

# VISIONS

THE UNDERGRADUATE JOURNAL  
OF AMERICAN STUDIES

VOLUME 14 // 2018-2019





# *VISIONS*

*THE UNDERGRADUATE JOURNAL  
OF AMERICAN STUDIES*

*VOLUME 14 // 2018-2019*

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## FOREWORD

We are proud to present the 2018–2019 edition of the *Undergraduate Journal of American Studies*. This year's journal encompasses the wide scope and interdisciplinary nature of American Studies. We were fortunate to draw from such varied fields as English literature, History, Political Science, and Cinema Studies.

The theme of this year's issue is "Visions." The United States is a country that is increasingly viewed in disparate and competing ways, both within and outside its borders. The past year has seen a large field of prospective Democratic Presidential candidates pitch various ideas of what America could look like in a post-Trump world. The ongoing migrant crisis from Central and South America compels the U.S. to grapple with the harsh realities of its southern neighbours, and reflect on its own asylum policies. Californians suffering through catastrophic wildfires now find unfortunate kinship with those in Brazil and Australia. Quarrels with geopolitical rivals such as China, Russia, and most recently Iran, demonstrate the multitude of challenges facing U.S. hegemony. Finally, the 116th Congress, the most diverse in the nation's history, has changed how history will view the Trump presidency by moving towards impeachment.

In this rapidly changing world, what is America? And how do we understand it?

The selected pieces in this issue touch on relevant topics including voter suppression, white supremacy, capitalism, and historical fundamentalism. In a time of seemingly endless crisis, the included works also offer avenues of hope through close readings of narratives and stories by those in the margins. We are also fortunate to have some special features on felon disenfranchisement and the 50th anniversary of the monumental Apollo 11 Moon Landing.

The 19th volume of *The Undergraduate Journal of American Studies* would not have been possible without the support of the CSUS community, including but not limited to Professors Alexandra Rahr and Nicholas Sammond. We would also like to extend our gratitude to Don Newton, Nikola Milicic, and Caroline Holland. We were fortunate to draw from an expansive set of papers and we are grateful to everyone who submitted papers for consideration. This year's journal is

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indebted to the work of our Associate Editors Isha Chaudhuri, Khushi Riona Nansi, Clare O'Brien, Margaret Pereira, and Sofiya Zadorozhna. We would also like to thank Ian Sullivan Cant for his expertise in graphic design. We sincerely hope that you enjoy the 19th volume of the journal and invite you to think critically about the questions it raises in light of our present moment.

Sincerely,

Aisha Assan-Lebbe & Emily Chu

Co-Editors-in-Chief

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## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

It is my great pleasure to welcome you, readers, to the fourteenth volume of the *Undergraduate Journal of American Studies* at the University of Toronto. As is the journal's tradition, the articles in this volume cover a wide variety of topics and articulate a range of perspectives. They are united, though, by the overarching theme of "Visions"—an exploration and argument about what has been, what is, and (perhaps most important) what will be in relation to the United States. In a historical moment in which the call to Make America Great Again (MAGA) seeks to silence the claims and demands of women, Indigenous folk, queer, Black and Latinx communities, this theme is a crucial call for detailing our visions of the world we choose to inhabit, visions that reach across disciplinary boundaries. And these articles speak volumes about how we do American Studies at the University of Toronto.

I offer my sincere thanks and congratulations to each of the volume's contributors and to its editorial team, which has assembled those contributions into an elegant whole. To write about our own vision and those of our peers—and to do so with passion, style, and care—is a pleasure in and of itself. Yet it is also a vital contribution to public discourse at a moment when that discourse is in peril. To declare that your vision is to "Make America Great Again" is to imply that America has fallen from grace. But the virtue of the United States as a place (and too often its excuse for abuses of its power) is that its citizens persistently argue about what it means to improve, to seek grace, to be better and truer to the ideals on which the nation was ostensibly founded. The inclusion of heretofore excluded voices and visions in that argument—rather than consignment to an idealized past in which they were silenced—fulfills that democratic promise. In 2015, when the pastor and eight parishioners at the Emanuel African American Episcopal Church were killed by a white supremacist, then-President Barack Obama ended his eulogy for the fallen by singing a chorus from the hymn *Amazing Grace*. The song recounts the redemption of a slave trader, his eyes opened to the error of his ways and fixed on a better tomorrow. The chorus is: "Amazing Grace/How sweet the sound/That saved a wretch like me./I once was lost/but now I'm found,/was blind but now I see." To find grace requires being willing to look unflinchingly at one's life and the effect of one's actions, and to judge them dispassionately and compassionately. We can ask no less and no

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more of ourselves and others. One of the less-sung verses of Woody Guthrie's *This Land Is Your Land* is, "As I went walking I saw a sign there/ And on the sign it said 'No Trespassing.'/But on the other side it didn't say nothing/That side was made for you and me." The essays in this volume are written on that side of the sign.

The Centre for the Study of the United States (CSUS) at the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy, University of Toronto, is this country's preeminent place for making sense of the place of the United States in the Americas and in the world. It provides a common ground for scholars in fields as diverse as political science, economics, cinema studies, women and gender studies, history, English, geography, and art history, brought together by a shared intellectual interest in the United States, and in the Americas. We host a wide range of public lectures and intellectually stimulating events each year. We offer a thorough and far-reaching undergraduate program in American Studies. We act as a clearinghouse for graduate students whose focus is the Americas. And, as you will see, we help in our small way to support an excellent undergraduate student journal in American Studies, one which advertises the breadth and depth of our students' interests, and their intellectual vision.

My sincere congratulations and gratitude to all of you who made this journal happen.

Nicholas Sammond

Director

Centre for the Study of the United States and the American Studies program

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*Zhixuan Zhu*

A JOURNEY BRIDGING THE PAST AND THE FUTURE:  
HOW SYMBOLIC GEOGRAPHY IN MOMADAY'S  
*THE WAY TO RAINY MOUNTAIN EMBODIES*  
THE CONTINUATION OF THE  
KIOWA ANCESTRAL SPIRIT



YR 1898  
V. R. HART,  
OMAHA

IN SUMMER  
- Kiowa -



N. Scott Momaday's *The Way to Rainy Mountain* depicts a journey in search for the ancestral origin of the Kiowa people. According to Momaday, this journey evokes three central themes: "a landscape that is incomparable, a time that is gone forever, and the human spirit, which endures" (4). Space, time, and the tribal and individual identity become closely intertwined. Through recurring descriptive patterns, Momaday endows the novel's landscape with metaphorical and symbolic significance. This spatial representation embodies a vision of the continuation of the long-lost Kiowa ancestral spirit into the future. Specifically, the fullness of the landscape represents the holistic experience of the tribal identity, the repeated notion of spatial distance metaphorically preserves the tribal identity in a transcendental eternity, and the motion across space is a symbolic representation of the rediscovery, inheritance, and rejuvenation of the ancestral spirit.

Momaday illustrates the entirety of the Kiowa tribal identity through his description of the plain landscape as well as the Kiowa people's experience of the landscape. When the narrator describes the plain landscape he sees from afar, he says: "At first there is no discrimination in the eye, nothing but the land itself, whole and impenetrable. But then the smallest things begin to stand out of the depths" (17). The land is depicted as "whole and impenetrable" (Momaday 17). The objects on the land "stand out of" the land as if they grow out of it rather than being placed onto it. Thus, they remain an organic and intimate part of the land instead of being cut off as isolated individuals. Not only is there no breach between the individual objects and the whole land, but the land is also at one with the sky: "There the land itself ascends into the sky" (23). The distance between the land and the sky is eliminated. In this way, the whole landscape, including the land, the sky, and the natural objects, is described as one organic, inseparable, and all-encompassing entity.

