place to another, hiring out at various jobs along the trail. Around his neck, he wears the “scapular of heathen ears that Brown had worn to the scaffold” (328). He carries with him a bible he found at a mining camp,

“no word of which could he read. In his dark and frugal clothes some took him for a sort of preacher but he was no witness to them, neither of things at hand nor things to come, he least of any man” (329). The Kid’s impersonation of a religious minister, even if involuntary, suggests a kinship between the Kid and Hazel Motes, the protagonist of Flannery O’Connor’s *Wise Blood*, who is repeatedly confused with a preacher because of his hat, despite his claims to the contrary, until he eventually becomes one, the preacher and only member of the Church Without Christ, “the church where the blind don’t see and the lame don’t walk and what’s dead stays that way. Ask me about that church and I’ll tell you it’s the church that the blood of Jesus don’t foul with redemption” (101). I have long held the suspicion that the appearance of “blood” in both titles is not mere coincidence, but rather McCarthy’s explicit acknowledgment of O’Connor’s presence in the midst of the intertextual universe invoked in his novel.

In truth, both *Blood Meridian* and *Wise Blood* recreate a farcical and grotesque world where the sacred turns into the profane, the serious into the inconsequential, the tragic into the comic, and vice-versa, all against the background of a cacophony of competing voices, or competing narratives, that signify nothing. A world of distorting mirrors holding only “smoke and phantoms” (BM 343), reflecting the true image of those creatures that play at being humans but are nothing beyond a deformed and hollow simulacrum, like the masks worn by actors in a tragicomedy, or like the “shadow behind” us (WB 166). Both Hazel and the Kid are war veterans, both are confused for a preacher, and both carry a bible with them (his mother’s bible and her silver-rimmed spectacles are the only possessions from his home village that Hazel takes along when he joins the army). Furthermore, both novels trace the lives of their protagonists from their adolescence to their death in quite explicit allegorical terms, even if the ultimate meaning of those allegories is opaque and resists univocal interpretation. Hazel and the Kid undergo a radical metamorphosis: from a sworn and militant atheist to a self-blinded witness to Jesus Christ in the case of Hazel; from a teenager with a “taste for mindless violence” (3) to a lone ranger in the Wild West who assists pilgrims in distress. At twenty-eight, fourteen years after his departure

from his father's shack in Tennessee, the Kid describes a surreal procession of penitents, a "troubled sect" progressing slowly across the plain, some flogging themselves on their naked backs, others carrying heavy loads of cholla cacti on their shoulders, all escorts to a hooded man in a white robe hauling a heavy and crudely hewed cross. The following day, the Kid runs again into the party of penitents, now a collection of butchered corpses scattered around the fallen cross. While contemplating the carnage, he happens to notice in a niche in the rock a very old woman kneeling as if in prayer, her head covered by a shawl decorated with the "figures of stars and quartermoons and other insignia of a provenance unknown to him" (332). While the Kid is unable to recognize such iconography, for he lacks the knowledge of the semiotic system in which those icons acquire meaning, an informed reader will immediately relate the elaborate shawl to the Virgin of Guadalupe and her miraculous appearance to the Indian convert Juan Diego in the early stages of the Spanish conquest of Mexico. And to this old woman the Kid opens his heart and, in the longest speech he delivers in the whole novel (even if rendered in indirect style), he tells her in a low voice of his life of hardship and warfare, a lonely traveler far away from his country of birth with no family or home to return to. And like a gallant knight errant of old, he assures the ancient woman he will deliver her from sure death at that place. But the woman remains silent: "Abuelita [...] No puedes escucharme?" With his question, the Kid not only reveals his concern for the old woman, but also his command of Spanish, a fact that seems to have attracted little critical attention, despite its significance in the character's evolution. When he gently touches the woman's arm, she moves "slightly, her whole body, light and rigid. She weighed nothing. She was just a dried shell and she had been dead in that place for years" (332). Like the numerous dilapidated churches and missions that dot the landscape of the novel, and like the party of penitents slaughtered mercilessly while reenacting the Crucifixion, the old virgin-like Mexican mummified in her rocky shrine stands as a symbol of the unviability of Catholicism in the world that is being created anew by the Judge and his creed. Furthermore, the woman's dry shell is a fascinating representa-

tion of a signifier devoid of a signified, like Addie Bundren's empty words that create a simulacrum of experience.

Judge Holden, for his part, could well pass for an inhabitant of Taulkinham, the city where most of the action of *Wise Blood* takes place, a modern-day Babylon after the collapse of the Tower of Babel and the resulting dispersion of peoples and languages. Taulkinham is the city of talkers, as its name suggests, the residence of tricksters and charlatans, a carnival in which nothing is what it seems to be, a contemporary version of John Bunyan's "City of Sin," disputed by a throng of con preachers announcing the good news of their church: The Church of Christ, the Church Without Christ, the Free Church of Christ, the Holy Church of Christ Without Christ. In an early episode of *Blood Meridian*, the Kid attends the performance of an itinerant revivalist, Reverend Green, inside a large tent where a large and foul-smelling crowd has sought refuge from the heavy rain. The preacher's sermon is suddenly interrupted by the entrance of an "enormous man [...] bold as a stone [...] and no trace of beard and [...] no brows to his eyes nor lasses to them," This is the first encounter of the Kid, and the reader, with Judge Holden, whose sudden appearance in that "nomadic house of God" (5) hushes all voices into dead silence. Such a dramatic entrée paves the way for Holden's even more dramatic performance, the first of many instances of his ability to manipulate individuals and crowds at his caprice:

Ladies and gentlemen I feel it my duty to inform you that the man holding this revival is an imposter. He holds no papers of divinity from any institution recognized or improvised [...] In truth, [...] [he] is not only totally illiterate but is also wanted by the law [...] [o]n a variety of charges the most recent of which involved a girl of eleven years—I said eleven—who had come to him in trust and whom he was surprised in the act of violating while actually clothed in the livery of his God [...]. Not three weeks before this he was run out of Fort Smith Arkansas for having congress with a goat. Yes lady, that is what I said. Goat. (7)

The gravity of Holden's accusations turn the congregation into a rampaging mob that wreaks havoc both inside and outside the tent, which collapses like a "wounded medusa" amidst the stampede of desperate men and women seeking protection from the incessant gunfire. When the Judge is asked at the bar-

room how he came into the knowledge of the reverend's hideous crimes, he simply replies: "I never laid eyes on the man before today. Never even heard of him" (9). Holden thus reveals his true nature as a manipulator of the masses by the power of his word to propagate lies as if they were proven facts. The Judge does not tolerate competition from any preacher, for he is the preacher, and his sinister gospel of war the only gospel to be authorized in the new world order that he heralds, for Holden ambitions to be the zookeeper in which all extant creatures are to be confined. Holden's zoo echoes the Taulkinham zoo in *Wise Blood*, where Enoch Emory, Hazel's single and most devout follower, works as a keeper. Enoch makes his mission to provide the Church Without Christ with the "new Jesus" that Hazel demands, "one that's all man, without blood to waste" (140), which he fulfils by stealing a mummified corpse from the museum inside the zoo, the carcass of a "a dead shriveled-up part-nigger dwarf that had never done anything but get himself embalmed and then lain stinking in a museum the rest of his life" (176). Enoch and the Judge, both zookeepers of sorts, along with the virgin-like Mexican woman and the shriveled "new Jesus," reveal the shared concern of both writers with the disorientation and despair resulting from the collapse of (religious) symbols and myths that had provided Western civilization with a sense of hope and purpose for millennia. There are other links between McCarthy's and O'Connor's novels, too many in fact to be analyzed in some depth in this article. O'Connor's Taulkinham and McCarthy's Southwest are discursive loci, sites of competing voices striving to pass as the messengers of truth, the residence of mountebanks in the guise of prophets, of fake orators selling a fake divinity to a mass of individuals trapped in the existential anguish that infects contemporary life like a contagious disease. A new form of "mental captivity" that makes of individuals an easy prey to whoever promises to restore hope and order to the chaotic world we inhabit, be it in religious or political terms. *Blood Meridian* and *Wise Blood* certainly shed an almost prophetic light on the current geopolitical state of affairs, in these times when the notion of facts and truth have been deprived of signification, a true exercise of deconstruction of language (and reality) for political gain.

One of the side effects of Donald Trump's term in office has been the revival of George Orwell's *1984*, once again ranking high on bookseller lists. Orwell's "newspeak" seems to have transcended the book pages and entered the common parlance of Trump's administration. Furthermore, like the Ministry of Truth in Orwell's novel, the current president and his administration seem engaged in the systematic retelling of history with complete disregard for evidence and proven facts. If facts contradict the Party's goals, then "the facts must be altered," concludes Orwell's Big Brother, "After all, past events 'have no objective existence, but survive only in written records and in human memories. The past is whatever the records and the memories agree upon'" (166). And, since the Party is in full control of the minds of its members (every citizen), and of the archives of history, "it follows that the past is whatever the Party chooses to make it [...] when it has been recreated in whatever shape is needed at the moment, then this new version is the past, and no different past can ever have existed" (166). Likewise, Trump and his aides do not hesitate to alter the narrative of past and present events to suit their needs, as journalists Christopher Cadelago and Andrew Restuccia denounced in an article published in *Politico* (09/12/2018):

From the moment Trump ascended to the nation's highest office, the former reality TV boardroom brawler has made a habit of rewriting history, challenging the public to ignore what people plainly see with their own eyes—often on television, where Trump is watching it, too [...] "If he doesn't like the reality, he changes it," said former Trump Organization executive Barbara Res. "He is able to take a reality and modify it and convince himself of that modified reality."

Donald Trump will pass down as the promoter of alternative facts and relative truths, which is perhaps defensible on the grounds that, in a universe of alternate narratives, no one has the right to claim preeminence over others, or so the Trump administration seems to take for granted. Hence, for example, his rotund and self-satisfied affirmation of how the response of the federal government to Hurricane Maria (which devastated the island of Puerto Rico and killed almost 3000 people in 2017) had been "an incredible unsung success," as Cadelago and Restuccia report

in their article. The Church Without Christ that Hazel Motes preaches seems to have found faithful acolytes among Trump’s voters, for Hazel’s gospel sounds like the guiding light of current U.S. domestic and foreign policies: “I preach there are all kinds of truth, your truth and somebody else’s, but behind all of them, there’s only one truth and that is that there’s no truth, [...] No truth behind all truths is what I and this church preach!” (WB 165). President Trump will also pass down as the president who recovered the myth of the American frontier, but not as an expansive vanguard extending the reach of (European) civilization over an untamed wilderness, as was envisioned in past centuries, but a frontier turned into a defensive border in the form of a wall that, like Hadrian’s Wall in the northern confines of ancient Rome, is meant to prevent any barbarian intrusion from the Mexican south. Trump’s “rhetoric of the wall” is the reversal of President J. F. Kennedy’s “New Frontier” rhetoric: while Kennedy’s was meant to reawaken the pioneering spirit of the American self, Trump’s seems meant to awaken the most primeval fears of the Other, and his envisioned Border, in theory meant as defense against hostile invaders, echoes Judge Holden’s totalitarian zoo so vividly as to suggest that its real purpose may not be so much walling out the encroaching barbarians from the south, as to wall a whole nation, like Holden’s birds, in an enclosure of dread and hatred for the foreigner.

The present article has undergone a series of revisions from the original paper I read at the “Captive Minds” conference organized by the University of Silesia back in 2018, precisely at the time of the publication by *The New York Times* of a long investigative article on the Russian factor in the presidential election that elevated Mr. Trump to the presidency. In it, Scott Shane and Mark Mazzetti stated, “there is a plausible case that Mr. Putin succeeded in delivering the presidency to his admirer, Mr. Trump, though it cannot be proved or disproved.” Such a claim—the impossibility of ever demonstrating the suspicion that Trump became U.S. President through the agency of Russia President Vladimir Putin—certainly was a prophetic anticipation of where the long investigation into this alleged collusion carried out by Special Counsel Robert S. Mueller would end. At the time of writing this

conclusion, The U.S. Congress has formally initiated preliminary investigations that may lead to the impeachment of President Donald Trump on the grounds of a phone conversation he held on July 25, 2019, with the newly elected president of the Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, triggered by a formal complaint lodged on August 12 by an unidentified C.I.A. officer detailed to the White House at one point and with expertise on Ukrainian affairs, according to *The New York Times* (Barnes et al.). In the nine-page complaint, the unnamed whistle-blower expressed serious concern about the tenor of the phonecall, suggesting that the U.S. president used his public office quite forcibly for personal political gain. The days that followed brought to light growing evidence of Trump's wrongdoing, and at the time I compose these closing remarks, it is difficult to foresee the outcome of this case. One thing, however, has become evident: while the conclusions of Mueller's report, submitted to U.S. Attorney General William Barr on March 22, 2019, did not prove, according to Barr, Trump's personal involvement in the Russian affair, the current case appears to involve ample evidence to substantiate a process of impeachment against the U.S. President. Time will tell.

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A CELEBRATION OF THE WILD

On Earth Democracy and the Ethics of Civil Disobedience
in Gary Snyder's Writing

*To carry yourself forward and experience myriad things is delusion.
But myriad things coming forth and experiencing themselves
is awakening.*

Dōgen

*Cultivating a sense of the whole functions to place each individual
part in greater and more coherent perspective, and thus to trans-
form one's experience of what is present and at hand.*

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THE WILD OR MOUNTAINS AND WATERS?

The article attempts to show the evolution of Gary Snyder's "mountains-and-rivers" philosophy of living/writing (from the Buddhist anarchism of the 1960s to his peace-promoting practice of the Wild), and focuses on the link between the ethics of civil disobedience, deep ecology, and deep "mind-ecology." Jason M. Wirth's seminal study titled *Mountains, Rivers, and the Great Earth: Reading Gary Snyder and Dōgen in an Age of Ecological Crisis*¹

1. Wirth's study is one of the most recent books that show Snyder's importance in the history of ecological thought, the so-called "green studies," geopoetic practices, and, more importantly, comparative religious studies. Other publications which foreground Snyder's relevance include (in choosing the texts, I focus on the ones which promote a comparative perspective of ecological and religious discourse): *Buddhism and Ecology. The Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds* (1997), *Deep Ecology and World Religions. New*

provides an interesting point of reference. Wirth discusses what Dōgen calls “the Great Earth” and what Snyder calls “the Wild” as a peculiar play of waters and mountains, emptiness and form; he is interested in exploring the ways in which these ideas can illuminate the spiritual and ethical dimensions of place, with a particular stress on Earth’s democracy, a place-based sense of communion where all beings inter-are. In my reading of Snyder’s work, I place emphasis on Snyder’s philosophical fascination with Taoism as well as Ch’an and Zen Buddhism, and I try to show how these philosophical traditions inform Snyder’s mind-traveling which, in turn exerts influence on his writing-living practice.²

Snyder is primarily interested in exploring a sense of connection between self and Self, and between self and Nature; it is important to note that his exploration is not focused on intellectual peregrinations—although that aspect of the whole dynamics is crucial—but first and foremost on developing a deep spiritual and sensual contact with the Great Earth. This process is inextricably linked with exploring the Wild, understood as wild nature, but also as the wild within. Embracing wildness within and without in Snyder’s philosophy of being means breaking free from the captivity of our ego, and opening up to what we truly are:

In early Chinese Daoism “training” did not mean to cultivate the wildness out of oneself, but to do away with arbitrary and delusive conditioning. Zhuang-zi [Chuang Tzu–MK] seems to be saying that all social values are false and generate self-serving ego. Buddhism takes a middle path—allowing that greed, hatred, and ignorance are intrinsic to ego, but that ego itself is a reflex of ignorance and delusion that comes from not seeing who we “truly” are. (Snyder, *The Practice of the Wild* 99)

Essays on Sacred Ground (2001), *A Place for Wayfaring. The Poetry and Prose of Gary Snyder* (2000) and *Literature, Nature, and Other* (1995). There are two anthologies that should be mentioned here as well: *At Home on the Earth. Becoming Native to Our Place* (1999), and *A Place on Earth. An Anthology of Nature Writing from Australia and North America* (2003).

2. It would be interesting to discuss the evolution of Snyder’s views in the contexts of the current environmental politics and the ecological engagement of the younger generation, globally. It goes without saying that many issues raised in Snyder’s writing are very much ad rem to the ecological/environmental political discourse and activism of today, and his relevance should be foregrounded here, but the scope of this article does not allow me to explore these highly engaging interconnections.

Snyder adds that each individual decides whether or not s/he “makes a little private vow to work for compassion and insight or overlooks this possibility” (*Practice of the Wild* 99). What seems crucial here is that the natural consequence of the vow should be practice: “a training that helps us realize our own true nature, and nature” (*Practice of the Wild* 99).

When discussing the importance of day-to-day practice, Snyder often refers to Dōgen (1200–1253), his favourite Japanese philosopher and poet. Apart from being one of the most renowned masters of Sōtō Zen, Dōgen was a mountain-lover, and this passion for mountain climbing is something extraordinarily attractive for Snyder, who makes frequent references to Dōgen’s *Shōbōgenzō* (*The Eye and Treasury of the True Law*), both in his essays and poetry. One could argue—as many critics have—that there are more mental affinities between Snyder and Dōgen. In his article tellingly titled “Painting Mountains and Rivers: Gary Snyder, Dōgen, and the Elemental Sūtra of the Wild,” Wirth argues that Snyder’s compelling language, which goes beyond the duality of art and science/philosophy, speaks of “our elemental relationship to the earth (what he calls ‘the wild’ and, following Dōgen, the Chinese landscape tradition, and many classic Ch’an and Taoist practitioners, ‘mountains and rivers’)” (Wirth 243). In my article, I try to show how these seemingly distant perspectives of looking at “the wild” coalesce or converge in Snyder’s work.

The following passage comes from Snyder’s essay on Dōgen’s “Mountains and Waters Sūtra.” Interestingly, the opening paragraph in Snyder’s essay is also the opening paragraph in Dōgen’s sūtra:

The mountains and rivers of this moment are the actualization of the way of the ancient Buddhas. Each, abiding in its own phenomenal expression, realizes completeness. Because mountains and waters have been active since before the eon of emptiness, they are alive at this moment. Because they have been the self since before form arose, they are liberated and realized. (qtd. in Snyder, *The Practice of the Wild* 104)

The image of “mountains and rivers” and their movement (“The blue mountains are constantly walking”)—as well as the theme of liberation and self-realization—will reappear as a refrain in subsequent parts of the essay. It is important to note here the intertextual nature of the quote: throughout his essay, Snyder is using a quote

within a quote: he quotes Dōgen, and Dōgen quotes the Ch'an master Furong. One could argue that the multi-level intertextual coherence in Snyder's work is something he shares with classical Chinese and Japanese writers.

Snyder uses the quote within a quote to discuss the process of going beyond the duality of being and non-being to arrive at what he calls "the nature of the nature of the nature" and "the wild in wild," both of which stand for "thusness":

Dōgen is not concerned with "sacred mountains"—or pilgrimages, or spirit allies, or wilderness as some special quality. His mountains and streams are the processes of this earth, all of existence, process, essence, action, absence; they roll being and nonbeing together. They are what we are, we are what they are. For those who would see directly into essential nature, the idea of the sacred is a delusion and an obstruction: it diverts us from seeing what is before our eyes: plain thusness. Roots, stems, and branches are all equally scratchy. No hierarchy, no equality. No occult and exoteric, no gifted kids and slow achievers. No wild and tame, no bound or free, no natural and artificial. Each totally its own frail self. Even though connected all which ways; even *because* connected all which ways. [...] This, *thusness*, is the nature of the nature of nature. The wild in wild. (Snyder, *The Practice of the Wild* 110)

In David Hinton's view, this passage about Dōgen's "Mountains and Rivers Sūtra" summarizes Snyder's philosophical interests (*The Wilds of Poetry* 135). Hinton notices that Dōgen's "mountains and rivers" is "the Chinese (and later, Japanese) term relegated to 'landscape' in translation, as in 'landscape painting' or 'landscape poetry,' but in Snyder's description is indistinguishable from Tao, that ontological tissue in constant transformation" (*The Wilds of Poetry* 135). For Hinton, Snyder's "thusness" is "essentially *tzu-jan* (a concept that appears in Snyder's essays): Tao seen as the ten thousand individual things we encounter in *contact*" (*The Wilds of Poetry* 135). Snyder quotes Dōgen who says "When you forget the self, you become one with the ten thousand things" (*The Practice of the Wild* 160), and he adds: "ten thousand things means all of the phenomenal world. When we are open that world can occupy us" (*The Practice of the Wild* 160). Snyder's *tzu-jan*—a concept from Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu which literally means "self-so" or "the of-itself" or "being such of itself" and thus "spontaneous" or "natural" (Hinton, *Chuang Tzu* 8)—is linked with the practice

of *wu-wei* (selfless action; literally: “nothing doing” [Hinton, *Chuang Tzu* 8]) and his practice of the wild.

One could only add that the concept appears not only in Snyder’s essays, but also in his poetry, most notably in his *Mountains and Waters Without End*. I mention this particular (epic) poem as it can be seen as the most elaborate embodiment as it were of Snyder’s “mountains-and-rivers cosmology,” a cosmology which, as Hinton aptly notices, draws primarily from non-Western sources, above all from Ch’an Buddhism (*The Wilds of Poetry* 135), Taoist thought (Ch’an’s conceptual source), and classical Chinese poetry. Obviously, we must remember that *Mountains and Waters Without End* is also an exercise in intersemiotic translation; it “writes-through” as if it were a *shan-shui* horizontal hand scroll called *Mountains and Waters Without End* by an unknown artist of the Sung dynasty. If, as Wirth notes, *shan-shui* (landscape) paintings “are not *representations* of mountains, waters, skies, and minimized humans and their dwellings” but rather “elemental exercises of the imagination” (Wirth, *Painting Mountains* 242), then it is not surprising that Snyder himself refers to Ch’an Buddhist landscape painting as a meditative exercise, and compares it with the role of the *tankas* and mandalas in Tibetan Buddhism (Snyder, *Mountains* 156). *The Practice of the Wild* contains a similar passage: “If a scroll is taken as a kind of Chinese mandala, then all the characters in it are our various little selves, and the cliffs, trees, waterfalls, and clouds are our own changes and stations” (115). Similarly, as Wirth notes, “the practice of reading transforms into its own meditative practice of the Wild” (*Mountains* 34): “Clearing the mind and sliding in / to that created space / a web of waters streaming over rocks” (Snyder, *Mountains and Rivers* 5). Julia Martin follows Snyder’s argument and writes: “If *Mountains and Rivers* is a *sūtra*, then its teaching is the communication of such a mandala” (“Seeing a Corner in the Sky” 80). If we want to see the poem as a *sūtra*, then its teaching will be inextricably linked with its structure, with its design. This is how we come closer to one more source of inspiration in writing the poem: Japanese Nō tradition. In an interview with John Jacoby, Snyder discusses the Japanese Nō play (Zeami’s *Yamamba*), and he admits that it is certainly a key structural sense of the poem, “with the scroll itself an analogous

structuring moving across the landscape, moving through different realms, moving through different seasons, but coming to a kind of ambiguous end sometimes” (Snyder, *The Real Work* 50). Again, even though he does not say it openly, Snyder suggests that part of the message he tries to convey is manifested through the structure of the poem, through techniques he became familiar with while living in Kyoto³. The ambiguity he mentions might be understood as the application of one of the most important aesthetic categories in Japanese Nō drama, namely *yūgen* (profound mystery). Here is what Alan Watts, Snyder’s mentor and friend, has to say about this and other moods:

Where the mood of the moment is solitary and quiet it is called *sabi*. When the artist is feeling depressed or sad, and in this peculiar emptiness of feeling catches a glimpse of something rather ordinary and unpretentious in its incredible “suchness,” the mood is called *wabi*. When the moment evokes a more intense, nostalgic sadness, connected with autumn and the vanishing away of the world, it is called *aware*. And when the vision is the sudden perception of something mysterious and strange, hinting at an unknown never to be discovered, the mood is called *yūgen*. These extremely untranslatable Japanese words denote the four basic moods of *furyu*, that is, of the general atmosphere of Zen “taste” in its perception of the aimless moments of life. (Watts 198)

In his seminal *Zen and Japanese Culture*, D.T. Suzuki notices that all art has its mystery, its spiritual rhythm, its *myō*, as the Japanese would call it: “the true artist, like a Zen master, is one who knows how to appreciate the *myō* of things” (220). In Japanese literature, *myō* is sometimes referred to as *yūgen*. For Suzuki,

3. Although his main reason for being in Kyoto was to practice Zen Buddhism, Snyder managed to make contact with Yamabushi, the Mountain Buddhist, and had a chance to experience how “walking the landscape can become both ritual and meditation” (Snyder, *Mountains and Rivers Without End* 158). Yamabushi follow the Shugendō doctrine, a peculiar integration of esoteric Buddhism of the Shingon sect, with Tendai Buddhism, Taoism, and even elements of Shinto—the traditions Snyder finds inspiring. In his essay “Blue Mountains Constantly Walking” Snyder speaks at length about his experience of walking the ancient pilgrimage route of the Ōmine Yamabushi, of walking landscape as a mandala; he mentions a traditional center of the “Diamond-Realm Mandala” at the summit of Mt. Ōmine and the center of the “Womb-Realm Mandala” at the Kumano Shrine (*The Practice of the Wild* 106–107).

all great works of art embody in them *yūgen* “whereby we attain a glimpse of things eternal in the world of constant changes: that is we look into the secrets of Reality” (1959: 220). This philosophy of writing can be seen as part of Snyder’s philosophy of the wild.

“WILD” AT HEART

In 1961, Gary Snyder wrote a thought-provoking article called “Buddhist Anarchism.” Its revised version was published in the 1968 collection *Earth, House, Hold* under the title “Buddhism and the Coming Revolution.” In it, Snyder says, “[T]he mercy of the West has been social revolution; the mercy of the East has been individual insight into the basic self / void. We need both” (92), and he adds that they are “both contained in the traditional three aspects of the Dharma path: wisdom (*prajña*), meditation (*dhyāna*), and morality (*śīla*)” (92). For Snyder, morality means practicing wisdom and meditation through personal example and responsible action for the benefit of “the true community (*sangha*) of ‘all beings’” (92). This last aspect means, for him:

supporting any cultural and economic revolution that moves clearly toward a free, international, classless world. It means using such means as civil disobedience, outspoken criticism, protest, pacifism, voluntary poverty and even gentle violence if it comes to a matter of restraining some impetuous redneck. It means affirming the widest possible spectrum of non-harmful individual behavior—defending the right of individuals to smoke hemp, eat peyote, be polygynous, polyandrous or homosexual. Worlds of behavior and custom long banned by the Judeo-Capitalist-Christian-Marxist West. (Snyder, *Earth, House, Hold* 92)

It is interesting to note that Snyder connects the practice of meditation with the process of changing the world; the “coming revolution” he describes, and which he embodies, is a revolution of what the Japanese call *kokoro*: the heart-mind:

The traditional cultures are in any case doomed, and rather than cling to their good aspects hopelessly it should be remembered that whatever is or ever was in any other culture can be reconstructed from the unconscious, through meditation. In fact, it is my own view that the coming revolution will close the circle and link us in many ways with the most creative aspects of our archaic past. If we are lucky we may eventually arrive at a totally integrated world culture with matrilineal descent,

free-form marriage, natural-credit communist economy, less industry, far less population and lots more national parks. (Snyder, *Earth, House, Hold* 92–93)

A similar message can be found in a poem tellingly titled “Revolution in the Revolution in the Revolution” from *Regarding Wave* (1970) where Snyder refers to various forms of captivity, “or dictatorship of the Unconscious” as he calls it; when our minds are free, he says, when we realize our true (wild?) nature, we can finally “arrive at true Communism” (*Regarding Wave* 39). “From he masses to the masses’ the most / Revolutionary consciousness is to be found / Among the most ruthlessly exploited classes: Animals, trees, water, air, grasses” (*Regarding Wave* 39). In each subsequent stanza, Snyder provides a different context in which the process of self-realization takes place. Hence, we might speak of three different images of a captive mind, but, interestingly, in all three cases the power to break free from oppression lies (hidden) in the seed-syllables of mantras:

If the capitalists and imperialists
are the exploiters, the masses are the workers.
and the party
is the communist.

If civilization
is the exploiter, the masses is nature.
and the party
is the poets.

If the abstract rational intellect
is the exploiter, the masses is the unconscious.
and the party
is the yogins.

⋈ POWER
comes out of the seed-syllables of mantras. (Snyder, *Regarding Wave* 39)

In 1980, in a collection titled *The Real Work: Interviews and Talks 1964–1979*, viewed by many critics as an application of the *Earth House Hold* theory, Snyder’s focus is on the living out of that process. The praxis is difficult, he says: “[i]t’s a much greater challenge to learn, finally, how to apply our contemporary scientific inclination to refine our biological understandings” (149), and he adds that we should “learn to work with biology rather than to clumsily recon-

struct it with nuts and bolts” (149). “In a nutshell,” he continues, “our future options are technocratic solutions or sophisticated biological solutions. The second, of course, is obviously right” (149). In a collection of essays titled *The Old Ways* (1977), Snyder once again stresses the importance of the link between the biological-ecological awareness and self-awareness in a spiritual sense: “The biological-ecological sciences have been laying out (implicitly) a spiritual dimension [...]. We must incorporate that insight into our own personal spiritual quest and integrate it with all the wisdom teachings we have received from the nearer past” (63).

In a letter in response to a question from the Dear Poets Commune, Snyder openly admits: “I became a poet that I might give voice to the songs I heard in nature and my inner ear, and that also, by the power of song, I might contribute to the downfall of the technological industrial world, its total destruction, in favor of a world based on closer knowledge of nature in man himself” (qtd. in Murphy, *A Place for Wayfaring* 10). The last sentence suggests that knowledge of nature is related to knowledge of the self, and self-realization is partly related to being in harmony with nature. We can see how this process operates by looking at “Tomorrow’s Song” from *Turtle Island* (1974) where Snyder affirms his vision of civil disobedience, of working outside the system, “getting power from within” and “growing strong on less”:

The USA slowly lost its mandate
in the middle and later twentieth century
it never gave the mountains and rivers,
 trees and animals,
 a vote.
all the people turned away from it
 myths die; even continents are impermanent

Turtle Island returned. [...]

We look to the future with pleasure
we need no fossil fuel
get power within
grow strong on less.

Grasp the tools and move in rhythm side by side
 flash gleams of wit and silent knowledge
 eye to eye
sit still like cats or snakes or stones

as whole and holding as
the blue black sky.
gentle and innocent as wolves
as tricky as a prince.

At work and in our place:

*in the service
of the wilderness
of life
of death
of the Mother's breasts!* (Snyder, *Turtle Island* 77)⁴

It is important to notice the song-like emphasis (similar to those in “Little Songs for Gaia” from *Axe Handles* (1983)) on being “in service / of the wilderness” in the place of one’s dwelling. Such an attitude, characterized by a mindful embracing of the wild as well as peace-promoting activism, can be seen not only in Snyder’s poetry or essays, but also in his engagement in various social and environmental initiatives. For instance, it is not surprising that when in 1978 Robert Aitken Roshi, Anne Hopkins Aitken, and Nelson Foster established The Buddhist Peace Fellowship—the first organizational flower of socially engaged Buddhism here in the West, a grass roots movement promoting various forms of nonviolent social activism and environmentalism, Snyder joined. On the website of the movement, which as a matter of fact is still active in its endeavors, we read that “the spark for BPF flew from Robert Aitken Roshi’s in-depth study of 19th and 20th century anarchism and his long experience as an anti-war and anti-military activist.” They must have shared many convictions with Snyder. Joanna Macy, Jack Kornfield, Al Bloom, and many others who soon joined the movement. It should be noted here how significant

4. This poem is one of the most well-known manifestos foregrounding the importance of the interrelated character of the ecological/environmental political discourse and activism. If we wanted to refer to the poem which marked the beginning of Snyder’s poetic/environmental activism we would need to move back in time to The Six Gallery Reading, an important poetry event that took place on October 7, 1955 in San Francisco. It was at this reading that Allen Ginsberg first read his poem *Howl*, and Gary Snyder presented his poem “A Berry Feast.” As Michael McClure puts it in one of the interviews in *The Practice of the Wild* film, it was clearly the first manifesto of Snyder’s environmental activism.

the collaboration of practicing Buddhists, social activists, proponents of deep ecology, and last but not least, mindfulness was and still is for Western culture. The Buddhist Peace Fellowship itself emerged as a member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, an interfaith umbrella of nonviolent peace and justice organizations, which takes inspiration from Jesus, Gandhi, Thomas Merton, and Martin Luther King Jr. The history of the BPF is inextricably linked with the continuing influence of Thich Nhat Hanh. In 1983, BPF and the San Francisco Zen Center organized Thich Nhat Hanh's first retreat for Western Buddhists at Tassajara, and in 1985, 1987, and 1989 BPF co-sponsored him for longer tours and in larger venues. On the website of the movement we read that the BPF community still continues to learn from Thich Nhat Hanh and benefits "from the thousands of people who come to engaged Dharma practice through his teaching." They also quote from Hanh's article "The Order of Interbeing," which contains the core of his teaching:

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To be in touch with the reality of the world means to be in touch with everything that is around us in the animal, vegetal, and mineral realms. If we want to be in touch, we have to get out of our shell and look clearly and deeply at the wonders of life—the snowflakes, the moonlight, the songs of the birds, the beautiful flowers—and also the suffering—hunger, disease, torture, and oppression. Overflowing with understanding and compassion, we can appreciate the wonders of life, and, at the same time, act with firm resolve to alleviate the suffering. Too many people distinguish between the inner world of our mind and the world outside, but these worlds are not separate. They belong to the same reality. (Hanh 205–206)

In this passage, Hanh is explaining the philosophy of the *Tiep Hien* Order. *Tiep* means "being in touch with" and "continuing"; *hien* means "realizing" and "making it here and now" (Hanh 205). In order to inter-be, to use one of Hanh's favorite verbs, we need to "bring and express our insights into real life" (Hanh 206). And, as only "the present moment is real and available to us" (Hanh 206), understanding and compassion must be seen and touched in this very moment. Hanh stresses that "[t]he secret of Buddhism is to be awake here and now. There is no way to peace; peace is the way. There is no way to enlightenment; enlightenment is the way. There is no way to liberation; liberation is the way (207)." It seems that Hanh's teaching is very close to Snyder's *tzu-jan*

gers the imagination and exercises an almost mesmeric effect on the mind as it conveys a wide range of teachings through its complex structure, its colorful symbolism, and its mnemonic concentration formulae” (1). Is there any link between *Hua-yen Sūtra* and Snyder’s writing? In a highly engaging collection of articles *The Sense of the Whole* devoted to the reading of Snyder’s *Mountains and Rivers without End*, one of the chapters opens with a quotation from Snyder’s *Practice of the Wild*: “To know the spirit of a place is to realize that you are a part of a part and that the whole is made up of parts, each of which is whole. You start with the part you are whole in” (41). Mark Goneremann, the editor of the book, argues that it is one of numerous instances that prove that at the heart of Snyder’s writing we find the metaphor of Indra’s net. This is precisely where Thich Nhat Hanh’s “interbeing” connects with the metaphor of Indra’s net and *Hua-yen Sūtra*.

In his illuminating book entitled *Hua-yen Buddhism: The Jewel Net of Indra*, Francis H. Cook provides the following description, calling it the favorite Hua-yen method of exemplifying the manner in which things exist:

Far away in the heavenly abode of the great god Indra, there is a wonderful net which has been hung by some cunning artificer in such a manner that it stretches out infinitely in all directions. In accordance with the extravagant tastes of deities, the artificer has hung a single glittering jewel in each “eye” of the net, and since the net itself is infinite in dimension, the jewels are infinite in number. There hang the jewels, glittering like stars of the first magnitude, a wonderful sight to behold. If we now arbitrarily select one of these jewels for inspection and look closely at it, we will discover that in its polished surface there are reflected all the other jewels in the net, infinite in number. Not only that, but each of the jewels reflected in this one jewel is also reflecting all the other jewels, so that there is an infinite reflecting process occurring. The Hua-yen school has been fond of this image, because it symbolizes a cosmos in which there is an infinitely repeated interrelationship among all the members of the cosmos. This relationship is said to be one of simultaneous *mutual identity* and *mutual intercausality*. (2)

In the Hua-yen universe there is no hierarchy, there is no center, or perhaps, as Cook notes, “if there is one, it is everywhere,” and he adds: “Man certainly is not the center, nor is some god” (4). In Buddhist philosophy, which is so important in Snyder’s life and writing, Indra’s net is a symbol of the interconnectedness

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of all reality. In his description of the Hua-yen school of Buddhism, Cook observes that the Chinese have a saying: “Hua-yen for philosophy, Ch’an for practice,” which, in his view shows the interrelationship of the two (26). Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki places particular importance on the relationship between Hua-yen and Zen, and he notes that “the philosophy of Zen is Kegon (*Avatamsaka* [*Hua-yen Sūtra*]) and the teaching of Kegon bears its fruit in the life of Zen” (qtd. in Dumoulin 46). Cook adds that without the practice and realization of Zen, Hua-yen philosophy “remains mere intellectual fun, never a vibrant reality” (26).

It is not surprising that Hua-yen images and ideas run throughout Snyder’s work, especially when one remembers that his formal Buddhist education took place in a Rinzai Zen seminary in Kyoto and that the founder of that order⁵ was indebted to this school. In his “Japan First Time Around,” written between 1956–1957, Snyder begins to discover diverse links between Zen, Hua-yen and Ch’an Buddhism. He also discovers associations between classical Chinese philosophy, painting and poetry (by which he has been drawn to throughout his studies) and Zen philosophy and poetry, especially in Dōgen’s writing. It could be argued that Dōgen becomes a perfect link between Zen and Ch’an traditions; his deep knowledge of Chinese philosophical traditions (various schools of Ch’an Buddhism and Taoism) becomes visible in the way he discusses the relation between the process of self-realization and being one with Nature, which is something Snyder finds very inspiring. He speaks about it openly in *The Practice of the Wild* (104–105).

Here is what Snyder writes about Zen and Hua-yen in his “Japan First Time Around” in June 1956:

So, Zen being founded on *Avatamsaka*, and the net-network of things; and Tantra being the application of the “interaction with no obstacles” vision on a personal-human level—the “other” becomes the lover, through whom the various links in the net can be perceived. As Zen goes to anything direct—rock or bushes or people—the Zen Master’s presence is to help one keep attention undivided, to always look one step farther along, to simplify the mind: like a blade which sharpens to nothing. (*Earth House Hold* 34)

5. Lin-chi (d. 867), one of the most influential of the T’ang period Ch’an masters.

For Snyder, as I will argue here, discovering the vibrant reality of Indra's net—or the “shining way of the wild”—begins only when poetry, thought and science come together, in a climate of reciprocal inspiration. In the poem “For All” from *Axe Handles* (1983) Snyder writes:

I pledge allegiance to the soil
 of Turtle Island,
 and to the beings who thereon dwell
 one ecosystem
 in diversity
 under the sun
 With joyful penetration for all. (114)

As Jason Wirth exclaims in the conclusion to his book, what we are talking about here is “one great sangha with all of its bioregions each in itself an interpenetrating jewel of Indra!” (*Mountains* 115). In *Mountains and Rivers without End*, the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* is quoted only once. At the start of “With This Flesh” we read:

*“Why should we cherish all sentient beings?
 Because sentient beings
 are the roots of the tree-of-awakening.
 The Bodhisattvas and the Buddhas are the flowers and fruits.
 Compassion is the water for the roots.”* (Snyder 77)

But as Mark Gonnerman notices, Hua-yen images and ideas are woven throughout (9). He adds that the vision of *Avatamsaka* in *Mountains and Rivers without End* is “predicated on the notion of Emptiness (*śūnyatā*), the keynote of all Buddhist understanding” (9). It is also suggested by one of the two epigraphs which open the book, namely, Milarepa's “The notion of Emptiness engenders compassion” (the other quote comes from Dōgen's “Painting of a Rice Cake”).

Robin Robertson makes an observation that the message of Indra's net for us as individuals is that “each of us, through our own process of growth and transformation, affects everyone and everything” (7). Let us have a look at one more quote from *Hua-yen Buddhism* where Cook is making a similar point. In my view, it might serve as an adequate comment on the philo-

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sophical and existential message of Snyder's writing: the message of oneness and interbeing:

Someone once made the observation that one's skin is not necessarily a boundary marking off the self from the not-self but rather that which brings one into contact with each other. Like Faraday's electric charge which must be conceived as being everywhere, I am in some sense boundless, my being encompassing the farthest limits of the universe, touching and moving every atom in existence. The same is true of everything else. The interfusion, the sharing of destiny, is as infinite in scope as the reflections in the jewels of Indra's net. When in a rare moment I manage painfully to rise above a petty individualism by knowing my true nature, I perceive that I dwell in the wondrous net of Indra, in this incredible network of interdependence. It is not just that "we are all in it" together. We all *are* it, rising or falling as one living body. (Cook 122)

JOYFUL PENETRATION FOR ALL

In *The Practice of the Wild* Snyder stresses the importance of the spiritual practice, of implementing Buddhist philosophy in the here-and-now, of protecting the wild (within and without), of discovering the interconnectedness of things, places, and people. In the chapter "The Etiquette of Freedom" he plays with definitions of the wild. He quotes entries from The Oxford English Dictionary: "of animals—not tame, undomesticated, unruly," "of plants—not cultivated," "of land—uninhabited, uncultivated," "of individuals—unrestrained, insubordinate, licentious, dissolute, loose," "of behavior—violent, destructive, cruel, unruly" (*The Practice of the Wild* 10), and he rightly concludes that *Wild* is largely defined in our dictionaries "by what—from a human standpoint—it is not" (10), which is why it "cannot be seen by this approach for what it *is*" (10). He then provides his definitions:

Of land—a place where the original and potential vegetation and fauna are intact and in full interaction and the landforms are entirely the result of nonhuman forces. Pristine.

Of societies—societies whose order has grown from within and is maintained by the force of consensus and custom rather than explicit legislation. Primary cultures, which consider themselves the original and eternal inhabitants of their territory. Societies which resist economic and political domination by civilization. Societies whose economic system is in a close and sustainable relation to the local ecosystem.

Of individuals—following local custom, style, and etiquette without concern for the standards of the metropolis or nearest trading post. Unintimidated, self-reliant, independent. “Proud and free.”

Of behavior—fiercely resisting any oppression, confinement, or exploitation. Far-out, outrageous, “bad,” admirable.