The fullness of the landscape echoes the people's holistic experience of it. The narrator describes his childhood experience of getting to know the land: "I came to know that country, not in the way a traveler knows the landmarks he sees in the distance, but more truly and intimately, in every season from a thousand points of view" (67). He also states that a man "ought to give himself up to a particular landscape... to look at it from as many angles as he can... to dwell upon it... to imagine that he touches it with his hands at every season" (83). For the Kiowa people, the land is not separated into isolated "landmarks" that receive only cursory glances and sporadic visits. To know the land means not merely to see it visually but to experience it holistically through every sense, from every perspective, and in every transient moment. In this way, the person joins into the fullness of the landscape. This experience of being one with the landscape is also reflected in the tribal origin myth: the seven sisters are "borne into the sky" and transformed into stars so that "the Kiowas have kinsmen in the night sky" (8). The seven sisters become part of the sky and, through them, the Kiowas as a people can also

integrate. Also, the Kiowa people will return to the earth after death: In the twenty fourth story, the woman in beautiful dress is buried “under the ground” (82). Her grave is unmarked so that no one knows its location after Mammedaty dies. She is fully merged into the land. From birth to death, the Kiowa people always see themselves as part of the landscape.

The totality of the landscape and people’s holistic experience of nature mirrors the unity of the Kiowa tribal identity. People are like individual natural objects while the tribal culture is like the vast land and sky that hold them together as a community. This sense of unification of identity is vividly depicted in the scene of a small cricket immersing into the moon. “It had gone there, I thought, to live and die, for there, of all places, was its small definition made whole and eternal” (12). The moon presents a round image, indicating the notion of completion. It also bears great resemblance to the sun—the Kiowa’s essential religious icon—and can thus be read as a symbol of the Kiowa community. The cricket is “made whole” (12) by becoming one with the moon, just like the Kiowa individual can be made whole by immersing into the larger tribal identity. Therefore, by repeating the notion of unification of landscape and people, Momaday gives the landscape the symbolic meaning of the entirety of the tribal identity, demonstrating that the Kiowa people see their individual identities as complete only when they are as one with the ancestral community.

Forced to discard the ancestral land, faith, and pastoral lifestyle, the narrator—a Kiowa descendant—inevitably feels a deep gap between himself and the ancestral world, and the repeated notion of spatial distance is used to represent this time and psychological gap. In the book, the ancestral figures are constantly positioned in faraway places: the houses on the plain “stand here and there against the sky... They belong in the distance; it is their domain” (11). In the narrator’s imagination, the Kiowa ancestor Kotsatoah stands “away in the distance, perhaps, alone and against the sky” (53). In the past story, the narrator describes the old buffalo chasers as “lost to view... in the distance” (55). The ancestral world seems to be always situated against the sky in the distance—always out of reach from the narrator’s psychological perception. Also, in Momaday’s description of space, there is a constant metaphorical relationship between space and time: the tortoises that crawl through space are described as “going nowhere in the plenty of time” (5), the pronghorns walking around in space are depicted as ambling along “in their own wilderness dimension of time” (19), and even the origin of summertime can be found by traveling across space (60). The dimension of space and the dimension of time collapse into one and the long spatial distance can represent a long distance in time between the descendant and the long-lost tribal tradition.

Yet this distance is not merely a pessimistic representation of the unconquerable barrier between the descendant and the ancestral origin: it is also a metaphorical way of preserving the ancestral world in a transcendental eternity.

In the scene of the cricket in the moon and the story of the seven sisters ascending into the sky, the creature can be made “eternal” (12) by traveling through the spatial distance. Thus by positioning the ancestral figures in a distance, Momaday puts the ancestral world “beyond [the] reach of time” (11) as if preserved in a cocoon, free from the erosion of time and waiting to be rediscovered. Moreover, he suggests the possibility for the descendant to bridge this time and space distance and tap into the ancestral world. “My line of vision was such that the creature filled the moon like a fossil. It had gone there, I thought, to live and die, for there, of all places, was its small definition made whole and eternal” (12). The cricket can enter the moon by eliminating the distance through the narrator’s eyes. The narrator can travel through time to converge with the ancestral spirit in his mind and can “see that man as if he were there now” (47). As long as the ancestral world is still “within the reach of memory” (85), the descendant always enjoys a possibility of bridging the time and psychological gap and gain access to the eternal ancestral spirit in their mind.

The rediscovery and inheritance of the ancestral spirit are also represented in the recurring downward motion across space. The twenty-third story describes three images: the Tai-me bundle that falls to the floor, the grandmother bundle hanging heavily around Mammedaty’s neck, and the great iron kettle in grandmother’s yard that is used to catch the rain. A downward motion runs across the page and through all three voices before ending in the heavy image of the iron kettle. The Tai-me bundle and the grandmother bundle are both symbolic representations of the heaviness of the ancestors’ spiritual belief while grandmother’s kettle in the personal voice can be seen as a representation of the individual descendant. By collecting the falling rain, the kettle catches the falling weight of the ancestral belief. The kettle can “sing for a long time afterward” (81), which suggests that the descendant is able to inherit the ancestral spirit and pass it down in the future. The downward motion is echoed in the mythical scene of the Leonid meteors. For the ancestors, the image of the falling stars is a “sudden and violent disintegration of an old order” (85) and an omen of the destiny of destruction. However, the falling stars are not simply fallen and forgotten—they fall into the memory and dream of people like Ko-sahn. The descendant catches the falling star in memory just like the kettle catches the rain. Dreaming about the falling stars, Ko-sahn can transcend time and transform into the “old purveyor of the sacred earth” (88) whom she sees at the Sun Dance ritual and thus reunite with the tribal community. The downward motion across space symbolically represents the trace of the ancestral spirit inherited and passed down through generations of descendants.

*The Way to Rainy Mountain* also involves a motion across space of larger scale implying the rediscovery of the ancestral world. Two journeys intertwine with each other in the book: the journey of the narrator to his grandmother’s grave and

the long migration of the Kiowa people. The Kiowa migration starts with the short poem “Headwaters” that indicates the origin of life and ends with the poem “Rainy Mountain Cemetery,” which evokes the death-like image of the cold black stone. It is a historical journey of “coming out” (17), rising up and then declining and falling. The journey of the narrator to the Rainy Mountain, on the other hand, is a retracing of the ancestral origin. He travels from the contemporary world to the Rainy mountain “where Creation was begun” (5) and to his grandmother’s grave where “ancestral names” are carved in dark stones. His journey across space represents the psychological journey of establishing a link between the individual and the ancestral identity.

Moreover, Momaday not only suggests the inheritance of the ancestral tradition, but also indicates renewal and rejuvenation of the tribal identity. “Looking back once, I saw the mountain and came away” (12). Arriving at the Rainy Mountain where the ancestral spirit originates and lies in silence, the narrator takes all the scenery into his mind and then “come away” (12), just like the young men in the Kiowa myth who found the origin of the sun and then “come away” (60) to return to their own people and their daily life. The descendant does not stop at the cold image of death or the lofty image of a long-gone culture. He bears the memory of tribal identity with him and goes on to explore the real world. The ancestral tradition is a source of vitality and integrity to be revisited for inspiration, but what matters most is how the descendants bring the tradition to life in a down-to-earth way in their and personal experience. Thus, the physical motion of the narrator suggests the possibility of renewing the traditional identity through the descendant’s personal journey.

By repeating the notion of fullness, distance, and motion across space, Momaday gives the spatial description in *The Way to Rainy Mountain* a metaphorical and symbolic connotation, thus presenting a vision of the continuation of the ancestral spirit from the past to the future. This way of giving new meaning to the landscape through retelling and reimagining also reflects the preservation and renewal of the Kiowa ancestral heritage through the oral tradition. “The journey herein recalled continues to be made anew each time the miracle comes to mind, for that is peculiarly the right and responsibility of the imagination” (4). The symbolic and metaphorical spatial description is a part of the larger connotation of the book that the ancestral spirit can be preserved and renewed by retelling the story and preserving the oral tradition.

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*Samantha Santoro*

“A VENT FOR A LONG-PENT CONSCIOUSNESS”:  
AN EXAMINATION OF THE PHYSICAL WORLD AND  
THE CREATION OF A “THIRD SPACE” IN ZITKALA-ŠA’S  
*AN INDIAN TEACHER AMONG INDIANS*



Zitkala-Ša's "An Indian Teacher Among Indians" frames the physical world and built environment as representations of the speaker's perpetual oscillation between the competing elements of her Sioux ancestry and the constraints of colonial society. The Sioux tradition from which she is alienated is depicted as familiar yet permeated with a vulnerability and disdainful naiveté despite its promise of liberation and self-discovery. Conversely, the built environment that is constructed by those who subscribe to the "white man's papers" (111) influence the creation of a space that obfuscates the speaker's Sioux heritage, threatening assimilation and catalyzing feelings of dislocation and suffocation within her. The narrative models an act of space-making in how it works against this dichotomy to create an intangible, emancipatory "space" that represents ventilation and freedom. Thus, the speaker disavows the built environments of colonial society while simultaneously resisting the familiar naiveté of the Sioux tradition that insists upon her retaining ignorance of the assimilating presence of the settler colonists. Moreover, the "space" which the speaker gradually constructs is a "third space" that is materially amorphous and permeated with the possibility for gradual evolution, amalgamating the Sioux culture and the colonial space to endow her with mobility and agency. This is evidenced through an examination of the diction of confinement which the narrator uses to depict domestic white space, the imagery of nature as simultaneously vast and isolating, and the imagery of the "horizon" and "light" which serves as a synecdoche for the "third space" constructed by the speaker. This "third space" is percolated with notions of renewal and evolution that reconfigure her bifurcated identity, keeping the dialogue between cultures present rather than reconciling their cultural differences.

The speaker uses diction of confinement in the depiction of the domestic space, thus imbuing it with notions of limitation and dislocation that suggest a suppression of the Sioux culture by colonial structures. The domestic environments throughout the text are portrayed as spaces that are uninhabitable and limiting, as seen in the passage:

...my room...[was] a small, carpeted room, with ghastly walls and ceiling. The two windows, both on the same side, were curtained with heavy muslin yellowed with age. A clean white bed was in one corner of the room, and opposite it was a square pinetable covered with a black woolen blanket. (105)

The initial impression of the space as "small" suggests confinement, and the meager furnishings that populate it are repellent to the disquieted speaker. The adverb "ghastly" is replete with notions of a grim and distressing place, illustrating an ardent aversion towards the space she is meant to occupy. The town wherein this room is located is introduced as "old-fashioned" (104), and

the image of the “heavy muslin [curtains] yellowed with age” corresponds with notions of an environment that is predicated upon the settler colonists’ outdated ideologies. Furthermore, the “square pine table,” a reference to the Sioux peoples’ symbiotic relationship with nature is obfuscated by the opacity of the “black woolen blanket” and situated opposite to the “clean white bed.” This language posits the diametric opposition of colonialism to Sioux culture. The speaker subverts the connotations of comfort and materialism associated with the domestic “white” space by attaching heaviness and suffocation to each item in the condemned environment.

Moreover, the domestic space engenders feelings of disquietude and dislocation within the speaker, who actively and continually resists integration into its unfamiliarity. The way in which the domestic environment catalyzes discomfort in the speaker is evident in the passage taken from her assessment of the cabin. She says, “[w]hen... I raised my head to hear more clearly the moaning of the wind in the corner logs, I noticed the daylight streaming into the dingy room through several places where the logs fitted unevenly” (109). The personification of the wind as “moaning” indicates overwhelming feelings of pain and anguish that pervade the space. The diction of “dingy” suggests a built environment that is gloomy and dismal, corresponding with the aforementioned “ghastly” and demonstrating how it is the “logs”—associated with Sioux culture—that do not fit into this environment rather than the speaker. This is evidenced by the visible distance between the personal pronoun and the adverb “unevenly.” Thus, the speaker’s nascent and evolving bicultural identity, manifesting in the creation of a “third space,” is the amalgamation of “daylight” and “dingy,” where the “daylight” that gradually filters into this grim and unfamiliar space commences the construction of a space within which she may stitch together both the white and Indian elements of her identity.

Conversely, the depiction of the natural environment is presented as permeated with the vestiges of the white culture associated with rapid and polluting industrialization:

[T]he intense heat and the sticky car smoke that followed my homeward trail did not noticeably restore my vitality...I noticed the gradual expansion of the horizon as we emerged out of the forests and into the plains. The great high buildings...and whose gigantic clusters formed large cities, diminished...until only little log cabins lay snugly in...the vast prairie. The cloud shadows which drifted about on the waving yellow of long-dried grasses thrilled me like the meeting of old friends. (106)

The diction of “intense heat” and “sticky car smoke” indicates a potency of the industrialized presence that violates the comfort of the “homeward trail,” while “sticky” suggests a presence that attaches itself to the speaker. The qualifiers “great,” “high,” and “gigantic” reflect the overwhelmingly dominant presence of industrialization looming over the prairie. The adverb “snugly” juxtaposes with the logs that fit “unevenly” when confined to the domestic space. The domestic diction of “snug” in the natural environment reinforces the sense of comfort. Furthermore, the natural imagery of the “cloud shadows” and the “waving yellow of long-dried grasses” is depicted as conversely inviting and welcoming, accentuated by the simile of “like the meeting of old friends.” However, the “yellow of long-dried grasses” suggests desiccation and lack of vitality, and the notion that it is the depleted natural environment that “thrill[s]” the speaker indicates that she identifies with decaying nature. Ultimately, the return to the plains corresponds with a “gradual expansion” of the “horizon” in which the narrator incorporates natural imagery associated with both vastness and desiccation in the creation of a “third space” that denotes possibility and potential rather than limitation.

The natural environment enables the narrator to obtain relief from the suffocation of industrialized cities. However, the portrayal of her homeland and its corresponding natural environment is irrefutably tinged with resentment at her former naiveté and guilelessness: “a strong hot wind seemed determined to blow my hat off and return me to my olden days when I roamed bareheaded over the hills” (107). The wind that was formerly “moaning” is personified in this instance as powerful and “determined to blow [her] hat off,” while “strong” and “hot” emphasize the speaker’s feelings of suffocation. The hat is a relic from white, industrialized society, and the wind opts to physically remove that which identifies her with another space rather than embrace her adaptation (1) . The diction of “old” in the phrase “olden days” reinforces the notion of familiarity established in the prior “old friends,” and the diction of “determined” and “return” implies a concentrated desire on the part of the wind to revert her to the “bareheaded” and vulnerable individual she formerly was. As a result of this resentment at the potential for regression on the part of the Sioux culture, the speaker manipulates the portrayal of natural imagery—which bears an inextricable association to this culture—so that it emanates isolation and desiccation rather than vitality. This perversion of the natural landscape is evident in the passage taken from the chapter titled “Retrospection”:

Like a slender tree, I had been uprooted from my mother,  
nature, and God. I was shorn of my branches, which had  
waved in sympathy and love for home and friends. The  
natural coat of bark which had protected my oversensitive  
nature was scraped off to the very quick. (112)

The image of the tree as “slender” proffers connotations of deprivation, emaciation, and a holistic lack of vitality; however, her usage of the natural environment as her extended metaphor illustrates a comfort and identification with elements of the symbiotic relationship between nature and the Sioux tradition. “Uprooted” emphasizes the dislocation and violation she feels when confronting the absence of the positively connoted “sympathy and love.” In addition, the phrase “shorn of my branches” implies an unwilling amputation of that to which she desires to maintain a connection. Furthermore, “shorn” and “scraped off” hint at the violence inherent to being stripped of one’s identity, and yet the fact that her bark is stripped “to the very quick” provides an opportunity for regrowth in the midst of such desolation.