Of behavior—artless, free, spontaneous, unconditioned. Expressive, physical, openly sexual, ecstatic. (*The Practice of the Wild* 10)

Snyder concludes by stating that “most of the senses in this second set of definitions come very close to how the Chinese define the term *Tao*, the way of Great Nature” (11):

eluding analysis, beyond categories, self-organizing, self-informing, playful, surprising, impermanent, insubstantial, independent, complete, orderly, unmediated, freely manifesting, self-authenticating, self-willed, complex, quite simple. Both empty and real at the same time. In some cases we might call it sacred. It is not far from the Buddhist term *Dharma* with its original senses of forming and firming. (*The Practice of the Wild* 11)

One could argue that the cultivation of the wild is inextricably linked here with the philosophy of *wu-wei* and interdependent becoming. But what strongly informs Snyder’s writing is the idea that the “way” cannot be followed. One can see that in his translation of the opening line of the *Tao Te Ching*: “The way that can be followed (‘wayed’) is not the constant way” (*The Practice of the Wild* 161), or as he puts it “A path that can be followed is not a *spiritual* path” (161).

Snyder’s Earth democracy, a “place-based sense of communion where all beings are interconnected and all beings matter” (Wirth xxiii) seems impossible to achieve without the cultivation of a practice of peace. Reflecting on his work with the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, Snyder stated in 1985 that “it’s part of our mission [...] as Buddhists to extend the concern for peace outside the human realm to the nonhuman realm” (qtd. in Murphy, *A Place for Wayfaring* 14). In an interview with Gene Fowler, titled “The Landscape of Consciousness,” Snyder asks: “What are we going to do with this planet?” and he provides an answer: “It’s a problem of love; not the humanistic love of the West—but love that extends to animals, rocks, dirt, all of it. Without this love, we can end, even without war, with an uninhabitable place” (Snyder, *The Real Work* 4). The cultivation of peace and compassion is also

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a question of ahimsa—of doing “the least possible harm in every situation” (Snyder, *A Place in Space* 79). For Wirth, Snyder’s ahimsa is “a practice of the Wild that issues from an ongoing awakening that is shaped by wisdom and compassion, these mountains and rivers within and without that are without end” (*Mountains* 113).

Wirth observes that Snyder decenters the human and opens “her in compassion to the value of all things, no longer as things, but as living expression of the Buddha” (xx). David Landis Barnhill writes that Snyder “has, in effect, ‘ecologized’ the Buddhist notion of interpenetration and the image of Indra’s net and ‘Buddhacized’ the notion of ecosystem” (189). We can see how it works when we look at the following passage taken from an interview with Snyder:

I find it always exciting to me, beautiful, to experience the interdependencies of things, the complex webs and networks by which everything moves, which I think are the most beautiful awarenesses that we can have of ourselves and of our planet. Let me quote something:

“The Buddha once said, bhikshus, if you can understand this blade of rice, you can understand the laws of interdependence and origination. If you can understand the laws of interdependence and origination, you can understand the Dharma. If you understand the Dharma, you know the Buddha.”

And again, that’s one of the worlds that poetry has taken, is these networks, these laws of interdependence—which are not exactly the laws that science points out. They are—although they are related—but imagination, intuition, vision clarify them, manifest them in certain ways—and to be able to transmit that to others is to transmit a certain quality of truth about the world. (Snyder, *The Real Work* 35)

THE WILD OR MOUNTAINS AND WATERS

The wisdom of Japanese culture, being so important for Snyder, “extols the importance of the moment, the now, but against the background of eternity” (Carter 136). According to Robert E. Carter, the arts in Japan come closest to “giving voice to the voiceless, and form to the formless” (114). In his view, art accomplishes this by:

directing attention to the particular and finding in each cicada, each stone, each flower, blade of grass, and dewdrop an intimation of the eternity which lines each and every thing in this world, if only one would make the effort to read nature, to merge with nature, and to instantiate the Buddhist vision of the interconnectedness of all things. (115)

The above quotation might serve as a summary of the philosophical and existential context of Snyder's poetry and his philosophy of writing in general. I would argue that *yūgen* as the key aesthetic category plays a prominent role in his immanent poetics. As Eliot Deutsch puts it, *yūgen* is "at once entirely natural and wholly spiritual" (31), and it "teaches us that in aesthetic experience it is not that 'I see the work of art,' but that by 'seeing the I is transformed'" (32). In a letter to Wendell Berry (dated 3 November 1977), Snyder writes: "As poets, our politics mostly stand back from that flow of topical events; and the place we do our real work is in the unconscious, or myth-consciousness of the culture; a place where people decide (without knowing it) to change their values" (qtd. in Gonnerman 135). Snyder's writing certainly opens a space of/for transformation, and those who are ready to enter the Way that cannot be "wayed" may catch a glimpse of the ever-changing "shining way of the wild":

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*Walking on walking,
under foot earth turns*

Streams and mountains never stay the same. (Snyder, *Mountains and Rivers* 9 and *passim*)

Near the end of *Mountains and Rivers Without End* we find a poem titled "We Wash Our Bowls in This Water" which incorporates an "enlightenment poem" written by Su Tung-p'o (also known as Su Shih), an eleventh-century Chinese poet and Ch'an adept. The poem, we learn, is a record of his experience of going beyond duality while sitting "one whole night by a creek on the slopes of Mt. Lu" (Snyder, *Mountains and Rivers* 140). Snyder provides his translation of the poetic piece Su Tung-p'o showed to his master:

The stream with its sounds is a long broad tongue
The looming mountain is a wide-awake body
Throughout the night song after song
How can I speak at dawn. (Snyder, *Mountains and Rivers* 140)

The story has it that Dōgen was so moved by the poem that he wrote his own *waka*:

Colours of the mountains
Streams in the valleys
One in all, all in one
The voice and body of
Our Sakyamuni Buddha (qtd. in Heine 71)

As Heine notes, the *waka* emphasizes the identity of mountains-rivers with the body and voice of Buddha (71). “It extends the doctrine of the ‘true form of all dharmas’ by concluding that not only does the Buddha preach to all things, but all things as they are in themselves are preaching the Dharma and enlightening humans” (Heine 71). The poem also reminds us of Dōgen’s view expressed in his “Mountains and Waters Sūtra,” written in response to Su Tung-p’o’s poem: “each and every aspect of nature is the continuous preaching of the sūtras” (Heine 71), “the inseparability and intimate rapport of humans and Buddha, as well as the unity of nature personified and of humans identified with the entire environment” (Heine 73).

Snyder decides not to quote Dōgen’s poem. Instead, he uses his “Mountains and Waters Sūtra.” This is how we come full circle to the text I mentioned at the beginning of my article, in the context of Snyder’s philosophy of the wild. This time, the issue of “mountains-and-rivers” cosmology and the process of self-realization can be seen from a slightly different angle, when we-rivers never stop and we-mountains never cease:

*Captive Minds
Normativities
and Protests*

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[...] Two centuries later Dōgen said,
“Sounds of streams and shapes of mountains.
The sounds never stop and the shapes never cease.
Was it Su who woke
or was it the mountains and streams?
Billions of beings see the morning star
and all become Buddhas!
If *you*, who are valley streams and looming
mountains,
can’t throw some light on the nature of ridges and rivers,
who can?” (Snyder, *Mountains* 140-141)

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“WHERE BUTCHERS SING LIKE ANGELS”

Of Captive Bodies and Colonized Minds
(With a Little Help from Louise Erdrich)

The most insidious oppressions are those that so insinuate themselves into the fabric of our lives and into the recess of our minds that we don't even realize they are acting upon us.

(Michael Parenti)

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PROLEGOMENA

Since 1984, the publication year of her debut novel *Love Medicine*, Louise Erdrich, an American author of German and Chippewa origin, has been constructing a cycle of interconnected narratives that converge on a North Dakota reservation and the nearby towns, such as Argus. Readers of *The Master Butchers Signing Club* (2003) are introduced to Argus in the second decade of the 20th century, when it is rapidly expanding thanks to the newly constructed railroad connecting it to the rest of the country. As a town built on unceded aboriginal lands, Argus is symbolic of the white man's victorious war against America's indigenous inhabitants, whose tragic fate is epitomized by the ragpicker Step-and-a-Half, a deeply traumatized survivor of the Wounded Knee Massacre. On the other hand, the town's two thriving butcher shops are telling reminders of the original colonizing project—that of human mastery over animals.

Alien to the hunting cultures of North America's indigenous inhabitants—Step-and-a-Half's ancestors—the domestication and exploitation of large social animals for food and as a workforce has, according to sociologist David Nibert, “engendered large-



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scale violence against and injury to devalued humans, particularly indigenous people around the world.” In the final analysis, rather than being the much touted leap in the development of humanity, domestication—more aptly called *domesacration*—“undermined the development of a just and peaceful world” (Nibert 2). In this article, I will draw on methodologies provided by decolonial thinking and Critical Animal Studies to argue that violence against animals and violence against devalued/animalized humans are two sides of the same coin.

Sociologist Lucy Mayblin succinctly defines the main thrust of decolonial thinking in the following way: “decolonialists seek to draw attention to the relation between colonialism and the narrative of modernity, through which much of the world’s history has come to be understood. Modernity, then, is viewed as an epistemological frame that is inseparably bound to the European colonial project” (Mayblin). My article is guided by the same ambition. With the help of Louise Erdrich, a U.S. author of mixed Euro-Cherokee descent, I aim to contest the accepted reading of the modern narrative of progress and foreground the trope of war against the animal(ized) Other I identify in her novel. Being partly indigenous and partly white, Erdrich transfers her divided loyalties onto the written page, revealing fundamental fault lines in modernity’s masternarrative. Reading closely carefully chosen fragments of *Master Butchers Singing Club*, I follow the associative paths suggested by the words and images used by the author. Not arguing explicitly against modernity, Erdrich nevertheless manages to capture much of its “dark side.” My article will try to bring this repressed, invisibilized part of the modern narrative into light.

I wish to stress that my article is not a systematic analysis of Erdrich’s novel. On the contrary, I wish to use the text as an illustration of the larger thesis, namely, that the ongoing war against the nonhuman and the not-quite-human cannot be properly understood without critiquing the idea of human exceptionalism, a concept unknown to Paleolithic-style small-scale societies, whose members realized they were constituted by their relations with other, nonhuman selves. For them, preserving those relations was essential for the good life. The Western hu/man,

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on the other hand, constituted in the act of separating himself from nature, is a schizophrenic figure, bent on killing the nonhuman Other that in fact, co-constitutes him.¹ Although capable of utter selflessness and the most astonishing works of beauty, he is not an angel, as evidenced by the long list of modern atrocities committed in the name of white privilege. In the course of my analysis, I will draw on *Master Butchers Singing Club* to illustrate the schizophrenia of modern life: trying to live the good life as advanced by Western culture, we² perform acts of atrocious violence against the animal(ized) Other, often without realizing it. Socialization into the structures of oppression makes us blind to the violence inherent in our lives. Only a vision from the margin, similar to that granted to Erdrich's Delphine, can reveal what has been occluded by the notions of progress and prosperity. Positing that everybody has been colonized in mind and body in the course of history,³ I will conclude by suggesting the need for decolonizing our relations with all living beings. I want to argue that we will never be fully human unless we recover a sense of embeddedness in a web of relations that co-constitute us (Sepie). By allowing an indigenous author to have the last word in this article, I wish to honor the wisdom of traditional worldviews which are not my own and to which, therefore, I have no rightful claim.

THE VIOLENCE OF HUMANISM

David Nibert is part of a growing number of scholars who believe that the anthropological machine (Agamben 33–38)—that is, the philosophical and scientific production of human life as distinct from the life of animals—is at the root of all modern oppressions.

1. The spelling of hu/man—with a slash—is to draw attention to the fact that modern humanity has been defined in explicitly masculine, patriarchal terms. Within this article, I shall be using 'white privilege' and 'normative humanity' as synonyms terms.

2. Erdrich is of indigenous and European descent and often speaks simultaneously from the two epistemologies she has inherited. Thus, the 'we moderns' would also, at least partly, include her. As for myself, being a white European woman, I realize I am part of the 'we' too, having been co-constituted by the same cultural codes I am trying to contest.

3. Although I have been reaching similar conclusions in my previous research, I want to acknowledge Amba J. Sepie as the direct source of this formulation.

Legal scholar Tarik Kochi of the University of Sussex, for example, demonstrates how decisions about what constitutes ‘legitimate’ violence are influenced by our assumptions about the value of life. The bare life—especially if it threatens the ‘good life’ as defined by Western modernity—is believed to be justifiably eliminable. War is a legitimate form of violence against life construed as *zoe*, or bare, which is commonly associated with purely utilitarian value. Livestock would be a prime example of the bare life—bred for consumption, they are denied any intrinsic worth and have almost no (executable) legal rights. According to Kochi, therefore, “what sits at the foundation of the Law of war is a discourse of species war that over time has been so naturalized within Western legal and political theory that we have almost forgotten about it.” Admitting that “species war may not be a Western monopoly,” the scholar nevertheless soberly accepts the West’s responsibility for imposing its own specific form of species war on the rest of the world through the interconnected processes of colonization and globalization (356). “For most humans in the West,” adds Kochi, “the ‘good life’ involves the daily killing of animals for dietary need and for pleasure” (362). Another legal scholar, Maneesha Deckha from the University of Victoria, draws the inescapable conclusion suggested but not explicitly articulated by Kochi. Finding the subhuman to be “the cultural agent of violence,” she concludes that humanism is synonymous with violence. Grounded as it is in oppositional thinking, humanism will always work through the logic of exclusion, the subhuman and non-human situated as the ‘legitimate’ recipient of violence.

Australian scholar Dinesh Wadiwel is another crucial contributor to the discussion of species war. Although I am in no way capable of doing justice to his profound book *The War Against Animals* in the space available, it is important to note that the author explicitly uses the trope of war to theorize human-animal relations. Having established his sovereignty over animals, man treats them as spoils of war to secure “the continual excess of human claimed rights and pleasures” (Wadiwel 23). The spoils of war,

whose intrinsic worth is constructed as negligible, are to enhance the quality of human life—the only life worth consideration.

Yet, how do we move beyond oppositional politics inherent in the discourses of humanism? How do we end species war in a way that would not replicate exclusionary thinking or ensure the perpetration of violence meted out in the name of the good life of the normative human? Decolonial critics point to the necessity of de-linking from the categories of thought imposed by colonialism and globalization and the subsequent retrieval of ancestral wisdoms for ‘thinking otherwise.’ To think human-animal relations otherwise, in ways repressed by the paradigm of human dominionism, we need to think disobediently. “Epistemic disobedience,” argues Walter Mignolo, “is necessary to take on civil disobedience to its point of non-return” (“Epistemic Disobedience” 17).

Another philosopher of decoloniality, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, in his book *Against War* aptly subtitled *Views from the Underside of Modernity*, finds violence and war to be more than “contingent results of particular historical projects. “For victims of colonialism violence and war appear as “constitutive dimensions of dominant conceptions of civilization and civilizational progress” (5). Underneath the triumphalist rhetoric of progress hides modernity’s dark unconscious, the repository of the repressed crimes of coloniality which made modernity possible. In accordance with the logic of Freudian psychoanalysis, this dark side of modernity continues to inform our daily choices and thus locks us in the prison house of compulsive repetitions of the past. Unless, that is, we dare to question the worldview available from the “zero point” of Western man’s epistemic privilege (Castro-Gomez, qtd. in Grosfoguel).

Questioning the assumptions we moderns live by implies choosing to position ourselves on the underside of modernity, together with the human and non-human victims of manifold oppressions invisibilized by the progressive paradigm of modernity. A view from the margin is certain to subvert our comforts and little securities, but then again, liberation from mental captivity is meant to be a revolutionary event, requiring a corollary revolutionary change in lifestyle. While a negative peace is simply an absence of tension, and has to be enforced by recourse to legal

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violence, positive peace—the presence of justice—resolves tensions and abolishes hierarchical distinctions.

DELPHINE: A VIEW FROM THE MARGIN

Delphine Watzka, the main female protagonist of *The Master Butchers Singing Club*, is of uncertain origin. She believes that her father is a local drunkard of Polish descent, and that her mother, supposedly a Native American, died soon after Delphine was born. All this turns out to be untrue. At the novel's end, the readers learn (but Delphine never does) that her biological mother, a pathological Mrs. Shimek, discarded her as a newborn infant into an outhouse and that the Wounded Knee survivor, Step-and-a Half, rescued the girl and brought her to Roy Watzka's house. As a poor woman, supposedly of native descent, struggling for her and her father's survival and performing as a circus artist with a gay partner with Ojibwe roots, Delphine is multiply marginalized within the patriarchal, assimilationist society of the first half of the 20th century. By marrying the local butcher, Fidelis Waldvogel, she leaves the margin and joins the local elite. From that moment on, Delphine too can participate in the good life advertised as available to all hard-working, conscientious Americans, regardless of their origins.

As both substitute mother to four young men who fight on both sides of the Second World War and her husband's partner in the butchering business, Delphine is no innocent bystander to modernity's wars. Yet, it is she who, at the novel's close, is granted a vision from the underside of modernity. In a particularly lucid moment, she sees beyond the socially constructed ideas and normativities of the Western world. The vision of naked reality is a vision of the world at war. At the unveiling of a monument to the victims of the bombing of Ludwigsruhe, Fidelis's hometown, a choir of master butchers performs in the open. Bewildered by the strange culture and alienated among her husband's German relatives, Delphine experiences a moment of acute derealization. Looking at the festive celebrations, she is reminded of the atrocities that had taken place there a short while before—"the burning, the marching, an enormity beyond her, a terrible strangeness in which things unbelievable were done" (375). But now the town is beautiful and orderly again, the gathered audience

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are elegant, cheerful, carefree. For some reason, she sees a photo of the young Step-and-a-Half blur with the scene in front of her. Delphine no longer hears the singing; she only sees “the mouths of the men opening and shutting in unison, in a roar, like some collection of animals in a zoo” (375). The scene continues:

She saw what was really happening. As the veil was torn away, as the statue of the burned stood washed in pleasant sunlight, as the master butchers parted their lips in song, smoke and ash poured out of their mouth holes like chimneys. Their hearts were smoldering, she thought disoriented. Their guts were on fire. Their lungs were hot bellows. Yet they kept on singing as though nothing was wrong at all. Nobody pointed, no children cried. Darkness continued to spiral out of the men’s oven-box chests. Smoke swirled, ash drifted. Finally the singing ended. All the cloudy dark the men had belched disintegrated and was gone, except for the tarry residues of the shadows. People surrounding her smiled and nodded. Clapped their hands with a solid racking clatter that went on and on. So, thought Delphine, very tired, throwing her hands together along with everyone else, it was normal for black plumes to rise from the mouths of the singing butchers into the brilliant air of the garden. It was an ordinary thing to witness here. (375–76)

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The light and the shadow, the glittering surface and the atrocities buried underneath—the latter invisible yet constitutive of the project of modernity—this is Western culture’s schizophrenia laid bare in Delphine’s vision. She sees both sides of the modern/colonial coin. A nation that produced some of the (Western) world’s greatest poets, philosophers, and musicians produced also the Übermensch, the Superhuman, the Führer—a semi-divine figure existing outside of the rule of law; creator of the modern death camp for those who failed to meet the criteria for inclusion in the race of masters. By superimposing Step-and-a-Half’s photo on the surrealist picture of the smoke-belching German butchers singing in a beautiful harmony of voices, Erdrich identifies the violence of colonialism with the beginning of the modern paradigm of war (against the subhuman). In Erdrich’s historical intervention, the Wounded Knee Massacre anticipates the Final Solution.

On December 29, 1890, about 300 peaceful Lakota men, women, and children were massacred at a camp the U.S. cavalrymen had ordered them to set up the previous day. Instead of the protection promised by the U.S. army, the weary Indians were liquidated in the prototype of a modern death camp. Literary

scholar John Carlos Rowe has this to say about the role Wounded Knee plays in *The Master Butchers Singing Club*: “Like a ghostly return of the repressed in Freudian psychoanalysis, Wounded Knee surfaces several times in Erdrich’s novel as the unconscious of Argus, North Dakota, and by extension the entire modernization process of the United States” (169). Normalized and repressed to the shadowy region of the cultural unconscious, genocidal violence is the unacknowledged price for the good life Western style, violence being “an ordinary thing to witness here” (376).

Despite her insight into the heart of modern darkness, Delphine applauds the master butchers’ problematic performance “with everyone else.” Rather than delink from the violence produced by normative humanity, she passively accepts her participation in its privileges, because she is concerned with assimilation. Delphine is a figure of reconciliation and care in the novel. This is why she helps to run the butcher shop and passively watches Fidelis shoot the feral dogs whom he had previously fed. A victim of the colonial matrix of power herself, Delphine, whose very name suggests affinities with animals, has been socialized to participate in the structural oppression of devalued bodies, to oppress and exploit other *damnés*. Although she secretly sympathizes with the dogs, hoping some will have escaped Fidelis’s rifle, she is not ready to renounce the privileges of her social standing. As a middle-class, decent woman with a liberal conscience, Delphine represses the animal Other, happy to be included in the elite category of the human. Her solidarity with victims of systemic oppressions outside of her family rarely goes beyond charity.

To speak from the margin is to speak in resistance, wrote bell hooks. Only if consciously embraced, however, can the margin become a site of struggle, a site “where transformation is possible” (hooks 203). Hooks asks: “Within complex and ever shifting realms of power relations, do we position ourselves on the side of colonizing mentality? Or do we continue to stand *in political resistance with the oppressed?*” (203, emphasis added).

FIDELIS: THE NORMATIVE HUMAN

Newly arrived in the USA, Fidelis Waldvogel, a German immigrant traumatized by World War I, is struggling with the problem

of identity and cultural assimilation—a master theme of Erdrich’s novels. But by settling in Argus, he is also, albeit involuntarily, participating in the ongoing dispossession of native peoples from their ancestral lands and the marginalization of their traditional lifeways. Fidelis is an admirable character of great moral probity, an emblematic modern man: hard-working, persevering, self-made. He is a faithful and protective husband, a loving father, and a man of honor. Yet, to be all of the above, he has to cultivate manifold epistemologies of ignorance⁴ to keep at a safe distance the specter of coloniality’s dark side. Not an innocent bystander to direct violence against the Other, Fidelis is modern man *par excellence*, suppressing doubts of moral nature as prerequisite for achieving the required stance of detached, professional mastery.

As a sniper in the Great War, Fidelis was among the most feared soldiers on the battlefield. Although specially trained marksmen had been used in earlier conflicts, German snipers made history as the first ever to use rifles with telescopic sights, which allowed them to shoot with incredible precision. Moreover, in contrast to British marksmen,

German snipers did not normally work from their own trenches. The main strategy was to creep out at dawn into no-man’s land and remain there all day. Wearing camouflaged clothing and using the cover of a fake tree, they waited for a British soldier to pop his head above the parapet.” (“Snipers”)

The combination of exceptional skills, expert training, and the ability to operate independently of other soldiers gave German snipers a fearsome reputation. They were masters of the craft of war. The sniper’s precision killing approximated high modernist art. Not without reason did high modernist art, which arguably originated with the Lost Generation’s wartime experience, highlight the importance of impersonality, technical discipline, precision of execution and total control over the medium of representation.

4. Epistemologies of ignorance are forms of unlearning; the complex phenomena of knowledge practices that produce and sustain various forms of ignorance. For the purpose of this article I am limiting myself to those “that take the form of the center’s own ignorance of injustice, cruelty, and suffering” (Sullivan and Tuana 1).

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Mainstream Euro-American modernism often celebrated violence and revealed misogynist, anti-Semitic, homophobic, dominationist biases. Ezra Pound idolized Mussolini; Hemingway saw the incarnation of the artist in the figure of the bullfighter. I posit that Fidelis is another quintessential artist of the modernist period.

Endowed with an angelic voice and passionate about poetry, he was forced to “shut down” (Erdrich 2) his senses and do violence to his sensitive nature in the trenches of World War One. Motivated by the need to survive, he became a deadly sniper, “deal[ing] death accurately from his sandbagged and reinforced turret” (5). The mechanical, repetitive nature of this process deadened his consciousness and allowed him to “meticulously oil [...] and clean [...] the workings of his rifle” in between shootings, and continue, day in and day out, “with a raptor’s perseverant ease to pluck men from that too shallow rift in the earth” (5). His craft is totally impersonal, divorced from emotions, seemingly effortless, although the appearance of “perseverant ease” results from rigorous discipline and self-control. Fidelis’s technical mastery is a death warrant to the eliminable Other on the opposite side of the battlefield. His art is conscienceless. As aptly noticed by Thomas Austenfeld, “[t]he savage butchery of war and the precision butchering of animals, a master craft of long standing, are but two sides of the same coin” (8).

In the Waldvogel family, the arcane skills of butchering have been passed down from father to son for generations. The Waldvogels were not ordinary butchers; they were Metzgemeisters, master butchers:

[...] there was an art to a proper killing. The profession, acquired only through painstaking study and examination from a young age, was one of extraordinary precision and timing. The Metzgemeister’s diploma required working knowledge of every spice known to humankind, the arcane preparation of hundreds of varieties of wurst, and the ability to commit one’s knife edge to the animal’s created bulk and grain with dreamlike intuition. His father, having practiced all his life, hardly seemed to move his hands as the animal fell into increasingly civilized circles and predictable shapes. On a block set before him, its creature-

liness disappeared and it entered, as Fidelis saw it, a higher and more satisfactory form of being. (8–9)

As demonstrated by the age of genocide,⁵ evil is banal rather than Faustian. It is the law-abiding citizen, the most trustful and trustworthy person (*fides* means trust, faith) who, having silenced his conscience, becomes a master butcher (of human and non-human animals) totally dedicated to his craft. Only when handling the Other with the indifferent precision of a superior being and with faith (*fides*) in either his military superiors' orders or man's divinely-ordained right to domination over the animal, will the modern man be able to treat the vilified Other as, respectively, the eliminable enemy and material to shape according to his (the master's) superior vision.

Like his father before him, Fidelis has perfected the skill to "improve" livestock by bringing them from the abyss of chaotic and unpredictable "creatureliness" to a more orderly and superior state, in which all randomness and waste has been eliminated. This is the Western man's most sublime art: the arcane and highly disciplined project of subduing ungovernable matter, making nature profitable, and civilizing it (along with all those who are on the 'nature' side of modern dichotomies). It is safe to argue that, as both sniper and butcher, Fidelis embodies the carnophallogocentric⁶ privileges of Western subjectivity. Meat-eating and killing animals/animalized Others are acts whose aim is, according to Carol Adams, "a sort of desperate performative rebuilding of the carnophallogocentric subject through violence" (36).

In the American context, Fidelis's profession provides another link between human domination over nature and the violence of colonialism. Both projects are directed at the same goal:

5. See, e.g., Samantha Powell, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (Basic Books, 2002).

6. Jacques Derrida introduced the idea of carnophallogocentrism in his late essay "Eating Well." According to the philosopher, Western subjectivity is quintessentially virile and masculine (phallo), speaking and self-present (logo), and animal-flesh eating (cf. Adams and Calarco).

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the securing of a continual flow of the spoils of war for the enjoyment of the normative hu/man.

To wit, the violent subjugation and forced dispossession of North America's indigenous people from their tribal territories, as well as the clearing of the Great Plains of the free roaming buffalo, allowed for the creation of lucrative ranching empires where "domesacrated" animals were raised for profit. Although the notorious Union Stock Yards of Chicago are never mentioned in the Erdrich novel, by the time of Fidelis's arrival in Argus they were already employing 40,000 workers ("The Union Stockyards"). Chicagoan Carl Sandburg called the city "Hog Butcher for the World" (191). Soon the booming animal-industrial complex was to drive small slaughterhouses (like Fidelis's) out of business. Upton Sinclair's novel *The Jungle*, depicting animal suffering and immigrant workforce oppression in the Stock Yards, was published in 1914. By then, the meat industry had already established a heavy meat diet as the marker of social standing. For countless immigrants, especially from poverty-stricken regions of Europe, successful assimilation to American culture meant the adoption of meat as their staple diet. Charles Patterson asserts that meat was for them "a rite of passage into the coveted American middle class" (58).

Violence and meat-eating are two sides of the same coin, asserts Carol Adams in an interview with Matthew Calarco; the self-present, speaking, rational, masculine, and flesh-eating human is the *essential* human who, like Fidelis, kills "with a raptor's perseverant ease" (Erdrich 5).

The raptor is Erdrich's insightful metaphor for humanity, understood, in the words of decolonial philosopher Syl Ko, as "not just homo sapiens but an ideal *type* of homo sapiens" (73). In her essay "Notes from the Border of the Human-Animal Divide," Ko argues that all inferiorized Others, human and nonhuman alike, are the Fanonian *damnés*—the wretched of the earth—but they are also "kindred spirits in a fight to depose 'the human'" (73). Knowing that "only humans are taken seriously" (74) while those marked by their "less than" status are routinely silenced and invisibilized, Ko advocates a rebellious move, one that runs counter to the much celebrated and hard-won legal inclusion of racialized bodies into the hegemonic

category of 'the human.' I quote Syl Ko's appeal at some length to illustrate the stakes involved:

Let's use our exclusion and invisibility as a power [...]. Let's use our erasure from this rotten-to-the-core Western notion of humanity to build up a different "new world," one that is not defined in terms of dichotomies or hierarchies or emotional death—but centered on love: one in which we accept ambiguity and difference, grounded in an expansive, limitless "we" [...]. We are realizing that by existing in this strange, liminal space, the space of being not-quite-human, we are forced to reconceive and reject the standard articulation of what speciesism is and how to fight it. In recognizing our strange status explicitly in terms of the grand division that makes all "isms" possible, the human-animal dichotomy, we voluntarily align ourselves with our fellow beings, those who do not belong to homo sapiens, in solidarity as we all somehow continue to thrive despite the crushing weight of the figure "the human." (75)

Delphine failed to align herself with the victims of 'the human.' By choosing inclusion in the oppressive category, she compromised her potential to build the world of the You; she failed to act on her extraordinary vision. Syl Ko's words echo bell hooks's realization that the margin has to be freely chosen if it is to become the site of resistance.

A growing number of activists from racial and oppressed minorities are reaching a similar conclusion, the chief target of their criticism being the Eurocentric, normative idea of the human. Critical of Western modernity, with its humanist, liberal discourses, they attempt to decenter whiteness and its supremacist *universum* by postulating the concept of pluriversality. As defined by Walter D. Mignolo, pluriversality is the "entanglement of several cosmologies connected today in a power differential. That power differential is the logic of coloniality covered up by the rhetorical narrative of modernity. Modernity is a fiction that carries in it the seed of Western pretense to universality" ("On Pluriversality"). To think pluritopically, though, one needs to *dwell* in the border, in the entanglement, rather than merely "study" it from the outside. To dwell in the border—or, in hook's terms, in the margin—means choosing it over and against the comforts and securities of the assimilationist center. Decolonial critics point to the necessity of delinking from the compromised epistemologies of the West as a precondition to thinking otherwise. What follows

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is an attempt to look at human-animal relationships differently by challenging the modernist matrix of domination.

OF PIGS AND MEN: TOWARDS THE DISMANTLING OF THE SPECIES BARRIER

Typically, in the racist/speciesist matrix of modernity, the pig, seen as the essence of filth and unruly behavior, has been used to animalize the most 'uncivilized' Other that needs to be disciplined or disposed of altogether. Within Erdrich's novel, Fidelis's sister, simply called Tante—a prim xenophobe, German nationalist, and supporter of Hitler's racist theories—must have used the 'Jewish pig' slogan, which paved the way for the Final Solution. As it turns out, however, the use of pigs for othering was not motivated solely by cultural prejudice or religious taboo. Originally, as argued by Karl Steel in his book *How to Make a Human: Animals and Violence in the Middle Ages* (2011), pigs were perceived as dangerously *similar* to humans, therefore threatening to the concept of human exceptionality. The abjection of pigs served the purpose of distinguishing 'ourselves' (humans) from 'them' (animals)—who, as demonstrated by the liminal pigs, were in fact disturbingly *like* 'us.' "Animal-like and human-like," writes Steel, "reviled for its appetite but useless without it, permitted to live only to be killed, but at the same time also fundamentally ungovernable, even murderous," pigs resisted dichotomization. Steel continues:

By killing and eating other animals, pigs lay claim to, even if only temporarily and without any institutional support, the dominion within human zones of control that only humans should possess [...]. In their violence, pigs behaviorally manifest a resemblance always present simply because of the anatomical likeness between humans and pigs. (184)

As sniper and master butcher, Fidelis sanctions the *cordon sanitaire* between the rational, 'civilized' masters and the subhuman and nonhuman brutes—the literal and metaphorical pigs. Fidelis's Metzgemeister's diploma is eerily evocative of the supremacist ideology of the master race, which found its consummation in the Jewish Holocaust on the one hand, and the biopolitics of animal agriculture on the other.⁷ The ideology of the master race

7. For a concise treatment of this theme, see especially "Master Species, Master Race" (Patterson 51-108).

is racist and speciesist at the same time. In both cases, the 'less than' human is ultimately devoid of agency, locked in a death camp (the industrial farm for animals) or enslaved in many other ways.

To dismantle the interconnected zones of the human-animal "gulag archipelago" (Wadiwel 24), we need to start from dismantling human sovereignty. As argued by Wadiwel, sovereignty is always declared retroactively, as rationalization or justification of a victory over the Other, whether human or non-human. Sovereignty "is the declaration of non reciprocity; the refusal of alterity through non recognition" (258). In decolonial readings of Hegel's master-slave dynamic, the colonial master does not need recognition from the subalter(n)/*damné*. As demonstrated by Frantz Fanon, the only way for the *damné* to gain recognition and liberation is through struggle, because only struggle gives the subaltern agency and asserts his/her dignity. In *The War Against Animals*, Wadiwel posits that animal sovereignty can be understood as "a mode of resistance against human domination" (253). This interpretation is confirmed by ethologists like Evelyn Lawino Abe, or Gay Bradshaw, author of *Elephants on the Edge: What Animals Teach Us About Humanity* (2009) and founder of trans-species psychology.⁸ Erdrich's *Master Butchers* offers an example of such a reversal of sovereignty and agency in a scene with a pedigree pig literally rebelling against being slaughtered. By resorting to violence against the butcher, she challenges the perception that farm animals are 'mere' provisions, thus revealing the unnaturalness of the speciesist barrier.

The intelligent price sow is about to be "decreate[d] [...] into rib chops, tenderloin, hams, hocks, pickled feet, fatback, bacon, and sausages" (Erdrich 36). She senses the danger and resists being driven up the chute: she "stood her ground," then charged and bit into Fidelis's knee cap, "shredding [his] trousers and skin to the bone" (37). With the second charge, the pig destroyed "what was left of his knee with another lurching bite. She then repaired to her corner, red-eyed, bleary with hatred, sobbing" (37). From the space

8. Sarat Cooling provides a useful list of scholars who write about animal resistance ("Animal Agency, Resistance and Escape" in *Critical Animal Studies: Towards Trans-species Social Justice*, edited by Atsuko Matsuoka and John Sorenson, Rowman and Littlefield International, 2018, pp. 21–44).

of ethical suspension to which she has been relegated by Fidelis—the archetypal modern hu/man, Erdrich’s militant sow asserts agency by struggling against the oppressor, rather than passively wait to be killed. She challenges the idea of human supremacy naturalized by species war. The uneven battle between Fidelis (armed and abetted by his son) and the (unarmed) sow cannot end otherwise than in the animal’s defeat. Had they confronted each other on equal terms, however, the result could have been diametrically different.

Despite his victory, Fidelis’s world has been shattered by an unwanted intimation of kinship with the slaughtered animal. He is overwhelmed by grief and an irrational desire to lie down in mud and cry—“and was all the more horrified to realize that he wept for the sow. How could that be?” Fidelis is bewildered: “He had killed people. He had seen them die. His best friend had died beside him. No tears. What sort of man was he to weep, now, for a pig?” (38). Furious with himself for this ‘unmanly’ weakness, he forces himself to ignore his wound and oversees the smallest details of processing the meat. As if his powerful will could bend reality, annul the unwelcome revelation, and return him to the safety of tested truths. Denying his own animality, he denies the reality of the body and its senses. Fidelis—the modern human—lives in denial, a denial that originates with his formative wartime experience, this symbolic rite of passage to modern manhood for members of his generation.

Having returned from the Great War with an undiagnosed Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, Fidelis realized he must keep his senses shut. “Memories would creep up on him,” he thought to himself, “emotions sabotage his thinking brain. To come alive after dying to himself was dangerous. There was far too much to feel, so he must seek, he thought, only shallow sensations” (2). Significantly, his protective cover is pierced twice and both times he is caught unawares by emotions too primal to be kept in check by the supposedly rational, autonomous self. Weeping for the pig comes years after the first awakening experience: his unexpected love for Eva Kalb, the fiancé of his fallen friend. Upon delivering

the news of Johannes's death, "Fidelis saw her [Eva], for one moment, in the state of a naked being accepting pain" (4).

In traumatic conditions, the veneer of socially constructed difference between humans and animals evaporates; the human, reduced to biology, is revealed as constituted by the animal Other we are encouraged to renounce in the process of self-constitution. Deadened by the terrifying news, Eva Kalb—'Kalb' being the German word for 'calf'—is like an animal brought to the slaughter; she is *zoe*, a naked being, an animal stunted before being killed.⁹ Having "slumped toward him [Fidelis], hands clasped, face calm" (4), she anticipates the long line of farm animals (with whom she shares her maiden name) brought to Fidelis every week for slaughter. And the butcher will be there every week "to carry out death's chores" (378), like he was there for the Kalb in Eva's maiden name, which had to be killed into Waldvogel. Having symbolically surrendered to modern masculinity, Eva becomes a "proper" woman: a mother (Eve is the biblical name of the mother of humankind), wife, and her husband's accomplice in the war against animals. Curiously, the abjected animality is still preserved in her married surname. "Forestbird," as Americans pointed out to the butcher, "was an oddly gentle name for one whose profession was based in slaughter" (8).

In the trenches of war Fidelis had a premonition of the underlying similarity, even kinship between humans and animals. But at that point in life he was a bundle of instincts and unable to understand this. Later in life, he will be too bent on proving his manly worth and 'making it' in the American melting pot to allow himself the luxury of philosophical deliberations. An awareness of the underlying identity between himself and the animals he has been slaughtering most of his life will finally resurface at the hour of his death: "He was on his hands and knees, kneeling there on the floor like an animal. This was the way the animals suddenly collapsed, but, he thought, wearily, this is an arrival gate, not a killing chute" (378). Returning to the USA, this modern man who till the very

9. It would be interesting to apply the feminist lens, or, even more intriguingly, Carol Adam's theory of the sexual politics of meat, to Eva's symbolic death in the arms of her husband-to-be. Tempting as it may be, this exercise would require more space than is available to the author of this article.

end “would not accept the news that he was ill,” who “ignored his body, despised its needs, kept his old habits as though they would bring back his power” (377), collapses to the floor. Now the butcher looks at the world from the vantage point of an animal he would routinely slaughter, wondering “[w]ho was there to do the same for him?” (378).

BY WAY OF A CONCLUSION

David Nibert’s concept of domesacration, foregrounding the violence of enslaving animals for human profit, captures the founding moment of species war. As “spoils of war,” domesacrated animals become objects devoid of the agency they used to enjoy in traditional, pre-colonial worldviews. The institution of animal slavery breaks with the early form of communal multispecies society based on kinship (Serpell; Nibert).

Step-And-A-Half’s ancestors, the indigenous peoples of the Northeastern Woodlands, were nomadic hunters and gatherers who treated animals as their equals. The notion of human sovereignty was and still is inimical to traditional worldviews that go back to Paleolithic times. On the other hand, the driving idea of modernity, the worldview imported by European colonizers, was connected to human exceptionalism and the supposedly divine mandate to ‘subdue the earth.’ Rather than asking an animal’s permission to give its flesh as food for needy humans and then offering thanks for the gift of animal life—as the indigenous nomads would do—settlers showed no respect for native animals’ life and they slaughtered livestock by the thousands. While the indigenous inhabitants of the Dakotas had lived in harmony and mutuality with the land and everything on it, the European newcomers brought a maimed idea of community, from which all were excluded save for Westernized humans.

For scholars drawing inspiration from traditional and indigenous worldviews, the idea of human dominionism is the essence of colonization. Amba J. Sepie from the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, argues: “we have been collectively colonized, over a very long time, out of this integrated and intuitive relationship with other humans, other species, and the world around us” (10). Understanding colonization as “an extended process of denying

relationships” (Dwayne Donald, qtd. in Sepie 10), Sepie warns against a shallow, ethnographic framing of the process of epistemic decolonization. “The objective of decolonization, as a global project,” she writes, “is to reassess our collective, diverse, cosmological assumptions with respect to all our relationships, in a manner that allows for the reconfiguring of the dominant perceptions of humanity, and recalibrates human relations with otherness of all kinds” (25).

Native American Viola Cordova explains that most indigenous peoples believe they are “part of the Earth” (*How It Is* 151) and that those who separate themselves from the never-ending web of kinship with all existence are not really humans but “ghostly beings residing in decadent bodies on inanimate and alien ground” (*How It Is* 213). To be fully human, therefore, we need to be in a relationship with the nonhuman Other, to treat animals and other earth beings as a Thou. For us, dwellers in late modernity, this implies liberating ourselves from the unexamined assumptions and presumptions we live by. Thinking differently is the first step towards living differently.

I want to close this article by quoting the words of a long-time advocate for animal and nature rights, the Chickasaw writer and activist Linda Hogan. It is fitting that the last words should belong to indigenous people themselves. In her upcoming book, *The Radiant Lives with Animals*, Hogan writes:

A word for animal *Nan okcha* means all alive. It means more than only that which is animated. Embedded in the language, it says that the animals have lives and being and are sentient, as is now known and related by Western science. Animals, like plants are a significant part of a whole. They have relationship and connection with other lives and an animate world that is the world at large. In the traditional world view, we have an awe of them and an obligation to keep all alive. That is a part of our human purpose here.

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RESISTANCE AND PROTEST IN PERCIVAL EVERETT'S *ERASURE*

As argued by the literary critic Margaret Russett, Percival Everett “unhinges ‘black’ subject matter from a lingering stereotype of ‘black’ style [and] challenges the assumption that a single or consensual African-American experience exists to be represented” (Russett 360). The author presents such a radical individualism in his most admired literary work published in 2001. In *Erasure*, Thelonious ‘Monk’ Ellison, the main character and narrator of the book, pens a stereotypically oriented African American novel that becomes an expression of “him being sick of it”; “an awful little book, demeaning and soul destroying drive!” (Everett 132, 137) that caters to the tastes and expectations of the American readership but, at the same time, oscillates around pre-conceived beliefs, prejudices and racial clichés supposedly emphasizing the ‘authentic’ black experience in the United States. Not only is *Erasure* about race, misconceptions of blackness, and racial identification but also about academia, external constraints, and one’s fight against them. The present article, therefore, endeavors to analyze different forms of resistance and protest in Percival Everett’s well acclaimed novel, demonstrating the intricate connections between the publishing industry, the impact of media, the formation of the literary canon, and the treatment of black culture.