Both of the aforementioned dichotomized spaces are unsatisfactory to the speaker, thus necessitating the creation of a “third space” that is a synthesis of both the sage and educated teacher from colonial society as well as the familiarity of Sioux tradition. The ambiguous “third space” alluded to in the passage taken from the beginning of the text, “Since the winter when I had my first dreams about red apples I had been travelling slowly toward the morning horizon” (104), begins with the image of “winter”—permeated with connotations of desolation—and evolves into a vision saturated with possibility and light. The imagery of “red apples” recalls Edenic associations of the Tree of Knowledge, implying that the speaker is striving towards heightened awareness rather than the suppression afforded by both colonial society and reintegration into Sioux culture. The phrase “travelling slowly” suggests a gradual evolution that serves as the diametric opposite of rapidly accelerating industrialization, and the image of the “morning horizon” is a synecdoche representing the speaker’s hopes of constructing a space that can accommodate her hybrid identity. Moreover, in the excerpt:

At this stage of my own evolution...In the process of my education I had lost all consciousness of the nature world about me...took me to the small white-walled prison which I then called my room, I unknowingly turned away from my one salvation...But alive, in my tomb, I was destitute! (112)

Here, the diction of “evolution” is associated with Darwinian conceptions of gradual and progressive (rather than instantaneous) nature. Alongside evolution is the Darwinian notion of adaptation: rather than fundamentally *changing* what one is, Zitkala-Ša’s speaker advocates for a strategic modification of the individual that enables them to retain their fundamental traits while nevertheless ensuring their survival when placed in an unfamiliar environment. The diction of “destitute” connotes a sense of being *without*, as well as overwhelming and inescapable absence—moreover, it bears associations with industrialization and poverty, thus being in a state of holistic deprivation. Furthermore, the phrase “my education” is

the speaker's recognition of the fact that this facet of the colonial society is inextricably entwined with her embryonic and "evol[ving]" bicultural identity. This realization of the necessity for a space that enables her to regain the "consciousness of the nature world" is saturated with the personal pronoun, juxtaposing with the former depictions of the domestic colonial space that was entirely devoid of the speaker's presence. The description of the speaker's emotional state as being "alive" but in a "tomb" complements the image of the tree being short to the quick while nevertheless alive, as both connote an organism that appears superficially desiccated yet is internally suffused with vitality. Additionally, she populates the excerpt with images of containment and imprisonment associated with the domestic and ostensibly "white" space—such as "small white-walled prison" or "tomb"—so as to exacerbate the need for a space within which she may be liberated and reanimated. The notion of "salvation" conjures associations of divinity, exacerbated by the presence of "sunlight" and "horizon" that characterize the composition of the "third space" and bear similarities to the ethereal light symbolizing the light of God's grace.

The rejection of these aforementioned spaces suggests that the speaker will transform her initial identification as a naïve Indigenous woman into a conclusive and self-reflexive identity as a bicultural teacher creating a new "space" that welcomes similarly hybrid identities. This rejection is evident in the passage taken from the end of the text:

Now a cold bare pole I seemed to be, planted in a strange  
earth. Still, I seemed to hope that my day would come when  
my mute aching head, reared upward toward the sky, would  
flash a zigzag lightning across the heavens. With this dream  
of a vent for a long-pent consciousness, I walked again amid  
the crowds. (113)

In this passage, the adjectives of "cold" and "bare" amplify the pre-existing sense of a physical space that is barren, desiccated, and deprived of vitality. Once "uprooted," the speaker confronts the irrefutable reality of her present space as liminal and planted in a "strange earth," distinct from both the familiar environment of her heritage and the loathed "white-walled prison" constructed by the white settlers. The "vent" for a long-pent consciousness seems to suggest that the speaker desires the "third space" to be a place of ventilation and exhalation, where "hope," "dream," "lightning," and "horizon" counteract states of "aching," "cold," and vulnerability resulting from being "bare." In so doing, the conditions of possibility are radically expanded. There is a sense of hope and potential imbued within the transitional phrase "still," as the speaker acknowledges the pain of her "mute aching head" derived from her bifurcated identity and strives towards dispersing herself "across

the heavens.” Throughout the text, it is apparent that the natural imagery associated with the sky—such as “zigzag lightning” and “sunlight”—is what grants the speaker access to her desired “third space” and affords her the ventilation that she was deprived of when occupying the former environments.

Therefore, through an examination of the diction of confinement in the depiction of the domestic white space, the imagery of nature as simultaneously vast as well as desiccated, and the imagery of the “horizon” and “lightning” as a synecdoche for the “third space” constructed by the speaker, it is evident that the “third space” is the amalgamation of the Sioux tradition and the colonial space into an intangible space that insists on resilience and adaptation, as well as both the potential and vision for a different kind of world. Zitkala-Ša’s “third space” advocates for perpetual motion instead of stagnancy, assembling the vestiges of her bicultural identity into a mosaic of possibility and ventilation that manifests itself in the resplendent yet ambiguous image of “zigzag lightning.”

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*Samantha Tristen*

EXPLORING THE LIMITS OF SENSORY  
MONUMENTS THROUGH A CASE STUDY  
OF JAMES DRAKE'S "POLICE DOGS  
ATTACK" SCULPTURE



Although once not treated seriously within academia, sensory studies have recently gained recognition as a useful methodology in the study of history. More pointedly, historical accounts of sensory experiences illuminate the dynamics between a figure and their environment, offering not only a more detailed—and by extension—a more accurate account of the past, but also a window into the thoughts and feelings associated with past experiences. For example, a memoir wherein a survivor of the Shoah recalls the sensory world in a Nazi concentration camp could inform historians of both the living conditions within these camps and how their prisoners interpreted and interacted with the environment.

It is from the chief advantage of sensory studies — viz. a detailed account of the sensate experiences of the past — that the prime debate within the field emerges. Given that certain texts provide an often richly detailed account of an environment in the past, could one recreate the environment in question to simulate the account that they are studying? According to a progenitor of sensory history, Peter Charles Hoffer, one could recreate a sensory experience and in the process, recover a sliver of the past given that sensory experiences are informed by the societies wherein they are situated (2, 6). In other words, Hoffer believes that through simulating the sensory environment detailed in historical accounts, historians may access past sensory worlds. Mark Michael Smith, another influential sensory historian, however, contends that accurately replicating conditions of historical context is not possible. Smith reasons that it is key historicize the senses as such an inquiry may uncover new information about the past (Smith 846-7). Nonetheless, one cannot truly recreate past sensory experiences because such experiences were informed by the cultures and societies in which they occurred, comparable to those of the present (Smith 846). Thus, any attempt to replicate a past sensory experience is ahistorical (“We Shall Overcome — West Park”).

At its core, this paper is a philosophical inquiry into this debate. Rather than working strictly within the traditional disciplinary field of history, this paper evaluates the claim that sensory experiences of the past can be recreated through an analysis of works of art. The reason for this is twofold. First, there exists an archive of artworks that are designed to simulate a sensory experience for the viewer. Second, art — especially public monuments, on which this paper focuses — is arguably the most frequent and accessible avenue via which historical narratives are disseminated. While an academic study of history is often limited to those who can access higher education and history is not a mandatory subject in many school curricula, whenever one passes a work of art in a public place, it influences their perception of the artwork’s subject, to varying degrees. For this reason, public art is inherently pedagogical despite the fact that viewers of public art may not consciously realize that their worldviews are actively being shaped by a statue in the local park or the mural on the wall of a popular cafe. As such, public art is the space in which sensory history is most commonly applied and experienced, and thus a prime tool by which we can evaluate if the sensory experiences of the past can be recreated. In doing so, this paper makes an original contribution to

the growing field of sensory studies, as the discipline has mainly focused on the cultural and temporal shifts as an obstacle in the replication of sensory experiences.

## CASE STUDY: “POLICE DOGS ATTACK” SCULPTURE BY JAMES DRAKE IN THE KELLY INGRAM PARK

Given the aims of this essay (viz. to evaluate if past sensory experiences can indeed be replicated), it is key to select a work of art for a case study that intentionally subjects its viewer to a sensory experience. While all art requires the use of the senses — even if just one — certain works of art explicitly intend to simulate a specific sensory experience (as opposed to the more common option of letting the viewer’s senses inform their experiences with the art). Due to its attempt to simulate the experiences of civil rights demonstrators in the infamous Birmingham riot of 1963, this paper considers James Drake’s 1991 “Police Dogs Attack” installation.

The statue in question is located in Kelly Ingram Park (formerly called West Park) in Birmingham, Alabama. During the 1960s, the city was a focal point for Civil Rights Movements due to its location in “the most segregated city” in the United States (Hunter-Gault). For this reason, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) chose Birmingham as a site wherein to protest the unjust segregation laws that were present throughout the country in May of 1963 (*PBS*). Birmingham’s reputation as a violently segregated city proved true when the city’s Public Safety Commissioner, Eugene “Bull” O’Connor, ordered the Birmingham police and fire departments to forcefully extinguish these demonstrations (Momodu). Such tactics included spraying the demonstrators — including young children — with a firefighter’s hose ordering large police dogs to attack the protesters (Siemaszko). Ultimately, the harshness instigated by O’Connor engendered sympathy for the Civil Rights Movement nationwide, as the cruelty was televised across the nation; nonetheless, the campaign was laborious and the violence haunted its victims even after Birmingham and the rest of the nation was legally desegregated (Hunter-Gault).

Drake’s “Police Dogs Attack” sculpture — one of his three sculptures in Ingram Park — is a two-panelled installation constructed of metal. The viewer is able to walk in between the two walls, out of which three dogs emerge, rendered to look as if they are attacking the viewer. The narrow space, coupled with the dynamism of the dogs, is designed to mimic the experience of Birmingham protesters (*RoadsideAmerica.com*). In other words, it seeks to recreate and preserve a sensory experience for posterity.

In the experience of walking through the installation, the monument elicits a distinct sensory and emotional response from the viewer. The narrowness of the walkway creates a sense of confinement, and the dogs extending from the panels obscure the path, making it impossible to walk straight through the installation. This engenders a sense of danger, confusion, and fear. Moreover, the dogs are

visually startling with their snarling expression and proximity to the viewer, further creating an unsettling sensory experience for the viewer (*RoadsideAmerica.com*).

Despite these sensory successes, this sculpture — like others, as this paper argues — is unable to accurately recreate the sensory experiences of the past. This calls into question Hoffer's assertion that sensory experiences of the past can be replicated and, more broadly, the purpose of sensory-based memorials.

There are a few reasons why this sculpture does not accurately translate the sensory experiences of the Birmingham riot. Foremost is that the sculpture does not replicate all sensory experiences for the viewer. Of Aristotle's five senses (i.e. sight, smell, touch, taste, and hearing), only two are replicated in the sculpture—sight and touch. The limits of these two will be addressed further below, but for now, this paper discusses how the exclusion of the other three Aristotelian senses — hearing, smell, and taste — fails to accurately portray the sensory environment of the Birmingham riot.

Primary sources written about the event report on an array of sensory stimuli. A post by the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette dated Monday, May 13, 1963, tells of the chaos that unfolded during the riot, which is by no means limited to sight and touch. The report writes about the explosions, fires, gunshots, stone-throwing, demolition, and loud voices — among other sensory experiences — that overwhelmed the streets during the riot (“Thousands Clash After Bombing”). Phil Oramous, then a press staffer for the paper, wrote of his experience in Birmingham during the riot, recalling windows and car windshields being broken, sirens wailing, and fires burning (“I Never Felt So Alone”). From these reports in addition to others covering the riot, it is apparent that hearing, smell, and perhaps even taste were all experienced by those in Birmingham.

Moreover, one must consider how even when the sculpture demands the use of certain senses — namely sight and smell — it by no means covers to full range of tactile and visual stimuli experienced in the riot. A sculpture is a visual manifestation of a second in time; while it may depict moving actors, it is uncommon for the sculpture itself to be kinetic. In effect, one can pause to meditate on the situation depicted in the sculpture, whereas those attacked by dogs during the riot did not have such a privilege. The viewer witnesses a still shot of movement, whereas the victims of O'Connor's cruelty experienced the dog attack in motion, which certainly creates a more urgent — and frightening — sensory environment (Siemaszko).

A similar dilemma exists vis-à-vis the sense of touch. Not only do the metal dog sculptures obviously fail to accurately depict what the dogs felt (or, for that matter, smelled or sounded like), but the choice to touch the sculptures is left to the viewer. Certainly the space in between the panels makes avoiding touching the dogs a more difficult task than with many other works of art. However, the viewer chooses to touch the sculpture, whereas the protesters in Birmingham did not have such a choice, as the dogs were sent to attack them (*PBS*). Moreover, a monument cannot — nor should it — attempt to distill on the viewer the pain endured by the victims of the dog attacks. However regrettable, pain was a tactile sensation

experienced during the riot. To provide an example of the physical violence, United Press International reported about the riot, writing that “[a] Negro man had four or five deep gashes on his leg where he had been bitten by a dog... [a] sobbing Negro woman said she had been kicked in the stomach by a policeman” (Siemaszko). With this violence considered, it becomes apparent that the sculpture cannot replicate the tactile experiences endured by the protester at Birmingham.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR SENSORY HISTORY, ART, AND MEMORY

As previously established, works of art cannot mimic historical sensory experiences. However, it is imperative that the impact of this conclusion be assessed. As this paper has predominantly worked within the disciplines of history and art, it seems apt to address the significance of this study for both disciplines.

In the realm of sensory studies, specifically sensory history, the Police Dogs Attack Sculpture confirms Smith’s contention that past sensory experiences cannot be replicated. Though he mainly discusses how culture inhibits an authentic recreation of sensory experiences, public art is the most common and accessible application of sensory history. Given that it is at best a laborious task and at worst an impossibility to replicate historical sensory experiences, one can conclude that Smith’s work is relevant in that historians should “properly historicize the senses” instead of “positing a usable but ahistorical past” (Smith 841, 847).

Art, particularly that which has the intent of simulating a specific sensory experience, should acknowledge the limits of replicating historical events. That is not to say artists should cease to create such works of art; indeed, sensory-based art can serve as an accessible and engaging gateway to historical studies. One should, however, not claim to be replicating a past sensory experience, and a viewer should not be led to believe that they have undergone an accurate simulation of a historical event. Works of visual art capture a moment in time, allowing their viewers to meditate for however long on a still depiction of a second. However, as evidenced by a comparison between the viewer’s experience of Drake’s sculpture the accounts of the 1963 Birmingham riot, a work of art cannot capture a full and authentic portrait of past sensory experiences.

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*Margaret Pereira*

**FEATURE**

**ONE SMALL STEP?  
REFLECTING ON THE ANNIVERSARY  
OF THE APOLLO 11 MOON LANDING**



It is difficult to grapple with the 50-year anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing. As a person who was not anywhere close to alive when Neil Armstrong set foot on the lunar surface, I find it very hard to imagine America without this sublime moment of technological innovation and human spirit. The moon landing was injected into the collective DNA of the United States, as an achievement which crystallized what it meant to be American: modern and exceptional. The cultural footprint, and indeed the actual footprint, is paramount to envisioning an America that seemed to be unyielding in its push for progress. On the other hand, Apollo 11 feels worlds away, existing back in a time where something could be uncontroversial, spectacular and inarguable. I have never experienced an event that seemed as pure as the moon landing, families huddled around the television to watch a historical moment that produced only hope. Of course, this was never completely true.