Percival Everett is often perceived as an African American writer who “tries to stay away from the mainstream literary recognition”

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and whose fiction “resist[s] classification” (Russett 363–364). Not only does Everett resent artistic limitations, for example by expressing his penchant for elaborate stylistic experiments and a wide range of genres and subjects, but his literary development proves that the author constantly challenges even his own conspicuously heterogeneous *oeuvre*. While commenting upon Everett’s literary works in the introduction to his 1996 novel *Watershed*, Sherman Alexie notices that “everybody, including other African-American writers and scholars, is ignoring him [...] [and adds that] Everett is being ignored precisely because he is so threatening” (Stewart 301). Whether the author of *Erasure* can revolutionize or has already revolutionized American letters is not the main concern here, but what needs to be noticed is the fact that the novelist has received more critical attention for *Erasure*, than for any of his earlier literary works. The book has been mainly praised for “blasting apart [the] notions of political/racial correctness”¹ and “social observations [as well as] stylistic inventiveness that reach for the bleakest comedy” (Pinckney 2003). Often described as an experimental, postmodern novel, “calling for alternative American literature” (Pinckney 2003), Everett’s literary work may not be easily classified and pinned down, especially taking into consideration the author’s attitude towards the commodification of black culture and classifications in general. Everett’s disdain for literary labelling (for example “uncategorizable” is still a category that the author detests) and bitter resentment at the mechanisms governing the literary market, the publishing industry and the academy² may put him in a risky, ‘biting the hand that feeds him’ situation, threatening both his literary and academic career. The author himself, however, seems to remain unmoved, claiming that “[he] never thinks about audience at all, [he] just thinks about trying to be as truthful as [he] can to [his] experience and the culture” (Stewart 313) and, therefore, does

1. The State, review on the cover of *Erasure*.

2. At this point, it seems worth mentioning that even though Everett is Distinguished Professor of English at the University of Southern California and teaches creative writing and literary theory, he openly admits that he will never attend the MLA annual conventions and he has no interest in any kind of conferences whatsoever (Stewart 302).

not cater to public taste. Furthermore, in an interview conducted in 2007 Everett admits that he prefers working with small presses to profit-driven publishing houses regardless of the fact that such small presses do not guarantee the availability of his books in North America, for instance as was in the case of Owl Creek Press that folded years ago, making the author's novel *Glyph* inaccessible for purchase. Everett comments on the power of the publishing houses, literary market, audiences and readership in general also in *Erasure*.

Due to the fact that Everett's twelfth novel satirizes the American willingness to "consume racialized images of the ghetto, especially within an increasingly commodified literary market" (Farebrother 117) and touches upon the questions of the American market of image making, as well as, to some extent, the literary canon formation, the dubious practice of selecting literary award winners and the glitz of the award ceremonies, it might be stated that Everett's novel depicts a protest against "the relationship between literature and politics and America's tendency to white-wash its multiracial history" (Farebrother 117).

One might be tempted to find multiple parallels between the actual life of the author of *Erasure* and his literary character, Thelonious "Monk" Ellison, and to "read [his novel] as a fictionalized account of Everett's career" (Russett 359). Russett observes that it is partly because the novel begins as a first-person confession and also because both the author and his literary character are "dauntingly erudite and relentlessly allusive" (Russett 359). In the opening lines of the book, the narrator confesses that he has dark brown skin, curly hair, a broad nose, some of his ancestors were slaves [...] and though he is fairly athletic, he is no good at basketball" (Everett 1) but, contrary to the presupposed belief, he did not grow up "in any inner city or the rural south" (Everett 1); his close family members are conspicuously literate and devote their professional career to medicine. Monk often thinks about his relationship to the image that other people have of him, as well as of his fellow black Americans. At those moments he realizes how disconnected his reality is from the image. Due to the fact that the narrator does not conform to the stereotypical role of a black man imposed on him, he believes that his awkwardness has

been the defining feature of his personality. Even though he lists cultural clichés conventionally attributed to African Americans, like “chillin’,” “dig,” “yo,” or “that’s some shit” and has attempted at inserting expressions like these into his speech, “[he] never sounded comfortable, never sounded real” (Everett 167). What is more, Monk never knew when to slap five or high five or which handshake was appropriate enough to use. Therefore, the main problem that the narrator/ Monk/ and allegedly Everett needs to confront is the fact that he constantly has “to prove he is black enough” (Everett 2) in order to be appreciated as a writer and to gain recognition. This particular stance is aptly illustrated by one of the book’s key quotes:

Some people in the society in which I live, described as being black, tell me I am not black enough. Some people whom the society calls white tell me the same thing. I have heard this mainly about my novels, from editors who have rejected me and reviewers whom I have apparently confused. (Everett 2)

‘Not being black enough’ results from Monk’s willingness to write about retellings of Euripides and parodies of French poststructuralists instead of, as one of the fictional reviewers observes, focusing entirely on depicting “the African American experience [in his fiction and creating] true, gritty real stories of black life” (Everett 2). In other words, Monk realizes that African American penmen whose writing does not fit into stereotypically reinforced and popularly circulated versions of the authentic black experience lack proper space, appreciation and attention in the literary world. Being dissatisfied with the fact that his literary works, no matter how intricate, revolutionary and ground-breaking they seem, are not well received by the editors and the readership only because they are “too dense,” “not for them,” and “the market won’t support [these] kind of thing[s]” (Everett 61), Everett’s protagonist decides to meet the expectations of the literary marketplace and creates a novel that would be similar in vein to his previous publication entitled “Second Failure.” As Monk explains:

“Second Failure” is about a young black man who can’t understand why his white-looking mother is ostracized by the black community. She finally kills herself and he realizes that he must attack the culture

and so becomes a terrorist, killing blacks and whites who behave as racists. [And adds] I hated writing the novel. I hated reading the novel. I hated thinking about the novel. (Everett 61)

The protagonist's mounting frustration finds its vent when Juanita Mae Jenkins, the author of a highly stereotypical and ostensibly offensive novel *We's Lives in Da Ghetto*, appears on TV on the "Kenya Dunston Show." Firmly believing that Jenkin's book is "a [true] slap in his face" (Everett 29) due to its presentation of warped images of black people and, at the same time, experiencing the internal conflict which "[caused] the pain in his feet that coursed through his legs, up his spine and into his brain" (Everett 61), Monk decides to write the gritty, dialect-ridden and overtly irreverent novella *My Pafology*, whose title is changed later into *Fuck* probably in order to gain more publicity and become a "sell-out." Ellison is well aware of the fact that in order to keep the good name of a highbrow writer intact, he needs to conceal his identity and, therefore, publishes the book under a pseudonym of Stagg R. Leigh. To Monk's surprise, his parody of African American experience filled with the most outrageous stereotyped images of black Americans dwelling on black violence, gangsta consciousness,³ the vernacular butt lore, (using Paul Gilroy's expression), and excessive sexual promiscuity, becomes a best-seller, is optioned for a film and the protagonist himself becomes a celebrity overnight. Interestingly, *My Pafology* was originally written as a free-standing novella, (Cf: Russett 359) and Percival Everett added it to *Erasure* at a later stage of writing the book.

Even though Everett applies satirical lenses to depict the life of his fictional university professor/writer Monk and to present the frenzy connected with the huge success of *My Pafology*, "a vivid, life like [novel], believed to be taught in schools, despite its rough language" (Everett 254), as the fictional judges of the literary contest in *Erasure* proclaim, there exists "the political seriousness that [permeates and pervades Everett's literary world] and that underpins his engagement with [...] African American urban writing"

3. The parody of the ghetto novel although Everett explains that "the notion of a novel of a ghetto is a construction of white America [...]. Black people in America are as diverse as white people." (Farebrother, 2015, p. 121.)

(Farebrother 117). First of all, Everett touches upon the question of black authenticity and the limitations put on African American authors whose portrayals of the black experience do not fit into the existing notions of blackness thus forcing them, as the protagonist of *Erasure* aptly observes, to create literary characters “[who] comb their afros and [are] called niggers” (Everett 43) in order to be noticed by the editors and valued by the readership. What is more, Everett’s novel may be treated as a political commentary on the “strategies writers have employed to reflect upon the ambivalent position occupied by black middle-class authors in a racially bifurcated literary marketplace” (Farebrother 133). One may recall at this point the complaints of bell hooks, who in “Postmodern Blackness” voices the need to enact a post-modernism of resistance and expresses her views on the literary market that limits and manipulates the representation of black culture. Hooks insists:

Attempts on the part of editors and publishing houses to control [...] the representation of black culture, as well as their desire to promote the creation of products which will attract the widest audience, limit in a crippling and stifling way the kind of work many black folks feel we can do and still receive recognition. (hooks, 1990)

Hooks was not the only one who raised the question of the black writer’s artistic obligations. One may not forget about the members of the Black Arts Movement and their agenda (e.g. Ron Karenga’s essays “On Black Art” and “Black Cultural Nationalism” or the voices of Amiri Baraka and Larry Neal), as well as the followers of the New Black Aesthetics (i.e., cultural mulattoes educated by a multi-racial mix of cultures [Cf: Ellis 234]). Resistance, protest and freedom of artistic expression were also expressed in visual arts created by African Americans starting from Betye Saar’s famous “Liberation of Aunt Jemima” and ending with Kara Walker’s black and white silhouettes, which rely on stereotypes from the era of slavery and relate to modern day concerns. The deeper analysis of the visual artistic works created by black Americans, however interesting, goes beyond the scope of this article. Everett’s Monk claims that “protest is an element of art” which, according to Russett, may take the indirect form of “a technical assault against

the styles which have gone before” (Russett 362) Therefore, what Monk-the fictional character, as well as Everett-the writer, notice and protest against is the demand of the literary marketplace for the type of writing that is stereotypically oriented and that conforms to the marketability of the product. Everett comments upon the hollow consumer culture and the black artist’s obligations in one interview in the following way:

The easy road for American publishing has been to publish novels about black farmers or inner-city [...] and slaves. Because these are the pictures that are easily commodified. But if it’s the black middle class, and it’s not so different from someone else, then what’s exotic about that? (Stewart 299)

The profit-driven literary establishment obliges African American authors to heavily rely on stereotypical representations perpetuated within the dominant white gaze because, as Brown observes, “the statement issued by the literary market [is clear]: stereotypes are wanted” (Brown as quoted in: Depci, Tanritanir 283). Thelonious Monk Ellison also notices that the WalMart of books, i.e. the chain bookstores which classify him as an African American Studies expert (exclusively on the basis of his “ostensibly African American photograph” [Everett 28] that appears on the cover of his book about the obscure reworking of Greek tragedy), “take[s] food from his table” (Everett 28). The propensity of the readership to rely on the flattened commodified silhouettes is visible because, as Paul Gilroy declares, “the imaginary blackness is being projected outward [...] as the means to orchestrate a truly global market in leisure products; [...] corporate multiculturalism is giving the black body a makeover” (Gilroy 270). Therefore, the jacket photograph of Monk becomes in a way a visual signifier that has a material significance.

Even though by writing *My Pafology/Fuck* Monk tries to resist and protest against the mass-mediated circulation of distorted images of blackness, believing that the literary critics would notice the irony and realize that it is not a novel at all but “a failed conception, an unformed fetus [...] a hand without fingers, a word with no vowels [...] that it’s offensive, poorly written, racist and mindless” (Everett 261), the reception of his book elevates

him to stardom. As a consequence, Monk/Stagg is implicated in the cultural commodification of blackness, i.e. the very thing that he was protesting against. In order to conform to the stereotypical image propagated by the literary market, the protagonist of *Erasure* turns into a trickster “who works within American cultural and social expectations” (Farebrother 130). Monk masquerades himself so that he would become the true embodiment of what is perceived by the literary establishment to be an authentic African American writer, to be “the real thing” (Everett 218), as he names it. Ellison’s appearance, his speech, and moves allegedly must reflect his authentic blackness and for that reason Monk/Stagg dons “black shoes, black trousers, black turtleneck sweater, black blazer, black beard, black fedora, [he] is black from toe to top of head, from shoulder to shoulder, from now until both ends of time” (Everett 245). As a consequence, the body of the literary celebrity becomes, in Farebrother’s view, “a commodified emblem of racial authenticity” (Farebrother 131); i.e. he becomes a version of the stereotype that he detests. When the protagonist meets with Morgenstein to discuss the details concerning the film production, a puzzled Morgenstein admits: “you’re not at all like I pictured you [...] [I mean you should be] tougher or something. You know, more street, more... black” (Everett 218). In order to meet the film producer’s expectations and prove himself to be ‘the real thing’ Stagg lies about having killed a man “with a leather awl of a Swiss army knife” (Everett 218), underscoring thus his propensity for crime and fitting into preconceived notions of a black man who tells the real and trustworthy story of his people. *My Pafology* after all becomes “the hallmark of his authenticity as a black writer” (Russett 359). With time, however, Monk finds himself unable to perform the black stereotype that he wished to satirize and experiences the disintegration of his personality. Near the end of the novel the narrator asks himself: “Had I by annihilating my own presence actually asserted the individuality of Stagg Leigh? Or was it the book itself that had given him life?” (Everett 248) The protagonist adheres to the norms imposed on him by the society and moves from invisibility to hypervisibility, becoming thus the caricature of himself. In the final chapter of *Erasure* Monk confesses:

I did not write out of a so-called family tradition of oral storytelling. I never tried to set anybody free, never tried to paint the next real and true picture of the life of my people, never had any people whose picture I knew well enough to paint [...] and I would have to wear a mask of the person I was expected to be. (Everett 212)

The mask is dropped, however, when Monk finds himself in the light of the TV cameras during the literary award gala and he works within the so called “televisual blackness” which Casey Hayman defines in terms of working within and against the mass-mediated iconography of blackness (Hayman 137). It is too late to correct or counteract the stereotype because his initial artistic resistance is misread by the public and any attempt to divulge his true identity is futile. The publishing world wins.

Apart from launching the attack on the mechanisms governing the literary marketplace and the external constraints put on black artists, Everett also ridicules in *Erasure* the gruesome process of selecting book award winners. Depicting the absurdity of the whole enterprise where five judges are given four hundred books to evaluate within a short period of time, the author comments upon the power of the capital and the potential consequences for the award winner that the fictional judges are not even aware of. After all, *My Pafology/Fuck* as a winner of the Book Award gifted by the National Book Association is likely to appear as a standard for school curricula in the future. During the selection process the appointed judges, Monk included, hope that “they are not expected to read every word of every book [explaining that] they do have lives” (Everett 225), and the members of the committee agree that “a lot of books they will be able to dismiss after the first couple of sentences” (Everett 225). The set criteria for the winning of the award are similarly ludicrous: the award may be given to the writer who is a good friend of the judges or because, as one fictional member of the jury admits, “[even though it’s not the best book, I’d like for its author to know that I take his work seriously” (Everett 233). The ceremony, during which the winners are announced, shows the publishing industry’s treatment of black culture and literature in general. The protagonist explains:

We judges [...] were all seated at tables with important guests. I was seated with the Director of the Board of Boston General Hospital,

the CEO of General Mills, a vice president from General Motors and head of marketing from General Electric, all with their spouses. (Everett 262)

Being surrounded by the profit-oriented executives of large companies who express neither interest in nor knowledge of literature, Monk fails to realize that he becomes a cog in the powerful machine and his protest is quelled.

It seems significant to notice how Percival Everett enters into dialogue with the American image-making machine, skillfully using the jacket photograph of himself, which was printed on the back cover of the Graywolf Press edition of *Erasure*. In the black and white photograph, the author is depicted with a raven perched on his shoulder, which might be interpreted as the visual signifier of Everett's protest against the infringing powers of the literary canon formation or, perhaps, the author's willingness to find his place within the American literary canon. After all, as the editors of *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture* assert, "[people] live in an increasingly image-saturated society where paintings, photographs, and electronic images depend on one another for their meanings" (Sturken, Cartwright, 2001, p. 11) and "images have never been merely illustrations, they carry important content" (Sturken, Cartwright 1.). Therefore, one may venture to claim that Everett's portrayal with a raven might not have been coincidental and it is the role of the readers/viewers to discover its underlying message because, as Sturken and Cartwright recount:

Through looking we negotiate social relationships and meanings. Looking is a practice much like speaking, writing, or signing. Looking involves learning to interpret and, like other practices, looking involves relationships of power. [...] To be made to look, to try to get someone else to look at you or at something you want to be noticed [...] entails a play of power. (Sturken, Cartwright 10)

If one assumes that Everett's choice of cover photo was intentional, because "the creation of an image through a camera lens always involves some degree of subjective choice through selection, framing, and personalization" (Sturken, Cartwright 16), and taking into consideration the fact that Everett's jacket design alludes (via the portrayal of the bird) to Edgar Allan Poe, who is perceived as one of the masters of American literature, it may be concluded

that Everett, in a subtle way, encourages his readers/viewers to answer some possible questions such as: What makes a writer reach the level of Poe's craftsmanship? Will this literary work (i.e. *Erasure*) carve a niche within the American literary canon? Or, maybe, can I (i.e. Percival Everett) be the next black Edgar Allan Poe of American letters? The photo cover of the writer is a sign of the author's visibility and, as a consequence, the penman becomes discernible to the readership, but the way Percival Everett wants to be seen, looked at, and perceived may have a multitude of purposes as "the roles played by images are multiple, diverse, and complex" (Sturken, Cartwright 11).

Everett's or his publisher's decision to use the image of an African American author with a raven may recall Toni Morrison's conclusions presented in *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. While Morrison is trying to find some answers to the question of how literary whiteness and literary blackness are constructed and examining the impact of "notions of racial history, racial exclusion and racial vulnerability on nonblacks who held, resisted, explored or altered those notions" (Morrison 11), the Nobel prize winner makes some comments upon Edgar Allan Poe and the racially inflected language in his fiction. According to Morrison, "no early American writer is more important to the concept of African Americanism than Poe" (Morrison 32). She explains that in Poe's works the images of whiteness denoting power are always presented "in conjunction with representations of black or Africanist people who are dead, impotent or under complete control" (Morrison 33). Taking into account Morrison's opinions about Poe's prose and her claim that "black people signified little or nothing in the imagination of white American writers" (Morrison 15), one may apply different lenses to view Everett's jacket photo. In one of the pivotal fragments of *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* Morrison makes a powerful statement concerning the role of American writers:

Writers are among the most sensitive, the most intellectually anarchic, most representative, most probing of artists. The ability of writers to imagine what is not the self, to familiarize the strange and mystify the familiar, is the test of their power. The languages they use and the social and historical context in which these languages signify are indirect and direct revelations of that power and its limitations. So it is

to them, the creators of American literature, that I look for clarification about the invention and effect of Africanism in the United States. (Morrison 15)

In light of the above, one may reach the conclusion that Everett may seem to be fully aware of his obligations as a writer and, in an inconspicuous manner, expresses his unwillingness to work within American cultural and social expectations, as well as the expectations of the literary market.

To recapitulate, Everett's novel *Erasure* is an expression of protest and struggle against an industry that insists on viewing the African American writer as an author obliged to reinforce a stereotype in order to fit the demands of the literary market and also a commentary on "superficial empty symbols that underline a close relationship between the increasing commodification of the literary marketplace and reductive [demeaning] racial stereotypical representations" (Farebrother 128). Everett offers here also his view on the limitations that stifle the individual's artistic mind and provokes further questions concerning the manufacturing of black authenticity.

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BLACK FLAG UNDER A GREY SKY

Forms of Protest

in Current Neo-Confederate Prose and Song

The current culture of white nationalism in the United States revolves around two geographically-based separatist movements in the form of the ‘Northwest Imperative’ and neo-Confederate movements.¹ They have filled the void left by the demise of the old white supremacist culture of the Jazz era, Civil Rights era, and ‘Militia’ era (mid-1980s to early 1990s) Ku Klux Klan and splinter neo-Nazi parties. This is not to say that the old white supremacist parties, such as the KKK do not exist; however, their impotency in the ‘real world’ white nationalist and overall political culture of the United States is apparent, mainly because the United States has undergone drastic changes in its culture and society since the heyday of the Klan’s resurgence

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1. The material used in this essay comes from the ‘revolutionary’-wing of the neo-Confederate movement, meaning only the essays, novels and songs that call for revolution or that advocate extreme Southern nationalism were used. The material referenced here is only a sampling of what is available. Regarding the different trends in the neo-Confederate movement, the interested reader should consult the two best known academic surveys: James W. Loewen and Edward H. Sebesta, editors, *The Confederate and Neo-Confederate Reader: The “Great Truth” about the “Lost Cause,”* University Press of Mississippi, 2010, and Euan Hague, Heidi Beirich, et. al, editors, *Neo-Confederacy: A Critical Introduction*, University of Texas Press, 2008, for a neo-Confederate perspective, see: Michael A. Grissom, *Southern by the Grace of God*, Rebel Press, 1988, and his *The Last Rebel Yell*, Rebel Press, 1991, as well as R. E. Smith, editor, *So Good A Cause: A Decade of Southern Partisan*, The Foundation for Education, 1993.

during the Civil Rights era. Furthermore, the leading philosophers and essayists of the American white nationalist movement are convinced that they cannot take back all of the United States unless something akin to an overall ‘systems collapse’ occurs.²

At present the most radical forms of white nationalist protest orbit around the so-called ‘Northwest Imperative’ or ‘Butler Plan’ (named after the late Richard G. Butler, pastor of the Aryan Nations) and the neo-Confederate movement. It is the latter movement that is the focus of this article. As the wounds of the Civil War were salved over and the failure of the Reconstruction of the South turned into the cry of “Home Rule” and the rule of Jim Crow, the beginnings of what would become the neo-Confederate movement began with the various myths that became the bedrock of the ‘Lost Cause,’ a ‘civil’ religion in the South during the late 1870s to early 1900s, which took shape with parades to Confederate graves on Confederate Memorial Day (normally May 10th or May 11th, depending on the state), the building of memorials to the fallen of the Confederacy, Confederate soldier reunions, the publication of various memoirs of leading Confederate veterans, continuing with the establishment of first, the Confederate Veterans Association, then the Sons of Confederate Veterans (commonly known as the SCV), and the United Daughters of the Confederacy (commonly known as the UDC). Finally, this period started to wind down with the publication of the racist novels of Thomas Dixon, Thomas Nelson Page and others at the turn of the 20th century into the mid-1920s.³

2. In American fringe fiction, this idea has been explored in so-called ‘Prepper’ or TEOTAWKI (The End of the World as We Know It) novels and various white nationalist novels. For the impossibility of a white nationalist takeover of the United States, see Harold A. Covington “Socialism in the White Ethnostate,” *Northwest Observer*, #127 (February, 2013), pp. 2-10. For a fictional sampling, see the ‘Hasten the Day’ trilogy by Billy Roper—*Hasten the Day: The First Year of the Balkanization of the United States*, *Waiting for the Sun*, and *Wasting the Dawn*, Createspace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015.

3. Thomas Dixon Jr.’s most famous novel, *The Clansman* (published 1905) was the second novel of his Reconstruction Trilogy. The other novels being *The Leopard’s Spots* (1902) and *The Traitor: A Story of the Rise and Fall of the Invisible Empire* (1907). It was Dixon’s novels, along with nostalgia for the Reconstruction era that helped to revive the Ku Klux Klan in 1915. Dixon was not the first novelist to defend the Confederacy, that ‘honor’ goes

However, as the last of the 'grey beards' (Confederate veterans) died off and the United States started to experience the first pangs of what would become the Great Depression, interest in the Confederate past was revived in the 1920s. The 'Southern Agrarian' movement in American literature renewed the call for respect to the South's old institutions and reverence for the antebellum and Confederate past, mainly as a reaction against the excesses of the 'Roaring Twenties' and the perceived hedonism that seemed to characterize urban life in the North. There was also a feeling that the Jazz Age appeared to many southern conservatives to not be the best of times, indeed the nostalgia for the antebellum period and the Confederacy can be traced to the mid-late 1920s.⁴ While gaining little ground among native southerners and even less ground among conservatives, it was the burgeoning distrust of an overarching federal government and rule from Washington that inspired the 'Southern Agrarians.' This nostalgia was swept aside during the Great Depression and, more importantly, as America geared up to enter World War II. However, with the end of World War II and coinciding with the first years of the Civil Rights era, interest in the Confederacy, its heroes and ideals started to resurface in the South, where memorials to fallen Confederates had

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to Brimsley Matthews and his 1882 novel *Well-Nigh Reconstructed*, in which an idealistic young man journeys from supporting the Republican policies of Reconstruction to supporting the Ku Klux Klan. Various histories have been published on the UDC, see Karen L. Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture*, UP of Florida, 2003. The official history of the UDC is Mary B. Poppenheim, et al, editors, *The History of the United Daughters of the Confederacy*, 3 vols., 1894-1986, reprint edition, Edwards and Broughton, 1966, 1985. There is no comparable history of the Confederate Veterans Association however, the closest is John A. Simpson, *S. A. Cunningham and the Confederate Heritage*, U of Georgia P, 1994. Sumner Archibald Cunningham was the founder and long-time editor of *Confederate Veteran* magazine.

4. For more on the Southern Agrarians, see Richard H. King, *A Southern Renaissance: The Cultural Awakening of the American South, 1930-1955*, Oxford University Press, 1980, and Paul V. Murphy, *The Rebuke of History: The Southern Agrarians and American Conservative Thought*, U of North Carolina P, 2001. The perspective of Daniel J. Singal in *The War Within: From Victorian to Modernist Thought in the South, 1919-1945*, U of North Carolina P, 1982, is also worthy of note.

been an important feature of southern life since the 1910s (or even earlier) and local 'Confederate days,' and folklore, legends, memorabilia and souvenirs that featured Confederate emblems and soldiers were commonplace. Furthermore, as some whites dug in their heels by resisting the civil rights marchers and George Wallace ramped up his campaign for president, the omnipresent symbol of the Confederacy, the Confederate battle flag (also known as the 'Stars and Bars') was adopted by the Civil Rights-era Ku Klux Klan because it symbolized resistance to the new political and social climate sweeping through the South.⁵ It should be noted at this juncture that before its adoption by the Civil Rights era Klan, the Confederate or 'Rebel' flag was not used by the previous incarnations of the Klan. The Jazz-era Klan and the Reconstruction-era Klan used either the American flag, in the case of the Jazz-era Klan, as seen in the newsreels of the Klan's march on Washington in 1924, or the red dragon banner, in the case of the Reconstruction Klan—the red dragon banner and the 'Rebel' flag are used today by various Klan groups, including the Traditional Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, the Confederate Knights of the Ku Klux Klan and others.

At the end of the 1960s and into the early 1970s, Southern bands like the Allman Brothers Band, Blackfoot, the Charlie Daniels Band, Lynyrd Skynyrd, the Marshall Tucker Band, Molly Hatchet, and The Outlaws, among others, would bring the 'Southern rock' sound to national attention, while other southern musical artists recorded more racist and reactionary music.⁶ David Allen Coe and Waylon Jennings, among other 'outlaw' Country performers, along with the prolific and overtly racist Johnny Rebel, would produce and record underground hits that would

5. 'Confederate Sam' used to be a ubiquitous symbol throughout the South of the 1950s-1980s and, at present, has been adopted by some members of the neo-Confederate movement. He has been featured on everything from beach towels and books, to posters, album covers, cigarette lighters, store signs, postcards and, of course, flags. See Figure 1 at the end of this article. For the history of the Confederate Battle Flag, see John M. Coski, *The Confederate Battle Flag: America's Most Embattled Banner*, Oxford UP, 1997.

6. For more on the history of Southern Rock, see Michael Buffalo Smith, *Rebel Yell: An Oral History of Southern Rock*, Mercer UP, 2014.

not be heard except by those ‘in the culture,’ at least before the invention of the internet.⁷ While relatively unknown outside the neo-Confederate and white nationalist underground, Johnny Rebel, and later, David Allen Coe became the sound of those white southerners who resisted, sometimes violently, the burgeoning black civil rights movement; though it must honestly be stated that David Allen Coe was more satirical and less racist than Johnny Rebel, whose songs mostly revolve around the ‘problem’ of blacks in the South. However, while these modern artists used modern technology and instruments, the roots of these rebellious songs of protest stretch back to the end of the American Civil War.

The first song to not only lament the defeat of the Confederacy but to reinforce the defiance some former Confederates felt at their defeat is “Good Ol’ Rebel,” which has been performed by many artists who have added their own spin and lyrics to the song. As performed by Hoyt Axton, the late actor and folk singer, the song is as close to the original as possible and its lyrics are below:

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Oh, I'm a good ol' Rebel
Now that's just what I am
And for this Yankee nation, I do not give a damn
I'm glad I fought again' her, I only wished we'd won
I ain't asked any pardon for anything I've done
I hates the Yankee nation and everything they do,
I hates the Declaration of Independence too,
I hates the glorious union, tis drippin' with our blood,
I hates the striped banner, I fit [old Southern English past for 'fight'] it all
I could,

I rode with Robert E. Lee for three years thereabouts,
Got wounded in four places, and I starved at Point Lookout,

7. David Allen Coe's two X-Rated albums include many overtly racist songs, while Waylon Jennings' version of “Good Ol’ Rebel” is also quite provocative. Johnny Rebel's songs include such underground hits as “Stay Away from Dixie” (a warning to the Freedom Riders), “Ni**er Hatin' Me,” and “Send Them All Back to Africa.” Some of the songs attributed to Johnny Rebel on www.youtube.com actually come from the early 1920s and were recorded by various artists. Johnny Rebel was only active during the mid-late 1960s, with an album of his racist songs being released in the early 1970s. It is difficult to be more specific as no scholar has endeavored to explore Johnny Rebel's (real name: Clifford Joseph Trahan) career. Indeed, even his obituary is scarce on information about his career.

I caught [old Southern English past for 'catch'] the rheumatism a campin'
in the snow,
But I killed a chance of Yankees and I'd like to kill some more

300,000 Yankees is stiff in Southern dust
We got 300,000 before they conquered us,
They died of Southern fever, and Southern steel and shot
I wished there were 3 million instead of what we got

I can't pick up my musket and fight them no more,
But I ain't gonna love 'em now that is certain sure
And I don't want no pardon for what I was and am
I won't be reconstructed and I do not give a damn.
(Repeat 1st stanza).⁸

“Good Ol’ Rebel’s” lyrical ‘I’s reticence at being reconstructed acted as a battle cry for former Confederates who felt that while history had determined the defeat of the Confederacy, they were not about to surrender their sovereign rights (as they saw them) to determine the structure of their society. The protection of their ‘rights’ fit in nicely with the rise of the Reconstruction Ku Klux Klan and assorted organizations, like the Pale Faces, and the Knights of the White Camelia, who quickly turned from fraternal organizations into terrorist groups, especially when Freedmen and Republicans started to flex their political muscles. The rebellion of the Reconstruction Klan was as much a conservative rebellion as it was a reaction to defeat and the boredom and malaise that accompanied that defeat. The fact that most Reconstruction Klan members were economic ‘up n’ comers’ or leaders in their communities and Confederate military veterans should not be overlooked. Far from being drawn from the lower classes of southern society like the Civil Rights and ‘Militia’-era Klans (the Klan of the 1980s and 1990s), the Reconstruction Klan included businessmen, doctors, and lawyers.⁹ Indeed, all of the founding members of the Ku Klux Klan shared three important characteristics: they were all (a) Confederate veterans, (b) university educated, and (c) Scots-Irish, meaning their ancestors were part of Oliver Cromwell’s ‘plantation’ system that

8. “Good Ol’ Rebel”(1866) by Capt. A. S. Randolph, C.S.A. Hoyt Axton version (1991) can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fT50xE1TMlo>. Accessed 15 October, 2017.

9. The best study to date on the Reconstruction Klan is Allen W. Trelease, *White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction*, paperback edition, Louisiana State UP, 1995. First published in 1971.

moved Scots Presbyterians into Catholic Northern Ireland. Some of these Scots-Irish moved to the United States, most settling in the South. While educated, they, like most die-hard Confederates, seemed to accept the defeat but refused to allow 'outsiders' ('Yankees') to determine how to structure southern society. Hence, the 'Good Ol' Rebel's' insistence on his refusal to be 'reconstructed' comes from the white Southerner being part of a defeated nation and his attitude that with defeat comes the knowledge that it could have been different and better (in his mind) if the war would have been won by the Confederacy. Whereas some former Confederates accepted the dictates of history and moved on with their lives, holdouts like Jesse James and Coleman Younger continued to fight the war. Furthermore, with the advent of Radical Reconstruction and the attempted overturning of the South's post-Civil War racial and societal structure, the politicized Ku Klux Klan took the lead in attacking Republicans, freedmen, 'scalawags' (native white southerners who supported the Union during the war and/or who supported the Reconstruction Acts) and 'carpetbaggers' (Northerners who moved to the South after the war). The Reconstruction Klan was quite successful in establishing 'Home Rule' in the form of Jim Crow laws that kept the majority of blacks out of political office and in a subservient economic position. However, a century later the demographics of the South had started to change, especially in the 1980s, with massive 'immigration' to the South from the North, mostly as a result of economic prosperity (not to mention non-white international immigration into the South beginning in the late 1970s). These new developments resulted in the revival of the idea of white Southern independence and uniqueness in many parts of the white South. In that sense, members of the current neo-Confederate movement are truly the 'Last Rebels.'

"Hold on to what you believe because they can't take that away"¹⁰—this brief quotation from a Lynyrd Skynyrd song appears to recapitulate the essence of the psychological defense that neo-Confederate and overall white nationalist groups have adopted. 'Holding on to what you believe' in the neo-Confederate sense requires both a celebration of group memory and the capability

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10. Lynyrd Skynyrd, *Can't Take That Away*, from the album *The Last Rebel*, Atlantic Records, 1993.

to selectively elevate the main values underlying the neo-Confederate narrative, while repressing other more popular narratives (in the sense of the popularity of those narratives within the overall culture of the United States). The words of some contemporary neo-Confederates will shed a better light on what they feel is at stake and, more importantly, how they view their opponents and their opponents' ideas. In his 1989 article, "A Long Farewell: The Southern Valedictories of 1860-1861," M. E. Bradford elaborates on the level of discourse aimed at the neo-Confederate movement, the white nationalist right and, indeed, any assertion of pride in white ethnicity by its erstwhile enemies in the United States:

For if you attack your countrymen as not merely mistaken but evil you are not proceeding politically or at law. Instead you represent an authority higher than statute or process and imply an intimacy with God's plan thusward [sic]. This strategy is called rhetorically *oraculum*—speaking for the gods. It is incompatible with the stable rule of law. (Bradford qtd. in Smith 25)

In essence, Bradford states what many neo-Confederates have come to see as their persecution for not believing the way that progressive, multicultural American society constantly reinforces they must believe. Furthermore, many neo-Confederates and other white nationalists, who are the intellectual inheritors of the founders of the Confederacy, look at their opponents as more delusional or bewitched than evil. However, in his 1985 article, Forrest McDonald points out that the cultural crusade many Social Justice Warriors and others on the political left seem to be engaged in to eradicate any whiff of apostasy from the current politically-correct society are anathema to the American system:

That is the first thing to understand about the Yankee: he is a doctrinal puritan, characterized by what William G. McLaughlin has called pietistic perfectionism. Unlike the Southerner, he is constitutionally incapable of letting things be, of adopting a live-and-let-live attitude. No departure from his version of Truth is tolerable, and thus when he finds himself amidst sinners, as he invariably does, he must either purge and purify the community or join with his fellow saints and go into the wilderness to establish a New Jerusalem. (McDonald qtd. in Smith 210)

Whereas McDonald's essay revolves around explaining the mindset of 'Yankees,' it could be argued that the current culture wars

in the United States pits present-day ‘Yankees’ against present-day ‘Confederates/Rebels,’ with both sides being the logical intellectual inheritors of their counterparts from 160 years ago.

The rhetoric aimed at the individual and collective neo-Confederate or white nationalist seems to be designed to shame him/her into conformity, as is exemplified by one of the major themes that failed Democratic presidential candidate Hillary R. Clinton leveled at her opponent’s supporters, labelling them as ‘Deplorables,’ which became a badge of honor that many adopted. The Trump rebellion of 2016 is just the latest in a long string of rebellions of the so-called ‘Unprotected.’¹¹ While Trump’s electoral victory in the 2016 U.S. presidential elections took many by surprise, it came as no surprise to others who have been watching the rise of white working-class frustration at the way in which current American popular culture and society denigrates and demeans, indeed, ‘shames’ them for believing as they believe, worshipping as they worship and for engaging in their various hobbies, like hunting or shooting guns. While it may seem strange to some, guns and the ‘gun culture’ used to be a prevalent part of Southern white culture. Hunting and shooting guns were considered rites of passage for most Southern white men, especially in rural areas and are considered hobbies among their adherents.¹² Sociologist

11. A term coined by Peggy Noonan in her article, “Trump and the Rise of the Unprotected,” *Wall Street Journal*, February 26, 2016.

12. Racist shootings by Southern whites or members of the neo-Confederate movement are rare, and while tragic, represent only a tiny fraction of deaths caused by guns in the United States. Indeed, only the Charleston church shooting of June 17, 2015 perpetrated by Dylann S. Roof can be classified as having anything to do with the neo-Confederate movement, even if peripherally. While other racists have used guns to commit heinous acts, the majority of gun-related deaths in the United States are related to random violence, gangs, drugs or other non-political causes. For more information, on the history and culture of guns in the United States, see *Gun Show Nation: Gun Culture and American Democracy* by Joan Burbick, The New Press, 2006, Clayton E. Cramer, *Armed America: The Story of How and Why Guns Became as American as Apple Pie*, Nelson Current, 2006, and Jen E. Dizard, Robert Merrill Muth and Stephen P. Andrews, editors, *Guns in America: A Reader*, New York UP, 1999. For race and gun ownership, see <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/07/15/the-demographics-and-politics-of-gun-owning-households/>, <http://demographicpartitions.com/>.

Michael Kimmel noticed the same process taking place with many of the Confederate ‘flag wavers,’ who ‘thumb their noses’ as it were at contemporary society when he wrote:

For Southern men, defeat meant a gendered humiliation—the Southern gentleman was discredited as a “real man.” [...] For the rest of the century and well into the twentieth century, Southern manhood would continually attempt to assert itself against debilitating conditions, Northern invaders (from carpetbaggers to civil rights workers), and newly freed blacks. The Southern rebel, waving the Confederate flag at collegiate football games, is perhaps his most recent incarnation. (Kimmel, *Manhood in America* 77)

While Kimmel was writing this in 1996, his 2013 book, *Angry White Men* also considers the rebellion that many white men (including the majority of Southern white men, who are more conservative in their outlook than Northern white males) embraced as the new millennium seemed to encompass everyone’s wishes except theirs. In quoting psychiatrist Willard Gaylin, Kimmel spotlights an important psychological aspect to the current pushback against popular American cultural and societal attitudes:

We can endure the fact that we do not have something unless we feel that something has been taken away from us. We will then experience a sense of violation. The smoldering rage which comes from being cheated [will be extended] to the society which allowed us to be cheated. (Kimmel, *Angry White Men* 25)

The neo-Confederate movement, in its essays, novels and songs, advocates that not only have they been ‘cheated’ by overall American society, but by history itself, reinforcing the ‘persecuted’ or ‘siege mentality’ as mentioned in the title of the 2002 book, *The South Under Siege, 1830–2000: A History of the Relations Between the North and the South* by Frank Conner, a neo-Confederate. Admittedly, both the neo-Confederate movement and the Northwest Imperative are fringe movements, hence the audience for the various writings (whether essays or novels) and songs is relatively small and the authors and song writers are, in a sense, ‘preaching to the choir,’ though the essays, novels and songs could be used

org/gun-owners/, <http://www.vox.com/2015/12/4/9849524/gun-race-statistics>. Accessed 10 Feb. 2020.

as recruiting tools. Finally, the novels of the neo-Confederate movement are available on various internet platforms, including Amazon. Also, the most well-known neo-Confederate band, Rebel Son, has its own website and if one is tenacious enough, Rebel 28's CDs can be purchased on the internet.