It is quite a feat of the American cultural hive-mind that the moon landing has been imagined as almost entirely separate from the event which produced it, namely the Cold War. Apollo 11 is not often considered an act of war, despite the fact that the scientific power the launch exhibits is perhaps just behind nuclear weaponry as an example of the world-ending abilities of American engineering. Additionally, as Imani Perry writes in a 2019 article for the *New York Times*, the moon landing is representative of America's best at a time where many were experiencing America's worst. The mission was met with over one hundred mostly Black protestors led by Ralph Abernathy, a pastor and close associate of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. After King's death in 1968, Abernathy assumed leadership of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and decried American's comfort with the, "gulf between technological innovations and our social injustices" (Perry). Abernathy argued the billions spent on space exploration would be better used towards ending poverty and hunger, and funding social programs and healthcare. Perry notes that protestors were not thrown out of what was then called Cape Kennedy, but invited in for a tour, some even being brought to the VIP section to watch the launch. In 2019 America where civil disobedience is chided online by the commander-in-chief, this action on behalf of the NASA Administrator only adds to the myth-making sense of unity which surrounds the moon landing, while papering over the very real problems that disenfranchised Americans experienced.

Apollo 11 is arguably responsible for much of the mid-century American exceptionalism that seeps into modern-day nooks and crannies, and is the cornerstone of the American canon, for better or worse. The rocket pushing higher and higher always represented progress, but it is starting to mean something very different when it feels like the United States is in a nosedive.

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*Claire Funk*

A NARRATIVE OF VIOLENCE: THE NECESSITY  
OF BUSINESS IN *BARTLEBY, THE SCRIVENER*:  
A STORY OF WALL STREET



To what extent can a story purportedly narrated by an “eminently *safe* man” (Melville 18) be implicated in an act of violence? The word “safe” itself is carefully ambiguous in all its potential meanings: cautious, free from harm, restored to health, presenting no danger, mentally or morally sound, not likely to be wrong, delivered from condemnation (*OED Online*). In “Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street”, Herman Melville does not offer his reader the comfort of a simple binary opposition between violence and pacifism. Rather, Melville’s doubts about the ontological gap between violence and pacifism find a voice in his narrator’s uneasy position, one in which, even as an “eminently *safe* man” his distance from violence is unfixed. This coexistence of violence and passivity is, in fact, essential to sustain the corporate cycle. Yet, the lawyer’s participation in this cycle is quiet and easily unobserved owing to the narrator’s consciousness of the problematic effects that suspicions of his involvement might have on his professional reputation. Violence in the office exists in a potential state, with regard to the ever-present threat of physical manifestation in the characters of Nippers and Turkey, and the lawyer “incautiously” (Melville 30) activates this violence on several occasions. Violence is fully realized, however, in the lawyer and narrator’s particular use and abuse of language. Here, I refer to a linguistic violence figured in the rhetoric the lawyer deploys to control a situation, i.e. Bartleby’s recalcitrance, which is then reconfigured in the narrative constraint the narrator uses to tell his tale. Linguistic violence, whether thought of as an “undue or enforced constraint” or as “improper treatment of a word or text; misinterpretation; misapplication; alteration of meaning or intention,” (*OED Online*) is visually represented in the story via recurring images of constraint, namely walls, coat buttons, and a paper weight. It is also grammatically rendered in the narrator’s frequent recourse to the imperative and the verb “must”. The linguistic violence that is both product of and fuel for the propagation of business and, as such, primarily serves the lawyer’s professional reputation, can be reduced to the lawyer’s repeated invocation of necessity. The claim of necessity is crucial to the lawyer’s vindication: if he can successfully present himself as responding to external pressures, as one compelled by the “necessities connected with [his] business” that in turn “tyrannize over all other considerations” (Melville 39) including his impulses toward compassion, then he will have effectively purged himself of any blame concerning Bartleby’s death. In other words, he will be “safe” from condemnation. The lawyer’s language restricts the scope of possibility and expands the role of necessity, thereby excluding the potential for alternative ethical action.

The opening words of Melville’s story, “I am,” (17) challenge the title’s suggestion that this narrative is about Bartleby rather than the narrator himself and his position on Wall Street. The lawyer’s concern with proper introductions neatly fits with John Jacob Astor’s appraisal of his “grand” qualities as “prudence” and “method” (Melville 18). The lawyer gives primary consideration to his

professional reputation over his account of *Bartleby*, and asserts his distance from violence by giving the reader a careful accumulation of only the most favorable opinions. But this impression is disturbed moments after his introductory declamation (and after he assures the reader that he rarely loses his temper) when, in a surprising outburst, the narrator attacks the new Constitution for what he considers “the sudden and violent abrogation of the office of Master in Chancery” (Melville 18). Ironically, his description of what upsets him about the new policy applies equally to his emotional display: it is “sudden and violent” (Melville 18). What precipitates this outburst is financial loss. The narrator feels cheated of what he had counted on as “a life-lease of the profits” (Melville 18). His preoccupation with money matters firmly grounds him in the world of Wall Street, a place that rouses a certain recklessness within him. This outburst, which he himself admits being “rash,” (Melville 18) initiates a sequence of increasingly rash responses that ultimately end in tragedy.

As both narrator and actor in the story, the lawyer is unable to admit his reliance on violence, a reliance that is revealed indirectly through the disjunction between what the narrator asserts himself to be and what the lawyer actually shows himself to be. The narrator works hard to conceal the troubling inconsistencies between his carefully constructed narrative and the behaviour on display. His carefully constructed narrative suggests a voluntary self, solidified by his reputation; but this self is challenged by the lawyer we read about— an erratic character who operates as much under the necessity of violence as his employees.

The lawyer exhibits a characteristic recklessness in his dealings with the scribes. An example of this appears early in the narrative, when the lawyer confronts Turkey about his eccentricities on a Saturday afternoon. At this point, the reader has been informed that Turkey’s violent temper comes on at noon and is “always worse on Saturdays” (Melville 20). Why, then, does the lawyer, “an eminently *safe* man,” choose this particular time to raise his concerns regarding Turkey’s work habits? Turkey responds to the confrontation according to schedule with violence both physical and verbal: “His countenance became intolerably fervid, as he oratorically assured me—gesticulating with a long ruler at the other end of the room—that if his services in the morning were useful, how indispensable, then, in the afternoon?” (Melville 20). Turkey’s oratorical speech, punctuated by the wildly swinging ruler, is a display of linguistic violence. Further, the word “indispensable” anticipates the issue of necessity. Here, Turkey argues and successfully convinces the lawyer that his services, and more importantly his predictable temper and regular displays of physical violence, are absolutely necessary for the lawyer’s business. His argument, that by violent means he is best able to serve the lawyer and his business, is strangely both differential and physically forceful, and relies on military terminology:

‘With submission, sir,’ said Turkey on this occasion, ‘I consider myself your right-hand man. In the morning I but marshal and deploy my columns; but in the afternoon I put myself at their head, and gallantly charge the foe, thus!’— and he made a violent thrust with the ruler. (Melville 20).

Later, the lawyer repeats this ostensible mistake of “incautiously rousing Turkey’s combativeness after dinner” (Melville 30). Notably, the second instance follows Bartleby’s refusal to check his work. The lawyer, being “mastered” by some “evil impulse” (Melville 29), yet unwilling to respond with physical violence himself, instead relies on Turkey, arms thrown into a “pugilistic position” (Melville 30) to threaten Bartleby with a black eye. It seems odd that, for someone who is considered safe foremost, the lawyer is reckless enough to accidentally inflame Turkey’s temper twice. In fact, the lawyer depends on Turkey and Nippers’ predictable tempers for necessary violence. If the lawyer is safe, rather than cautious or presenting no threat, we should understand safe, in this context at least, as free from danger. He silently orchestrates violence while inviting the reader to observe his safe distance from said violence.

Apart from Bartleby, the two scribes employed by the lawyer are comically eccentric but share one important feature: a temper that manifests in timely displays of physical violence. The lawyer never has to deal with “their eccentricities at one time” (Melville 23). Combined with his summary claim that “this was a good and natural arrangement under the circumstances,” (Melville 23) this suggests that what is good about the arrangement is that the lawyer can always rely on having one rational employee. The preference for peaceful rationality and only mild tolerance for its inverse due to its regularity and predictability, however, is a deceptive surface. In reality, the lawyer’s business demands passive submission and violence equally. The simile that separates the two statements above disrupts this surface: “Their fits relieved each other like guards. When Nippers’ was on, Turkey’s was off; and *vice versa*” (Melville 23). In comparing Turkey and Nippers’ respective fits to guards that relieve each other of their duties at noon, the narrator unwittingly betrays the lawyer’s dependence on violence. The allusion to military formations through the language of guards and the “good natural arrangement” reconfigures the office as a space that functions according to regular displays of violence. Due to this “good and natural arrangement,” there is always one violent temper present in the lawyer’s office. Further, the language of an “arrangement” not only has clear military associations, but also can be considered in terms of a business arrangement, suggesting a union between a militaristic violence and corporate efficiency.

Thus far, I have attempted to prove that the lawyer depends on conventional forms of violence despite claims for passivity. In his office, violence exists in a potential state, quickly realized upon provocation. This arrangement allows the

lawyer to safely maintain his distance and reputation. A scene which captures this dynamic appears approximately halfway through the narrative. In which Bartleby has refused, at this point, to answer the lawyer's questions about his origins, preferring "not to be a little reasonable" despite the lawyer's earnest pleading for a kind of "friendly" (Melville 36) rationality. The scene is set in "the contracted space behind the screen" (Melville 38). Nippers enters, quite agitated, and threatens Bartleby, a threat that is couched in Bartleby's own particular language: "'Prefer not, eh?' gritted Nippers—I'd prefer him, if I were you, sir" (Melville 37). Thus, Nippers' violent temper is presently on duty. Nippers then exits the scene upon the lawyer's dismissal, and Turkey immediately assumes position, offering bland submission: "Turkey blandly and deferentially approached. 'With submission, sir,' said he, 'yesterday I was thinking about Bartleby here, and I think that if he would but prefer to take a quart of good ale every day, it would do much towards mending him'" (Melville 37). Both violence and passive submission are present in this small space that functions as a microcosm of the lawyer's office. The physical space as one "contracted" is important. As the scribes and lawyer assemble behind the screen, Bartleby suffers the effects of restriction: "Turkey, respectfully crowding himself into the contracted space behind the screen, and by so doing, making me jostle the scrivener" (Melville 37-8). Critical to the narrator's portrayal of the way in which he manages Bartleby is the framing of his business as an external force that operates on him. Here, the external force is Turkey. The lawyer is merely caught between his two employees in an overcrowded space and is forced to shove the one. The language intentionally works to distance the lawyer from the violent, if accidental, act: he is passive participant rather than active agent. In the story at large, the external force is the necessity of business that contradicts his self-proclaimed internal good nature and impulses towards charity and benevolence. Conveniently, ethical implications are excluded from consideration when necessity is the operating force. Additionally, in this scene the lawyer becomes "slightly excited" (Melville 37) over language. Turkey, Nippers, and the lawyer all begin to use Bartleby's strange language, an alignment that troubles the lawyer. Bartleby's language, the language of preference, offers choice and in doing so directly challenges the lawyer's presentation of the situation as determined and driven by necessity.

"[I]n the haste of business" (Melville 25) and its various iterations in the story prove a constant reminder of both the lawyer's primary interest and the external forces that compel his actions. The lawyer observes the manifestation of Nipper's "indigestion" as "unnecessary maledictions, hissed, rather than spoken, in the heat of business" (Melville 21). The first instance in which the lawyer requests that Bartleby check his work, followed by Bartleby's first refusal, emerges, as the narrator claims, "in the haste of business" (Melville 25). When Bartleby informs the lawyer he would prefer not to check his work, [IC3] the lawyer ponders "[w]hat had one best do?" (Melville 26). He decides to "forget the matter for the

present” instead “reserving it for [his] future leisure”, because, as he says: “my business hurried me” (Melville 26). In near exact repetition, the lawyer asks Bartleby to join the other scribes in checking four documents as “[i]t became necessary to examine them” (Melville 26). Once again, Bartleby expresses a preference to do other than what the lawyer and his business demand. In response, the lawyer “postpone[s] the consideration of this dilemma to [his] future leisure” because “once more business hurrie[s] [him]” (Melville 26). In the simple phrase “once more,” (Melville 26) the narrator presents an accumulating force his business exerts over him as the story progresses toward its unhappy end. The lawyer, “in the eagerness of dispatching pressing business,” (Melville 32) continues to make demands of Bartleby he has come to expect will be refused: “I would inadvertently summon Bartleby, in a short, rapid tone, to put his finger, say, on the incipient tie of a bit of red tape with which I was about compressing some papers. Of course, from behind the screen the usual answer, ‘I prefer not to,’ was sure to come” (Melville 32). Finally, the lawyer emphasizes the problematic nature of Bartleby’s continued refusal by resituating his scrivener’s obstinacy within the view of his colleagues, thereby a threat to his professional reputation: “Also, when a Reference was going on, and the room full of lawyers and witnesses and business was driving fast” (Melville 45). The idea of Bartleby “denying [the lawyer’s] authority” and consequently “scandalizing [his] professional reputation” worries him “very much” (Melville 45) and solidifies his resolve to act in accordance with the necessities of business rather than social responsibility.

The act of repetition in these iterative phrases imitates the oppressive force that drives the lawyer and the narrative forward. Contrived by the narrator’s insistent language, necessity justifies his actions and interactions with Bartleby. Bartleby’s death becomes an inevitable consequence of his refusal to fulfill the demands of business, to be a necessary cog in the machine of business. Because the lawyer’s business requires both violence and passivity, Bartleby, who offers neither, is rendered inessential. The oppressive force of business is further refigured in the imperative and the conspicuous frequency of the verb “must”. The verb “must” appears twenty-eight times in the story, all spoken by the narrator or lawyer apart from two exceptions which are voiced by the landlord of the lawyer’s office, in his urging that Bartleby “must” (Melville 48) be removed in some way or another. The narrator’s reliance on the urgency of the imperative is made conspicuous in the presence of its opposite: Bartleby’s use of the subjunctive, a mood that conveys potential and preference rather than external compulsion.

Bartleby’s gaze locates this linguistic constraint. Moments prior to the aforementioned scene wherein all office members gather behind Bartleby’s screen, the lawyer examines his origins, an inquiry fueled by what the lawyer explains as a “friendly” (Melville 36) feeling toward the scrivener. Here, Bartleby fixes his gaze not on the lawyer but “upon [his] bust of Cicero” (Melville 36) occupying the

space six inches above his head. The presence of Cicero, the great Roman orator and lawyer, here regarded by Bartleby, signals the possibility of the lawyer's words as a speech, a rhetorical coaxing framed as a gesture of friendship, and the lawyer as linguistic conniver rather than confidant. Furthermore, when the lawyer visits Bartleby in the Tombs at the end of the story, he discovers the scrivener "standing all alone in the quietest of the yards, his face towards a high wall" (Melville 51). Bartleby maintains this position and the direction of his gaze as the lawyer greets him. In fact, this behaviour is part of a larger pattern the narrator observes and terms "those dead-wall reveries of his" (Melville 51). The obtrusive presence of walls in the narrative is a visual representation of the linguistic constraint imposed by the various iterative phrases and the lawyer's overuse of the verb "must."

The narrator takes counteractive measures and directs the reader's gaze to phantoms of physical violence, safely distanced from himself, to distract from the insidious nature of his particular use of linguistic constraint. That the reader should chance to gaze in the same direction as Bartleby, towards visual cues of linguistic constraint, is made all the less likely by spectacles of conventional violence, "murderers and thieves" (Melville 51). In this way, the tempers of Turkey and Nippers can also be understood as distraction. The narrator refers to visually vivid descriptions of physical violence when most frustrated by his third scrivener. Similarly, the final encounter between the lawyer and Bartleby takes place in the prison yard, that the lawyer imagines is witnessed by "eyes of murders and thieves" (Melville 51). However, these imagined murderers and thieves present no real threat to Bartleby. He dies of starvation, not at the hands of physical violence.