In essence, while neo-Confederates are members of what Wolfgang Schivelbusch called the 'culture of defeat,' they also have 'captive minds' in that their minds still wander back to that fateful day of July 3rd, 1863 in the farmland surrounding Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. In the words of William Faulkner in his 1949 anti-racist novel *Intruder in the Dust*, the white Southern boy can escape to that time in his mind:

[...], not once but whenever he wants it, there is the instant when it's still not yet two o'clock on that July afternoon in 1863, the brigades are in position behind the rail fence, the guns are laid and ready in the woods and the furled flags are already loosened to break out and Pickett himself with his long oiled ringlets and his hat in one hand probably and his sword in the other looking up the hill waiting for Longstreet to give the word and it's all in the balance, it hasn't happened yet, it hasn't even begun yet, it not only hasn't begun yet but there is still time for it not to begin [...]. Maybe this time with all this much to lose and all this much to gain: Pennsylvania, Maryland, the world, the golden dome of Washington itself to crown with desperate and unbelievable victory the desperate gamble, the cast made two years ago [...]. (Faulkner 125–126)

Reinforcing the 'could have been, should have been and would have been' attitude of history, the above quote not only imagines a past that might have been but reflects an attitude in the present. At present, neo-Confederates seem to be trapped in the ongoing, never-ending cycle of replaying the Confederate defeat, or of trying to overturn history's verdict of those three fateful days in July, 1863 mentioned above. David Goldfield elaborated on this feeling of being a 'captive of history' in his book *Still Fighting the Civil War*, when he stated:

If history has defined the South, it has also trapped white southerners into sometimes defending the indefensible, holding onto views generally discredited in the rest of the civilized world and holding on the fiercer because of it. The extreme sensitivity of some southerners toward criticism of their past (or present) reflects not only their deep attachment to their perception of history but also their misgivings, a feeling that

maybe they've fouled up somewhere and maybe the critics have something. Southerners may be loyal but they are not stupid. (Goldfield 318)

In traditional white Southern families, and in many black southern families, history is lived. Family gatherings where the family history is shared, and where the family Bible might be brought out, updated and talked about are, or were until relatively recently, commonplace occurrences. However, the neo-Confederate takes this tradition to the extreme, for while being 'trapped' in their history, the 'unreconstructed' neo-Confederate sympathizer continues to play songs, write novels and wave the Confederate battle flag proudly. However, whereas the battle flag is the most obvious symbol of the movement, it is the novels and songs that allow the movement to attract followers. Indeed, the novels and songs act as an outpouring of grief over a past that could have been, and over the present which is informed by a vision of a future that can still be. The novels and songs produced by the movement serve both as a source documenting the history of group affect and a product of communal trauma that continues to shape the group's self-definition and self-esteem, namely as a community living in a shared memory of trauma since the fall of the Confederacy. It is with the above in mind that this article turns to the song "Southern Wind" from Rebel Son's 2006 album *Unreconstructed*. The song is over eight minutes long; however, the most important part is the chorus, which is below:

*Captive Minds
Normativities
and Protests*

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Southern wind blow on through our unforgotten land,
here today and yesteryear reunited once again,
Hear the cry of Confederates lost many years ago,
cannons thunder and a lonesome locomotive whistle blows
Keep pride inside with your fellow Rebel souls
Hear their stories from beyond the grave, so many left untold
Keep Dixieland alive in your heart and in your mind
Southern wind blows once again and will until the end of time.
(Rebel Son, "Southern Wind" 2006)

The idea that the members of a nation, both living and dead, are linked by blood and land, is stated quite blatantly in the chorus. While under disrepute in present Western popular culture, this theory has been and continues to be popular among various nationalists, including the current neo-Nazi white nationalist

movement, the so-called “Blood and Soil” factions being its most obvious adherents. Furthermore, the notion that the nation can survive a tragic, even devastating loss is nothing unusual; indeed, one just has to examine nationalists of all stripes to see that most have a ‘moment’ to which they look back. For instance, Serbian nationalists harken back to the defeat in 1389 of the Serbian medieval kingdom on Kosovo Polje (the infamous ‘Field of Blackbirds’), where King Lazar traded an earthly kingdom for a kingdom in heaven, according to legend. In the American South however, history is not just something for textbooks and professors but as Goldfield further observed,

History is not learned; it is remembered, it is handed down like a family heirloom through generations. Much of this remembered past is no longer in history books but it is valued all the more as a precious life-line, ever more fragile, connecting Southerners to the South and to each other. The memories invariably begin with the Civil War. And how white Southerners remembered the Civil War and its aftermath defined and distinguished the South for the next century. (Goldfield 16)

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And, as is argued in this article, the memory of the South’s defeat has ‘defined and distinguished’ the neo-Confederate movement of today as well. In light of the above quote, two diametrically opposing visions have been advanced regarding the American Civil War and Reconstruction. The first position is adopted by those sharing the unreconstructed view that Confederates were not fighting for the perpetuation of slavery but were struggling to defend their homes against invaders who wanted to change their way of life, admittedly slavery was a part of that life, but, they argue, the war was forced upon them by the ‘perfidious Yankees.’ This view is aptly phrased by Charles Scott Hamel in his introduction to the collection of articles from *Southern Partisan* magazine, *So Good A Cause: A Decade of Southern Partisan*:

Southern Partisan is somewhat different from other Conservative magazines in that its ethos stems from a region of the country which has tasted the bitter fruits of military defeat and has been subjected to repeated and continuous attempts to force it to change its way of life. The very existence of *Southern Partisan* is testimony to the fact that these attempts have not wholly succeeded, much to the chagrin of the ideologues and robber barons who nevertheless continue to make

war on this region in the name of the modern shibboleths of “equality” and “progress.” (Smith i)

The second view is the ‘modern,’ progressive interpretation of the Confederacy as a racist country better off forgotten at worst, or at best, its defeat and the civil rights struggles that followed are shining examples of how far the United States has come in race relations.¹³ The latter view is the view that popular American culture has adopted and any attempt by neo-Confederates or other white nationalist/white pride groups results in a popular demonization. Therefore, the opposing views appear to be locked in a Manichean battle, literally a struggle between light and dark, a brawl between good and evil, a fight between those who want to remember and revere their ancestors’ sacrifices and those who want to destroy any vestige of the Confederacy in the South, or, indeed, the United States. At least, that is the view of the neo-Confederate movement and its supporters.

The idea of a mind ‘captive’ to the history of its forebears is nothing new, as with every victory of the progressive, cultural and political left in the United States, especially post-Charleston and post-Charlottesville, the rhetoric directed against present-day conservative white Americans, not to mention, white nationalists, as being held hostage to the mistakes of their ancestors is very real indeed. To conservatives, the most extreme claims of their ideological opponents on the left appear to be ludicrous. ‘How,’ they appear to ask, ‘can we be held responsible for the crimes of our ancestors? We never owned slaves or killed Indians.’ Therefore, the changing of American popular culture from what it was in the 1970s to the present appears to be impossibly immense, at least to conservative whites, and, more specifically, conservative white southerners. Indeed, they seem to echo the words of conservative commentator Ben Shapiro, “One cannot right past injustices with present injustices.”¹⁴ Therefore, in celebrating

13. This view is present in most ‘establishment’ historians’ studies of the American Civil War but is most acutely explored by James M. McPherson in his *Battle Cry of Freedom: A History of the United States during the Civil War Era*, Oxford UP, 1988.

14. Far from being a radical, racist right-winger, Shapiro is a conservative, Orthodox Jew, who is well-known among conservatives in the United

the actions of former Confederates, present-day neo-Confederates are not only revering the memory of Confederates but also thumbing their noses at contemporary mores that seem to recoil in horror at any favorable mention of the Confederacy or its cause. Moreover, they are protesting the changes that have occurred in American society over the past sixty years or so. To say this protest is tragic would be an understatement, as most neo-Confederates have rejected current American popular culture in all its forms and have opted out of, not only the culture, but the overall society. This aspect leads not only to a counterculture (as evidenced by the cultural trappings of the neo-Confederate movement—the symbols, essays, songs, heroes and legends) but to a group that believes that its very physical existence is under threat of annihilation.

By their rejection of the current culture, neo-Confederates in the American South share their admiration of the Confederacy with the European white nationalist movement. Among the subculture of the world-wide white nationalist movement, especially with the advent of the internet and, in particular, YouTube, unknown or obscure bands and musicians can produce songs that are as racist or reactionary as they want.¹⁵ A further example of the popularity of a particular view of the Confederate cause, comes from the underground of the European national-

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States for his erudite argumentation and his fearlessness in debates against the progressive left. He is also extremely popular among young conservatives for his insistence on personal responsibility and his rejection of 'victim culture.' Furthermore, he is famous for saying, "Facts don't care about your feelings," in debates against various progressives and in many encounters with American university students.

15. While You Tube has tried to curb the posting of some of the more egregious songs, there are still many songs and videos available. One example is the group Aryan, whose song "Coon Shootin' Boogie" is among one of the more satirical examples of white nationalist music available on the site. Racist Redneck Rebels' debut album, *Keep the Hate Alive*, was, at one time, available in full, though it appears to have been removed because of violation of copyright. RRR, as they are commonly known, produced songs such as "Dropping the Kids Off in Harlem," "Blow Up the Middle East," and "Whatever Happened to that Dear Ol' Klan of Mine?," "Pederast Priests," among others. With the famous 'purge' or 'Adpocalypse' of June, 2019, it remains to be seen what neo-Confederate songs and videos will be available on the site.

ist right-wing, where the most vicious of Confederate warriors are honored, as evidenced by the following song by Redneck 28, a Welsh-based racist country band. “Outlaws” is from their 2015 album, *The South Will Rise Again*.¹⁶

Lookin’ back a long, long time to the U.S. Civil War,
Quantrill’s men were on the run from the Carpetbaggers’ law,
But then from all around the victors’ evil lies,
Put a ransom on their heads, falling them all to die
(Chorus)
They were outlaws,
Never bow to the blue,
In the Civil War, the Southern flags they flew,
(repeat)
To the South they were true
When the war was finally done they never dropped their Southern flags,
Bounty hunters everywhere wanted them all dead,
It was an ordeal as Quantrill’s men rode by,
It was always clear to them they had to ride or die
(Chorus)
Outlaws ridin’ on, Southern flags they fly
Death followed at their heels, they knew they could die
Never decent tombstones, never asked the reason why
They will live forever,
They’re great riders in the sky
(Chorus) They are outlaws...

The song celebrates those ‘outlaws,’ like Jesse James and Coleman Younger, who, after the Civil War found it difficult to adjust to civilian life and continued to fight against the encroachment of ‘Carpetbagger laws.’¹⁷ This aspect is likewise famously explored by director Clint Eastwood in the film adaptation of the 1972 novel by Asa Carter *Josey Wales: Confederate Outlaw*. Quantrill’s band of Confederate guerrillas holds a particularly unsavory place in Civil War history, as they were spectacularly brutal in attacking Unionist supporters in Missouri and in their sacking of Lawrence, Kansas in May, 1863. Among white nationalists, however, Quantrill’s band, and “‘Bloody’ Bill Anderson and, later, ‘Little’ Archie Clements’ band

16. Redneck 28, “Outlaws,” *The South Will Rise Again* (2015).

17. The best biography of Jesse James at present is: T. J. Stiles, *Jesse James: Last Rebel of the Civil War*, Vintage Books, 2003. For Coleman Younger and the Younger brothers, see Marley Brant, *The Outlaw Youngers: A Confederate Brotherhood, A Biography*, Madison Books, 1992.

(the band that Jesse James joined) is viewed with reverence bordering on worship as an example of the type of Confederate warrior who never asked for quarter and never gave any, in essence always flying the “Black Flag.”¹⁸ Historically, the song rings true, as Pinkerton detectives and various other ‘agents’ of the numerous train companies, at first controlled by Northern investors, and bounty hunters chased Jesse James, his brother Frank and the Youngers. The former Confederate guerillas’ support among the populace of northwestern Missouri was enhanced by the bitter feelings engendered by the fierce guerrilla war that raged along the Missouri-Kansas border from the ‘Bleeding Kansas’ period of 1854 to around 1874, depending on the county under investigation. Jesse James’ legend was further heightened by a former Confederate and newspaper editor, John Newman Edwards, who was responsible for constructing James and his gang of mostly former Confederates into folk heroes, especially among the pro-Southern former Confederates in Missouri.¹⁹ James and his gang’s exploits were further popularized by ‘dime,’ ‘nickel’ or ‘penny’ novels (named so because of their price); however, in current underground neo-Confederate culture, the current heroes of the movement come from novels written by authors who have taken their cue from other elements of the white separatist movement.

In a sense, the novels written by neo-Confederates of various stripes try to emulate the same ‘black flag’ feeling in their characters.²⁰ In Gregory Kay’s neo-Confederate *Third Revolution* saga, the revolution begins with a riot over the removal of the Confederate flag on the South Carolina State House grounds where it had flown

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18. In military terms, flying a/the black flag meant that no quarter would be given to one’s enemies, and, no quarter would be asked. Quantrill’s band flew a black flag, as did other Confederate guerrilla groups.

19. In combination with the aforementioned biography of Jesse James by T. J. Stiles, interested readers should consult Thomas Goodrich, *War to the Knife: Bleeding Kansas, 1854–1861*, U of Nebraska P, 2004) and Jonathan H. Earle and Diane M. Burke, *Bleeding Kansas, Bleeding Missouri: The Long Civil War on the Border*, UP of Kansas, 2013.

20. To review all of the fictional writings of the neo-Confederate movement would make this essay too unwieldy, therefore only two novels were used to provide a sampling, the first novel of Gregory Kay’s *The Third Revolution* tetralogy and Lloyd Lennard’s *The Last Confederate Flag*.

in front of the Confederate soldier monument, after being taken down from the South Carolina capitol dome. The hero of *The Third Revolution*, a white Columbia police officer, Frank Gore starts out in the novel as a proud, native South Carolinian with a major Southern pedigree. After he is injured during the riot that followed, in which white supporters of the flag were shot and killed by a black police officer, Gore is taken to the hospital and while there, his grandmother, who had raised him urged him to “tell the truth about what he saw,” as the mass media was trying to spin the riot into a “white supremacist conspiracy.” She gives him her locket, which she never took off and urges him to look inside:

Frank looked carefully, turning the locket over in his hands, but could see nothing else. “All I see is this cloth trim.”

“That’s not trim. That’s a piece of the company Battle Flag that my own grandfather died carrying at Shiloh, fighting the Yankee invaders. Those stains? That’s his blood, Frankie; his blood, my blood, and *your* blood.

Frank was numb. As he held the object, he could feel a strange warmth coursing through his body and it felt like unseen eyes were upon him.

“This is my heritage [...]”

Granny shook her head. “No Frankie, *this* is your heritage,” she said, tapping his chest gently over his heart with a bony fingertip. “It’s in here, in the heart and in the blood. Bred in the bone, like the old folks used to say. *This*,” pointing to the locket, “is just a symbol of it, a reminder, so that we never forget who we are!” (Kay 21, emphasis in the original)

Again, the above quote reinforces the idea that history and heritage are not ‘dead’ to the traditional southerner, but particularly to the neo-Confederate. In Frank Gore’s case, he pays for his beliefs. When he tries to tell the truth, he is forced to stay silent and through a series of adventures, he, and an enterprising reporter, Samantha Norris are forced to join the neo-Confederate revolutionaries, the CAP (Confederate Army Provisional). After marrying Ms. Norris, the farm they were staying at is attacked by Federal forces and his wife is captured. She is intimately tortured while in Federal captivity, à la Abu Ghraib, and once she was rescued by the CAP, Frank and Samantha Gore give an interview to a group of high school reporters hungry for a good story. In the course of the interview, Frank Gore explains his reasons for rebelling against the U.S. and becoming a neo-Confederate:

It was only after we saw what the Federal Government and its shameless lackeys here in the local administration were capable of doing that we became true believers. Due to their un-Godly persecution, we became revolutionaries, not because we lack patriotism, but because we *are* patriots. No patriot will allow tyrants and despots to hold sway over their country, for any reason. This South of ours, this beautiful Dixie Land, has been trodden under the heel of the tyrants in Washington for a century and a half, and that heavy tread has beaten down the Southern man until it's made us think that's the way it should be." (Kay 401–402, emphasis in the original)

Not only does the above quote repeat various neo-Confederate accusations against the federal government, namely destroying white Southern culture through forced integration, forced 'levelling' of educational opportunities (Affirmative Action), and the denigration of Southern speech patterns and culture, it also shows how one becomes a revolutionary—the threat of death at the hands of an omnipresent government forces one to fight. While Frank Gore's protest ends successfully in the novels as the South is freed and the Confederacy is reestablished, at present, while the neo-Confederate movement is protesting the supposed destruction of white Southern culture it has made little to no headway in the past twenty years or so. It does appear though, that the movement is becoming more and more radical and frustrated with the way in which American culture and society continues to supposedly denigrate the Confederacy and its symbols. It is interesting that the feelings that were projected into the candidates in the divisive 2016 presidential election are the same kinds of feelings that are injected into the debate over the legacy of the Confederacy, again, both sides seem to be locked in a Manichean struggle with the forces of evil.

As can be seen by the above examples, the spirit of protest, while not exactly 'tragic' within the neo-Confederate movement has an extensive and multifaceted history. While songs seem to be the most appealing, it is the novels that are probably the best examples of the tragic aspects of the neo-Confederate protest against the current state of society in the American South. Indeed, Lloyd Lenard's 2000 novel, *The Last Confederate Flag* seems to echo the quote of William Faulkner regarding the romantic vision of a future that might have been. While the story in Lenard's novel revolves around the differences between the forces sup-

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porting the Confederate battle flag and those opposed, the most interesting and telling parts involve the debate between the two sides and how the supporters of the flag and Confederate monuments view those symbols as part of an enduring South. One of the flag supporters, a member of the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV) reads out a portion of an essay written by Judge Ben Smith Jr. and published in the *Confederate Veteran* magazine which succinctly points to the heart of the matter as concerns certain symbols of white Southern pride, hence it is quoted at length:

All over the Southland we are plagued with an epidemic of do-gooder educators and mindless politicians hell-bent on obliterating all reminders of the Southern Confederacy. It is said that they do not wish to offend minority groups and members of the new enlightenment. Ancient symbols and time-honored traditions will be swept away as worthless encumbrances to the new breed of Southerner. Our children are taught to despise these totems of a once proud people. The new-style censorship is considered to be a splendid and humanitarian thing, a giant step on the way to the true brotherhood of man [...].

What arrant nonsense. It never occurs to these manipulators that catering to any kind of pressure to invoke the banning of symbols and displays of regional heritage is itself a contemptible form of intolerance. It cannot be a greater sin to offend other citizens who want to enjoy the privilege of free expression under the First Amendment of our Constitution [...].

The political avant-garde of today are the most intolerant breed to appear in modern America. These mischievous people are after votes and care little for constitutional principles. They are the worthy successors of the radical Republicans of another time (those who swarmed Southward during the reconstruction period to plunder, steal and occupy the seats of power). They have done more to polarize the races in the South than they have done to establish the good feeling that ought to exist between them.

If I am offended by someone who is expressing his ideas and not disobeying the law, that is just too bad, for both black and white, yellow and red, have every right to celebrate their heritage. [...] It is irrelevant that someone is offended by this lawful behavior. This is the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave or so it used to be. (Lennard 196-198)

In four paragraphs, four distinct ideas are presented that illustrate the differences and lack of compromise between the two forces that are currently fighting over the Confederate flag and associated symbols of the neo-Confederate version of the South. First, the idea that 'do-gooder' educators are chang-

ing the South for the worst is a complaint that was heard during the first Reconstruction period when Northern (mostly young white female) teachers came South working for the Freedman's Bureau and would educate white and black together, thus trying to break down racial barriers that had existed for hundreds of years. Second, the shift in culture that has occurred where once venerated symbols, i.e. the Confederate battle flag are now despised and vilified by children, again, signaling a move not only in the contemporary ethos but in the future culture as well. Third, the painting of the opposition as not following the Constitution is a particular sore point with neo-Confederates, though Lenard's novel is less revolutionary than Kay's. Finally, the last two paragraphs hit upon the idea that the South has been involved in a culture war since the antebellum era but increasing in intensity during Reconstruction and into the contemporary era.

As the hero of Lenard's novel, Stonewall Bedford, sits in jail for defending his family from attack by black radicals, he looks out the window and sees a Confederate battle flag blowing in the breeze, to which he remarks:

I still hear the faint calls of the bugles at Gettysburg; still hear the distant sounds of the roll of the drums, see and feel the explosions of the bursting shells. I'm charging up Cemetery Ridge with the long lines of valiant men in gray, as my Confederate comrades scream, die, and reluctantly fall back. For a moment that day, we reached the high ground. If only we could have held it... if only we had won [...] if only [...]. (Lenard 432)

In echoing the Faulkner quote from *Intruder in the Dust* above, Bedford reinforces the neo-Confederate 'romantic' view of history, a view that is, at the same time, nostalgic and tragic because it appears that as long as there are neo-Confederates, there will always be those who are willing to 'tragically' protest the present and long for a past that could have been if only the Confederacy would have won. While unsavory to contemporary sensibilities, there is an undercurrent of tragedy to the neo-Confederate movement, for, like their precursors, they seem destined to fight an eternally losing battle against the overwhelming forces of modernism and progressivism.

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Figure 1: ‘Confederate Sam’—the once ubiquitous symbol of the ‘unreconstructed’ or Southern Nationalist movement. Made popular in the 1960s with the centennial of the American Civil War, it has now become a somewhat sarcastic, somewhat serious symbol of the neo-Confederate movement and a mascot for those who consider themselves anti-PC. A version of ‘Confederate Sam’ was used on the CD cover of Rebel Son’s 2006 album *Unreconstructed*. From the author’s collection.

Figure 2: After 9/11, such bumper stickers started to appear. They have been followed with bumper stickers that feature American Indians (a quite famous photo of Mescalero Apaches is normally used), stating “Fighting Terrorism Since 1492.” Frequently featured in the South on cars and trucks, the pictured version of the “Fighting Terrorism Since...” normally marks a supporter or sympathizer of the neo-Confederate, or Southern Nationalist movement. © FlyThemHigh.com 2016. Used with permission.



*Captive Minds
Normativities
and Protests*

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VIOLENCE HATES GAMES?

Revolting (Against) Violence
in Michael Haneke's *Funny Games U.S.*

The question is not: "What am I allowed to show?" but rather: "What chance do I give the viewer to recognize what it is I am showing?" The question—limited to the topic of VIOLENCE—is not: "How do I show violence?" but rather: "How do I show the viewer his [or her] own position vis-à-vis violence and its portrayal?"

Haneke, "Violence and the Media" 579.

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EXCESSIVE IMAGES

Among the various norms that contemporary mainstream cinema has been eagerly transgressing, the limits of violence—either justified or not—happen to be challenged more intensely than ever before. Perhaps no other artistic medium has managed to deploy so profoundly the dogma which psychoanalysis stubbornly refers to: a subject's pursuit of excessive and Thanatic pleasure we know as *jouissance*. Yet, mainstream cinema rarely conspires with desires or the real and its traumatic experiences of emptiness; Hollywood, as a construct, cautiously trudges across the realms of fantasies instead. If violence is eagerly cherished and exercised there, then it is mostly because the films themselves refrain from inflicting violence on spectators, preserving their bloodthirsty images in impermeable bubbles. Spectacles of violence proliferate insofar as they are kept at a safe distance, which makes it possible to turn them into the harmless conditions for retributive *catharses* and the soothing moments when brutality

is overcome altogether. As constituents of more complex fantasies, representations of violence satisfy the compensatory needs of the spectators, construct their either collective or individual identities, and contribute to the middle-class myths demanded in the “risk society” (be it those of modern super heroes, self-made men, or survivors). At the same time, these bloodthirsty fantasies put scholars in a suspicious position; as Patricia Pisters notes, critics way too often tend to either perceive such tropes as mere aesthetical devices or lock them up within a moral framework, eschewing any considerations concerning their form (Pisters 80).¹ Neither moral nor aesthetic reductionism provides an insight into the intricacies of violence with regard to its political, social, artistic, or affective circulation.

A remake of Michael Haneke’s seminal film, *Funny Games U.S.* seems to resist such a clear-cut binary and criticizes immensely the mainstream representations of violence. For Haneke, as he states briefly in a short essay devoted to the brutality depicted onscreen, cinematic violence can be divided into three predominant categories. First, be it in horror, science fiction, or Westerns, it functions in separation from the experiences of the spectator. Such a suspension of disbelief makes it possible for him or her to identify with the protagonists and yet reside at a safe distance. Second, in films concerned with terrorism, crime, or war—that is, issues far more realistic and palpable for the spectator—violence turns into a “liberating and positive” event providing one with a solution to the particular impasse. In this respect, violence might become an exaggerated allegorization of mundane struggles or a re-familiarization of an exceptional danger, which in either case meets a comforting closure at the end of the film. The last one, inherent in the postmodern cinema, incorporates violence into satire or as a joke (Haneke, “Violence and the Media” 576–577). What should be noticed is the fact that this incorporation of mockery in violence hardly suspends the latter; although the inherent displacement of postmodern cinema might result in ingenious strategies capable of deconstructing the ways

1. Importantly enough, Pisters as a Deleuzian scholar follows an entirely different path and perspective in her text.

in which cinematic images thrive on brutality, it also contributes immensely to these representations.

This article aims at reading Haneke's *Funny Games U.S.* as a protest against the violence employed in the mainstream cinema. As I will argue, by confronting its spectators with unbearable cruelty devoid of closing catharsis, *Funny Games U.S.* challenges the clichés Haneke enumerates in his essay. At the same time, it resorts to affective violence against the spectators, exposing them to defamiliarized images of brutality and unmasking their bloodthirsty desire for retaliation. In other words, they become the very reason for the violence on screen. Following, among others, Jean-Luc Nancy and Henry A. Giroux, I would like to demonstrate how Haneke exhausts the norm of acceptable violence to reinstate such a limit anew.

DEPRAVING PLEASURE

Funny Games U.S. is a remake of an Austrian thriller of the same name, which this time manages to overcome the inevitable flaw of the original picture that has distanced the object of Haneke's criticism—that is, the American(ized) mainstream cinema—from the form of the film: the barrier of language and the actors' recognition. The beginning of *Funny Games U.S.* connotes a well-known structure of a worn-out and conventional thriller targeted at a white, middle-class, and heterosexual spectator (perhaps an instance of the masculine gaze). A happy couple, George and Ann Farber, are riding out of town with their little son, Georgie, to spend a relaxing weekend by the lake. Suddenly, the idyllic image of jokes and guessing games is interrupted with the cacophonous saxophone of John Zorn and the harsh growls of *Naked City*. After their arrival, the family recognizes that something really disturbing is happening to their friends, accompanied by two strangers, who, dressed in white, conjure up the image of the gang members in Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*. When the Farbers return to the house they have rented to make themselves comfortable, both men—having introduced themselves as Peter and Paul—visit them in order to, as they claim, borrow some eggs. Unfortunately, the unexpected visitors become more and more intrusive with every single minute: they break the eggs and implore the Farbers to give

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them another two, they play with George's expensive golf clubs without his permission, and they drown the telephone in a sink full of water. Furious, Ann orders her husband to kick Peter and Paul out of their house. Having achieved nothing and facing only mockery and laughter instead, George slaps Paul in the face. This gesture commences the spiral of violence which will last until the end of *Funny Games U.S.*; Paul grabs a golf club and breaks George's leg with it, forcing the Farbers to accept a gruesome bet—they have to survive until the next morning. From this moment on, Haneke's work imposes on its spectators excessive images of torture, mutilation, injury, and eventually murder.

By no means is Haneke interested in moving or transgressing the acceptable norms of visual representations of cruelty. Indeed, the way his protagonists contribute to the excessive images of violence poses the question of what can be shown on screen and unmasks the arbitrariness of this division. Still, as he admits himself, these are secondary issues; rather, Haneke aims at uncovering the spectators' position towards the brutal spectacle of *Funny Games U.S.* (Haneke, "Violence and the Media" 578–579). The reason for that stems from the strive for such an aesthetic of violence that resists being subsumed under any of the voyeuristic categories he diagnoses in contemporary cinema, be it identification, liberation, or postmodernist mockery. With regard to Zygmunt Bauman's idea of fatigue with violence, Henry A. Giroux argues that

[h]yper-violence and spectacular representations of cruelty disrupt and block our ability to respond politically and ethically to the violence as it is actually happening on the ground. In this instance, unfamiliar violence such as extreme images of torture and death becomes banally familiar, while familiar violence that occurs daily is barely recognized, becoming if not boring then relegated to the realm of the unnoticed and unnoticeable. (Giroux 39)

Such a transition is founded on what Giroux calls the "depravity of aesthetics" (Giroux 31), which intertwines the proliferation of violence and its obscene representations with the biopolitical apparatus of "collective pleasure" and "instant gratification." Although it is not my intention to examine whether Giroux's argument is tenable or not when it comes to the political aspirations

it eventually states, the depravity of aesthetics—understood as a practice of looking—neatly corresponds to Haneke’s strategy. The mode of reception theorized by Giroux situates the spectator in the bubble, where his or her unreachable position makes it possible to join the excess of violence with transgressive pleasure, *jouissance* as Jacques Lacan would have it.² Since the aesthetics of violence and its norms constantly expand, absorbing and accumulating more and more obscene representations, violence has to be overloaded in a different manner. It has to be defamiliarized in such a way that contributes equally to the recognition and unfamiliarity of brutality and, at the same time, does not locate it as something inaccessible or abstract. As I will demonstrate further on, Haneke attempts to include the spectator in his film, assuming that his or her participation in the spectacle blurs the boundaries of the familiar and the unfamiliar. When the spectator turns out to be incapable of situating himself or herself at a safe distance, indifference can hardly be upheld, whereas the voyeuristic transformation of violence into pleasure is blocked. Haneke still operates within the framework of responding to sadistic impulses; however, instead of gratifying them, he uncovers the bloodthirsty agenda lurking behind.

SUSPENDING VIOLENCE

In *Funny Games U.S.*, the scenes of cruel torture and ruthless killings are entangled in the ongoing masquerade, during which swapping roles, theatrical gestures, and temporary identities destabilize the seemingly fixed positions of the perpetrators and their victims, and tamper with the motivations behind the carnage. Whereas the Farbers seem to fit in the convention of a popular thriller, Peter and Paul do not belong there. They are dressed in plain white clothes, more suitable for members of a pantomime

2. Todd McGowan claims that *jouissance* “marks a disturbance in the ordinary symbolic functioning of the subject, and the subject inevitably suffers its enjoyment. One cannot simply integrate one’s enjoyment into the other aspects of one’s daily life because it always results from the injection of a foreign element—the real—into this life. [...] The subject cannot simply have its enjoyment; it is more correct to say that this enjoyment has the subject” (McGowan 10–11).

group than a couple of psychopathic murderers, and wear white gloves. As their appearances are highly depersonalized, and even the props themselves enable them not to leave any fingerprints at the crime scene, it is emphasized that both men are deprived of any fixed identity. Peter and Paul juggle with different stories about themselves, constantly undermining or denying things they have said before, and they turn most conversations into mockery. Furthermore, even their names—or nicknames—are not permanent; both men regularly change the way they call themselves, for instance, Tom and Jerry or Beavis and Butthead. If we bear that in mind, the choice of murder weapons—golf club, knife, and shotgun—surprises us even less. These props, just as the aforementioned nicknames, point to the emblematic cartoons that present irrational violence deprived of consequences. Therefore, if Haneke pinpoints the identities of Peter and Paul, then it is the identity of the American(ized) film industry with its insatiable hunger for violence that contributes to the state Giroux recognizes. This last remark might prove why Haneke decided to remake *Funny Games* in the first place. *Funny Games U.S.* does not provide any ground-breaking elements in comparison to its predecessor; quite the contrary, it purposefully uses the very same locations and props (Monk 426–427). The difference lies in employing well-known actors, whose status does not grant them any form of immunity to cruelty and painful death, and using English—that is, the language of the mainstream violence—in order to narrow the distance between Haneke’s critical toolbox and the object of his criticism.

Temporary identities are accompanied by the inversion of hierarchies and orders organizing the brutal realm of *Funny Games U.S.* As has been hinted at above, canonical thrillers or slasher films would most probably end with a closing catharsis, marking the reunion of the victims and the punishment of the perpetrators. Such a resolution would provide us with *sui generis* working through particular higher values. In other words, such violence would belong to Haneke’s second category, being the “positive or liberating” one. In *Funny Games U.S.*, not only do the Farbers lose their bet and are murdered by Peter and Paul, but also Paul is invited to a new house to start the spectacle of violence once

again. Moreover, these genre-oriented inversions—if not the ethical ones—coexist with the blurred distinctions into victims and perpetrators. On a superficial level, this relation is straightforward, as it is organized by the gruesome bet and the asymmetry it entails; however, the deeper level of this film is furnished with interpretative twists. Although Peter and Paul kill the Farbers' dog before they are confronted by the furious family, George and Ann are unaware of this fact; hence, despite the fact that both men in white are intrusive, it is George who resorts to physical violence first, when he slaps one of them in his face. Further on, Peter and Paul agree that they equally suffer from the situations they are in as the Farbers do. Deprived of motivations, the perpetrators claim that there is neither an inspiration nor a cause behind their actions; instead, their deeds stem directly from boredom and an existence devoid of any sense.

Even though Peter and Paul's denials might be read as yet another eponymous game, the inclusion of the spectator in the film might suggest otherwise, exposing to what extent both men remain highly determined characters. *Funny Games U.S.* cherishes breaking the fourth wall, since both men tend to recognize the presence of the spectator: they blink, emphasizing the arbitrariness of the whole spectacle of cruelty, they ask him or her about the expected result of the bet, finally, they accuse the spectator of supporting the other side—the family. As Roy Grundmann suggests, the manner in which both realities interweave does not necessarily pose the spectator as a witness or a participant of the carnage, but rather incorporates him or her as the cause of violence (Grundmann 28). Paul reminds us of it when he stares at the camera and ominously asks whether he should disclose the real ending of this film. This is the first time when his face covers the screen entirely. Consequently, it becomes a mirror in which the faces of the spectator and the perpetrator meet, breaking the safe distance and appropriating the outside into the expanding space of the film. Haneke's space of suffering is the realm in which the perpetrators turn out to be determined, as they merely respond to the most hidden Thanatic fantasies of the bloodthirsty audience; Peter and Paul reflect themselves as the vicious *alter egos* of the spectators in the space of deprived

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aesthetics. The same aesthetic gesture is repeated in the final scene of *Funny Games U.S.*; this time, covering the screen once again, Paul presents his terrifying manifesto: “You will be next.” Yet, is it indeed Paul speaking, threatening the spectator who now must confront the fact that representations of violence transgress its visual content and affectively transform the audience—just as Giroux has it? Or, perhaps, is this the hidden voice of the spectator—reflected in Paul’s face—who identifies the objects of his or her bloodthirsty desires anew? Those people—although not known yet—might already be the addressees of wrath and blind retaliation, of boredom or hollow existence. Or, does it really matter at all whether this charge of the death drive leaves the screened reality or not, if we bear in mind its affective potential?

VIOLENCE HATES GAMES?

Funny Games U.S. is predominantly about playing; still, the eponymous games do not boil down exclusively to bets, counting rhymes, or guessing games, which Peter and Paul force the Farbers to accept and take part in. Turning violence into a ruthless game in which the perpetrators play with their victims, as the film medium suspends responsibility, also does not exhaust the title of Haneke’s work. If we bear in mind that *spielen* in German encompasses a broader range of meanings than a game, we can assume that *Funny Games U.S.* is about a playing a different sort of game: namely, acting (Peucker 136–137). It is the idea of acting, sewing together both realities of *Funny Games U.S.*, that entails the arbitrariness of defamiliarizing violence onscreen and disallowing one to naturalize it. Since ‘games’ are so well-furnished in meanings and references, Haneke’s film interestingly corresponds to Jean-Luc Nancy’s reading of violence and visibility, in which the philosopher claims that “Violence does not play the game of forces. It does not play at all. Violence hates games, all games; it hates the intervals, the articulations, the tempo, the rules governed by nothing but the pure relations among themselves” (17). As Nancy argues, violence yearns for being shown, or for showing off; it demands to be—monstrously—demonstrated and turned into its own image, since any other relations—or rules—are already exhausted. Either without the image or because of it, violence turns into “a sign

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of its own rage” (16), or “[a] pure, dense, stupid, impenetrable intensity” (17). By no means does it imply that violence avoids partaking in any social constructions or cultural spectacles aiming to institutionalize it; quite the opposite, the symbolic inclusion and regulation of violence—in arts, sports, or state control, to name a few instances—proves its empty form that demands to be shown, made present, and represented. These instances turn out to be discursive sites that re-negotiate the spectrum of violence with the faint recognition that violence, being after all a transgressive event, neither is interested in establishing limits nor respects them. As the authoritarian and totalitarian states demonstrate it most explicitly, violence has to be shown: it “always completes itself in an image” (Nancy 20). Nancy continues: “If no image can exist without tearing apart a closed intimacy or a non-disclosed immanence, and if no image can exist without plunging into a blind depth—without world or subject—then it must also be admitted that not only violence but the extreme violence of cruelty hovers at the edge of the image, of all images” (24). The congruence violence bears with image, or image with violence, allows us to think of Haneke’s picture differently. Precisely, perhaps one should set aside the violent representations onscreen to focus on the affective violence that *Funny Games U.S.* inflicts on the spectator. After all, violence is but a destructive event. Since the representations of cruelty do not exhaust relations as they are incorporated into a greater machinery of identification and compensation, then the violence they present is suspended. The desperate protest against its ubiquity and boredom has to be therefore spurred by employing the intensities of the image that shatter relations, disturb one’s boundaries, and set limits of perception anew. Let us consider two instances of such violence.

One of the means Haneke uses in order to puncture the stable boundaries of the spectator is to entangle him or her in the play of noise and silence. Encouraged by his parents, Georgie manages to flee and hides in a nearby house. His escape cannot be left unnoticed, and one of the perpetrators decides to pursue him. Convinced that he has found the boy, he inserts the *Naked City* record in a hi-fi set, playing the opening track of *Funny Games U.S.* The scene holds spectators in uncertainty for a few

more seconds and then ends. Although the harsh soundtrack and the tension it creates might suggest otherwise, young Georgie is spared and brought back to his parents the very moment one is convinced of his imminent death. He will be killed in the least expected moment, when the sudden gunshot tears the calmness of another scene, a filler of sort, focused on Peter looking into a fridge for something to eat. These two scenes are employed to deconstruct the expectations of the spectator, surprising him or her for the first time with mercy when both the film reaches its arguable climax and death is most plausible, and for the second time—with a murder that occurs unexpectedly. Cruelty takes place in silence. After her son is killed, Ann turns off the bloodstained TV set and begins to mourn. In the realm of TV entertainment, brutal scenes of death lack their counterpart in grief that, just like suffering, occurs in silence. *Naked City* with its harshness of vocals and shrieks of the saxophone provocatively signals those excessive moments which are unbearable in the realm of the brutalized film industry: a quiet lack of violence. Conversely, it is silence that disturbs the boundaries of the spectator and transforms itself into a powerful affective means.

Haneke's *Funny Games U.S.* not only reveals the bloodthirsty expectations of the spectators, but also deconstructs their yearn for retaliation, unmasking the arbitrariness behind this impulse. After her child is murdered, Ann is desperate for either survival or revenge; she manages to grab a shotgun and fatally wounds Peter. Panicked, Paul picks up the remote control, rewinds the scene before Ann came into possession of the weapon, and prevents her from doing so. Therefore, the spectacle manifests itself as determined and well-planned; when a happy ending is no longer a possibility, what remains at stake is only the time in which the scenes of the fixed sequence will take place. As Leland Monk suggests, one might be tempted to wonder why Ann does not pick up the remote control herself and rewind the film to the much safer circumstances; this is, however, pointless (Monk 425). For rewinding is incapable of going beyond the opening scene in which the Farbers are already on the move and are bound to meet Peter and Paul, the only way to save them is to kill the perpetrators when they are unarmed at the beginning of the film (Monk 425–426). Simulta-

neously, such a hypothetical re-position—motivated by empathy towards the victims—would contribute to the justified and positive violence of the second category; yet, in light of such a dramatic rewinding of the film, victims are not yet victims, whereas Peter and Paul's brutality is yet to come. Monk's observation proves that the fatal position of the characters depends predominantly on the inevitability of violence; the spectator might be tempted to support retaliation at any cost which, in an extreme case, might turn the Farbers into the perpetrators within an atemporal projection when there is nobody to be avenged. At best, the scene with the remote control evokes sympathy and regret that Ann has not managed to kill the murderers of her son. In either case, the plot of *Funny Games U.S.* demonstrates that supporting the Farbers is hardly separable from, a more or less conscious, yearning for committing violence against Peter and Paul.

Delving into the congruence of violence and image suggested by Nancy, these two scenes put forward not only the *images of violence*, but also the *images as violence*, bringing Haneke's *Funny Games U.S.* closely to the *cinema of intersection*, theorized by Todd McGowan. McGowan claims that

the deeper problem with Hollywood's fantasies lies in their failure to envision the impossible as such. Hollywood remains in the domain of the possible, even when it colors this domain with the image of impossibility. Hollywood's escapist films, for the most part, belong to the cinema of integration rather than the cinema of intersection because they transform the impossible object into an ordinary object. Cinema truly realizes its radical potential when it treats the ordinary object as an impossible one. (McGowan 165)

If we revise the brutal representations of the mainstream cinema Haneke criticizes, we should note that they belong to the cinema of incorporation as well; in each of the three instances of cinematic violence he mentions, excessive brutality is eventually reduced to an element that does not break the integrity of the subject but fulfills a particular fantasy instead: violence is kept at a distance, prevented from taking place, stopped from spreading, or suspended by mockery. The significance of *Funny Games U.S.*, however, does not lie entirely in its critique of how the mainstream cinema deploys its strategies of violence, but also in the way Haneke's film inflicts

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violence on the spectator, reaching this elusive element that resists being absorbed in a fantasy. For McGowan, the gaze inherent in the cinema of intersection is a means of political activism that engenders the liberation of a subject. This sense of freedom is understood entirely in psychoanalytical terms, nonetheless; it marks the traumatic event that breaks the confines of ideology in favor of reaching the emptiness of the object of one's desire. McGowan adds:

Through enacting a traumatic encounter with the gaze, this cinema shows us that we can do the impossible. At the moment we encounter the gaze, we see the field of representation thrown into relief and redefined. Everything outside of the gaze loses its former significance in light of this encounter. Through this cinematic experience, we can glimpse the impossible. We see the filmic world from the perspective of the gaze rather than seeing the gaze from the perspective of the filmic world (as occurs in the cinema of integration). After this encounter, the normal functioning of the world cannot continue in the same way and undergoes a radical transformation. Though we can accomplish the impossible, we can't do so without simultaneously destroying the very ground beneath our feet. (McGowan 177)

McGowan's observation reveals the psychoanalytic potential of Haneke's *Funny Games U.S.*; its play with convention, expectations, the roles of victims and perpetrators, or the safety of the film screen that exposes the elements that hardly belong to its reality and disturb the viewing practices of the spectator. At the same time, these practices detach violence from its social and generic superstructure. Rather, they reframe brutal and bloodthirsty images as an ungraspable intensity that is recurring onscreen over and over again in its imperative to be shown; yet, this loop-form barely leaves the spectator-subject unscathed. Inflicting violence on a spectator, *Funny Games U.S.* allows him or her to experience the real that punctures through the thin veil of Haneke's picture. Precisely, it is the encounter of the spectator with a formless and brute violence manifested in a traumatic element that escapes the completeness of a filmed fantasy and the subject's control.

ABANDONING FRONTIERS

Adopting the spectacle of cruelty and suspending its limits, Michael Haneke's *Funny Games U.S.* manifests a dramatic protest

against the disturbed norms of violence in the contemporary cinema and the growing apathy that intoxicates the spectators, which Henry A. Giroux's depravity of aesthetics and Jean-Luc Nancy's reflections on violence helped us conceptualize. Since cruelty on screen is easily captured in the processes of compensation and identification, as Haneke points out in his categorization of cinematic violence, it is not enough to confront the spectator with excessive violence and its representations. Haneke is forced to find a solution elsewhere; hence, his resistance to the *status quo* is oriented towards the most tragic means, that is, mobilizing the cinematic medium created for the spectators against them. Consequently, by means of structural twists and its play with convention, Haneke construes an affective machine capable of unmasking the bloodthirsty and voyeuristic fantasies that are projected on the film, and the depraved agenda behind them. The critical project *Funny Games U.S.* initiates and finds its affirmative counterpart in the affective violence inflicted on the spectator and breaking his or her safe position outside of the film. Therefore, it punctures the strategies of distance that are already at play. What is affirmed is such violence that is no longer a result of excessive representations, but rather one which stems from these capacities of the medium that resist discursive fancies.

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POSTHUMANITY AND THE PRISON-HOUSE OF GENDER IN DOUGLAS COUPLAND'S *MICROSERFS*

Captivity narratives have comprised a major part of the story-telling tradition in the history of humanity. From ancient myths to contemporary literature, the history of literature presents us with the tragedies of captive minds and captive bodies. However, all these different forms of captivities frequently stressed a captivity based in inhumanity and the characters' struggle to free themselves from imprisonment, which inevitably signifies a struggle to (re)humanize their minds and their bodies. Although such an emphasis on decency or the limits of humanity remains ambiguous, it can reasonably be argued that posthumanism offers a new outlet for breaking the chains of captivity, that is, escaping into the non-human to redefine humanity and to emancipate the human mind and human body to advance a more liberated and more equitable definition of humanity.

Indeed, the human body has been a domain of struggle, a struggle of captivity and enslavement and a struggle for enfranchisement and redemption, a struggle over shaping and reproducing the physical forms and appearances of the body as well as redefining the mind and perceptions of human existence. The body is a cultural artifact, a textual construction, "a medium of culture, a powerful symbolic form, a surface on which the central rules, hierarchies, and even metaphysical commitments of a culture are inscribed and thus reinforced through the concrete language of the body" (Bordo 2362). The body as a physical entity had

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sustained its unquestionability and obscurity for ages and “there was a relentless effort to convince people that they had no bodies” (Baudrillard, *The Consumer* 148). Only recently was the human body stripped of its sanctity, and has therefore become an object of scientific investigation. The categorizations of body and sex were established on the basis of negations and perversities through medicalization as a relationship of domination and as a way of positioning difference as abnormal. Therefore, Western civilization, as Foucault discussed in detail with reference to sexuality in antiquity and then in Judeo-Christian culture, was concerned more about defining anomalies, illnesses, and transgression in order to delineate heteronormativity. Pre-modern cultures recognized transgressive forms of the body and sexuality and even sometimes regarded them as holy and god-given, whereas modernity almost reinvented the human body and sexuality as a social construct like race, class, and ethnicity by regulating and redefining time, space, and human interaction through which bodies were trained and shaped with prevailing historical forms of selfhood, desire, masculinity, and femininity. Moreover, Western modernity suppressed the visibility and eligibility of “deviant forms” of the human being including sexual, racial and ethnic diversities as well as eliminating the lower classes from the public realm. The history of Western urbanization and industrialization, then, may as well be read as an attempt to construct divisions in terms of the formation of the human body and public appearance. Women, and by extension, non-white and non-heterosexual forms of gender, have been left out of the central core of the social structure.

However, the dissolution of grand narratives with postmodernity also brought about a dissolution of the heteronormative and essentialist uniformity and solidity of the human body. Definitions of gender and sex, as the major grand narratives of identity, were questioned and transformed into dispersed and commodified forms. As gender and sex are further marked by the mechanical and mass-mediated reproduction of human experiences, history and memory, space and time, postmodern gender theories present a perpetual in-betweenness, transgression and fluidity. Gender therefore is necessarily “transsexual not just in the sense of anatomical sexual transformation, but in the wider

sense of transvestism, of playing on interchangeable signs of sex and by contrast with the previous play on sexual difference, of playing on sexual indifference” (Baudrillard, *Screened Out* 9).

An escape from identity politics characterizes postmodern gender structures since all forms of identity politics, whether patriarchal or feminist, seemingly confine the human body and sex into manageable and consumable units, which implies that, as Judith Butler suggests: “if the inner truth of gender is a fabrication and if a true gender is a fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies, then it seems that genders can be neither true nor false, but are only produced as the true effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity” (136). While lacking any substantial frame of reference, or cultural or historical roots, gender is characterized with a parallel tendency for reclaiming the possession of one’s body and sexual identity as a desire to transform the body as a physical entity through plastic surgery, genetic cloning, in vitro fertilization and the computerization of the human mind and memory. Therefore, the body has lost its quality as gendered and sexed and turned into the embodiment of infantile innocence and manipulability, a “ghost in the machine,” or a cyborg, a hybrid of machine and organism (Haraway 2269). Pramod Nayar further suggested that “the human body as a coherent, self-contained, autonomous self is no longer a viable proposition. We have to see the self as multiple, fragmented and made of the foreign” (89). Michel Foucault, in his *History of Madness*, comprehensively illustrated that human rationality is based on unreason or madness, eventually toppling the idealization of the human subject and the overarching significance of rationality as the chief signifier of human actions.

The perception of the body today also marks a disintegration of the boundaries between the body and its compatibility with the environment since the human body now functions as an interface through which information flows and embodies an aggregation of human-machine corporeality. The human-machine symbiosis, then, is exteriorized and extended into a network of objects switching the “natural human body” to an immaterialized, dehumanized, and prosthetic “data made flesh.” Katherine Hayles comments on the intriguing affinity between human cognition

and cyborg consciousness, which: “implies not only a coupling with intelligent machines but a coupling so intense and multifaceted that it is no longer possible to distinguish meaningfully between the biological organism and the informational circuits in which the organism is enmeshed” (35).

At this point, posthumanism offers a fairly radical and overall decentering of the traditional coherent and autonomous human body. The humanist view postulates a patriarchal hierarchy that privileges human beings not only to non-human forms but also men to women, western people to non-western people, white people to all people of color, abled bodies to disabled bodies, which justifies patriarchal hegemony by labeling others as irrational, antimodern, savage, primitive, or unproductive (Rutsky 2). Humanism assumes a taken for granted universality in understanding the human body as categorically different from all “non-human” forms. Posthumanism, on the other hand, hinges upon a perception of “human subjectivity as an assemblage, co-evolving with machines and animals” (Nayar 23), which consequently denotes an encompassing definition of life, and ethical responsibilities toward non-human forms as the boundaries between species increasingly blur and intermingle. Therefore, posthumanism inevitably offers a political disposition that negates the hierarchy of life forms. Considering that the human body has been functional when aided by simple tools and machines, it would be reasonable to argue that it is already (and necessarily) technologized and dehumanized and that distinguishing the organic or mechanical from the humanoid has become even more challenging. In other words, the human body is identified with ambiguity and imprecision and there are no “natural” distinctions between human beings, non-human organisms and machines in terms of tool use, language, social behaviors, and organizational skills (Haney 84).

In light of such a theoretical background, this paper will discuss the end of captivity within gendered identities in Douglas Coupland’s 1995 novel, *Microserfs*, as an attempt to read gender from a posthumanist perspective and a redefinition of humanity. Posthumanism presupposes an ontological condition where human beings coalesce with a network of machines and other life forms while investing in the potential perfectibility of the human body,

or an intensification of human capabilities, to produce an improvable and modifiable by-product. Accordingly, it goes beyond the pessimism and dystopianism of postwar cultural criticism, especially in regard to machine–human interaction, and provides an integration of technology and the 1980’s counterculture, the culture of video games, punk, and nihilistic anarchism (Fitting 296). Douglas Coupland’s *Microserfs*, on the other hand, redefines humanism “in conjunction with contemporary technology rather than to use humanism to defeat the machine it created” (Miller 384). Coupland boldly explores the potential of posthuman culture to provide a deconstruction of human subjectivity through an analysis of the postmodern identification of human and machine.

Microserfs tells the story of a group of geeks, Generation X Microsoft employees, as narrated by Daniel Underwood, living in a group house with his friends, which is furnished with “useless furniture with ugly colors and shapes, full of toys and crappy hobby stuff, magazines, toys, baseball caps, and Battlestar Galactica trading card album, IKEA mugs and vitamin bottles” (7). Headed by Michael, a senior coder, they decide to leave Microsoft and start their own company and software, Oop!, in order to (in Daniel’s words) “forget the whole business and get on with living—with being alive. I want to forget the way my body was ignored, year in, year out, in the pursuit of code, in the pursuit of somebody else’s abstraction” (90–91). Similarly, Cary Wolfe emphasizes that “the very thing that separates us from the world connects us to the world, and self-referential, autopoietic closure, far from indicating a kind of solipsistic neo-Kantian idealism, actually is generative of openness to the environment” (21). In this regard, with brilliantly expressed references to the interconnectivity between human beings and computers, and sometimes intriguing remarks on the transformation of human beings into computerized humanoids, *Microserfs* provides an inspiring understanding of the world of Generation X as “human units,” “amnesia machines,” the “middle children of history” who refuse to grow up and participate in the game of grown-ups because they are looking for meaning and enlightenment in the immaterial cyber-universe.

Microserfs ostensibly offers more than the story of a bunch of geeks decorating their high-tech office lives with their gib-

berish jargon. Instead, *Microserfs* reflects the anxieties, hopes, and transformation of Generation X and their strive to find meaning in their “cramped, love-starved, sensationless existence” (90). Their release from the corporate Microsoft universe also delineates their delivery from a universe where their bodies are sacrificed in the “pursuit of efficient, marketable code” and turned to “artificial, disembodied intelligence” (76). Coupland’s characters are fugitives of the middle-class American dream and inevitably reside in a capitalist culture that produces waste of all kinds—industrial, cultural, and political—and their stories, therefore, are born out of that garbage pile which fills their stories with ambiguities, controversies, predicaments, and finally, bitter irony. The mythology of the *Microserf* generation, thus, is strictly indebted to distracted and creolized subcultural narratives that defy and, at the same time, celebrate mass-produced motifs and images (Tate 4). Late capitalism seizes subjects in a convolution of images and representations where everything can be potentially translated into computational data, which converts personal and cultural memory to a partial and contingent pastiche. In this regard, Douglas Coupland’s constant references to popular culture or cultural icons in *Microserfs* generates a random-access memory of cultural data and styles (Rutsky 16).

The fundamental qualities of human beings, or the absence of qualities that make humans different from other animals and machines, are the major concerns of the novel. Daniel, for instance, introduces himself and his friends according to what their seven ideal categories would be if they were contestants on Jeopardy! Although each of them pursues an individual identity quest, or identity transformation, they all pursue a new and satisfying life in conjunction with machines rather than a life without machines. Reflecting the zeitgeist of their generation, their activities have to do with getting back in touch with their bodies as they have been neglecting them through eating disorders, malnutrition or lack of use (Miller 402). Dan complains that he doesn’t even do many sports anymore and his relationship with his body has gone all weird. He reduces his bodily functions to mere instrumentality and realizes that he feels that “his body is a station wagon in which he drives his brain around” (4) because

“at Microsoft you pretend bodies don’t exist... BRAINS are what matter. At Microsoft bodies get down played to near invisibility... so that employees morph themselves into those international symbols for MAN and WOMAN you see at the airports” (198). As other geeks who have no life outside the internet, Daniel has been completely dehumanized and believes “email is wonderful because there is no possibility of connecting with the person on the other end” and “he can get away with as little as fifteen minutes of ‘facetime’ each day” (Miller 401). Moreover, Susan, a member of the Oop! crew, wonders that

we, as humans, bear the burden of having to be every animal in the world rolled into one... we really have no identity of our own. What is human behavior except trying to prove that we’re not animals? [...] I think we have strayed so far away from our animal origins that we are bent on creating a new, supra-animal identity [...] What are computers but the everyanimal machine? (17)

Posthumanity is mainly concerned with the question of the fundamentals of the dismantled boundary between human beings and other life forms. Human and animal biology and behavioral science tore down the separations of human and animal, shaking the foundations of a long-lived assumption that the body is a sacred and unique creation of God, and that the human body must have certain qualities that would make human beings superior to other creatures. In this sense, sex and gender just like race or class-consciousness appear to be an “achievement forced on us by the terrible historical experience of the contradictory social realities of patriarchy, colonialism and capitalism” (Haraway 2275). Posthuman theory basically challenges the dichotomous conceptualization of mind and body, animal and human, organism and machine, public and private, nature and culture, men and women, primitive and civilized. It also regards these binaries as a burden of modernity and emphasizes that modern dichotomies and ideological categorizations of the human body have proven to be obsolete and all human embodiments are already technologized. All cognitive systems of human existence like language, memory and intelligence as well as perceptions of sex and gender have now been governed by machines and computerized networks of domination. Therefore, the posthuman body is not based on Oedipal

and heterosexual interrelations but a non-Oedipal and decentered sexuality. In other words, the human body, according to posthuman theory, has been deprived of its sexual and gendered connotations, and exists as a shattered tabula rasa, a void desire waiting to be filled (Levin 91). The immateriality of the body and gendered identity, then, corresponds to the immaterial reality of the cyber-universe, which offers a chance to construct a sense of belonging and defines gender on the basis of performativity and pastiche.

Discussing the feasibility of animal-like software projects, Coupland's geeks are troubled with the fundamental questions posed by the history of philosophy and still unanswered in the age of the information superhighway and global networks of computerized memory: "What is the search for the next great compelling application but a search for the human identity? (15) asks Dan. "What makes any person any different from any other? Where does your individuality end and your species-hood begin?" asks Karla (236), seeing humanity through the eyes of a flock of birds and claiming that their generation lacks the differentiating qualities as human units. Therefore, cyborg bodies in their struggle for emancipating themselves from essentialist categorizations of the body seeking new terrain, a new definition of humanity and gender, refraining from taken for granted embodiments and engenderment and taking refuge in anonymity and diversification. Dan feels excited to see what's next: "I remember back in grade school. VCR documentaries on embryology, and the way all mammals look the same up until a certain point in their embryological development, and then they start to differentiate and become what they're going to become. I think we're at that point now" (194).

This is also a point of departure from humanity into the union of machine and human being into cyborg bodies. For Haraway, "it's not clear who makes and who is made in the relation between human and machine. Like other discursive definitions, we have no ontological separation in our formal knowledge of machine and organism, of technical and organic" (2296) and cybernetics "mediates the translations of labor into robotics and word processing, sex into genetic engineering and reproductive technologies, and mind into artificial intelligence and decision procedures" (2285).

The human body in the post-gender era is destined to become a prosthesis, a machine (Baudrillard, *The Consumer* 11) with exteriorized body organs. Besides frequent references to the “body as a peripheral memory storage device” (Coupland 66), “the body as hard drive” (67), “bodies like diskettes with tags” (205), and “the corporate invasion of private memory” (177), the members of the Oop! team develop an umbilical relationship with computers and like any other umbilical relationship, it is both liberating, life-giving, and encapsulating and subjugating. Michael admits that he has been subliminally modeling his personality after machines and secretly dreams of speaking to machines. He wonders what it would be like to be a humanoid: “do you think humanoids—people—will ever design a machine that can pray? Do we pray to machines or through them? How do we use machines to achieve our deepest needs? What would r2d2 say to me if r2d2 could speak?” (183). Furthermore, when she was an adolescent, Karla dreamed of wanting to become a machine, and one day when she had a sunstroke and was taken to hospital, injected with isotopes, inserted into body scanning machines her dream came true, she became a machine and “felt glad to be no longer human for a few brief moments” (64). The major characters in *Microserfs*, indeed, experience the same dilemma that Gregor Samsa goes through when one morning he finds himself exiled into the body of a vermin but unlike Kafkaesque angst and alienation, the *Microserfs*’ reaction is to celebrate and enjoy the concept of being a humanoid (Kroker 94). Each character in the novel transcends his or her sense of isolation and self-limitation through the mediation of computer technology, becoming more human in the wake of posthumanity. In the process of their emancipation from Microsoft, they begin to learn about their own selves and bodies; Karla reconciled with her body, ends her childhood obsession with Barbie dolls, and becomes more feminine; Todd and Dusty “engage in the serial embrace of ideologies, beginning with body building and progressing through Marxism and Maoism” (Heffernan 97); Bug comes out of the closet and declares that he is a homosexual; Michael desperately falls in love with an anonymous cyber identity without knowing his/her age, gender, or sexual orientation; and Susan builds up a feminist network through the internet exhibiting a cyborg

feminist stance, a blatant mixture of Charlie's Angels and manga hipness. Furthermore, Karla and Dan see themselves as a human reflection of the Windows-Macintosh interface they are designing for Oop! and categorize the characteristics of genders in association with the characteristics of Windows and Mac products. What is more striking is that Dan's mother only becomes the center of attention and expresses herself directly after she has a stroke and is connected to a machine, when her "password was deleted" (365). Her muteness as "part woman/part machine, emanating blue Macintosh light" (369) and as "the condition of the silent uncomplaining woman" (Bordo 2371) is transfigured by a computer program specially designed by the kids that enables her to speak like a "license plate...like encryption...it's real life" (370). The final resolution of the novel comes only when the ultimate object of desire, mother, literally turns into a cyborg, i.e. when computers take possession of Dan's mother.

Indeed, in the posthuman culture, the traditional oedipal family structure as a unit of social control has lost its capacity to produce a phallogocentric governing power. The self becomes a construction of so many different identity signifiers, making identity much more fluid and changing, more nomadic in one respect, but also more peer-bound in another. Therefore, *Microserfs* is deprived of an all-powerful, omnipresent father figure; instead, the idea of an oedipal father is reduced to a ghost-like invisibility and impotence. Bill Gates, for instance, serves as the role model, the omnipresent father figure of the Microsoft geeks. Bill "is wise. Bill is kind. Bill is benevolent" (1), and his presence "floats about the campus, semi-visible, at all times, kind of like the dead grandfather in the Family Circus cartoons. Bill is a moral force, a spectral force, a force that shapes, a force that molds. A force with thick, thick glasses" (3). Bill is everywhere like machines, not as a real person but a simulation of power and domination, a mediated image of invisible omnipresence. Therefore, the phallic symbolism of the Father, or God, has diffused into microsystems of authority and domination, reproducing itself in various forms and degrees. Michael, for instance, becomes the father figure and a new Bill for the Oop' team. He finds the kids playing computer games or watching the Simpsons when they are supposed to be coding,

and immediately freaks out and tells them to get back to work. But the Oopl team, indeed, needs an all-powerful and repressive father figure. Dan says “he is really such a slave driver. He squishes everything he can out of us. It’s very Bill, so we can relate to it” (241). He not only watches over the kids in the office but also mentors and “reprograms” Dan’s father who has become first demasculinized (he started watching Oprah) and then infantilized (he started playing with model trains and walking around aimlessly and annoyingly) because he lost his job by being made “redundant” in a working culture in which “it is as if all young America is out of school and it’s like the year 1311 where everyone over 35 is dead and out of sight and mind (14).”

Judith Halberstam argues that technologies that remake the body also permeate and mediate our relationship to the “real.” The “real” is literally unimaginable or only imaginable within a technological society. Technology makes the body queer, fragments it, frames it, cuts it, transforms desire; the age of the image creates desire as a *screen* (Halberstam and Livingstone 16). Given that the subject is clenched in a state of uncertainty and amorphous fluidity and deprived of its secure position in a cobweb of Oedipal dichotomies, and if, as Deleuze and Guattari argue, capitalism has produced dehumanized desiring machines, a body without organs, it would be reasonable to suggest that human beings have been entrapped in infancy and immaturity as sexless, genderless, and bodiless human units who make and are made by the machines. Infantilization seems to be the ultimate and inescapable end of the post-industrial world of leisure, plenty, and childish playfulness. The 21st century has witnessed infantilized, sexless role models among grownups: Hollywood stars and popular singers playing on transsexuality and infant innocence, big muscle heroes acting like kids unwilling to grow up or pregnant scientists, presidents playing the saxophone or killing time on their private golf courses. Once scorned as a juvenile pastime, science fiction and fantasy fiction, as well as movies and RPGs have become immensely popular and taken as a serious way of life among adults. The vocabulary of business and management has increasingly been invaded with play-related idioms, like ‘being a team player’, ‘playing the game’, and ‘win-win strategies’ signifying a transformation

from a military vocabulary to a rather consumerist vocabulary. The earlier Protestant ethic of hard work and deferred pleasure has been eroded by the rise of mass production and consumer culture, and the cultural and moral justification of capitalism becomes the idea of pleasure as a way of life.

Play is suggested as the response to the removal of patriarchal certainties, and information technology, just as much as the objects and icons of commodity culture, functions as a medium for this type of play. As the borderline between work and leisure, between indoors and outdoors, and between work and rest disappears “to the point of unrecognizability” (211), the “fort da” game of having and losing reinforces the sense of incompleteness and imperfection, which enslaves the infantilized generation of cyborg culture through little promises, like stock options or high salaries and commissions, playground-like office environments, flexible and relatively independent work conditions. Daniel remarks: “employees at Microsoft are bounded with stock shares. It’s a psychic yo-yo” (6). Daniel also describes his generation as “the children who fell down life’s cartoon holes... dreamless children, alive but not living we emerged on the other side of the cartoon holes, fully awake and discovered we were whole” (371). Play, in this sense, apparently gives Generation X the capacity to dream to be whole and to unite with their adult selves. Consequently, play is both enslavement and liberation from the restraints of status anxiety that are directly related to the constant pressure in a period of rapid economic and social restructuring. Having been fired from his job, Dan’s father creates an idealized and simulated environment made out of Lego bricks for their new office through the introduction of play into the heart of the productive process. Here is the first reaction of Dan to what his father has been secretly dealing with for a long time: “This universe he had built was a Guggenheim and a Toys-R-Us squished into one... and I said ‘Oh, Dad, this is—the most *real* thing I have ever seen’” (220). The distinctions between play and work, technology and toys, Guggenheim- style high art and commodity culture bring out the erosion of the simulated and the real in this new economic and social regime.

However, Dan confesses that he and his friends are “all pretty empty file in the ideology department” (28) and that “politics

only makes people crank. There must be some alternative form of discourse” (251). The notions of political commitment, class solidarity, and outright opposition to the relations of capitalist production lack any substantial sense of class identity or location for Generation X. Douglas Coupland’s characters are not apolitic, individualistic, and self-centered yuppies. On the contrary, Coupland deliberately underlines a political solidarity among the Microserfs, an impulsive gesture of openness that was believed to be lost in a cynical generation of Microserfs. Coupland basically explores what it means to possess a body, with the characters experiencing bodily, sexual, and emotional moments of reawakening. Karla recovers from anorexia, Susan establishes a guerilla girl collective, Chyx, to reconstruct her femininity, Dan gains an insight into his body and feels like his memory is “thawing inside the body” (67). The tone of the novel is paradoxically heightened with subtle political insinuations in an age when any political commitment is immediately dissolved and marketed and when the only uncompromising political attitude should be utter nihilism. Therefore, the sketchy political awakenings of the media-hype generation, or slackers, in the novel do not necessarily suggest that Generation X has abandoned the political struggle but, in contrast, their disillusionment with politics denotes a denial of political paradigms and points to an attempt to create a new political language that corresponds to the chaotic and discontinuous absurdities of real politics (Tate 21).

Politics is simply a language game, absorbing an ideology as the equivalent of learning a new code. Therefore, Coupland’s characters react to the domination of ideological reconstructions and constraints in their life through writing new codes, remodeling and distorting language as the central dogma of phallogentrism because “decoding and restructuring language is a Lacanian upheaval against the linguistic and cultural roles of the Father” (Bordo 2369) and therefore, “cyborg politics is the struggle for language and the struggle against perfect communication, against the one code that translates all meaning perfectly” (Haraway 2295). Cyborg language, then, values noise over clear-cut definitions, ambiguity and experimentality of language over the predetermined patterns of knowledge. Accordingly, Douglas Coupland’s

use of typography and paratextual material proposes a new avant-garde textual form and appropriates a multiplicity of visual techniques, blending them with fiction, diffusing the meaning and form and replacing it/them? with experimentality. Obviously, Coupland is reviving the modernist avant-garde tradition characterized by the loss of a belief in originality, by creative repetition, and a pastiche of written and visual languages like the agit-prop avantgarde of the 1920's. For Daniel, for instance, "language is such a technology" (174). He creates a new language, reinforcing the continuity between the languages of information technology, the codes of mass culture, and the process of commodification. But after a while, it turns out that Daniel's subconscious speaks through the computer and submerges his deeper self with the machine. Eventually, it becomes virtually impossible to say whose subconscious is let out. Abe combines numbers and letters in order to create a new language similar to the one Prince uses in his lyrics. Michael experiments with deleting vowels and discovers that the words still remain comprehensible. Daniel writes two words over and over again, machine and money, two flag points of industrial capitalism, and discovers how one can easily enter the domain of the immaterial and an infinite series of *deja vu*, and produce meaninglessness. What Daniel has accomplished can be interpreted as a revolutionary deconstruction of the mass-produced, mass-mediated, and immaterialized language of late capitalist culture that has immaterialized the concepts, images, and categorizations in time.

As a conclusion, Generation X is the product of a culture in which power is inscribed in cultural codes, the ownership of knowledge and computational know-how, a culture where members of Generation X "have created a computer metaphor for EVERY thing that exists in the real world" (145). In this timeless and spaceless culture of fluidity and uncertainty, the prison-house of gender proves to be inadequate, urging man and woman to swing between masculinity and femininity, organic bodies and machines, childhood and adulthood, materiality and immateriality, sexual drives and childish playfulness, and dependency and independency. The sexless, genderless, and bodiless representations of the human being in *Microserfs* lead to the conclusion that "posthuman bod-

ies are the causes and effects of postmodern relations of power and pleasure, virtuality and reality, sex and its consequences” (Halberstam and Livingstone 3). They are a product of technology and technology itself, or a techno-body, a projected image; a source of contamination, and contamination itself, a reflection of the image, and the image itself. They are a pastiche and a “chimera, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism, in short we are cyborgs. The cyborg is our ontology, it gives us our politics” (Haraway 2270).

Despite all the concerns about the dehumanization and mechanization of the body and mind, all the social and political concerns about the highly technologized society, and bleak images of post-apocalyptic dystopias, posthumanism boldly highlights the potential of human and machine interaction: machines and computers function not only as prosthetic body parts but are an almost organic manifestation of human imagination and desire: machines really are our subconscious, our liberation, and our prison. “We live in an era of no historical precedents—no historical roots. [...] the cards being shuffled; new games are being invented. And we are actually driving to the actual card factory” (99), says Karla while talking about trekpolitics. She adds: “left vs. right is obsolete. Politics, in the end, is about biology, information, diversification, numbers, numbers, and numbers—all candy coated with charisma and guns” (260). Generation X is profoundly disillusioned with politics and technology. Computers are all they have left to emancipate themselves from a culture stuck between Windows and Prozac, a culture that infantilizes, pacifies, and captivates people whose lives are destined to end when they turn 30, people whose creativity is confined to code writing and data processing, who become machines that produce machines that produce machines. Posthuman culture potentially perpetuates ambiguity between “natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed” (Haraway 2272) and dematerializes the body so as to be articulated with a strategy for escaping contemporary institutions of power (Silvio 61) and reconstituting them.

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THE TRAGEDY OF A WHISTLEBLOWER

Adamczewski's *Tragic Protest* and the Case of Chelsea Manning

In recent years, political whistleblowing has become an important element of the public debate. Popular concern about the true political agendas camouflaged under official propaganda skyrocketed when Chelsea Manning was released from prison; millions of people followed the story of Edward Snowden dramatized in a feature film that entered movie theatres shortly after the documentary *Citizenfour* had won the Academy Award. Popular reactions to these productions testify to unprecedented public interest in the now iconic whistleblower figures and to the popular support for the individuals who put their own lives at risk, reporting wrongdoings secretly perpetrated by organizations and governments, including that of the United States.

The above notwithstanding, “blowing the whistle” remains a controversial issue. While, in the public space, whistleblowers are construed as either heroes or traitors (as testified to by press reports and news), it is important to observe that irrespective of how their actions are judged, they are, essentially, *protesters*. Rebelling against certain ideologies, phenomena or activities which they perceive to be unjust, in the name of their belief they fight numerous battles, many of which play out in their minds before they are fought “in the field.” Facing the dilemma of the choice between what is right and what is convenient and safe, many of the contemporary whistleblowers epitomize the *tragic protest*:

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a protest that comes at an enormous cost of a personal tragedy that stigmatizes the protester for life.

Bringing most carefully guarded secrets into light, political whistleblowers deconstruct the essential oppositions upon which superpower ideologies are founded: they draw popular attention to what has been relegated to the margins of the dominant discourses. Torpedoing the reputations of the most powerful organizations in the world, and well aware of the inevitability of retaliation, they put themselves in a most precarious position. Fighting against impossible odds in the name of the greater good, facing the gravity of the consequences, they become heroes in the *classical* sense of the word: arguably, their dilemmas are not unlike those faced by Antigone, Hamlet and other iconic figures in history, literature and mythology. Such is the central premise of this article.

The methodological frame for the analysis of the material in this study has been adopted from Zygmunt Adamczewski's *The Tragic Protest*. Adamczewski's theory, bringing together classical and modern approaches to tragedy, allows for the extrapolation of the principles underlying the protest of such iconic figures as Prometheus, Orestes, Faust, Hamlet, Thomas Stockman or Willy Loman to discourses outside the grand narratives of culture. His theory of the tragic protest serves as a tool facilitating the identification of the features of a quintessential tragic protester, which Adamczewski attains by means of the study of the defining traits of mythological and literary tragic heroes. It is against such a backdrop that I adapt and apply Adamczewski's model to the study of materials related to Chelsea Manning in search of parallels that locate her own form of protest in the universal space of tragedy.

THE TRAGIC PROTESTER: IN SEARCH OF AN ARCHETYPE

Chelsea Manning (like other Western political whistleblowers), emerges from a reality which cannot be separated from the legacy of the past. Both historically and today, to build a strong dominion, any "Emperor"¹ imposes his or her rules, establishing an order which

1. The words "ruler," "Emperor," "government," and other terms of a similar meaning are used interchangeably to denote individuals or privileged

the governed are supposed to believe is universal. As history demonstrates, standing above the law, the “Emperor” wields “absolute power that corrupts absolutely.” Inevitably, he or she becomes the perpetrator of evil. The nature of the “imperial wrongdoings” is especially ambiguous because the “Emperor’s” actions are often justified by means of a rhetorical invocation of the “higher values” or “the greater cause.” Regardless of whether it is the “spreading of civilization,” “defending democracy,” or “fighting terrorism,” the “higher reasons” have always functioned as a potential cover for conquest, legitimizing exploitation, enslavement, torture, or genocide. It is from such an “imperial” order that the whistleblower arises: questioning the foundations of the system, he or she draws others’ attention to flaws in the “imperial” plan, debarring injustice or crimes committed by the “Emperor,” who does not have to abide by the laws he or she creates for all others.

The protest incarnates the freedom to rebel. To create a new reality, the protester must step outside the oppressive order, not unlike Faust, for whom the protest “against the reality he has been led to traverse presses him to stand up against the God he has been led to obey” (Adamczewski 119), and not unlike Orestes, who declares: “Neither slave nor master. I am my freedom” (Sartre, *The Flies*, qtd. in Adamczewski 223). By acknowledging his freedom, the protester not only takes upon himself the responsibility to act, but also breaks out of the discursive order, in which he has been imprisoned. Because such acts always carry consequences, one of the most significant elements in the debate concerning the protest has always been the question of the choice: it is standing before an *impossible* choice and its emotional intensity that makes one’s existence tragic.

The *tragic* protester, unlike many others, always stands alone. Like Hamlet, he “is alienated from his entourage, singled out or singling himself out in his choice” (Adamczewski 75). In the situation of a *tragic choice*, all possible options are destructive: one can either choose to exist in the oppressive reality with full awareness of its flaws and thereby doom him or herself to a constant struggle with one’s conscience, or one may choose to take necessary action

groups wielding power and to emphasize the universality—and constancy—of the “imperial” model of exercising power “above the law.”

and face the consequences, even if that means condemnation, suffering, or death, knowing that “[i]n what you are and choose and become you can strive for property, for integrity, for being true to yourself” (82). The choice of conscious living, which is the essence of being human, is especially consequential in the case of political whistleblowers: “both, or all, of these striving options are in being, are positive, pulling, productive; but mutually for themselves they are negative, repulsing, destructive” (137). For many a political protester this is a Promethean choice: his “is the conflict of value[s], between the existential significance of the human being as such and the essential order of nature as organized by the law of Zeus whose care does not extend to men” (41). The tragic dilemma leaves no hope for a happy end: like Orestes, who “to claim his blood [...] has to destroy his blood, [...] to establish his place in Argos [he] is to be refused and banished by Argos, where, empty, in the attempt to flee his solitude he ends in flight and solitude” (204), the tragic protester acts against what is dear to protect it, often vilified by those he strives to protect, and always alone:

How does Hamlet stand toward the mankind around him? His story is essentially one of isolation, approximating within human limits the solitude of the Titan. [...] Hamlet is alone, and would remain so probably in any station of human society, because he makes himself alone by withdrawal, precisely like Prometheus. (74)

*Captive Minds
Normativities
and Protests*

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Like Orestes, also Hamlet and Prometheus carry the burden of responsibility. As they decide to take up an impossible fight, they doom themselves to suffering in isolation. In the final quest in which they are engaged there is no room for other commitments, no space for sharing moments of everyday life with others. Tragic protesters, questioning the “universality” of the order that others find to be the only reality they can imagine, are often outcasts from their own societies. Afraid of losing *what they know*, turning a blind eye to injustice around them, the very people for whom the protesters fight fail to recognize their own champions, who, like Thomas Stockman, are often ascribed “shocking, injurious, seemingly alien label of ‘an enemy of the people’” (162). Choosing to act, a tragic protester chooses to be “ready to accept social exile, sacrificing himself for the sake of his fellow-citizens though against

their present passion; he clings to his liberating idea but is willing to embrace all men within it” (203), even though those he or she fights for may have not yet broken free from the ideology which entraps them. The element of self-sacrifice for sake of those who “do not understand” puts the protesters in a sympathetic light: they are those who do the right thing, expecting no gratitude or glory, yet are ready to suffer for the greater good of others.

If, under the rule of Zeus, people’s lives have no real significance, it is not entirely untrue of real-life “Emperors,” whose primary and overarching interest is the interest of the *polis*. Common people remain insignificant: the ruler may keep them relatively comfortable and occupied to avoid rebellion that could upturn their own sense of safety and comfort. For Prometheus and Orestes—it is unbearable to stand by and watch as people become dehumanized due to their own inclination towards conformity and submissiveness. Yet,

Should men embrace the alternative in flight from tragedy? Many will. [...] But some will choose to stay alone, deeming themselves free, to stand up for their own being, to exist as unique men. To those few a protest, even if always a lost cause, even if only a protest against, in bounds of time, will be worth their while, their short while in the world. To those the Titanic challenger of heaven opens the temporal entrance into tragic being. They will live as proper creatures of Prometheus.(43)

The essential factor conditioning the protester’s decision to act upon the acknowledged fact that there is a flaw in the dominant order of reality is his or her morality. As Adamczewski observes, “the source of man’s tragic possibilities is his own disposition in the world he dwells in, his proper way to be, his ethos” (16). It is the power of his ethos that makes it *impossible* for Hamlet *not to act*.

With qualms, [Hamlet] has to play the game of his own blood. That is what his princely ambition means to him. It means an existence demanding, desperate and doubtful of its own deserts, yet an existence unavoidably human, unavoidably conscious, unavoidably proper. (73)

“The name of his [Hamlet’s] ‘sickness,’” Adamczewski continues, “is quest for integrity” (95). Being a prince demands from him more than is demanded from others: “the time is out of joint”

and to “set it right” he must avenge his father. Although royal blood is not an usual characteristics among the actors of tragedies playing out in the Aristotelian order, their morality and the morality of contemporary tragic protesters work in a similar way. Unlike the crowd, the tragic protesters rely upon a strong set of values that makes them feel responsible for what happens around them irrespective of personal consequences. Orestes, for the sake of his people, accepts the exile from his land: because he cares for others, he sacrifices himself.

In the face of the overwhelming weight of law, divine, natural, social, this outcast promises to admit “no other law but mine.” When so an inter-human frame of reference is lacking, or when the man in question even explicitly demands to be excluded from it, how can a defect be classified, how can crime be contraposed to merit? Certainly, some externally “objective” adverse verdict and sanction are always available: a man can be judged and punished as criminal by powers outside him. Yet such external powers may miss the heart of the problem of justice, when they are powerless to make him recognize his act as improper, and repent for it; when he continues to regard himself not as a criminal but as a persecuted martyr, the task of justice has hardly been fulfilled. (Adamczewski 205)

Throughout history, law has often proven far from synonymous with morality: suffice it to remember that slavery, the Shoah, the Roma genocide, as well as numerous other crimes against humanity were legal in the light of the laws in force, and those who would protest against them would thereby act against the law. Such ambiguities pose a challenge: they pose essential questions concerning the *justification* of existing regimes, but also the essentials of the worldviews shared by those who protest against them.

It is so because at the heart of the tragic protest lies the deconstruction of the linguistic order based on binary oppositions arbitrarily imposed by the “Emperor.” Deconstructing the opposition between good and evil as defined by the discourse centralized by the “Emperor”—a discourse posited as universal and guarded by those in whose interest it is to uphold the order of the empire, the protester deconstructs the fundament of the law, whose function is to normativize the order preferred by those wielding power. Questioning the basic premises of the *organization*, such

an act dis-*organizes* it in a fashion resembling the manner in which dis-*ease* deconstructs and displaces bodily “ease” as either primary of unmarked state of affairs, sending it to the margin of experience, temporarily (or permanently) transferring the position of centrality to un-“ease.” It is reflected in Hamlet’s withdrawal from the world, in Orestes’ frustration with his people, or in Willy Loman’s inability to continue to live.

Man is not in question here as an organism nor yet as a mind alone. And yet tragedy can be said to effect for the human being what illness does for the human organism: dis-organize it—or what insanity does for the human mentality: render it de-mented, un-mindful, in the sense of moving it outside the wholesome norms in security and accomplishment of man-kind. In a darker significance, tragedy is dis-ease.(265)

Many cultures recognize one’s existence in a balance, in “ease” and in harmony, as a precondition of a healthy body and a healthy mind. Familiarity with what we craft to be our lives, in the present and in the future, gives us as individuals a sense of safety, predictability—and an illusion of being in control. All of that falls apart when the tragic protest becomes one’s life. Paradoxically, the deconstruction of an oppressive ideology (which, in the case of a tragic protester, may prove tantamount to throwing one’s self-definition—or even the whole frame of one’s life’s reference—entirely out of balance) may then result in deconstructing the binaries underlying the discourses of justification for, or explanation of, one’s whole existence. *Dis-ease* is an *absence* of *ease* one needs to live a harmonious life—and simultaneously it is an ailment, defined, on the contrary, by its painful *presence*. One contradicts another, one makes another impossible, because presence and absence are mutually exclusive. Yet it is exactly this oscillation that underlies tragedy in its aporetic ineffability.

Thus, the knowledge of the truth beyond centralized discourses of “the only truth” condemns the protesters with double intensity, placing them in an existential deadlock: their choice is either to live a life of constant suppression of conscience or to take action, as a result which their lives may turn to ruin. No matter how objectively significant the truth is, it is critical for those whose heretofore existence stops in a sudden moment of awakening and a new, dis-eased life starts henceforth. The quintessential

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protester “wages a campaign in the name of truth, as truth were a goddess or an idol and he the select defender, as if it were above and not within his own being there; and so he despises the ‘false’ altars of truth erected by other men” (Adamczewski 171).

In the face of its alternatives, truth becomes a higher moral value: it is worth risking one’s life, especially that suppressing such a realization would make one’s life unbearable anyway. Importantly, the “false altars of truth,” which the protester already recognizes as structures catering to the celebration of lies, may be erected to institute any ideology, regime or preferred perception of the world: capitalism, communism, religion, nationalism or imperialism, liberalism or conservatism.

The truth emerges as a complex phenomenon: for the truth about what proper existence is about one is ready to fight and make sacrifices. Nonetheless, even such a truth is far from absolute: like objective laws or objective execution of those laws, the word “truth,” upon which the former concepts depend, is a product of discourse. Existing in (and owing to) language, it reflects the principles of the metanarrative which gave rise to the language and, as such, is conditioned by the limits of the category-based linguistic image of the world. Therefore—“[t]his above all,—to thine own self be true! [...] Truth to one’s own is a disposition not publicly accessible, not objectively measurable, not susceptible to judgement of others; it is the unique feeling of weight in the task of one’s own existence. Is it then any different from conscience?” (Adamczewski 75).

The moment in which truth and the ethos of the protester intertwine is the one in which the nature of subjectivity as well as the tragic nature of the human condition are revealed: “truth which is distinctly and genuinely tragic, truth in which content and not just form is tragic, truth which is displayed only to those whose vision is tragic, is a prospect not to be dismissed” (Adamczewski 10). The truth as one sees it causes one’s tragedy as it propels an individual to act. Irrespective of whether it is easy or hard to undermine, regardless of the fact that its perception is always perspectivist, it has a tangible effect on an individual’s life.

Therefore suffering is an inherent element of the tragic protest. In its most profound dimension, suffering engages all of the human mind and influences all physical aspects of one’s existence. Oedipus

“cries and curses [protesting] against this truth of existence which is by no means easy to bear” (Adamczewski 61). Hamlet is “a man who knows he is dealing with a dangerous affair, an affair of state, but an affair which disturbs him very intimately” (Adamczewski 71). And

what makes Loman’s protest tragic is not its quality, its objectives, its influence on him, but its mere continuous though fading presence: its existence in him. This is his cry: “The woods are burning!” He is as a human being fully aware of the oppressive heat, of flames pressing ever closer, of himself sinking suppressed. (Adamczewski 190)

Tragic protesters suffer as they struggle with unanswered (and sometimes unanswerable) questions; they suffer as they give themselves wholly to the cause that often remains beyond the logic of institutionalized discourse; they suffer because their sacrifice is often futile; they suffer because no matter what they choose to do, they will face tremendous consequences.

The existential condition of the tragic protester, as Zygmunt Adamczewski’s analysis demonstrates, epitomized by literary, mythological and historical figures, seems to be timeless. Brought together, the traits of the characters studied by the scholar form a model so old and so deeply inscribed into the texture of culture that its significance is close to that of an archetype. It is therefore possible to argue that the iconic contemporary political whistleblowers, like Daniel Ellsberg, Edward Snowden, Chelsea Manning, seem to emulate that archetype, as their personal tragedies, invisible beyond the surface of their mass media image, share in the sublime dimension of the epic tragedies of the canonical tragic protesters of the western world.

AGAINST APATHY: THE TRAGEDY OF SPEAKING OUT

“This is possibly one of the more significant documents of our time removing the fog of war and revealing the true nature of twenty-first century asymmetric warfare. [...] Have a good day” (Shaer 2017)—Chelsea Manning wrote in an anonymous text file she wanted to attach to the largest collection of classified or sensitive military and diplomatic documents ever leaked to the public. As is well known, serving as a United States army intelligence analyst,

Manning disclosed nearly 750 thousand documents to WikiLeaks, including, as Wikipedia informs us, 250,000 diplomatic telegrams, video footage of the July 12, 2007, Baghdad airstrike, and the video of the Granai airstrike). Reported by Adrián Alfonso Lamo Atwood, a threat analyst and a hacker, in whom she had confided, she was arrested in 2011. Having spent two years in confinement, including eleven months in the level 1 military prison in Quantico, Virginia (in maximum-security custody),² she was charged under the Espionage Act and sentenced to 35 years of imprisonment (“Wikileaks: The Forgotten Man”). In 2017, she was released after her sentence was commuted by President Barack Obama.

Although patterns seem similar, the case of Manning is different than the cases of other contemporary whistleblowers like Daniel Ellsberg or Edward Snowden. It is so because of the clash between her gender identity and her biological sex, which she later described as a “giant, cosmic toothache” to which no remedy could be found. “[...] Morning, evening, breakfast, lunch, dinner, wherever you are. It’s everywhere you go” (Shaer). Especially in the context of the military profession, such a “cosmic” experience might sensitize a person to the suffering of others to a greater extent than could be the case otherwise. Admittedly, until her trial, conviction, release and sex change, Manning had spent all of her life hiding her true self. “[L]iving such an opaque life,” she confessed, “has forced me never to take transparency, openness, and honesty for granted” (Hansen). Yet, the sense of loneliness experienced while being with others had always been a part of her existential experience, and a familiar space. “I’ve been so isolated so long...,” she recalls, “I just wanted to be nice, and live a normal life... but events kept forcing me to figure out ways to survive... smart enough

2. “[B]y definition, Level I means that it ‘provide[d] pretrial and short-term posttrial confinement support. Level I confinement facilities are generally limited to 90 or fewer days. When necessary, Level I facilities may confine prisoners more than 90 days, but not to exceed 1 year.’” The Army Corrections System, AR 19–47 Section 2–2 “Components of the Army Corrections System,” qtd. in the Wikipedia entry: “Marine Corps Brig, Quantico,” in: *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Corps_Brig,_Quantico (Accessed 15 April 2020).

to know what's going on, but helpless to do anything... no-one took any notice of me" ("Bradley Manning in his own Words")³.

Perhaps it is also because of her otherness that some of the traits characterizing the prototypical tragic protesters had been hers long before she became one of the world's most prominent whistleblowers. Before she embraced her female identity, she had often been misunderstood and, since elementary school, found fitting into her environment challenging. But it was especially during the time of her service in the army that her experience of marginalization became particularly hurtful (Hansen; Shaer). One of the soldiers who served with her later recalled that "Manning was routinely called a 'faggot.' The guy took it from every side. He couldn't please anyone. And he tried. He really did" (Shaer). Manning's perception of war was, therefore, multifaceted: downgraded and slighted as a soldier "trying her best" and overwhelmed with the gravity of her sudden discovery of the unbearable truth about the war in which she was obliged to fight in the name of her country, she faced a dilemma of epic dimensions.

Noticing obvious contradictions between the official discourse and the ruthlessness of the daily military practice, in her final Facebook message to her partner, Tyler Watkins, she would comment upon her experience thus: "I live in a very real world, where deaths and detainment are just statistics; where idealistic calls for 'liberation' and 'freedom' are utterly meaningless" (O'Kane). The situation in which she found herself was governed by unclear rules, where moral values would fluctuate and where "patriotism [would be] used to excuse acts that a democracy should abhor" (Rosenthal). When she witnessed unjust and undemocratic actions, she decided to report it to her commander in hope of his intervention. Then,

[s]he is told to 'shut up' and instead to 'explain' to her commander how she can help further restrict free speech and democracy. It would be a mistake, though, to read this moment as a simple *silencing* of Manning. Rather, her commanding officer also commands her to *speak*

3. Spelling (sometimes reflecting pronunciation) and text editing in the citations from the chat logs are quoted in the original form, except for apparently unintentional underlining, which has been removed.

differently—to speak in the register of American interests rather than in terms of right and wrong, true and false. (Maxwell)

In this quote from her “Truth in Public: Chelsea Manning, Gender Identity, and the Politics of Truth-Telling,” Linda Maxwell focuses on the language of the army—the language where there is no room for distinctions based on elementary moral values. Instead, with no regard for democracy or the value of human life, the soldiers are to be concerned with patriotism defined broadly as “doing what is good for the United States.” Nonetheless, the imposed compulsion to engage in what is a parallel to Orwellian newspeak did not have an expected effect on Manning.

The most obvious thing that jumps out at the reader from this story is American hypocrisy: Manning realizes that the United States says that it is promoting democracy and free speech, when in reality it is helping the Iraqis restrict free speech and democracy on behalf of stability. (Maxwell)

Realizing the truth, she could not feel comfortable witnessing the abuse of human rights and the values of democracy as a representative of the abuser. The discourse of justification imposed by the army and expected to be taken for granted by the U.S. soldiers underwent an unanticipated deconstruction: the oppositions between “just” and “unjust,” “honorable” and “dishonorable,” “patriotic” and “unpatriotic” collapsed, activating an altogether new configuration of values, which made it impossible for Manning to suppress the knowledge that she attained. In one of her chats, she declares:

(02:26:01 PM) bradass87: i dont believe in good guys versus bad guys anymore... i only [see] a plethora of states acting in self interest... with varying ethics and moral standards of course, but self-interest nonetheless. (Hansen)

Evidently, the disillusionment with the world around her let Manning perceive reality more clearly than ever before. It allowed her to see that what the “Empire” construes as “objectively just” and based on allegedly “universal values”—is only an illusion. Once she found the material testifying to the U.S. military crimes (particularly the video of the July 12, 2007, Baghdad airstrike known

as *Collateral Murder*) she no longer was able to rationalize them. "It was still on my mind," she declared, "... i kept that in my mind for weeks... probably a month and a half... before i forwarded it to them" (Hansen). Her dramatic confession demonstrates that Manning faced an impossible choice between staying loyal to the state, which she represented as a U.S. soldier, and staying loyal to herself by doing what she thought was right.

Her dilemma was finally resolved when Manning's strong sense of responsibility prevailed. Interpreting her choice, Ellsberg claims that "Manning was defending the Constitution in revealing the truth about the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan" (qtd. in McGreal), but what seems clear from the logs of her chats is that it was her empathy, perhaps to an extent greater than her rationality, that was the driving force of her actions. In her conversation with Lamo she declared: "i cant separate myself from others... i feel connected to everybody... like they were distant family... i... care?" and then she adds: "we're human... and we're killing ourselves... and no-one seems to see that... and it bothers me... apathy... apathy is far worse than the active participation" (Hansen). Manning's sense of connectedness with those suffering made it impossible for her to suppress the gravity of the truth that she had discovered about how the U.S. fought its war, and to stand by the ideology underlying both the American propaganda and the army cease-and-desist rules. She confessed: "i just... couldnt let these things stay inside of the system... and inside of my head..." (Hansen).

The psychological urge to shake off the unbearable burden excluded the possibility of her passivity: reinforced with her belief that "apathy is worse than wrongdoing," it pushed her into action. Heather Brooke confirms it, arguing that it was Manning's sensitivity to human suffering which energized her: "if Manning is convicted, it will be because his individual dedication to human ethics far surpasses that of the U.S. government" (Brooke). Describing herself as a humanist, Manning acts on the values that the philosophy of humanism embraces; that, however, does not exclude her struggle with doubt, which is strongly manifest in her conversations with Lamo. Although the exchange below was partly related to her insecurity regarding her gender, parts of it express concern about the disclosed material.

(02:20:57 AM) bradass87: well, it was forwarded to WL
(02:21:18 AM) bradass87: and god knows what happens now
(02:22:27 AM) bradass87: hopefully worldwide discussion, debates,
and reforms
(02:23:06 AM) bradass87: if not... than we're doomed
(02:23:18 AM) bradass87: as a species
(02:24:13 AM) bradass87: i will officially give up on the society we have
if nothing happens. (Hansen)

Manning put her faith in people and in essential democratic values. She was confident about the fact that people had an obligation to act, to defy the government, rather than conform to the U.S. war policy. Her choice to do so, however, rendered her the epitome of loneliness, and that in more than one respect. The disclosure of the materials caused the multiplication of the dimensions of isolation that Manning would have to simultaneously suffer. Next to metaphysical and emotional isolation she had been experiencing for years, her actual imprisonment would physically isolate her from others in the world. After her arrest, the protester was detained in Quantico, in solitary confinement which lasted roughly eleven months. Some time after her release, Manning thus recalls the time when her detention began: "I was completely isolated. [...] I've been forgotten about, and I've just disappeared" (Shaer). Experiencing loneliness in such a profound way, when she felt her existence was ignored, Manning discovered yet another dimension of tragedy: even those whose rights she fought for failed to appreciate her sacrifice. It was only after enough international political pressure from various non-governmental organizations and from the United Nations Special Rapporteur for Human Rights was exerted upon the U.S. administration that she was moved to Fort Leavenworth (Rothe). In the context of the violation of human rights, it cannot be questioned that what she experienced in the first years after her arrest was deep emotional trauma combined with humiliation. During her stay in Quantico, Manning stated:

In fact, I am currently the only detainee being held under MAX Custody [...] As a result of being placed on Suicide Risk, I was confined to my cell for 24 h a day. I was also stripped of all clothing with the exception of my underwear. Additionally, my prescription eyeglasses were taken from me. Due to not having my glasses, I was forced to sit in essential

blindness during the day. [...] The determination to place me on Suicide Risk was without justification and therefore constitutes unlawful pre-trial punishment. (Manning)

Facing severe punitive measures even before her trial, isolated, humiliated, forgotten, Manning did not have a future to which to look forward with much hope. A lifetime in prison or even a death penalty were distinct possibilities and, at the time of her arrest, the commutation of the verdict seemed unlikely. Yet, beyond the point of no return, her individuality found expression mainly in terms of conscious shaping of her worldview against a backdrop of the binaries defining the dominant norms of the heteronormative society, which, in the context of the military, would assume acute forms of unrelenting domination of the language of masculinity. Self-conscious and unable to suppress that self-consciousness, Manning suffered the consequences of her defiance of both the social norms and the principles underlying the functioning of the military environment with its simplified ethics and its obvious denial of empathy: those trained to shoot and kill must be systematically de-sensitized to the suffering they cause and cannot afford any doubts that could result in hesitation putting their survival at risk. Yet, driven by empathy, Chelsea Manning lived up to her declaration: "i had always questioned the [way] things worked, and investigated to find the truth" (Hansen). She wrote to Lomo: "i want people to see the truth... regardless of who they are... because without information, you cannot make informed decisions as a public" (Hansen).

Embracing democratic values, Manning thus expressed her rational belief that it is the role of people to decide whether or not to curtail what in her perspective was their state's wrongdoings. However, it was her *emotional* awareness of the truth that put Manning in a position in which she found it impossible to suppress her knowledge: the gravity of the facts affected her whole existence. "I prefer a painful truth over any blissful fantasy" (Hansen), she declared, and blowing the whistle on the government she disclosed the lies propagated by the U.S. to cover up their real actions and motives, possibly in hope of changing her own dis-eased existence despite the inevitable consequences.

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She declared that after she had realized the truth under the veil of the military propaganda “everything started slipping” and that she “saw things differently” (Hansen). With all the former moral imperatives losing validity as a result of the spontaneous deconstruction of the basic distinctions between good and evil, Manning felt lost in her reality: “im just kind of drifting now...,” she declared, and plainly confessed her depressive state: “im a wreck” (Hansen). Her dramatic projection of the unavoidably painful future (“still gonna be weird watching the world change on the macro scale, while my life changes on the micro” [Hansen]), seems to indicate that her choice to embrace the possible death sentence or lifetime imprisonment would still be more bearable than living in silence, haunted by the facts about the war she would not be able to unlearn. Believing in democracy and in freedom of information, yet aware of the unavoidable fallout of her possible action, she struggled with the decision she faced: although she had been in possession of the shocking material for several months, she did not disclose the truth immediately. Yet, when she finally blew the whistle, her tragic protest was a mature act of conscience, one based on self-reflection and on the acknowledgment of the impossibility of a choice for which she would not be ready to pay the price of her peace of mind.

APORIAS: THE MAKING OF A TRAGIC HERO
(CONCLUDING REMARKS)

In Manning’s perception, the governmental propaganda, resting upon the ethical connotations of such words as “democracy” or “patriotism,” has been used by the state to help exercise its power world-wide. In light of her discoveries, the essential binary oppositions underlying the axiological matrix of the language and ideology imposed by the state became deconstructed. As a result, the primary senses of the key words of the state ideology became marginal, while the formerly marginal interpretations of them, gaining the status of centrality, would result in a complete reversal of her reading of the U.S. government as the warrant of the stability of the essential American values. Driven by a higher moral imperative, recognizing the superiority of the higher law—be it the U.S. Constitution or human rights,

Chelsea Manning faced the dilemma of what it means to serve one's own country.

She came into knowledge which changed her life. The ramifications of the classified facts she discovered made it impossible for her to either suppress the new knowledge and live her life pretending to subscribe to the discourse of the state, or avoid the consequences of the disclosure of the classified information in the public space. The choice she faced was the choice between options of catastrophic consequences: blowing the whistle would come at the price of the loss of her previous life, her identity and her freedom; the decision not to act would compromise her integrity. She liberated herself from the state-imposed ideology when her new knowledge energized the deconstructions of the categories upon which the preferred, allegedly "universal" ideological discourse was based. "Awakened," she in-read her own meaning into the microhistories to which she (involuntarily) became privy, debarring the imperial agenda of the official language of axiology. Aware of the consequences, Manning decided to follow her own conscience and to choose the path of non-conformity rather than adjust to the norms dictated by a sinister ideology used to manipulate masses. True to her beliefs, paying homage to the essential human rights, exercising empathy, Chelsea Manning would epitomize the archetype of a tragic protester, inscribed into the basic metanarratives of western culture and embodied in such iconic characters as Prometheus, Orestes, Hamlet, or Faust. In a world where the opposition between "patriot" and "traitor" ceased to be ethically productive, her defiance of the great system ruling the world, which came at a great personal cost, broke the aporia and provided new directions not only to Manning, but to those who, dis-eased with what they see, needed a trigger for action. Thus, Chelsea Manning became an icon of a whistleblower, and as an icon of heroism she incarnates the values shared by the mythical heroes of the past. As a tragic hero of the 21st century, she is perceived as the champion of essential human liberties and rights and a model of personal integrity, all too often opportunistically exchanged for the comfort of conformity by the captive minds of the societies of the late capitalist era.

Because she lived.

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PARADIGMS OF OTHERNESS

The American Savage in British Eighteenth-Century Popular and Scholarly Literature

INTRODUCING THE “SAVAGE OF AMERICA”

Derived from the Latin *salvaticus* and therefore associated to the wild pagans of the woods, the term savage shifted from its original meaning during the era of European geographical discoveries, coming to denote exotic otherness. One of the earliest examples of such a semantic shift can be found in William Camden’s *Remains concerning Britain* (1605), where the phrase “savage of America” for the first time connects the folkloristic imagery of the beastie forest dwellers¹ to the description of the uncivilized natives of the New World.²

Indeed, whether portrayed as innocent creatures in edenic paradises or ferocious demons in corrupted lands of sloth, American

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1. The medieval type of the Woodwose, from the Anglo-Saxon “Wudu-wasa” to the German “Holzwib,” is a mythical creature that was believed to be the link between modern humans and their ancestors. Often depicted with a tail and a body covered with thick hair, the Woodwose is generally accompanied by a young captive boy tied to a branch (*Monstrous Bodies* 28).
2. William Camden’s work *Remains Concerning Britain* is perfectly inscribed in the Renaissance tradition of incorporating the discourse about the savage virtue of pre-Roman Britain with the emerging speculations on the indomitable character of the populations of the newly conquered territories. Indeed, the *topos* of the worth of Britons’ ancestors goes back to as far as Tacitus who provides a nostalgic version of the *translation imperii* myth where the refinement and civility brought by the Roman conquest corresponds to the loss of innocence of Britain (Tacitus, *Germania*, chap. 11). Then, across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the scholarly dispute about the effeminizing effects of Latin culture on “the old discipline of England”

natives were commonly represented as an underdeveloped race subsisting beyond the structures and standards of Western civilization. The anecdotes from the first-hand encounters between the early explorers of the Old Continent and the Indians reinforced such a simplistic imagery by providing sketches of the “savages” as mere objects of fascination, wonder, and horror.³ For example, Christopher Columbus’s initial comments about the Arawak population of the Antille appear as rooted in a patronizing rhetoric of evaluation of the natives both in terms of aesthetic features (their bodily beauty) and commercial value (their aptness to slavery):

They were well-built, with good bodies and handsome features [...] They do not bear arms, and do not know them, for I showed them a sword, they took it by the edge and cut themselves out of ignorance. They have no iron. Their spears are made of cane [...] They would make fine servants [...] With fifty men we could subjugate them all and make them do whatever we want. (Morison 43)

Likewise, Ferdinand Magellan’s description of the Brazilian savages of Verzin in 1519 reveals the same discourse of contrastive

re-emerged as a crucial factor in Stephen Gosson’s *School of Abuse* (1579): “Englishmen could suffer watching and labour, hunger, and thirst, and bear of all storms with head and shoulders. They used slender weapons, went naked, and were good soldiers. They fed upon roots and barks of trees, they would stand up to the chin many days in marshes without victuals [...] the men in valor not yielding to Scythia, the women in courage and wrestling and trying such masteries as either consisted in swiftness of feet, agility of body, strength of arms, or martial discipline” (*The English Renaissance* 286). A few years later, Philip Sidney’s *Defense of Poesy* (1595) associates the savage nobility of the “barbarous and simple Indians” of America to the “true remnant of the ancient Britons” in Wales (Aughterson 55).

3. The term “savage” has been used for centuries by white explorers and settlers to dehumanize Indigenous peoples and normalize the use of violence and abuses against them. On the other hand, the word “Indian” is commonly derived by Christopher Columbus’s first encounter with the native peoples of the Antilles he referred to as *Indios*: persons from the Indus valley. Reflecting the wrong assumption that Columbus had finally reached Asia and the Indian Ocean, such mistaken nomenclature was extended in geographical terms to the Caribbean Islands, still known today as the West Indies. In this article, the intentional use of the words “Indians” and “savages” referring to the native tribes of the American continent is meant to reflect their colonial connotation.

assessment of the locals, further supported by the implication of a certain trait of risible animal plainness of their customs:

The said land of Verzin abounds in all good things, and it is larger than France, Spain, and Italy together. It is one of the countries that the King of Portugal has conquered. Its people are not Christians, and worship nothing, but live according to the custom of nature, more like beasts than otherwise. And some of these people live a hundred years, or six score or seven score years, or more, and they go naked, both men and women. Their habitation is in fairly long houses, which they call Boii, and they sleep in nets of cotton, which they call in their language Amache. Be it noted also that the inhabitants of that country, both men and women, are in the habit of painting themselves with fire [i.e., tattooing] over all the body and face. The men are shaved and wear no beard, for they pluck it out themselves. And their whole clothing is a ring surrounded by the largest parrot feathers, with which they cover the part and backside only. Which is a very ridiculous thing [...] And those people, both men and women, are not quite black, but tend to tan color, and they openly display their shame. (Pigafetta 43)

Then, with the seventeenth-century capillarization of the European settlements, along with the spread of French Jesuit missions in Acadia and Terre-Neuve, Western understanding of native American societies improved. In particular, thanks to its "scientific" approach to conversion, the Society of Jesus equated every process of evangelization to an intellectual enterprise,⁴ thus playing a major role in promoting the scholarly knowledge of indigenous cultures in terms of languages, customs, and religious beliefs. In 1634, for example, Father Julien Perrault provided a written account of the Mi'kmaq tribe, Nova Scotia, reporting how they lived according to a seasonal subsistence round, how they dressed and behaved, and, of course, what they looked like. Similarly, the written reports of Father Claude Dablon about the resident tribes of the Illinois Confederation, upper Mississippi, result as permeated with the same Jesuit spirit of intellectual curiosity almost constantly inspired by the doctrinal urge to disclose a specific type of "savage virtue":⁵

4. Referring to Jesus's words in Matthew's Gospel (Mat 28:18–20), in Jesuit doctrine to evangelize means to observe, learn and act consequently.

5. The Jesuits were inclined to consider savagery in more sympathetic terms as a result of their doctrine. In fact, as a reaction to Calvinist's obsession for men's sinful nature, the theology of the Society of Jesus saw man

is [the chief of the Illinois] countenance, moreover, is as gentle and winning as is possible to see; and, although, he is regarded as a great warrior, he has a mildness of expression that delights all the beholders. The inner nature does not belie the external appearance, for he is of a tender and affectionate disposition [...] And what we say of the chief can be said of all the rest of his nation, in whom we have noted the same disposition, together with a docility which has no savor of barbarian. (Gold Thwaites 213)

For most of the period between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the history of encounters between the wild natives of the New World and the civilized peoples of the Old Continent had been primarily a written one, carried out through the circulation of settlers' memoirs, captivity narratives, or missionary reports. Notwithstanding the massive presence of such forms of literature, it was not until the advent of the eighteenth century that the picturesque inhabitants of the imperial peripheries gained center stage in British public debate. This was mainly due to a variety of factors connected to the unprecedented development of material sites of civic sociability (i.e., the premises of the new coffee houses, literary salons, voluntary societies and associations) and the virtual discursive practices that appeared along with the emerging print culture. Jürgen Habermas defined such a phenomenon as the birth of the public sphere: the community of inter-subjective networks responsible for the processes of opinion formation and the exercise of political power.⁶ In Habermas's

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as "less afflicted with much less irreducible evil than the puritanical and that he was therefore comparatively free to seek and to find the good by his own natural efforts" (Healey 1958). This implied a subtle but highly significant shift from the concept of "fallen" to "purely natural" man, meaning that man—no matter how removed from divine presence or favor—always retained as part of his inherent nature those substantial power that made him a creature of dignity, worth, and real potential virtue. It easily followed that even living *extra ecclesia* and therefore being not competent to the attaining of eternal life, the good pagans were not damned or unworthy creatures.

6. Even though Habermas's thesis can be considered as the basis of the scholarly debate about the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere, there is also an extensive number of critical contributions published in the last thirty years which question, or at least problematize, his assumptions. Brian Cowan's essay "Making Publics and Making Novels: Post-Habermasian Perspectives" provides a comprehensive summary of the works that have appeared on this contentious subject (Downie 55–70).

theorization, the concept of the public sphere is intrinsically tangled with the field of cultural production as it was from the very pages of the new-born genres of journalism and realistic fiction that the views and tastes of the British reading public began to be shaped, reflected, and—most importantly—manipulated.

In this perspective, the availability of information about the foreign lands and populations of North America in the press, along with the strategic opacity through which such information was conveyed—"sufficiently imperfect to allow for, or necessitate, a good deal of imaginative interpretation" (Whelan 6) stimulated a substantial growth of public curiosity. However, if at the beginning of the Augustan Age the representations of North American Indians were still embedded in the early modern forms of Eurocentric fetishism, practically interchangeable with all sorts of manifestations of non-European otherness, this changed in the mid-eighteenth century with the outbreak of the Seven Years War (1756–1763). In this period, the mediatic narrative regarding the role of the savage tribes as potential allies or dangerous obstacles to the exercise of British hegemony in the colonies contributed to transforming the stereotypical imagery of the American Indians into a more tangible reality echoing Britain's own socio-economic past as well as present imperial prosperity.

More specifically, in the peculiar context of the Scottish Enlightenment, the indigenous peoples of America began to be perceived as a set of comparable types enabling Europeans to witness "the first footsteps of the human race" (Scots Magazine, August 1777, 434. qtd. in Bickham 199).⁷ By analyzing primitive tribes

7. Just like in the classic age the institutions and laws of the Greek *polis* could be conceptualized and evaluated in contrast with the practices of the non-Greek barbarians or the despotic theocracy of Persia, European Enlightenment utilized the savages of America as a contrastive mirror-glass for the self-referential evaluation of the merits and achievements of Western civilization. Frederick G. Whelan explains the philosophical foundations of such dynamics of cultural comparison in these terms: "Both empirical political theory (social science) and normative theory (moral evaluation in the political field) would seem to require comparison. Meaningful analysis of a phenomenon such as a social practice, a law code, or a form of government involves the identification of what is essential or special about it, which in turn requires a contrast with other, differing instances

at degree zero on the Western thermometer of civilization, Scottish thinkers developed a new category of historiography known as stadial and conjectural history which aimed to produce a rational reconstruction of the common patterns of progress of mankind. Adam Smith, David Hume, Adam Ferguson, John Millar, Lord Kames, and William Robertson, were among the firsts to pursue such a vision of a comprehensive natural history of civilization deploying the discourse of American Indians to categorize the hierarchy of human societies while carrying out an unprecedented inquiry on the origins and evolution of the European cultural identity.

With these premises, in this article I will explore the transformations of the British imagery regarding the savages of America in the context of eighteenth-century print and material culture. The proliferation of Indian-related subjects in the British public sphere will be analyzed in light of the emerging representations of the Empire both as a geopolitical and discursive reality. Then, I will examine the development of the Scottish Enlightenment underlying its role as main ideological framework for the evaluation of the economic and technological superiority of European civilizations against all those peripheral cultures with whom the British Empire interacted.

BALLADS AND POPULAR STORIES: THE SAVAGE AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Separated by hundreds of miles of oceanic and continental wilderness, the British reading public encountered the American savage on an impressively regular basis. Even if the rare presence of indigenous visitors to Britain prevented such encounters to occur on a physical or personal level, Britons could virtually access information about the mysterious lands of North American and their exotic inhabitants through specific literary genres and social happenings. Written accounts and reports of the “Savage Nations” circulated among the publishers

of the same kind of thing. Evaluative judgments of particulars may appeal to an ideal standard (the best regime, the law of nature) that the philosopher delineates in the abstract, but the more practical questions of distinguishing better and worse regimes from the historically feasible set, or of identifying the moral advantages, disadvantages, and trade-offs in the actual alternatives of political experience, similarly require comparison” (2).

and were exchanged by readers either privately or through commercial lending schemes. Similarly, material exhibitions of all sorts of non-European artifacts became sensational events tailored to redirect the public interest towards imperial issues by engaging both men and women in the cultural debate about alien societies and their relationships with Britain. In this paragraph I will give an account of the early literary representations of American Indians into the burgeoning public sphere. In particular, I will focus on the first visit of the Iroquois delegation at Queen Ann's court in 1710 and its resonance in British cultural imagery as written texts and iconographic material. I will then point out how Richard Steele's famous adaptation of the story of Inkle and Yarico, included in the 11th issue of *The Spectator*, contributed to the construction of the early Enlightenment critique towards the new practices of colonial trade based on the growing English hegemony in the Slave Trade.

One of the most renowned cases of direct contact between Britons and native Americans on British national soil is certainly associated to the "Four Iroquois Kings." The episode revolves around the arrival in 1710 of a delegation of Indian leaders—three Mohawk from the Haudenosaunee alliance and one Mohican from the Algonquin nations—supporting Lieutenant Francis Nicholson in his aim to persuade the government to send naval support for an expedition against New France.⁸ Misnamed by both degree and kin, the foreign visitors were curiously neither kings nor Iroquois. However, they were granted the same degree of deference reserved to diplomats and fellow members of the elites and engaged in a variety of institutional activities such as reviewing troops, touring across noble estates, visiting London's major sights, and—of course—being presented at court.⁹ Queen Ann herself was so impressed by the tall,

8. The presence of the delegation was intended to emphasize that Nicholson had powerful support from the native populations for his venture which, unfortunately, resulted in a clamorous naval defeat.

9. For a detailed account of the different activities of the Mohawk delegates, see Hinderaker, pp. 487–526.

muscular physique of her guests to commission their portraits to the famous Dutch painter John Verelst.¹⁰

Even outside the palace walls, the popular response to the Mohawk envoy was quite significant as the four Indian chiefs were quickly turned into celebrities by the metropolitan press. The reading public was meticulously notified of almost every movement of the delegation across the city so that spontaneous crowds of Londoners would gather to catch a glimpse of them everywhere they went. At the same time, a number of ballads, poems, illustrations, and musical compositions, began to proliferate in the entertainment industry to satisfy the public demand for the “kings.” Among these, the homonymous love ballad “The Four Indian Kings” is probably one of the most popular and enduring literary legacies of such an event. Published shortly after the end of the Iroquois visit in 1710, the ballad remained little altered from its first appearances and survived in at least twenty-six printed editions throughout the English, Irish, and North American publishing markets. As Alden T. Vaughan points out in his study *Transatlantic Encounters: American Indians in Britain, 1500–1776*:

Fifteen or more undated broadsides and short pamphlets from various printers throughout England and Ireland, published soon after the Indians’ departure to America, relate in rhymed stanzas a brief and in most versions unhappy romance between one of the Indians (implicitly unmarried) and a beautiful English lady. By repeating and expanding the story for a year or more after the Indians had left England, the pamphlets vicariously extended, embellished and disseminated their story. (128)

The ballad opens with a historical contextualization which emphasizes the reasons of the native prince to come to Britain:

Attend unto a true relation
Of four Indian kings of late
Who came to this Christian nation
To report their sorrows great
Which by France they had sustained

10. The series of oil-colors known as *The Four Indian Kings* or *Four Kings of the New World* constitutes one of the first pictorial renderings of aboriginal people where the subjects are not merely captured in their ethnographic peculiarity, but portrayed as authentic English aristocrats posing in front of wild American landscapes in their most ornate apparels.

to the overthrow of trade
That the seas might be regained
Who are come to beg our aid. (Stevens 97)

The love story emerges from “a glance of Britain’s glory” in the modern metropolitan setting of St. James’s Park, where the youngest king admires “Troops of handsome ladies fair/Rich and gaudily attir’d/Rubies, jewels, diamond rings” and falls in love with “One fair lady.” The symbolic characterization of the beautiful woman is that of “Britain’s glory” itself—its society, culture and civilization—and serves to establish an immediate sense of alterity with the identity of the Indian king. Notwithstanding the undoubted qualities of the young lover derived from his noble status (“tho’ he is an Indian king”), the lady initially rejects his proposal for he is a pagan :

Tho’ I pity his disaster
Tho’ I pity his disaster
Being catch’d in Cupid’s snare
Tis against all true discretion
To comply with what I scorn:
He’s a Heathen by profession,
I a Christian bred and born. (Stevens 98)

However, only a few lines later, she resolves to accept him if he agrees to “become a Christian”

If he will become a Christian,
Live up to the truth reveal’d,
I will make him grant the question,
Or before will never yield
Altho’ he was pleased to send to me,
His fine ring and diamond stone,
With this answer pray commend
To your master yet unknown. (Stevens 98)

This is where the early versions of the ballad end. Some copies from the second half of the eighteenth century add a passage in which the Indian king converts to Christianity and marries the lady with Queen Ann’s approval.¹¹ Envisioning the possibility for a colonized “other” to be redeemed by the love of a civilized

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11. For a reconstruction of the different versions of the Ballad see Bond 57–68.

woman, “The Four Indian Kings” ballad embodies a classic imperial fantasy where the powerful combination of love and Christianity is presented as the only means to ensure the savage outsiders the access to a new order of enlightened fellowship.

Besides the effective literary merits of such a text, “The Four Indian Kings” continued to shape the British popular perception of the indigenous visitors thanks to its iconographic apparatus. Indeed, the stereotypical woodcut illustrations enclosed in the many editions of the ballad depicted the native chiefs as European monarchs, with scepters, crowns, fur-trimmed capes, and—most strikingly—white faces. In addition to that, as each reprinted edition became farther removed in time from the kings’ original visit, a series of more substantial shifts in the collective memory of the event began to occur. In particular, the number of the Indians was progressively reduced to three while any reference to their North American origins was obliterated in the subtle, somehow unconscious, attempt to assimilate them to the best-known biblical correlative of traveling royals: the Magi (Hinderaker 518).

About a year after this exotic encounter, another prominent discussion regarding the colonial world emerged from the new publication of *The Spectator* by Addison and Steele. Published from March 1711 to 1714, the lifespan of *The Spectator* coincides with an important period for Britain’s imperial history. In fact, by the time of its first issue in 1711 the War of Spanish Succession (1710–1714) was clearly resolving to the advantage of Britain’s imperial enterprise. Conversely, the periodical’s final issue coincides with the Peace of Utrecht (1714) which legally established Britain as the main European power in North America and the Caribbean granting it the monopoly of the Slave Trade. In this perspective, it is not much of a surprise that *The Spectator* results both tangentially and directly concerned with the construction of the early eighteenth-century colonial discourse. Among the stories focused on the relationship between Britain and the extra-European world, nothing hooked the popular imagination more than Steele’s rewriting of the romance of Inkle and Yarico in *The Spectator* (11).

Originally reported by Richard Lingon in his *History of the Island of the Barbadoes* in 1657, the bitter-sweet account of the European sailor Inkle and the indigenous maiden Yarico “sold for a slave, who

was as a free born as he" (*The Spectator* 11) soon became the source of dozens of poems, prose continuations, and dramas, the majority of which were written between 1785 and 1795 during the abolitionist campaign.¹² Steele's version includes a frame narrative following Mr. Spectator's encounter with Arietta, an older woman many people visit to converse with. When Mr. Spectator enters her drawing room, she is discussing matters of "constancy in love" with another man who is using the tale of *The Ephesian Matron* to support his point. Arietta responds to the gentleman's tale with her story of *Inkle and Yarico* where she presents Thomas Inkle as a twenty-year-old Englishman educated by his father in the "love of gain." On its way to the Barbados Islands, his ship comes under some distress and is "put into a Creek on the Main in America, in search of provisions." When a group of Indians ambushes and kills many of Inkle's shipmates, he escapes and hides in a cave where he meets Yarico. The attraction towards the Indian maiden is immediate:

They appeared mutually agreeable to each other. If the European was highly charmed with the Limbs, Features, and wild Graces of the Naked American; the American was no less taken with the Dress, Complexion, and Shape of an European, covered from Head to Foot. The Indian grew immediately enamoured of him, and consequently solicitous for his Preservation (*The Spectator* 11).

Falling in love with one another's diversity, especially clothing and physical appearances, Yarico spends the next several months hiding Inkle from her people while providing him with food and fresh water so that "In this manner did the Lovers pass away their Time, till they had learn'd a Language of their own." Eventually, another ship heading for the Barbadoes passed, and Inkle and Yarico used this opportunity to leave the island. However, after reaching the English colony, Inkle considers selling Yarico as a slave even after being informed she is pregnant with his child:

To be short, Mr. Thomas Inkle, now coming into English territories, began seriously to reflect upon his loss of Time, and to weigh with himself how

12. According to Frank Felsenstein, over the course of the eighteenth century at least sixty versions of the story were published. It was translated into a variety of languages, made into an opera, a play, and rendered in the form of a poem (2).

many Days Interest of his Money he had lost during his stay with Yarico. This Thought made the Young Man very pensive, and careful what Account he should be able to give his Friends of his Voyage. Upon which Considerations, the prudent and frugal young Man sold Yarico to a Barbadian merchant; notwithstanding that the poor Girl, to incline him to commiserate her Condition, told him that she was with Child be him: But he only made use of that Information, to rise in his Demands upon the Purchaser (*The Spectator* 11).

Steele's version ends with a return to the frame narrative wherein Arietta closes her tale highlighting how Inkle exploited Yarico's condition to bargain for a higher price when selling her, leaving Mr. Spectator visibly moved.

Despite the purely fictional nature of this peculiar story of love and slavery, the popular clamor around Inkle and Yarico reveals a lot about the British perception of the dynamics of hierarchy, gender, and property, implied in the practice of colonial trade.¹³ In particular, Mr Spectator's emotional reaction to Arietta's tale can be read as a symptom of the uneasiness regarding the exploitation of indigenous people and the arbitrariness of the boundary between the status of free and enslaved human beings during the earliest decades of English settlements. In addition to that, the *Spectator's* version of Inkle and Yarico discloses the profound intersections between gender and colonial discourses exposing the unspeakable reality of an enslaved woman whose value relies as much in her ability to do the work of any male slave as in the ability of her body to reproduce the next generation of slaves.

The analysis of the cultural phenomena of "The Four Indian Kings" ballad and Steele's rewriting of Inkle and Yarico presented above illustrate how British interest in North American Indians at the beginning of the eighteenth century still responds

13. "Steele's Inkle and Yarico story was published on 13 March 1711, several months before details of the *asiento* treaty would become public. But there is no doubt that Steele had already sensed the implications of victory over Spain for British colonial policy. In this context, it is significant that the Inkle and Yarico story, rather than displaying enthusiasm for New World slavery, in fact articulates an anxiety over the dangers posed by colonial trade, as opposed to the fair, honest, British trade that was celebrated by Whigs at home. Indeed, imperial trading appeared to involve a suspension of the established social order and a disregard for the social and linguistic codes that bound traders together" (Newman 135).

to a logic of erratic enthusiasm rather than of genuine public engagement for imperial matters. It was only after the Seven Years War (1756–1763) that the indigenous gained centre stage in the British public debate as specific ethnic groups capable of influencing the prosperity or demise of the British Empire. As a result, major British intellectuals—many of which belonged to the Scottish Enlightenment—began to make a more comprehensive and systematic effort to understand and appraise the cultures and political institutions of the non-Western world and use their findings to sustain their research concerning the origin and fate of commercial societies. In the following paragraph I will explore the development of the Scottish philosophical school as the main theoretical framework for the British interactions with its colonies.

SCHOLARLY RELOCATIONS:
THE SAVAGE AND THE SCOTTISH ENLIGHTENMENT

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The relationship between the Scottish Enlightenment and American Indians is worth revisiting in the context of the eighteenth-century pseudo-scientific reasoning about racial hierarchies on a national and imperial level. As the previous section has just shown, despite a limited number of sensational cameos in the British literary scene, it was not until the second half of the century that savages were used by Scottish philosophers to categorize other cultures into what Edmund Burke described as “the great map of mankind.”¹⁴

What mostly triggered such a new attitude was the series of highly publicized, large-scale conflicts raging across the North American frontier from 1754 to 1783, namely the Seven Years War and the American War of Independence.¹⁵ In those years, the British

14. In 1777 Edmund Burke wrote a letter to the Scottish historian William Robertson stating: “Now the Great Map of Mankind is unrolled at once; and there is no state or Gradation of barbarism, and no mode of refinement which we have not at the same instant under our View. The very different Civility of Europe and of China; the barbarism of Persia and of Abyssinia. The errattick manners of Tartary, and of Arabia. The Savage State of North America, and of New Zealand” (qtd. in Marshall 93).

15. “British awareness of Indians changed remarkably in the three decades that followed. Indians were simultaneously represented as the causes of defeat, keys to victory, and banes of British rule in America. In an effort

debate about the peoples of the New World saw a progressive overriding of the picturesque representations of Indians typical of the early century with images of brutal savages living in primordial, kin based, hunter-gatherer communities. For Scottish Enlightenment, the state of primitive simplicity characterizing the variety of American cultures was not just an ethnographic oddity but a living window on Europe's past. In particular, Scottish philosophers believed that the origins of all human societies could be traced and observed in the social organization of their contemporary colonial tribes and therefore the study of their manners and customs could be used to substantiate theories about the development of a stadial history of mankind as well as a theory of human emotions.¹⁶ In this paragraph, I will provide an overview of the role of American Indians within the most relevant works of the Scottish Enlightenment in their attempt to merge the moral and natural philosophical approaches to the study of conjectural historiography.

In his study about the Scottish Enlightenment, Hopfl defines conjectural history as the term first employed to describe the methodology used in *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) by Adam Smith to illustrate his vision of a stadial scheme of human progress, presenting societies as evolving through stages characterized by different formulations of the division of labor and concepts of property (20). After Smith, also Adam Ferguson, John Millar, William Robertson, and, to a lesser extent, Lord James and David Hume, were among the intellectuals who mostly contributed to the construction of such a field. These men knew each other

to educate their readers about these essential allies and formidable foes, editors packed their newspapers and magazines with information about American Indians. Sources included accounts from American colonists, reprinted histories and travel accounts, letters from British soldiers serving in America, speeches from various diplomatic encounters with Indians, and the reactions of readers at home. The result of the press's information bombardment was that at least a crude awareness of American Indian warfare, geography, and culture was hard to avoid" (Bickham 67).

16. According to William Robertson (*Annual Register* [1777]), "[Philosophers] discovered that the contemplation of the Americans in their original state, tended to complete our knowledge of the human species, [and] might enable us to fill up a considerable chasm in the history of its progress" (qtd. in Bickham 207).

thanks to Edinburgh's intricate network of social hubs where they met as colleagues, mentors, but especially as friends. Indeed, in a time span of twenty years, beginning with Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), they all published on the same topic with similar titles such as *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767) by Adam Ferguson, *History of America* (1777) by William Robertson, and *Origin and Distinction of Ranks in Society* (1778) by John Millar, all of which I will examine below .

Adam Smith was the core of the group as he was Millar's professor who arranged for him to live with Lord Kames during his apprenticeship in law. On the other hand, Kames was the person who firstly introduced Millar to Hume and the wider Edinburgh circle, while William Robertson, another of Smith's students, became the principal of Edinburgh University so that he would have been familiar with the whole group. Even if they diverged on academic and political interests, they all appeared to share the same methodologies and philosophical premises for what concerned their scholarly engagement with American Indians. In particular, an analysis of their works reveals two major common traits: their use of French sources of information about the indigenous tribes of North America, and their common a priori assumptions about man and society.

As regards their typology of sources, Scottish philosophers mostly relied on French Jesuits' accounts such as Lafitau's *Moeurs des Sauvages Amériquains, Comparées aux Moeurs des Premiers Temps* (1724), and Pierre François Xavier de Charlevoix's *Histoire et Description Général de la Nouvelle France* (1744). With the parochial exception of the Cadwallader Colden's *History of the Five Indian Nations of Canada* (1744) and James Adair's *History of the American Indians* (1775), the preference of French literature over the British one can be explained in light of a generalized perception of superiority of Jesuits' reports in terms of details and analytical depth. For instance, Ferguson's *History of America* relied almost exclusively on Lafitau's and Charlevoix's works and early modern travel writing, while Millar further justified the recourse to the French sources because of their "degree of authority, upon which we may depend with security,

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and to which the narration of any single person, how respectable soever, can have no pretension” (Bickham 176).

On the other hand, for what concerns their a priori assumptions, the Scottish philosophers structured their conjectural histories on the common premises that the commercial society, acme of modern experience, was but an outcome of a recursive evolutionary process that had substantially altered European government and manners. The driving force of such a process was the progressive change in the means by which a society obtained its subsistence, marked by four stages: hunting, shepherding, farming, and commerce. The relationship between these evolutionary stages and the course of human interactions was at the core of the conjectures about the role of private property considered as the ultimate frontier of human moral and economic advancement.

One of the first Scottish thinkers to make explicit use of the “savages of North America” as empirical evidences for the primordial stage of human societies is Adam Smith in *Theory of Moral Sentiments*¹⁷ where he states that moral sentiments can only develop in more advanced social stages in which the presence of a hierarchy of social ranks and leisure time offers sufficient opportunities for individuals to grow reciprocal sympathetic interest. On the contrary, the daily experiences of the native tribes prevented their members from expressing a variety of emotions as “all savages are too much occupied with their own wants and necessities, to give such attention to those of another person” (Smith 1987, 129). To further illustrate his points, he turned to the “savages of North America, [who] we are told, assume upon all occasions the greatest indifference, and would think themselves degraded if they should ever appear in any respect to be overcome, either by love or grief, or resentment” (Smith 1987, 129).

After the success of Smith’s *Theory*, in 1767 Ferguson’s *Essay on the History of Civil Society* contributed to enrich the paradigm for Scots philosophers’ use of Indians in conjectural histories. Accord-

17. Smith will make further reference to the indigenous people of North America in his famous book *Wealth of Nations* where he will equate them to Britain’s Celtic ancestors: “At the invasion of Julius Caesar [...] its inhabitants were nearly the same state with the savages of North America” (419).

ing to the author, the contemporary zones of the “rude nations” were enormous, stretching “from one to the other extremity of America; from Kamschatka westward to the river Oby, and from the Northern sea, over that length of country, to the confines of China, of India, and Persia; from the Caspian to the Red sea, with little exception and from thence over the inland continent and the western shores of Africa” (Ferguson 148). The presumed universality and interchangeability of such civilizations offered “polished” nations the opportunity to peer into their own past: “It is in their present condition, that we are to behold, as in a mirror, the features of our own progenitors, and from thence we are to draw our conclusions with respect to the influence and situations, in which, we have reason to believe, our fathers were placed” (Ferguson 147).

In addition to that, Ferguson’s *Essay on the History of Civil Society* reinforced the thesis that British ancestors also lived in a social state similar to the American Indians: “the inhabitants of Britain, at the time of the first Roman invasions, resembled, in many things, the present natives of North America” (137). This parallelism allowed the scholar to stress some rare but admirable traits of the indigenous peoples such as their inherent sense of freedom. Ensuring that no man had to endure “any imposition, or unequal treatment,” he stated that what actually determined Indians’ wartime goals was the preservation of people, rather than the pursuit of glory and material greed: “The American rates his defeat from the numbers of men he has lost, or he estimates his victory from the prisoners he has made; not from his having remained the master of a field [...] A man with whom he can associate in all his pursuits, whom he finds an object to his affections, and an aid in his struggles, is to him the most precious accession of fortune” (250). This specific assumption allowed Ferguson to connect the imagery about Indian warriors to the emerging type-character of the romantic hero:

The hero of Greek poetry proceeds on the maxims of animosity and hostile passion. His maxims in war are like those which prevail in the woods of America. They require him to be brave, but they allow him to practice against his enemy every sort of deception. The hero of modern romance professes a contempt of stratagem, as well as of danger, and unites in the same person, characters and dispositions seemingly opposite;

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ferocity with gentleness, and the love of blood with sentiments of tenderness and pity. (362)

Like Ferguson's *History of Civil Society*, also Millar's *Origins of the Distinction of Ranks* (1778) maintained his colleagues' perception of the American natives as the living examples of the pre-history of the civilized nations of Europe. In particular, Millar explored how human progress had an impact on family organizations, showing how the place and treatment of women within a society could be seen as an index of the socio-economic development achieved by a given community. In addition, Millard's research focuses with remarkable originality on the relationship between cultural advancement and sexual desire. Rejecting the arguments of the naturalist Buffon about the possible connection between the low population-density of the American continent and the supposed inferiority of its inhabitants' reproductive organs, the Scottish scholar asserted that the demographic scarcity among the Indians was mainly due to the limited male interest in copulation rather than a genital defect. Such lack of enthusiasm on the part of indigenous males for "cultivating a correspondence with the other sex" was ascribed to their easy access to sexual intercourses where the male savage "arrives at the end of his wishes, before they have sufficiently occupied his thoughts, or engaged him in those delightful anticipations of happiness which the imagination is apt to display in the most flattering colours" (qtd. in Bickham 190).¹⁸

One of the last exponents of Scottish Enlightenment to extensively include the American Indians in his inquiry on the "infancy of social life" was William Robertson. Unlike Smith or Ferguson, Robertson was not a social theoretician but he nonetheless applied the same evaluative methodology employed by Machiavelli's *Discourses* and Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* to examine the Spanish Empire in the New World. Heavily relying on Hume's skeptical theory of knowledge—in which conceptions of time, space, substance, and causation are seen to be rooted in custom and education—Robertson's *History of America* (1790) described the American Indians as creatures of appetite

18. For a deeper analysis of eighteenth-century Scottish studies on women and sexual relationships among the American tribes see Moloney.

without the use of reason. Incapable of forming an idea of futurity, Robertson's savages were depicted as genuinely limited and simplistically dismissed as "small, independent, hostile tribes, struggling for subsistence amidst the wood and marshes" (qtd. in Bickham 196).

In conclusion, it is clear that Scottish Enlightenment philosophers did not paint a flattering portrait of the American populations. Rather, their perception of the natives continued being deeply affected by the existing popular views about the savages,¹⁹ whether by presenting them as irredeemable or emphasizing the negative connotations of their physical characteristics. On the other hand, in terms of positive qualities, Scots intellectuals commonly acknowledged Indians with a considerable degree of personal freedom, superior oratorical skills, and an enviable immunity to the hardships associated with greed and vanity. Even if most of the theoretical principles of conjectural history were shared by all the four authors presented here, their emphasis differed according to the single intellectual and political concerns. Smith and Millar, for example, appear more focused on the contrast between primitive and modern societies in terms of property, social rank, and manners while Ferguson's civic engagements led him to contemplate the vigor and virtues of the "rude nations" in contrast to the potential corruptibility of the "polished" ones. On the other hand, Robertson's comprehensive but unaccomplished narrative of European empires presupposed the patronizing stereotype of the American natives as savages in need of civilization.

In this way, by using them either as mirrors on Europe's own barbaric past,²⁰ or as empirical evidences of the earliest stages of human civilization, the Scottish Enlightenment exploited

19. "Descriptions of Indians were abundant throughout the British press, which provided easy and inexpensive access to detailed accounts of Indian warfare, culture, and society. These were available in the Scots Magazine, a favourite of the Scottish literati, as well as in a host of other Scottish and English newspapers and magazines that would have been available by subscription in the coffee-houses in which the Scots philosophers met and socialized" (Bickham 181).

20. "Indians such as the Iroquois became contemporary equivalents of ancient Britons, Gauls, and Scots. Their pagan societies reminded the Church

the imagery related to the savages of America as the theoretical and ideological basis for the legitimation of the natives' political subjection within the new imperial order.

CONCLUSIONS: PARADIGMS OF OTHERNESS

In the attempt to investigate the British popular representations of the savages during the long eighteenth-century, this article has revealed the two major diachronical turning points in the construction of the European's ethnographic paradigm of otherness. Indeed, for most of the years from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, the symbolic opposition between wild and civilized peoples was articulated on a stereotypical imagery of American Indians seen as the inferior aliens upon which the rising culture of Empire shored its dominance. However, due to their paradoxical status of outsiders born *within* the extended boundaries of the British commonwealth, American savages represented a new model of imperial otherness deprived of the threatening and hostile qualities generally associated to common outsiders. Indeed, Indians had quite a different appeal to the British audience who viewed them as exotic and mysterious allies endowed with an essentially benign set of features. As shown in the second section, the early eighteenth-century apparitions of savages in the British sphere of literary production seem to match with this prototype. The popular success and the artistic longevity of the ballad of *The Four Indian Kings*, or the famous story of *Inkle and Yarico* can be seen as examples of the public appetite for the type of sensational exoticism embodied by the Indians. Then, as shown in the third section, during the second half of the century, more precisely in the years between the end of the Seven Years War and Britain's defeat in the American War of Independence (1754–83), such a characterization of American natives experienced a radical change. The consistent representation of the indigenous as ruthless, indiscriminate, but extremely capable warriors, demonstrates how the British were unwilling to see Indians in idealized, noble-savage terms any longer. In particular, key philosophers

*Captive Minds
Normativities
and Protests*

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of England clergy of the European gentiles at the time of Paul the Apostle's entreaties for the expansion of the Christian Church" (Bickham 2).

of Scottish Enlightenment deployed the principle of aesthetic primitivism observed within the social organization of American tribes to fuel British interest in their own ancestral origins, while providing an empirically sustained theory for the vast socio-economic discrepancies between the world's cultures and nations. Scottish Enlightenment's relation to imperialism and the colonial discourse is certainly influenced by the British political context in the aftermath of the 1707 Act of Union. Being finally integrated into the political entity of Great Britain, Scotland rapidly changed its status from one of an oppressed colony to one of a northern periphery of a growing global empire. However, notwithstanding the fact that the economic and administrative centers of Glasgow and Edinburgh massively benefited from the fruits of English colonial trade, some of the most celebrated authors of the Scottish Enlightenment showed quite a critical attitude toward the imperial enterprise. Both Hume and Smith, for example, condemned the colonial wars for their ruinous impact on the British public debt which they saw as a major factor of degeneration and corruption of commercial societies. Likewise, Robertson's patronizing conception of imperialism as well as Ferguson's vitalist critique of colonial expansion seem to suggest a certain degree of sensibility towards the inclusion of non-Europeans within the ordinary standards of political and human reciprocity. In this perspective, the Scottish Enlightenment can be regarded as the cultural framework in which "the barbarian ceased being an 'other' and became an origin of the self" (Pocock 363) thus transforming the American natives from the generic turban-wearing Orientals of the first eighteenth-century into the earliest characters of Europe's quest for its own narrative of civilization.

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DRACULA AS INTER-AMERICAN FILM ICON

Universal Pictures and Cinematográfica ABSA

INTRODUCTION: THE MIGRANT VAMPIRE

In Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), Jonathan Harker and the Transylvanian count first come together over a piece of real estate. The purchase of Carfax Abbey is hardly an impulse-buy. An aspiring immigrant, Dracula has taken the time to educate himself on subjects "all relating to England and English life and customs and manners" (44). He plans to assimilate into a new society: "I long to go through the crowded streets of your mighty London, to be in the midst of the whirl and rush of humanity, to share its life, its change, its death, and all that makes it what it is" (45). Dracula's emphasis on the roar of London conveys his desire to abandon the Carpathian Mountains in favor of the modern metropolis. Transylvania will have the reverse effect on Harker: having left the industrial West, he nearly goes mad from his captivity in the East. Upon discovering the vampire lying in his coffin with "a mocking smile on the bloated face," Harker rages (prophetically, as it turns out): "This was the being I was helping to transfer to London, where, perhaps, for centuries to come he might, amongst its teeming millions, satiate his lust for blood, and create a new and ever-widening circle of semi-demons to batten on the helpless" (74). Indeed, despite the triumph of the vampire hunters in Stoker's novel, Dracula's enduring popularity with "the teeming millions" is proof that the monster has had the proverbial last laugh. The more he has died in literature, film, theater, and even

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the ballet, the more he has set the stage for his own resurrection and the spawning of kindred “semi-demons.” *Dracula* sells because of its embedded rationale for propagating undead variants, across the arts and the ages.

Perhaps it is little coincidence, then, that the 1897 publication of *Dracula* coincided with the birth of the motion pictures. As it turns out, the count’s “mocking smile” forecasts how he would “sate his lust for blood” as an icon of world cinema. *Dracula*’s migration to London would transform him into a viral monster with a reach beyond the page. Despite the Victorian book’s popularity as a lurid page-turner, screen adaptations consecrated *Dracula* for all time.

In what follows, I trace hemispheric circuits of culture by exploring a small piece of the “ever-widening circle” of *Dracula*–inspired films within Mexico’s midcentury gothic cinema. Critics generally neglect these horror films which, according to Doyle Greene (*Mexploitation* 168–9), herald “not simply the sad decline of the Golden Age of Mexican cinema into a sorry B-movie Culture Industry, but the emergence of a Mexican cinema which resonated with a young audience and burgeoning popular culture in the 1950s and 1960s.” In what follows, I examine the first offering from Cinematográfica ABSA, a producer of what Greene calls “mexploitation.” The first Latin American vampire film, *El vampiro* [The Vampire] reveals the interplay between Hollywood monsters and Mexican reinventions that launched a youth wave of gothic cinema.

In order to establish a foundation for this trailblazing feature, I first turn to Universal Pictures and its joint production of *Dracula* and its lesser-known Spanish-language counterpart, *Drácula*. Their parallel manufacture in 1931 was part of a Hollywood strategy to survive the Great Depression. Aided by a policy of hemispheric cooperation that coincided with the new talking cinema, Hollywood exploited Latin American markets by hiring foreign nationals for Hispanic remakes of its films. Universal made *Drácula* for added revenue, but a comparative analysis proves that the film exceeds its cynical commercial origins. Both would eventually guide Mexico’s vampire cinema, and its spinoffs. The point of my analysis is not to proclaim the Hispanic films better than the Anglophone. I argue instead that U.S.-Mexican bloodlines

disrupt academic norms of Latin American national cinemas as freestanding and rabidly anti-Hollywood. The Mexican vampire cinema is of hemispheric provenance, and proportion.

FROM UNIVERSAL TO HEMISPHERIC HORRORS

Paradoxically, Universal Pictures established its monopoly on horror films as the Great Depression ravaged the global economy. Producer Karl Laemmle, Jr. weathered the crisis by adhering to small budgets, coordinating with exhibitors to boost theater revenues, and recycling a tight-knit unit of writers, directors, producers, and actors on feature-length projects. Starting in 1931, Laemmle financed a series of talkies based upon a Universal formula that had turned the silent film star Lon Chaney—the titular monster in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1923) and *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925)—into a household name. This cycle would prove to be the most influential in horror film history. It began with *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* in 1931. Other archetypal entries followed, among them *The Mummy* (1932), *The Invisible Man* (1933), *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), and *Werewolf of London* (1935). Universal cashed in further by inventing the movie sequel and the monster marathon, as in *Dracula's Daughter* (1936), *Son of Frankenstein* (1939), and *Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman* (1943). The horror genre got its gothic flavoring from German Expressionism, including the first adaptation of *Dracula*, F.W. Murnau's *Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror* (1922). For its celluloid nightmares, Universal combined heavy make-up, chiaroscuro lighting, stylized performances, gothic set decor, and subjective cameras. Given its stylishness and accessibility to the working classes, the monster feature became a Universal trademark that lasted into the late 1940s. The studio made close to one-hundred such films during its classic period. We may think of these as orchestrating a cultural ritual of survival by summoning, and exorcizing, monsters that stood in for the Great Depression. Without addressing the 1929 market crash directly, Universal crystalized anxieties and offered antidotes against evil. David J. Skal sums up Universal's big success in 1931: "America's worst year of the century would be its best year ever for monsters" (*The Monster* 115).

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The introduction of sound technology in the late 1920s complicated production further. Talking cinema magnified sensory appeal, but also threatened the international advantage of Hollywood as an exporter of silent images. During the early 1930s, many theaters lacked the equipment to screen sound prints. Nonetheless, audiences wanted to experience the magic of movies speaking in their native tongues. In what amounts to a blip in cinema history, Hollywood improvised by shooting parallel versions of domestic films for foreign markets (and for U.S. Spanish-language theaters). For instance, in 1929, MGM invested \$2 million to produce features in Spanish, French, and German. That same year, Paramount Pictures spent \$10 million on a studio in Joinville, France for manufacturing films in as many as five languages. From 1929–1939, Hollywood studios made around 175 Hispanic movies, including clones of Anglophone products, sound remakes of silent films, and even some standalone productions. Executives were especially keen on selling to Mexico, as their southern neighbor could also serve as a gateway to markets in South America and Spain. For these audiences, Hollywood hired foreign actors at bargain prices, and reused technical crews, sets, cameras, lighting equipment, and even footage. By all accounts, the Spanish versions were of a poorer quality than the domestic offerings. Due to missing film archives (over 90% of the movies are now lost), the scholarship on this age of polyglot Hollywood is incomplete, and relies heavily on production notes and press releases.¹

With Franklin D. Roosevelt’s 1933 declaration of U.S. “Good Neighbor” diplomacy, Hollywood studios gained further impetus for a business strategy that would revolutionize Latin American film production (particularly through Mexico, which became the “Hollywood” of the Spanish-speaking world in the 1940s).²

1. Hispanic Hollywood production remains an understudied field. For exceptions, see Jarvinen, and Agrasánchez. In 2017, the UCLA Film & Television Archive and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences organized the symposium “Hollywood Goes Latin: Spanish-Language Cinema in Los Angeles.” The papers, representing the latest findings, are in Carreras and Horak.

2. The “Good Neighbor” policy led to the establishment of the Office for Coordination of Commercial and Cultural Relations between the American

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Like MGM and Paramount, Universal confronted the talking cinema with linguistic diversification. The case of *Dracula* and *Drácula* is the best-known example of multilateral production from this period. At an estimated additional cost of \$66,000, *Drácula* required a portion of the \$355,000 needed to make *Dracula*. The shoot took place over 22 nights instead of seven weeks. To save on copyright fees, Universal substituted Stoker's source text with the Hamilton Deane/John Balderston stage versions. Paul Kohner, head of foreign production, hired actors from Mexico, Argentina, Cuba, and Spain to work a graveyard shift on the same sets as the daytime crew. The Hispanic company worked with the dailies from the main production. Carlos Villarías, a Spanish stage actor, tried shadowing his Hungarian counterpart, Béla Lugosi. Kohner brought in George Melford as director and George Robinson as cinematographer, two Hollywood veterans who communicated with the cast through an interpreter. The duo had just collaborated on three Spanish-language remakes for Universal.³

The plot of the two films is nearly identical. Renfield (a screen surrogate for Stoker's Jonathan Harker) travels to Transylvania to meet the eccentric Count Dracula, who is completing his purchase of Carfax Abbey near London. With his three vampire brides in tow, Dracula attacks Renfield and turns him into his lunatic sidekick. Master and slave then board a vessel bound for England. Dracula decimates the ship's crew and escapes upon arrival; but Renfield winds up in an insane asylum run by Dr. Seward. In London, Dracula bites a flower girl before attending a performance of *Swan Lake*. At the concert hall, he meets two beautiful victims-to-be: Lucy and her friend Mina (Seward's daughter in the films). The vampire establishes his influence in the Seward family and bites Lucy

Republics (OCCCRBAR), which operated within the U.S. State Department from 1940-1946. Along with the Motion Picture Exports Association of America (MPEAA), it provided the nation with a cultural platform for economic penetration into Latin America. For a discussion of U.S. "Good Neighbor" film politics, and some of their unintended consequences, see Berg (*Cinema of Solitude*), pp. 37-9.

3. These are *La voluntad del muerto* (1930) (*The Cat Creeps*), *Oriente y occidente* (1930) (*East is West*), and *Don Juan diplomático* (1931) (*The Boudoir Diplomat*). Melford and Robinson would eventually collaborate on *Dracula's Daughter*.

in a guest-bedroom. She dies from her wounds and transforms into a child-stalking vamp. Perplexed, Seward summons the brilliant Professor Van Helsing, who discovers that Dracula is a vampire, and that he has designs on Mina. He and John Harker (Mina fiancé) rush to Dracula's lair for a final showdown just as the vampire murders Renfield. Van Helsing triumphs by driving a stake through Dracula's heart. Delivered from darkness, Mina snaps out of a trance and departs with John to the sound of church bells.

At 104 minutes, *Drácula* is a more satisfying production than the 75-minute *Dracula* directed by Tod Browning. The Hispanic version shows a deeper commitment to Stoker's original material, and adheres more closely to its storytelling. Melford even corrects several plot holes in the Anglophone original.⁴ The subjective camerawork in *Drácula* conveys the mental states of characters in line with the novel's epistolary first-person design. The Hispanic film is more violent and erotic, themes central to the vampire's desecration of religion, scientific reason, and Victorian ideals of marriage and motherhood. *Dracula* features the cinematography of Karl Freund, a German émigré who had collaborated with Fritz Lang on *Metropolis* (1929). Nonetheless, *Drácula* retains a greater connection with the German Expressionist cinema. Through lighting and photography that surpass what Freund only hints at in *Dracula*, Robinson's chiaroscuro compositions and complex depth of field for *Drácula* creates an ambiance more typical of the Universal canon that would inspire horror producers from around the world.

Dracula was Universal's highest grossing film of 1931, but it received mixed reviews upon its New York City premiere on February 12. Meanwhile, *Drácula* opened to critical acclaim in Mexico City on April 4, 1931. The Mexican press lauded the film, especially the performances of Tovar and Villarías. On April 8, *Excelsior* called *Drácula* "el triunfo más grande del cine hablado en nuestro idioma" [the greatest triumph of the talking cinema in our language] (6). In an article from April 9 with the bold headline "Drácula asombrará a México" [*Drácula* Will Amaze Mexico], *El Universal* declared a "positivo triunfo" [positive triumph] and praised Tovar for "revelándose como una de las artistas más completas

4. See Skal (*Hollywood Gothic* 207-29) for differences between the two films.

entre los elementos de nuestra raza” [revealing herself as one of the most complete actresses among our people] (6). A month later, *Drácula* premiered in Los Angeles and New York, where it met with favorable reviews from the Spanish-language press. The film continued to show throughout Latin America until the 1950s, also competing with the Browning/Lugosi version in several national markets. Besides foregrounding inter-American production, the divergent fates of the two films provide a lesson in the cruelties of canonization. The Anglophone movie would become the horror classic; *Drácula*, on the other hand, went missing before a chance discovery in 1992.⁵ Still, Universal had just carved a hemispheric mold through its Hispanicized industrial practices. With the onset of the Cold War, genre cinema in the United States turned from gothic monsters to sci-fi creature features relaying atomic fears. Universal monsters soon left Hollywood, bound for Mexico City.

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FROM NATIONAL GOLD TO HEMISPHERIC TRASH

Despite the initial success of Hollywood’s foreign division, the Spanish talkies failed by the early 1940s. Among the causes was the industry’s cultural insensitivity. Many viewers felt that the infelicitous *mélange* of Hispanic accents confirmed an Anglophone presumption of little to no differences between Spanish-speaking countries. A so-called “war of the accents” took place on multiple fronts, with Hollywood taking heat from the Latin American press and even foreign dignitaries for its decision to adopt a Castilian standard. Furthermore, the shoestring budgets resulted in the casting of few stars, one of the major draws during the silent era. Once the public got past the novelty of sound, the productions revealed themselves as soulless Anglo products dressed up in Hispanic garbs.⁶ To make up ground, Hollywood experimented with intertitles, subtitles, rescoring, and (most scandalously) dubbing. The Argentine author Jorge Luis Borges (284) wrote about the latter process in his 1945 essay “Sobre el doblaje” [On Dubbing],

5. In 1992, archivists assembled a complete print from reels found at a Universal storage facility in New Jersey, and at the Cuban Film Archives in Havana. Video and DVD releases followed.

6. For negative reception of Hollywood Hispanic talkies, see Borge (106–38).

in which he decries “un maligno artificio” [a perverse artifice] that ignores how “la mímica del inglés no es la del español” [gestures in Spanish are not the same as in English].

Thus, the new sound technology that had led to Hollywood’s Hispanic cinema would now advance the development of Latin America’s own talking films. Brian O’Neil (97) finds inter-American currents here: “at the same time Mexican critics were deriding the [...] poisonous hybridity polluting Hollywood’s Spanish-language films, the reality was that Hollywood and the Mexican film industry were becoming increasingly linked, both institutionally and culturally.” Indeed, as the Great Depression had before it, hemispheric policy during World War II led to economic alignment. The establishment of the two biggest Mexican film distributors in the United States—Azteca Films (est. 1932) and Clasa-Mohme (est. 1942) placed more than 2,000 national films into U.S. theaters by 1960. In turn, this economic partnership helped Hollywood make inroads into a pan-Hispanic market. While controversy exists over this cross-cultural cooperation, one of its unintended consequences is that Hollywood served as a training ground for founders of national cinemas in Latin America. For example, a year after appearing in *Drácula*, Lupita Tovar starred in *Santa* (1932), Mexico’s first sound film. Lisa Jarvinen (101) rightly observes: “The cultural hybridity of foreign-language films and of films made by foreign nationals who had extensive Hollywood experience troubled critics who wished to stake claims for national cinemas.” Like screen icon Dolores del Río, legendary director Emilio “El Indio” Fernández, and several other producers, writers, cinematographers, and technicians from the Good Neighbor era, Tovar contributed to *Cine de Oro* post-Hollywood. Jarvinen’s “cultural hybridity” is one foundation for rethinking the nation-based paradigms of New World cinemas.

Most scholars trace the Mexican Golden Age cinema to Fernando de Fuentes’s *Allá en el rancho grande* [Out on the Big Ranch], a 1936 *comedia ranchera* that blended melodrama and musical numbers. It established a typology of folklore, rural landscapes, colonial architecture, singing *charros*, and beautiful young starlets. The film was a commercial success throughout Latin America, and across U.S. Spanish-language theaters. It helped consolidate the Mexican industry and launched a mainstream boom that derailed a par-

allel horror genre in the 1930s.⁷ As Mexico underwent postwar modernization, however, a Hollywood-inspired mexploitation cinema filled the void. It invoked themes less typically “Mexican” as defined by state-funded *Cine de Oro*, but it often used studios, cast, and crew from those same productions. The scholarly consensus has been to ignore these films as being simple-minded, derivative, and/or reactionary betrayals of highbrow art cinemas.⁸ In my view, however, studying Mexican horror discloses how lowbrow films enabled a recuperation of death, blood, and masks, all of them staples of pre-Hispanic traditions that the Golden Age filmmakers idealized or simply omitted. As such, mexploitation is a counter-narrative to Mexico’s cultural elite, and its designation of “quality” cinema. The films do not name the economic “Milagro mexicano” [Mexican Miracle] that lasted from 1954–1970, nor the effects of industrialization, urbanization, consumerism, and the new forms of PRI government corruption taking shape. Yet, within mexploitation, the nation renegotiated its identity by returning to, and reinventing, Hollywood; the movement was not U.S. ventriloquism, but a popular dramatization of Mexican self-reflection. As is typical of the horror genre, that expression fluctuates between traditional and progressive critiques of modernity.

The foundation for modern horror in Mexico stems from the contradictions of its postwar society, including the sense of the past as a living entity (a cyclical view of history dating from before the Spanish arrival) and the conflict between science and religion in a modernizing nation with roots in blood sacrifices (both Catholic and pre-Hispanic). According to Edgar Martín del Campo (114), the bloodsucking witch *teyollohcuani* is a folkloric vampire that belongs to “one of the demonstrably earliest supernatural categories in Mesoamerica.” In addition, pre-Hispanic Mexico possessed the most dazzling pantheons of monstrous deities in the world. These avatars worked to effect changes in the universe, often through violent means, as in the case of Greco-Roman gods.

7. For a critical summation of this cycle, see Rhodes.

8. For a recent example of this divide, see Berg (*The Classical*). Another example of scholarly neglect entails the Mexican films of “La India María,” as discussed by Rohrer.

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After the Conquest, this belief system absorbed Catholicism and created *mestizo* Mexico. The movies—as popular culture—continue the clash, ritual, and ceremonial display.

In *Mexploitation Cinema: A Critical History of Mexican Vampire, Wrestler, Ape-Man and Similar Films, 1957-1977* (2005), Greene (21) defines the mexploitation formula as: “an immortal or resurrected monster wreaking havoc on, and exacting revenge from, the present, a narrative motif which also serves as an important social and political metaphor of the dangers of Mexico’s past (superstition, tradition, debauchery) and its potentially debilitating effect on the present (social, cultural, and economic modernization).” At the starting gate is Cinematográfica Calderón’s “momia Azteca” trilogy (1957-1958), which ends by restoring modernity against Mexico’s ancestral ghosts. The series blends mummy and Frankenstein horror subgenres into a Meso-Americanizing of Hollywood Egyptology. The “maldición” (curse) is equally a recurring theme in mexploitation, as signaled by *La maldición de la momia azteca* [The Curse of the Aztec Mummy], the second installment in the trilogy. Another example, *La maldición de La Llorona* [The Curse of the Crying Woman] (1963), reintroduces “La Llorona,” a wailing spirit and child-murderer with roots in an Aztec account of the fall of Tenochtitlán (present-day Mexico City).

Mad scientists abound in mexploitation. Updated for the youth market, their laboratories sometimes feature groovy beakers and flasks, bubbling liquids, sci-fi consoles, and space age monitors, as in *Santo contra la hija de Frankenstein* [Santo vs. Frankenstein’s Daughter] (1971). In *El espejo de la bruja* [The Witch’s Mirror] (1962), a wife-killing doctor operates on his second bride after she suffers burns via the vengeful spirit of his first bride. The villain of the third mummy film *La momia azteca contra el robot humano* [The Robot vs. the Aztec Mummy] builds a “Robby the Robot” ripoff to destroy “Popoca,” whose hieroglyphic armor holds the key to Aztec treasure. It was the first mexploitation movie to exploit the “contra” (x vs. y) formula, a staple of the *lucha libre*-horror hybrids starring the wrestler and superhero “El Santo,” a modern incarnation of a masked Aztec warrior. When a benevolent patriarch in the mexploitation classic *Santo vs. las mujeres vampiro* [Samson vs the Vampire Women] (1962) warns that, according to an ancient codex, “nues-

tra época sera propicia para la resurrección de los monstrous en la tierra” [our time will be ripe for the resurrection of monsters on earth], he lays bare the rationale of a Universal-inspired franchise operating in full swing. Even a cursory glance at this lineup demonstrates a vibrant recycling (and reworking) of Universal’s repertoire to reflect on Mexico. Hollywood-based, mexploitation recalibrates a foreign idiom for local consumption. This cinema remains indebted to Hollywood, thus challenging post-colonialist paradigms that tend to supplant the intricacies (and unintended consequences) of capitalism with David and Goliath tales of national struggle. In my view, rather than gaining its value from how well it makes war on Hollywood, mexploitation is one part of an untold story of interconnected New World cinemas.

“DRACULA...SET ON A MEXICAN HACIENDA”

Cinematográfica ABSA conflates syllables from the first and last name of its founder, Abel Salazar, who divided his career into acting, producing, and directing. Film historians remember Salazar today for his small-scale low-budget horror, and as “a founding father of mexploitation cinema” (Greene 9). The ABSA canon includes eight black and white films released between 1957 and 1963, seven of them shot at Estudios Churubusco-Azteca in Mexico City.⁹ Among them, Salazar made a vampire trilogy consisting of *El vampiro* and its sequel *El ataúd del vampiro* [The Vampire’s Coffin] (both directed by Fernando Méndez). To these he added *El mundo de los vampiros* [The World of the Vampires] by Alfonso Corona Blake. Salazar also produced three films by Chano Urueta: *El espejo de la bruja*, *El barón del terror* [The Brainiac] (1962), and *La cabeza viviente* [The Living Head] (1963). Urueta had kicked off mexploitation with *El monstruo resucitado* [Monster] (1952)—a blend of Universal storylines from *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Franken-*

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9. Heading Trans-International Films, the exploitation producer K. Gordon Murray made hastily dubbed English-language versions of several ABSA films for television and drive-ins in the late 1960s. In 1968, *El vampiro* appeared on a Mexican double bill with *The Curse of the Doll People* (1961). With Murray repackaging mexploitation for a U.S. teen audience, his Anglo versions constitute a case of inter-American cultural convergence in the exploitation film arena.

stein, and *The Invisible Man*. Finally, actor-director Rafael Baledón contributed the Jekyll and Hyde-based *El hombre y el monstruo* [The Man and the Monster] (1959), and *La maldición de La Llorona*. By casting himself in six of his own films, Salazar became a fixture in a youth-oriented franchise exploiting the Mexican gothic.

In an interview from 1984, Salazar disclosed the Hollywood roots of *El vampiro*: “Me pregunté por qué la Universal tenía los ingresos que tenía” [I asked myself why Universal had the profits that it had]. The answer was its musicals and “las películas de monstruos, las películas de terror” [the monster films, the horror films]. He came to a decision that would forever change the Mexican national cinema: “Entonces había que hacer una película de terror y escogí *El vampiro*. Yo inicié prácticamente *Drácula* [...] situada en la hacienda mexicana” [Therefore, I had to make a horror film and I chose *The Vampire*. I basically put forth *Dracula* [...] set on a Mexican hacienda] (qtd. in Vega Alfaro, 109). The first vampire film produced in Latin America, *El vampiro* launched a Mexican horror boom that lasted well into the 1970s.¹⁰

Salazar hired Fernando Méndez, among the most versatile directors within the national industry. His career began as writer and production assistant on the 1932 Hispanic Hollywood crime film *Contrabando* (remade by Fox as *Contraband* in 1933). He later served as makeup artist and production assistant on *Maniac* (aka, *Sex Maniac*, 1934) and *Marihuana, Weed with Roots in Hell* (1936), two delirious exploitation films directed and distributed by the lowbrow cinema mogul Dwain Esper. Upon returning to Mexico in 1936, Méndez contributed to the screenplay for *El superloco* [The Super Madman] (1936), a horror comedy with Carlos Villarías (from *Drácula*) playing a mad scientist. Méndez began directing Mexican films in the 1940s, and completed thirty-two features at his creative peak in the 1950s. Throughout his career, he specialized in genres, among them westerns, action-adventures, melodramas, and urban crime films. Aside from his Golden Age existentialist crime film, *El suavecito* (1951), his horror filmography earns him the greatest recognition today. This includes one entry

10. Mexico would produce over thirty-six vampire films between 1957 and 1978 (the height of the genre's popularity). For an excellent history of Mexican vampire cinema, see Wilt.

that is possibly mexploitation's greatest masterpiece, *Misterios de ultratumba* [The Black Pit of Dr. M] (1959).

Just months before filming *El vampiro*, Méndez directed *El ladrón de cadáveres* [The Body Snatcher] (1957) for Internacional Cinematográfica. Its blend of wrestlers, monsters, ape-men, and mad scientists established the mixed-genre basis for mexploitation. Macabre sets, blaring scores, and oblique camera angles became directorial signatures. For the role of Señor Duval, Salazar enlisted the Mexican character actor Carlos López Moctezuma. Salazar later paid out his contract and replaced him in imitation of Universal's casting of an unknown face in Béla Lugosi. Like Lugosi (whose birthplace matches Duval's Hungarian ethnicity), the Spanish stage performer Germán Robles soon became a horror icon with a foreign affectation, especially upon reprising his role in *El ataúd del vampiro* and playing a similar character in the marathon film *El castillo de los monstruos* (1958), and in Estudios América's "Nostradamus" cycle (1961–1962).¹¹

The opening scene of *El vampiro* is a tour de force created with the aid of avant-garde painter Gunter Gerszo, the film's art director. It opens with a high-angle shot of a misty Spanish courtyard, a large well in the foreground. After fifteen seconds, the camera cuts to a tall figure surrounded by thick fog and peering into a bedroom in the main house. A bombastic score by ABSA horror composer Gustavo César Carrión complements the striking composition lit in low-key by cinematographer Rosalío Solano. Echoing Universal's hypnotic vampire stares, the camera cuts to a close-up of Duval's bulging eyes (Villarías) with pinpoint lighting (Lugosi). Duval soon turns into a giant bat via a startling jump cut, and swoops inside before resuming human form. In imitation of an innovation undertaken by Villarías in *Drácula*, Duval envelops his female victim in his cape. The camera cranes toward her limp body, the neck oozing blood. The encounter, and its visible aftermath, seems to almost mock the virginity of Duval's anxious, middle-aged prey. Eloísa will turn from frustrated "old maid" to free-flowing vampire bride.

11. Robles's fangs and aristocratic manner in *El vampiro* are rumored influences on the look and performance of Christopher Lee in the 1958 Hammer classic *Dracula* (aka, *Horror of Dracula*).

The story continues with the late train arrival of Marta González in Sierra Negra [Black Forest]. The young woman has come home to visit her sick aunt, María Teresa. Having missed her uncle at the station, she agrees to ride to Los Sicomoros estate in a carriage transporting a box of Hungarian earth. Marta accompanies Enrique Saldívar (played by Abel Salazar), a travel agent from Mexico City. With its emphasis on foggy exteriors and other ambient terrors, the sequence evokes Renfield's passage to Transylvania in the Universal films. Upon arrival, Marta learns that a fear of vampires has already killed her aunt. In the next scene, a high-angle tracking shot formally introduces us to Señor Duval, whose fingers-first exit from his coffin pays homage to Lugosi and Villarías. His black cape and broach copy the Universal uniform. Eloísa (now a vampire in a black gown) helps Duval plan the resurrection of his brother, Conde Karol Lavud ("Duval" in reverse—a nod to "Alucard"/"Dracula" from Universal's 1943 film *Son of Dracula*). We learn from a servant that Conde Lavud was a vampire and the founder of Los Sicomoros. Two mineworkers killed him one-hundred years earlier in response to a rash of vampire slayings. Afterwards, the townsfolk buried him in the hacienda's crypt. (There is an archive of the mine's operation inside the main residence, as well as a manuscript documenting the murder trial.)

We find out that, in the recent past, Eloísa has poisoned her sister María Teresa and buried her alive after she refused to sell Los Sicomoros to Duval (a twist on the sale of Carfax Abbey). Marta, however, runs into María Teresa clutching a large crucifix before a giant spider web. She has been protecting her niece and helping Enrique discover the plot (the latter is actually a doctor summoned in secret by Eloísa's brother, Emilio). Still, Duval manages to poison Marta and escape into a catacomb with her body. In the wild finale, Eloísa kills Emilio through a vampire bite as Enrique and the vampire engage in a makeshift sword fight. María Teresa then strangles Eloísa and drives a stake through Duval's heart. The coat of arms on Duval's coffin burns in close up, signaling the ending of the Lavud tyranny in Sierra Negra. In love, Marta and Enrique then head back to the train station. They seal the ending with a kiss.

The most significant aspect of *El vampiro* is its recasting of Stoker's story in Mexico. With its myriad cobwebs

and crumbling Spanish architecture, the castle-turned-hacienda signals the hybridizing of the Hollywood gothic with a symbol of the nation's colonial past. It may appear that the Hollywood influence was hard to shake off here, yet the art of blending as survival has been central to Latin America since the Conquest. Mexico, in particular, embraces Spanish-indigenous syncretism in its cultural and religious practices. Mesoamerican art, literature, and architecture from the sixteenth century onward shows a baroque penchant for cultural combinations to include the vanquished rather than keep opposites unmixed. *El vampiro* manifests this sensibility through overabundant sights and sounds: hyper-aestheticized sets, house-of-horrors lighting, orchestral stabs, and exuberant performances are the result not of anti-Hollywood purification to bolster a freestanding *mexicanidad*, but of the sensual fusion of inter-American forms. An inventor of mexploitation, Méndez is a mad scientist who revives—and hybridizes unto extremes—Universal sets and monsters by pumping them full of local steroids.

El vampiro possesses an immediacy mostly missing from the Universal horror catalogue. Instead of dividing the self (modern urban citizen) from the “other” (ancient foreign monster), the film brings the two together through an uncanny recognition. The exact location of castles in Universal films is inconsequential; haciendas, on the other hand, are quintessentially Mexican. They date from when the Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés became the Marquis of the Valley of Oaxaca and instituted a peonage system (*encomienda*) in one hacienda built for him in 1529. After Mexican independence in 1821, haciendas became a symbol of state landownership under the reign of Porfirio Díaz. By 1917, the Mexican Revolution overthrew Díaz, and the new regime abolished haciendas as putrid emblems of colonialism. In *El vampiro*, Los Sicomoros subverts the wholesome and anachronistic image of the hacienda from *comedias rancheras*, which had the *hacendado* (landowner) ruling kindly over a large household of *indios* (Indians), *criados* (servants), *campesinos* (peasants), and *charros* (horsemen). A horrible patriarch, Duval even murders a *campesino* child on screen, an act almost unthinkable within 1950s Hollywood. As Juan Rulfo had

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in the Mexican proto-Boom novel, *Pedro Páramo* (1955), Méndez connects supernatural forces to the story of a family bleeding from self-inflicted wounds of the colonial past. A manifestation of Mexico's undead history, the centenary resurrection of the House of Lavud is the fulfillment of a curse generations in the making. *El vampiro* transforms Dracula from a satanic corruptor of Victorian angels into a bloodthirsty *cacique* who exploits Mexican lives in the present. This history explains why colonial vampires are rife in Mexican cinema.

Méndez taps into the dark psychology of the Mexican family, pouring life into a script by Ramón Obón, one of mexploitation's finest writers. Illness and decay propel the storyline; these elements plague the crumbling property as much as they do an heirless González clan made up of unmarried siblings that literally eat their own. In *El vampiro*, the Hungarian peasants from the Universal movies become the *mestizo* servants of the hacienda. While one of them tells Enrique of her father's death at the hands of Lavud, they keep secrets from the landowners. Embodying a perverse aristocracy, Eloísa carries out Duval's bidding as his willing concubine. Marta's childhood bedroom suggests a psychosexual trauma that the film exploits to uncanny effect through a spooky lullaby, and lingering point-of-view shots of a door. This forbidden place is the site of María Teresa's reemergence from the bowels of Los Sicomoros. Most of all, the estate enacts modernity's return of the repressed by linking family secrets to secret passageways. Defunct mining tunnels beneath the hacienda double as a catacomb in which the González family buries the past, including its vampire lineage. Duval's lair even connects to Los Sicomoros via these tunnels, forming part of its architectural skeleton. Méndez's film suggests that Mexico houses inner and underlying demons that threaten its prosperity. At least for the space of four critically successful weeks at the box office, the modern nation confronted its colonial legacy and exorcised its past, even if it repurposed Hollywood to do so.¹² As is usually the case with mexploitation, however, it amounts to flirtation; in the end, the romantic leads are poised

12. For critical reception of *El vampiro*, see Vega Alfaro (197–202).

to leave Sierra Negra, escaping the nightmare of history the film uncovers. Still, vampires are hard to kill, and an ABSA sequel set in Mexico City (with Robles reprising his role) was months away.

CONCLUSION: U.S.-MEXICAN BLOODLINES

Because it weds U.S. and Mexican film production, the horror genre provides a solid foundation for an inter-American approach to cinema. Cinematográfica ABSA, whose success came on the heels of Hollywood's technical ingenuity and Good Neighbor financing, straddled national boundaries. A new hemispheric direction, however, requires that scholars consider Latin American cinema beyond traditional critiques of U.S. imperialism, and the Hollywood industry that is its presumed handmaiden. Mexploitation does not emerge from Hollywood's shadow as DIY originality; rather, it looks northward in order to say the unsaid within the nation's cultural ranks. Ana M. López (71) is correct to blast "Hollywood's self-appointed mission as goodwill imperialist ethnographer of the Americas." At the same time, conventional approaches to hemispheric policy and production risk overlooking how U.S. economic expansion into the Americas stimulated Hispanic ingenuity. Instead of more narratives showing how Latin American cinemas counter movie stereotypes, we might examine neighboring industries that reconfigure Hollywood within transnational frameworks. I am under no illusion that these rely upon fair networks of exchange, or that the nation is not a useful category of resistance.¹³ Still, as it pertains to Latin American and U.S. Latino filmmaking, Julianne Burton-Carvajal (197) argues (rightly, I think): "Simple models of 'national' cinema [...] are complicated by transatlantic and trans-hemispheric migrations of talent, international co-productions, exile, and diasporic film production." Because *Dracula* is a world-class migrant, I would extend her claim to celluloid vampires that brought about a flowering of Mexican creativity in the late 1950s. As we have seen, these specters of modernity are of a peculiar type: lucrative, immortal, inter-American.

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13. For the tension between national and transnational in Latin American cinema studies, see D'Lugo, López, and Podalsky (3–4).

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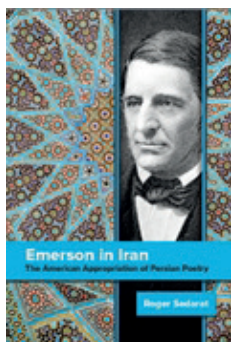
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EMERSON IN IRAN: THE AMERICAN APPROPRIATION OF PERSIAN POETRY

by Roger Sedarat
(A Book Review)



In his recent book, *Emerson in Iran: The American Appropriation of Persian Poetry*, Roger Sedarat, professor of English at CUNY's Queens College, has placed Ralph Waldo Emerson's engagement with classical Persian poetry at the center of his study. Emerson found his way to Persian literature in the 1840s and, despite his illiteracy in Persian, translated nearly two thousand lines from Persian poets

via the intermediary German renderings by Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall. Building on and inspired by earlier scholarship, mostly in the form of essays and book chapters, *Emerson in Iran*, as one of the few monographs ever published in the field, sets out to illuminate the influence of Emerson's practice of translation on his original works and, subsequently, American poetry. The book also demonstrates how American literary translation was influenced by Emerson's appropriative renderings and his general attitude to foreign voices.

The book's cover shows a black and white image of Emerson whose contrast with the circular, oriental motifs of the colorful mosaics in the background is emphasized by two brilliant vertical borders. Dedicating the work to his two countries and foregrounding his hybrid identity as a poet-scholar inheritor of both Iranian

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and American poetic traditions, Sedarat anticipates the upcoming main themes and arguments. The book is a history of hybridity and contradictions, an exploration of the paradoxes such as circle and line, self-reliance and imitation, transparency and shadow, expression and abstention, originality and translation, unity and fragmentation, fatalism and free-will, East and West. The writer delineates how these paradoxes distort, transform, and pass through one another—finally forming a new different composition, a sort of interactive coexistence, like Emerson with his typical American face reposing peacefully at the heart of the vibrantly colored tiles of Iranian architecture on the book's cover.

Sedarat, mostly in the first chapter, investigates the philosophical origins of Emerson's transnational approach and his affinity with the Persian mystic poets. He argues that Platonism as the underpinning of Romanticism and Transcendentalism enabled Emerson to ignore the linguistic, temporal, religious, and literary differences; accommodate transnational influences; and direct American poetry toward an atemporal, all-unifying Platonic ideal. Moreover, fundamental correspondences between Sufi mysticism and Neoplatonism resulted in Emerson's and Sufi poets' similar visions. According to Sedarat, the emancipating look manifested in Persian verse, the poetic and philosophic interpretation of religious principles, and the subversion of Islamic strictures and religious fanaticism, all facilitated Emerson's communication with Persian poetry despite the latter being informed by Islamic tradition. Both Platonic recollection and Sufis' memory of the pre-eternal oath or covenant refer to a similar theme that is the return to the origination where all differences are unified. Belief in the common, picturesque or symbolic language of nature, which is the material manifestation of the spiritual according to Emerson and the reflection of the divine countenance according to Sufis, is another characteristic shared by Emerson and Persian poets. The book explicates that the spiritual poetry of Hafez and Sa'di provides a means of release not only from the fatalism of Mohammadism but also the determinism felt by Emerson in the Christian origins of Catholicism. Such poetry interprets the will of God as love, relies on inner wisdom in place of acquired knowledge, and despises *aql* (reason), just as Emerson himself disparaged understanding.

Having elaborated on the philosophical affinity between Emerson and Persian mysticism, the book continues with the meticulous examination of Persian poetry woven invisibly into Emerson's writings. Sedarat focuses on Hafez and Sa'di whose works resonate in Emerson's oeuvre more than those of other Persian poets. The arguments are mostly predicated on Emerson's translations from these two poets, particularly those of Hafez, his comments on them, and the compositions he wrote in imitation of their poetry or inspired by their insights and power of expression. The theoretical framework of the book is based on the theories of Harold Bloom, Homi Bhabha, and Willis Barnstone. Analyzing the close correspondence between Persian poetry and Emerson's vision and rhetoric, Sedarat unveils imitation in the works of a self-reliant author who, with an assimilating power, disavows his dependence on predecessors and pretends not to be suffering from the anxiety of influence. However, by exposing this influence, Sedarat does not negate Emerson's self-reliance but shows the reconciliation of the paradox of originality and imitation in this outsourcing writer. Applying Bhabha's theory of the third space of enunciation, Sedarat argues that Emerson's individuality is developed in a third hybrid space that is the result of the conflation of East and West. This hybrid new self is manifested in Emerson's appropriative translations of Persian verse, his original poems written in imitation of them, and the identities of Persian poets redefined by him in his essays and poems. Emerson puts Sufi poets beside Greco-Roman deities, renders *Saqi* (cup-bearer) as "Bacchus," and a Persian mythological bird as "Phoenix," ignores the Islamic context of the poems, and recreates Sa'di's identity within the American context along with changing his name to "SAID." He then adopts or appropriates this new American-Iranian identity, and this newly discovered—or, better yet, newly created—voice grants him the power of self-expression. Thus, Sedarat shows how the Persian predecessors imitated by Emerson are partly the product of his formative gaze to the Orient. He is imitating foreign fathers, hued by his own domesticating, creative look to them. Making claims on both poetry and identity of Persian poets, Emerson satisfies his desire to see as they do and be as they are. He looks around through the eyes of thousand-eyed Hafez and agonizes over the death of his darling

son through Sa'di's translated elegy. Letting these voices in, along with the penetrating visions they represent, Emerson gets rid of all mean egotism and moves towards the Platonic all-encompassing ideal, the transparent eyeball, which is a state similar to Sufis' *fana* or self-annihilation. Sedarat provides an insightful analysis that connects the American's act of appropriation to his rhetoric. Integrating Hafez's fragmented, allusion-filled lyrics and Sa'di's hybrid prose-poetry form into his aphoristic writings, Emerson diminishes the rhetorical Western ego as well and develops a decentering one fitting to express his fragmented, circular aesthetic.

Emerson in Iran is not only the examination of Emerson's relation to Iran but also an attempt to formulate his theory of translation and put it in a proper place in the history of American literary translation. Sedarat calls for a revision of assumptions about Ezra Pound as the first American appropriative translator and shows how Emerson's renderings and rhetorical theory anticipated this twentieth-century poet-translator. As the book asserts, translating Persian poetry despite illiteracy in the source language, subverting equivalence, aiming to render the spirit of the work instead of superficial literal meaning, appropriating/domesticating/Americanizing foreign predecessors, and using translation as a model for the poetic act are the main legacies of the Sage of Concord. Looking into the works of a number of contemporary translators and poets in two concluding chapters, Sedarat identifies the influence of Emerson's appropriative approach in them. Some of these translators—with the superficial, exaggerated practice of the conventions sanctioned by Emerson's renderings—have produced loose, unqualified translations of Hafez and Rumi. However, there are adept translators and poets such as Dick Davis and Aqa Shahid Ali whose works, according to Sedarat, reflect Emerson's corrective look to the East and attest to their genuine apprehension of the spirit and form of Persian poetry.

Beautifully written, *Emerson in Iran* is a delight to read. The criticism, in some passages, turns into the literary performance of Emerson's picturesque ideal language. The use of the lively, eye-catching imagery picked up from the works of Emerson and Persian poets connects the former, who believes in the visual root of language, to the latter, who work with images addressed

to the eye. As a poet-translator with Persian origins, Sedarat has been successful in illuminating how his preceding poet-translator could, through imitation and translation, integrate Persian poetry into his own poetry and rhetoric. This insightful research addresses itself not only to the Emersonians but also the students and scholars of comparative and world literature, translation studies, and the history of translation. Foregrounding the influence of Persian poets on the works of a seminal American writer and enlarging the Bloomian term “predecessor” to include foreign authors, the book is also noteworthy in the field of critical theory. However, I think it could have reached a still wider audience had the author provided more references to the Persian texts. Having access to Hafez through a few verses selected from Emerson’s appropriative translations, readers less familiar with Persian literature may fail to notice how far these poems are transformed through Emerson’s renderings or Americanized by the translators presented in the penultimate chapter. Moreover, *Emerson in Iran* could have better fulfilled the comprehensiveness promised by its title if it had included other Persian poets besides Sa’di and Hafez in its arguments. The book also has not given enough consideration to the domesticating behavior of the German translator. Although Sedarat is quite conscious of the changes made in the German version by von Hammer-Purgstall, his brief references to them may cause readers to ignore or underestimate them.

All in all, *Emerson in Iran* is a valuable contribution to Emerson scholarship and serves as an invitation for the reconsideration of this writer’s engagement with world literature, particularly with Persian poetry.

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DOS NARIZONES NO SE PUEDEN BESAR TRAYECTORIAS, USOS Y PRÁCTICAS DE LA TRADICIÓN ORISHA EN YUCATÁN

by Nahayelli Beatriz Juárez Huet
(A Book Review)



This book is probably the first ethnography of Orisha religious practices on Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula. The author, a researcher at the Yucatán Unit of the Centre for Research and Higher Studies (CIESAS), has not tried to create a lineal history of the development of Orisha practices but rather look at the fluidity of the beliefs, rituals, and practices of its practitioners along the travel circuit that

encompasses Yucatán, Cuba, Mexico City, and Nigeria. The main unit of analysis in this book seems to be the Orishas. The book has an introduction, four chapters, and a short discussion section. The introduction explains the methodological point of view of the author, which centers on the flow of meanings and changing contexts. The first chapter is about Orishas and their relation to ethnicity and race definitions. The second chapter is a historical view of Africans and their descendants in Mexico alongside their contributions to Mexican religious plurality. The last two chapters are ethnographic, describing the ways in which Orishas were present at different places and settings during the author's fieldwork in Mexico City and in the and in the Yucatán Peninsula, which encompasses the states of Campeche, Yucatán and Quintana Roo.

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As per Juárez Huet's description, in different places Orishas are considered entities that can operate miracles if they are asked correctly by the right people, or the incarnation of energies or forces that can change the destiny of people, or mediators between the worlds of the living and the dead. In Cuba, Brazil, and Puerto Rico, Orishas took on the aspect and some characteristics of Catholic saints. In Yucatán, Orisha-related beliefs and practices often replicate, to some extent, the Cuban varieties; but they also mix with other types of esoteric beliefs—including various Christian religions, indigenous forms of healing, and diverse facets of the New Age movement (e.g. yoga, tarot, palmistry, and crystal healing). In particular, *lfa* is a divination method associated with the Orishas and with initiation in Orisha-related religious groups. Because of the diversity of understandings of who or what the Orishas are, belief in and worship of them can be part of organized religions in some cases, but they can also be practices that have been incorporated by practitioners of other major religions or practices associated with folk medicine and the casting of spells. Juárez Huet found that in Nigeria Orisha-related beliefs and practices are constructed as part of Yoruba history and ethnicity, but the people who practice them do not claim necessarily to be Yoruba. In the United States, religious and magical practices related to Orishas are claimed as a part of cultural patrimony of specific ethnic groups. In Mexico (and in the Yucatán Peninsula in particular), this does not seem to be the case: anyone may either become part of a group practicing rituals or form of divination associated with Orishas. Also, in Nigeria, Orisha beliefs and rituals coexist within other major religions, including Catholicism and Islam, to which they have been fully integrated. In Mexico, instead, they are recognized as relatively extraneous but still adaptable to other major religions, including Catholicism and other Christian religions. Juárez Huet writes that it is inaccurate to see Orisha-related elements as having originated historically in Africa or within a specifically Yoruba ethnicity; rather, different beliefs and rituals developed through constant flows of back and forth migration between Africa and the Americas. This flow resembles the way music has travelled since the sixteenth century between continents, so that today it is practically impossible to think of European music with-

out taking the Americas into account, and vice versa. The same applies to Orisha-related beliefs.

Juárez Huet finds puzzling the paucity of scholarship surrounding the historical importance of descendants from Africans in Mexico, particularly in the Yucatán Peninsula. There were, she explains, perhaps as many Africans as Europeans during the first years of colonial Yucatán. However, first the conquistadors and later on the historians saw the indigenous Maya as the main *other* in their writings and observations. The cultural legacy of Africans and their descendants to Yucatecan culture has been under-reported and under-analyzed. She tells us that, even today, the categories of the national census are not registering accurately enough the many religions of ethnic or of African origin. It is unfortunate that the table (on page 122), where Juárez Huet provides numbers of ethnic and African religions in Mexico, is not analyzed in the text, since there are apparently over 34,000 religions outside the larger and official ones. It would have been good to know what “religion” means here, because reading this large number leads to the perception that each person practicing something other than one of the larger, official religions has invented a cult or church of his or her own. Also, it would have been important to know how many from among these several thousand religions include rites or practices related to beliefs in Orishas. Juárez Huet writes that the beliefs and religious practices African slaves and other Africans brought with them to Mexico (and the Yucatán Peninsula in particular) might have recombined with existing divinatory and magical practices of both the Europeans and the original inhabitants, but she adds that there are some practices still in use today—such as those called Palo Monte, which in Cuba is called Regla de Palo Monte and refers to the religion known as Santería both in Cuba and Yucatan—where the Orishas have metamorphosed with Catholic Saints and hold powers related both to their Catholic and Orisha associations.

The two last chapters look at the presence of Orishas in the beliefs and practices of Mexicans and especially of people living in the Yucatán Peninsula. Most of the ethnographic examples are from Mexico City and locations in the states of Yucatán and Quintana Roo. Merida is Yucatán’s most important cultural capital, and the historical

and affective links between Merida and Cuba have been profusely documented in the history and ethnography of the peninsula. Here, Juárez Huet traces contemporary belief in Orishas to the popularity of Cuban musicians and dancers in Yucatán in the 1990s, especially in the city of Merida. During that decade, there were several bars and restaurants that began to offer “Cuban shows” featuring Cuban musicians and dancers, and this meant that hundreds of artists came to the Yucatán Peninsula—and some of them took their shows to Mexico City and other parts of the country. The Santería religion, where the Orishas are identified with Catholic saints, travelled with many of them, and some of these artists managed to stay in Mexico. An interesting aspect of at least some types of Santería is the belief in consulting with the spirits of the dead. Juárez Huet points at the long tradition of spirit mediums in Yucatán, where they were fashionable among the social elites of the entire peninsula at the end of the 1800s and the first decades of the 1900s. She says that there have been very few studies of what happened after that, but she believes that the practice of mediumship did not disappear completely, so it was easily re-activated in more recent forms of spirit-belief practices, including *Espiritismo Mariano* (a form of mediumship generally associated with some branches of the Catholic Church in Mexico) and with some of the Cuban-derived forms of Santería now practiced in Mexico. *Ifa* divination, in its Cuban forms, is thought to necessitate a hierarchy among its practitioners, so that only a few, usually placed in the higher rungs of the priesthood, can invoke and talk to the spirits of the dead.

Juárez Huet gives us a sketch of the life of an artist who came to Merida as a dancer then moved to Mexico City before emigrating to the United States. She said that she felt right away that Merida was her home, and when she tired of working too hard and enjoying life too little in the US, she came back to start a family in Yucatán. She is now one of the most recognized practitioners of Santería, and she has converted many Meridians to her beliefs. Juárez Huet also gives us examples of young people practicing yoga and Eastern forms of spirituality who have tried *Ifa* divination at different times for specific purposes related to either health or magical beliefs. These people treat esoteric beliefs and divination as different options within a larger market

and have not been interested in gaining any further knowledge of the beliefs and rites associated with the Orishas or Santería.

Through ethnographic examples, the author shows that the belief of the Orishas are neither a unified concept nor a homogeneous religion. The book is rather complicated for readers who are not specialists in Orisha religion, but the author does provide a useful glossary for many of the unfamiliar terms and concepts. All things considered, the book is a welcome addition to the ethnography of the Yucatán Peninsula; it certainly paves the way for other studies that can focus more specifically on particular locations or groups to broaden our understanding of religious practices in Yucatán.

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IASA STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

for the struggle against racialized violence in the United States

The International American Studies Association is dismayed to see the explosion of anger, bitterness and desperation that has been triggered by yet another senseless, cruel and wanton act of racialized violence in the United States. We stand in solidarity with and support the ongoing struggle by African Americans, indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, migrants and the marginalized against the racialized violence perpetrated against them.

As scholars of the United States, we see the killing of George Floyd and many before them as acts on the continuum of the history of the powerful committing racialized violence against the powerless in the United States from before the birth of that country to the here and now of the present day. This continuum stretches from the transatlantic slave trade, the genocide of the indigenous population, the denial of rights and liberties to women, through the exploitation of American workers, slavery and Jim Crow, to the exclusion and inhumane treatment of the same migrants who make a profit for American corporations and keep prices low for the U.S. consumer. As scholars of the United States, we are acutely aware of how racialized violence is systemic, of how it has been woven into the fabric of U.S. society and cultures by the powerful, and of how the struggle against it has pro-

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duced some of the greatest contributions of U.S. society to world culture and heritage.

The desperate rebellion of the powerless against racialized violence by the powerful is in turn propagandized as unreasonable or malicious. It is neither. It is an uprising to defend their own lives, their last resort after waiting for generations for justice and equal treatment from law enforcement, law makers, and the courts. In too many instances, those in power have answered such uprisings with deadly force—and in every instance, they have had alternatives to this response.

We are calling on those in power and the people with the guns in the United States now to exercise their choices and choose an alternative to deadly force as a response to the struggle against racialized violence. You have the power and the weapons—you have a choice to do the right thing and make peace.

We are calling on U.S. law makers to listen and address the issues of injustice and racialized violence through systemic reform that remakes the very fabric of the United States justice system, including independent accountability oversight for law enforcement.

We are calling on our IASA members and Americanists around the world to redouble their efforts at teaching their students and educating the public of the truth about the struggle against racialized violence in the United States.

We are calling on our IASA members and Americanists around the world to become allies in the struggle against racialized violence in the United States and in their home societies by publicizing scholarship on the truth, by listening to and amplifying the voices of black people, ethnic minorities and the marginalized, and supporting them in this struggle on their own terms.

We are calling on all fellow scholarly associations to explore all the ways in which they can put pressure with those in power at all levels in the United States to do the right thing and end racialized violence.

There will be no peace in our hearts and souls until justice is done and racialized violence is ended—until all of us are able “to breathe free.”

DR MANPREET KAUR KANG, President of the International American Studies Association, Professor of English and Dean, School of Humanities & Social Sciences, Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, India;

DR JENNIFER FROST, President of the Australian and New Zealand American Studies Association, Associate Professor of History, University of Auckland, New Zealand;

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ABSTRACTS AND NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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Dracula as Inter-American Film Icon Universal Pictures and Cinematográfica ABSA

My essay explores the vampire cinema of Hollywood and Mexico. In particular, I trace the relationship between Universal Pictures as the progenitor of horror during the Great Depression and Cinematográfica ABSA's "mexploitation" practices. The latter resulted in the first vampire film in Latin America—*El vampiro* (1957). Rather than strengthening separatist national cinemas, the unintended consequences of genre film production make this a case of inter-American scope.

Keywords: Dracula, hemispheric, inter-American, cinema, mexploitation

Antonio Barrenechea is a professor of literature of the Americas and cinema. He is the author of *America Unbound: Encyclopedic Literature and Hemispheric Studies* (University of New Mexico Press, 2016), which brings together comparative literature and hemispheric studies by tracing New World historical imaginaries in prodigious novels from the United States, Latin America, and Francophone Canada. He is also co-editor of *Hemispheric Indigenous Studies*, a special issue of *Comparative American Studies* (2013) that calls for a trans-American frame for indigenous history and culture. Over the past fifteen years, Dr. Barrenechea has contributed articles and reviews to *Comparative Literature*, *Revista Iberoamericana*, *American Literature*, and other venues, including the American Comparative Literature Association's "state-of-the-discipline" report. The forthcoming "Hemispheric Studies Beyond Suspicion" was awarded the 2014–2016 prize for the best

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essay by the International Association of Inter-American Studies. Following upon a 2016–2017 fellowship at the Institut Américain Universitaire in France, Dr. Barrenechea's recent work is on the relation between trash culture and analog cinema as produced in the fringes of North and South American film capitals. He also conducts ongoing research on the intellectual history of the literature of the Americas, particularly its international pioneering waves, and its contemporary manifestations in U.S. academia. Dr. Barrenechea presently serves on the boards of the International American Studies Association, the International Association of Inter-American Studies, and Comparative American Studies..

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**A Literary History of Mental Captivity in the United States
Blood Meridian, *Wise Blood*, and Contemporary Political Discourse**

On July 15, 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump and Russia's President Vladimir Putin held a summit in Helsinki that immediately set off a chain reaction throughout the world. By now, barely two months later, that summit is all but forgotten for the most part, superseded by the frantic train of events and the subsequent bombardment from the media that have become the "new normal." While the iron secrecy surrounding the conversation between the two dignitaries allowed for all kinds of speculation, the image of President Trump bowing to his Russian counterpart (indeed a treasure trove for semioticians) became for many observers in the U.S. and across the world the living proof of Mr. Trump's subservient allegiance to Mr. Putin and his obscure designs. Even some of the most recalcitrant GOPs vented quite publicly their disgust at the sight of a president paying evident homage to the archenemy of the United States, as Vercingetorix kneeled down before Julius Cesar in recognition of the Gaul's surrender to the might of the Roman Empire. For some arcane reason, the whole episode of the Helsinki summit brought to my mind, as in a vivid *déjà vu*, Cormac McCarthy's novel *Blood Meridian* and more specifically, the characters of Judge Holden and the idiotic freak who becomes Holden's ludicrous disciple in the wastelands of Arizona. In my essay, I provide some possible explanations as to why I came to blend these two unrelated episodes into a single continuum. In the process, I briefly revisit some key texts in the American canon that fully belong in the history of "mental captivity" in the United States, yet to be written. Obviously, I am not in hopes of deciphering the ultimate reasons for current U.S. foreign policy, and the more modest aim of my article is to offer some insights into the general theme of mental captivity through a novel and a textual tradition overpopulated with "captive minds."

Keywords: Cormac McCarthy, *Blood Meridian*, U.S. foreign policy, President Trump, President Putin

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he served as the president of the International American Studies Association (IASA). Before moving to Texas, he taught for two decades at the University of Leon (Spain). Broncano has published a number of scholarly works on various American authors such as Flannery O'Connor, Willa Cather, Faulkner, Melville, Poe, etc. His latest book was released in 2014, *Religion in Cormac McCarthy's Fiction: Apocryphal Borderlands* (Routledge). Broncano has also kept an active agenda as a translator. His latest translation is Giannina Braschi's *United States of Banana* (*Estados Unidos de Banana*, Amazon Crossing 2014).

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Resistance and Protest in Percival Everett's *Erasure*

As argued by the literary critic Margaret Russett, Percival Everett "unhinges 'black' subject matter from a lingering stereotype of 'black' style [and] challenges the assumption that a single or consensual African-American experience exists to be represented." The author presents such a radical individualism in his most admired literary work published in 2001. In *Erasure*, Thelonious 'Monk' Ellison, the main character and narrator of the book, pens a stereotypically oriented African American novel that becomes an expression of "him being sick of it"; "an awful little book, demeaning and soul-destroying drivel" that caters for the tastes and expectations of the American readership but, at the same time, oscillates around pre-conceived beliefs, prejudices, and racial clichés supposedly emphasizing the 'authentic' black experience in the United States. Not only is *Erasure* about race, misconceptions of blackness and racial identification but also about academia, external constraints, and one's fight against them. The present article, therefore, endeavors to analyze different forms of resistance and protest in Percival Everett's well-acclaimed novel, demonstrating the intricate connections between the publishing industry, the impact of media, the literary canon formation and the treatment of black culture.

Keywords: protest, resistance, Percival Everett, literary canon

Sonia Caputa, PhD, works as Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Silesia. She was a participant of the Summer Fulbright Scholarship Programme "The United States Department of State 2015 Institute on Contemporary U.S. Literature" (University of Louisville, Kentucky). She is an active member of the Polish Association for American Studies. Caputa was guest co-editor one of the issues of *RIAS* and a co-editor of the series "Grand Themes of American Literature." She teaches contemporary ethnic American literature and offers survey courses of the history of American literature. Her interests include, but are not limited to: ethnicity, assimilation, as well as stereotypes in literature and films.

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Posthumanity and Prison-House of Gender in Douglas Coupland's *Microserfs*

This article aims to analyze Douglas Coupland's *Microserfs* with a deliberate emphasis on posthuman theory, body politics, and gender to construe the transformation of the human body, human-machine nexus, and captivity in inhumanity with a struggle to (re)humanize minds and their bodies. One of the arguments of the paper will be that posthumanism offers a new outlet for breaking the chains of captivity, that is, escaping into non-human to redefine humanity and to emancipate the human mind and human body to notch up a more liberated and more equitable definition of humanity. As gender and sex are further marked by the mechanical and mass-mediated reproduction of human experiences, history, and memory, space and time, postmodern gender theories present a perpetual in-betweenness, transgression and fluidity and the dissolution of grand narratives also resulted in a dissolution of the heteronormative and essentialist uniformity and solidity of the human body. Gender in a posthuman context is characterized by a parallel tendency for reclaiming the possession of the body and sexual identity with a desire to transform the body as a physical entity through plastic surgery, genetic cloning, in vitro fertilization, and computerization of human mind and memory. Therefore, the human body has lost its quality as gendered and sexed and has been imprisoned in an embodiment of infantile innocence and manipulability, a "ghost in the machine," or a cyborg, a hybrid of machine and organism (Haraway). The human-machine symbiosis, then, is exteriorized and extended into a network of objects switching "natural human body" to an immaterialized, dehumanized, and prosthetic "data made flesh." In this regard, Coupland's *Microserfs* boldly explores the potential of posthuman culture to provide a deconstruction of human subjectivity through an analysis of human and machine interaction and to demonstrate how human beings transgress the captivity of humanity by technologizing their bodies and minds in an attempt to become more human than human.

Keywords: Douglas Coupland, *Microserfs*, posthuman, cyborg theory, gender

Murat Göç is an assistant professor of English Language and Literature at Celal Bayar University Turkey. He received his PhD degree from Ege University American Culture and Literature Department. His main fields of interest are: contemporary American literature, literary theory, gender studies, and, in particular, masculinity studies. He is the founding editor of the *Masculinities* Journal and a member of the Initiative for Critical Studies of Masculinities, an academic network of scholars based in Turkey, working on establishing and ensuring gender equality, supporting LGBTI rights, and inspiring a critical transformation of masculinities.

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MICHAŁ KISIEL*Er(r)go. Theory–Literature–Culture*
University of Silesia in Katowice
Poland**Violence Hates Games?
Revolting (Against) Violence in Michael Haneke's *Funny Games U.S.***

This article aims at exploring Haneke's *Funny Games U.S.* as a protest against violence employed in the mainstream cinema. Satisfying compensatory needs of the spectators, constructing their identities, and even contributing to the biopolitics of neoliberalism, proliferating bloodthirsty fantasies put scholars in a suspicious position of treating them as either purely aesthetical phenomena or exclusively ethical ones. Haneke's film seems to resist such a clear-cut binary; what is more, it contributes immensely to the criticism of mainstream cinematic violence. Misleading with its initial setting of a conventional thriller, Haneke employs absurd brutality in order to overload violence itself. The scenes of ruthless tortures are entangled in the ongoing masquerade, during which swapping roles, theatrical gestures, and temporary identities destabilize seemingly fixed positions of perpetrators and their victims, and tamper with the motives behind the carnage. As I argue, by confronting its spectators with unbearable cruelty devoid of closing catharsis, *Funny Games* deconstructs their bloodthirsty desire of retaliation and unmask them as the very reason for the violence on screen. Following, among others, Jean-Luc Nancy and Henry A. Giroux, I wish to demonstrate how Haneke exhausts the norm of acceptable violence to reinstate such a limit anew.

Keywords: Haneke, violence, affect, brutality, *Funny Games U.S.*, cinema

Michał Kisiel holds a PhD in Humanities and an MA in English from the University of Silesia in Katowice. His doctoral dissertation focused on the unfolding of Samuel Beckett and Tadeusz Kantor by means of new materialist methods. His interests include the correspondence between literature and philosophy, and the ontological turn in humanities. In 2015, he participated in The Northwestern University Paris Program in Critical Theory.

MONIKA KOCOT*Department of British Literature and Culture*
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and the Ethics of Civil Disobedience in Gary Snyder's Writing**

The article attempts to shed light upon the evolution of Gary Snyder's "mountains-and-rivers" philosophy of living/writing (from the Buddhist anarchism of the 1960s to his peace-promoting practice of the Wild), and focuses on the link between the ethics of civil disobedience, deep ecology, and deep "mind-ecology." Jason M. Wirth's seminal study titled

Mountains, Rivers, and the Great Earth: Reading Gary Snyder and Dōgen in an Age of Ecological Crisis provides an interesting point of reference. The author places emphasis on Snyder's philosophical fascination with Taoism as well as Ch'an and Zen Buddhism, and tries to show how these philosophical traditions inform his theory and practice of the Wild.

Keywords: Gary Snyder, the Wild, interconnectedness, interbeing, rivers, mountains, Zen, Ch'an, Tao

Monika Kocot, PhD, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of British Literature and Culture at the University of Łódź, Poland. Her main academic interests include contemporary British poetry, Native American prose and poetry, literary theory, and literary translation. She is the author of *Playing Games of Sense in Edwin Morgan's Writing* (Peter Lang, 2016) and co-editor of *Języki (pop)kultury w literaturze, mediach i filmie* (Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2015), *Nie tylko Ishiguro. Szkice o literaturze anglojęzycznej w Polsce* (Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2019), and *Moving between Modes. Papers in Intersemiotic Translation. In Memoriam Professor Alina Kwiatkowska* (Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego 2020). She is a member of the Association for Cultural Studies, The Association for Scottish Literary Studies, and the French Society of Scottish Studies (SFEE). She is the President of The K.K. Baczynski Literary Society.

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The Tragedy of a Whistleblower

Adamczewski's *Tragic Protest* and the Case of Chelsea Manning

Bringing most carefully guarded secrets into light, political whistleblowers deconstruct the essential oppositions upon which superpower ideologies are founded: they draw popular attention to what has been relegated to the margins of the dominant discourses. Torpedoing the reputations of the most powerful organizations in the world, and well aware of the inevitability of retaliation, they put themselves in a most precarious position. Fighting against impossible odds in the name of the greater good, facing the gravity of the consequences, they become heroes in the *classical* sense of the word: arguably, their dilemmas are not unlike those faced by Antigone, Hamlet and other iconic figures in history, literature and mythology. Such is the central premise of this article. The methodological frame for the analysis of the material in this study has been adopted from Zygmunt Adamczewski's *The Tragic Protest*, whose theory, bringing together classical and modern approaches to tragedy, allows for the extrapolation of the principles underlying the protest of such iconic figures as Prometheus, Orestes, Faust, Hamlet, Thomas Stockman or Willy Loman to discourses outside the grand narratives of culture. His theory of the tragic protest serves as a tool facilitating the identification of the features of a quintessential tragic

protester, which Adamczewski attains by means of the study of the defining traits of mythological and literary tragic heroes. It is against such a backdrop that I adapt and apply Adamczewski's model to the study of materials related to Chelsea Manning in search of parallels that locate her own form of protest in the universal space of tragedy.

Keywords: whistleblower, tragic protest, archetype, Chelsea Manning

Monika Kołtun, a PhD Candidate at the University of Silesia in Katowice, holds an MA degree in American and Canadian Studies for Intercultural Relations and Diplomacy. As a graduate, she spent a year studying at the University of the Fraser Valley in Canada. Monika Kołtun authored an article titled "Signed: Gombrowicz. 'Pupa,' the Western Canon, and the English Translation of *Ferdydurke*" in a high-ranking journal of translation studies *Między Oryginałem a Przekładem*. Her research interests embrace a variety of problems within the areas of cultural and literary studies, anthropology, politics, and ethics.

GIORGIO MARIANI

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Emerson's Superhero

After offering some preliminary remarks on the notion of what makes a "captive mind," the article shifts its attention to one of the most significant and yet relatively neglected early essays by Ralph Waldo Emerson, the essay "War." This text, I argue, deserves not only to be considered the (largely forgotten) founding document of the American anti-war movement, but it remains important even today, as it sheds light on the inevitable contradictions and double-binds any serious movement against war and for social justice must face. It is a text, in other words, which helps us highlight some of the problems we run into—both conceptually and practically—when we try to free our minds from a given mindset, but we must still rely on a world that is pretty much the outcome of the ideologies, customs, and traditions we wish to transcend. To imagine a world free of violence and war is the age-old problem of how to change the world and make it "new" when the practical and intellectual instruments we have are all steeped in the old world we want to abolish. Emerson's thinking provides a basis to unpack the aporias of what, historically speaking, the antiwar movement has been, both inside and outside the U.S. The article concludes by examining some recent collections of U.S. pacifist and anti-war writings, as providing useful examples of the challenges antiwar, and more generally protest movements, must face.

Keywords: Ralph Waldo Emerson, anti-war movement, protest movements

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as President of the International American Studies Association (IASA), from 2011 to 2015. His work has concentrated on nineteenth-century American writers (Emerson, Melville, Stephen Crane, and others); on contemporary American Indian literature; on literary theory; on the literary and cinematic representation of war. He has published, edited, and co-edited several volumes, listed below. His essays and reviews have appeared in many journals, including *American Literary History*, *Studies in American Fiction*, *Fictions*, *RIAS*, *RSA Journal*, *Stephen Crane Studies*, *Nuovo Corrente*, *Zapruder*, *Leviathan*, *Letterature d'America*, *AION*, *Acoma*, *Studi Americani*. With Donatella Izzo he edits the American Studies series of the Sapienza UP, and with Donatella Izzo and Mauro Pala he edits the series "Le Balene" published by La Scuola di Pitagora. He is co-editor-in-chief (with Donatella Izzo and Stefano Rosso) of *Acoma. Rivista internazionale di studi nord-americani*. His books published in English include: *Waging War on War. Peacefighting in American Literature* (2015), *Post-tribal Epics: The Native American Novel between Tradition and Modernity* (1996), *Spectacular Narratives: Representations of Class and War in Stephen Crane and the American 1890s* (1992).

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Mailer, Doctorow, Roth
A Cross-Generational Reading of the American Berserk

Of all American paradoxes, none is greater than this: that the typical American cherishes free speech but is almost mortally offended by public protest, which he regards as at best lacking in taste and at worst an outright crime. A nation founded on dissent, America is exquisitely uncomfortable with ill-mannered disagreement. More than freedom itself, an American is likely to value moral insularity and absolutism: he wants to live his life free from ethical challenge. He seeks suburban anesthesia, a life of commercial abundance untroubled by the pain inflicted elsewhere to maintain it, whether through military aggression or the global exploitation of labor. The American hopes to be reminded that he is good and blameless—and quickly condemns his critics as envious or mad or driven by dark agendas. As by an unwritten law, he denounces protest as an offense against his *amour propre*. This condemnation, *ipso facto*, makes a figurative criminal of the protester, who, when her efforts are scorned, finds herself not trying to persuade, but acting in a spirit of resentment and self-vindication. She sees any act by her countryman that does not challenge the social system as intolerable evidence of complicity and collaboration. The spirit of compromise vanishes, and the protester risks falling into the attitude described by Philip Roth as "the American berserk." My article examines this process of polarization through three indispensable American

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novels of protest: Norman Mailer's *Armies of the Night*; E.L. Doctorow's *The Book of Daniel*; and Philip Roth's *American Pastoral*.

Keywords: protest, radicalism, liberalism, conscience, literature, Norman Mailer, E. L. Doctorow, Philip Roth

John T. Matteson is a recipient of the Pulitzer Prize for Biography. He has an AB in history from Princeton University and a PhD in English from Columbia University. He also holds a JD from Harvard and has practiced as a litigation attorney in California and North Carolina. His work has appeared in *The Wall Street Journal*; *The New York Times*; *The Harvard Theological Review*; *New England Quarterly*; *Nineteenth-Century Prose*; *Leviathan: A Journal of Melville Studies*; and other publications. His first book, *Eden's Outcasts: The Story of Louisa May Alcott and Her Father*, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 2008. His more recent book *The Lives of Margaret Fuller* has been awarded the Ann M. Sperber Prize for Best Biography of a Journalist. Professor Matteson's annotated edition of Alcott's *Little Women*, published by W. W. Norton in 2015, reached #1 on Amazon's list of best-selling works of children's literary criticism. Professor Matteson is a Fellow of the Massachusetts Historical Society and a former Fellow of the Leon Levy Center for Biography, where he formerly served as deputy director. He has received the Distinguished Faculty Award of the John Jay College Alumni Association and the Dean's Award for Distinguished Achievement by a PhD Alumnus of the Columbia University School of Arts and Sciences. His new book, *A Worse Place Than Hell: How the Civil War Battle of Fredericksburg Changed a Nation*, is currently in print.

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Paradigms of Otherness The American Savage in British Eighteenth-Century Popular and Scholarly Literature

In this article, I trace the changes in the literary and material representations of the indigenous peoples of North America within the British sphere of cultural production. As a first example, I give an account of the episode of the "Four Iroquois Kings" envoy at Queen Ann's court in 1710, focusing on the resonance of such a historical encounter in popular texts and iconographic material. As a second example, I analyze the popular story of Inkle and Yarico included in Richard Steele's *The Spectator* in 1711, showing its impact on the early Enlightenment reflections on colonial trade. In my conclusion, I examine the role of American natives in the scholarly works of the Scottish Enlightenment, in order to show how they were used as comparable types for the observation of the roots of European civilizations thus justifying the construction

of the British imperial hegemony both geopolitical terms and discursive practice.

Keywords: American savages, public sphere, popular literature, Scottish Enlightenment, British Empire

Federica Perazzini is Researcher in English Literature at the “Sapienza” University of Rome where she currently teaches English Literature and Culture. Awarded a Fulbright Fellowship in 2011, she was visiting researcher at Stanford University where she joined Franco Moretti’s research group at the Literary Lab. Her main research interests involve the application of computational tools to the study of literary genres and cultural discourse analysis. Her pioneering dissertation, published in two volumes in 2013, is an example of computational criticism applied to the case study of the English gothic novel. Her latest research projects include the computational analysis of the emergence of modern subjectivity in the Long 18th Century (*La Cifra del Moderno*, 2019) and the publication of a study on the intersections between fashion and English literature titled *Fashion Keywords* (2017).

MAŁGORZATA POKS

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**“Where Butchers Sing Like Angels”
Of Captive Bodies and Colonized Minds
(With a Little Help from Louise Erdrich)**

The Master Butchers Signing Club—Louise Erdrich’s “countehistory” (Natalie Eppelsheimer) of the declared and undeclared wars of Western patriarchy—depicts a world where butchering, when done with precision and expertise, approximates art. Fidelis Waldvogel, whose name means literally Faithful Forestbird, is a sensitive German boy turned the first-rate sniper in the First World War and master butcher in his adult life in America. When Fidelis revisits his homeland after the slaughter of World War II, Delphine, his second wife, has a vision of smoke and ashes bursting out of the mouths of the master butchers singing onstage in a masterful harmony of voices. Why it is only Delphine, an outsider in the Western world, that can see the crematorium-like reality overimposed on the bucolic scenery of a small German town? Drawing on decolonial and Critical Animal Studies, this article tries to demystify some of the norms and normativities we live by.

Keywords: Louise Erdrich, decoloniality, species war, normative humanity

Małgorzata Poks, PhD is an assistant professor at the Institute of Literary Studies, Faculty of Humanities, at the University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland. Her main research interests revolve around contemporary North American Literature, Indigenous Studies, US-Mexican

border writing, Critical Animal Studies, Christian anarchism, Thomas Merton's late poetry. She has published widely in Poland and abroad. Her monograph *Thomas Merton and Latin America: a Consonance of Voices* (2006) received the International Thomas Merton Award and in her article "Home on the Border: in Ana Castillo's *The Guardians: The Colonial Matrix of Power, Epistemic Disobedience, and Decolonial Love*" was awarded the 2019 Javier Coy Biennial Research Award. Poks is also a recipient of several international research fellowships.

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**Black Flag under a Grey Sky
Forms of Protest in Current Neo-Confederate Prose and Song**

While 'tragic' protest and protest songs are normally conceived of as originating on the political left of American culture, in recent years protest from the political right, specifically the racist right has flown under the cultural radar of most researchers of American studies. This article strives to explore the ways in which the neo-Confederate movement is currently protesting the state of cultural, political, and social affairs in the contemporary American South. The neo-Confederate movement is one of the oldest forms of 'conservative' protest present in the United States, originating out of the defeat of the Confederacy and the civic religion of the 'Lost Cause' of the last decades of the 1800s into the first three decades of the 1900s. Since the neo-Confederate movement is both revolutionary and conservative, it is possible to derive some valuable insights into the contemporary reactionary politics of the right by examining a brief sampling of the protest songs, novels, and essays of this particular subculture.

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Keywords: neo-Confederate, radical fiction, racist revolutionary subculture, U.S. cultural history

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