The allusion to the Colt case is another sustained effort at narrative distraction. In 1842 John Colt, a bookkeeper and law clerk in New York City, was tried and convicted for the murder of Samuel Adams, a printer to whom Colt owed money. The lawyer's recollection of the grisly crime, murder by hatchet in the man's own office, proposes a parallel between himself and Colt, Bartleby and Adams. Yet, the facts of the case are curiously misrepresented, and the comparison is not as fitting as the narrator would have the reader believe. In the article "Melville, the Colt-Adams Murder, and 'Bartleby'", T.H. Giddings attends to the discrepancies between the facts of the case and the details that appear in Melville's story, namely the physical details of the setting. Giddings includes the original statement of the judge who presided over the case in his charge to the jury: "that the building in which the crime took place was 'the most frequented house in the most populous city in the union: the time midday, and separated only by a folding door was a schoolroom filled with scholars'" (127). The description provided by the narrator is markedly different:

It was the circumstance of being alone in a solitary office,  
upstairs, of a building entirely unhallowed by humanizing

domestic associations—an uncarpeted office, doubtless, of a dusty, haggard sort of appearance;—this it must have been, which greatly helped to enhance the irritable desperation of the hapless Colt (Melville 40).

The physical details reported by the narrator almost exclusively emphasize the solitary nature [IC5] of the office setting, as if seeking a link between extreme solitude and violence. Giddings understands the loose handling of facts as an artistic liberty taken by Melville and suggests that “Melville was not as thoroughly familiar with the facts of the Colt case as his detailed commentary implies” (128). The author surmises that “Melville wrote from assumptions rather than exact knowledge” (Giddings 128). While I find Giddings’ attention to the misrepresentation of the facts of the Colt Case interesting, rather than attribute this to artistic license or incomplete knowledge on Melville’s part, I think it can be understood as an act of linguistic violence, as the “improper treatment of a word or text; misinterpretation; misapplication; alteration of meaning or intention” (*OED Online*) perpetrated by the narrator. Giddings does not observe the gap between Melville and narrator that, for this reading at least, is critical. The appearance of “must” hints toward the gap. As I noted earlier, the narrator and lawyer share a linguistic tick: a predisposition to the imperative mood and verbs connoting urgency and necessity. The narrator deploys language to constrain possible outcomes, here to force his reading as the only viable option. The narrator alters the facts of the case to convey a much different scene, one perhaps more arresting and by comparison presents himself as overcoming the nearly irresistible push toward physical violence. However, that this was ever a possibility seems unlikely, especially considering the effect it would have on his reputation. Giddings picks up on the strangeness of the comparison, that the “connotations of hatchet-murder-corpse-in-box are simply unsuited to the lawyer-Bartleby confrontation” (129). The threatening figure of physical violence, that proves merely a phantom presence, is a displaced signifier for linguistic violence.

Images of restriction model the linguistic constraint in the story. The small attention paid to clothing in the narrative is mostly spent on the lawyer’s coat buttons. The lawyer, at particular moments of tension between internal impulses of benevolence and external compulsions of his business, buttons his coat in a gesture of restriction and control. Driven by the “necessities connected with [his] business,” (Melville 39) the lawyer resolves to firmly dismiss Bartleby from the office. Squashing his pity, he prepares himself to deliver the news: “I buttoned up my coat, balanced myself” (Melville 39). His minute manipulations of clothing as an attempt to regain control imply the minute rhetorical manipulations that are an attempt to control his scrivener, as with an abundance of “musts,” he conveys a necessity to Bartleby that intends to leave little room for alternatives.

The object of linguistic violence is ethical action. The lawyer's charitable deeds are attended by images of constraint, as if the assistance itself is simply another iteration of restriction and control. Because Turkey's clothing, particularly his coat, is a "reproach" (Melville 22) to the lawyer, he seeks to correct the situation by offering Turkey one of his own. The coat is described as one "which buttoned straight up from the knee to the neck" (Melville 22). The lawyer's charity, that stems from the hope that the "highly-respectable looking coat" will not only reflect well on his business but further quell the employee's "rashness and obstreperousness of afternoons", rather has a "pernicious effect" (Melville 22). Turkey's temper only worsens with each button. This marks the third time the lawyer accidentally rouses the violence that lies dormant in his scrivener. The lawyer's effort to control and the coat buttons' attempt to restrict are met with more violence. The combination of charitable deeds and images of constraint reappears with Bartleby as the object of the lawyer's generosity. Operating under the assumption that Bartleby will quit his office, the lawyer offers him a parting gift: "I owe you twelve dollars on account; here are thirty-two; the odd twenty are yours ... I will leave them here then,' putting them under a weight on the table" (Melville 40). The bills are pinned under the paper weight where they remain, yet to be accepted. The paperweight symbolizes the force applied with this act of generosity that is really an effort to control Bartleby and appease the lawyer's conscience.

That his gift to Bartleby is rejected and the former, to Turkey, is problematic, indicates an inefficacy to the lawyer's generosity due in equal part to motivation and execution. Undermining the sincerity of the lawyer's generosity is the fact that, in both cases, the motivations for charitable action are entangled with self-interest and the maintenance of his professional reputation. Though perhaps, as he claims, the narrator has impulses towards goodness and generosity, the conflation of these with the needs of his business results in the kind of charity that functions as a means to an end, which can be argued is not charity at all. The entire operation and execution of generosity is one of violence, revealed in the recurring imagery of constraint. Melville reframes linguistic violence as an ethical issue. The narrator and lawyer's willful misinterpretation and misrepresentation of ideas and stories for his primary interests, his business and reputation, disallow for the possibility of sincere ethical action.

Ultimately, in "Bartleby the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street", Melville criticizes a simple understanding of violence as separate and opposed to passivity. Violence and passivity exist equally within Turkey and Nippers, and, more generally within the office, in a relationship of complex interdependence. Likewise, the lawyer uses linguistic violence, particularly through the constraint of iterative phrases that insist on an urgency and necessity, to maintain his professional reputation as "an eminently *safe* man". The narrative iterations, however, ring false, the threats of physical violence prove empty as Melville locates the real threat of violence within language itself, in the words of a "man of peace" (Melville 20).

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*Matthews Lawford*

“HOLISTIC HISTORY”:  
EVALUATING JILL LEPORE’S CHALLENGE  
TO HISTORICAL FUNDAMENTALISM



In Jill Lepore's *The Whites of Their Eyes: The Tea Party's Revolution and the Battle Over American History*, she criticizes the far-right political group named "the Tea Party" for using ahistorical narratives to advance their political agenda. The Tea Party, referencing the original 1773 anti-British revolt, relies disproportionately on the Constitution to advance their arguments. Lepore argues that historical fundamentalism is antithetical to historical inquiry for several reasons, including its extreme and unwavering devotion to the Constitution. However, unlike anti-fundamentalists who wish to avoid using the Constitution as a political argument, Lepore proposes that to counter fundamentalists' anti-historical methods, Americans must instead study history "holistically" and examine all relevant context in an argument. Lepore's theory entails that all historical events between the Revolution and the contemporary era must be heavily considered in historical arguments, and that the Constitution should be given less absolute power to decide political arguments. This theory has ramifications that extend to the level of the Supreme Court, which predominantly focus on the wording of the Constitution, especially concerning gun laws which rely on the Second Amendment. A theoretical revision would force these decisions to account for all changes that happened in historical context and drastically reduce the Constitution's power.

In her book, Lepore criticizes fundamentalism for its narrow scope, anti-intellectual methodology, and irrational devotion to the revolution. explicitly describes fundamentalism as "anti-intellectual" when referring to the Texas school board reform, later elaborating that fundamentalists see "the academic study of history (whose standards of evidence and methods of analysis are based on skepticism) [as] a conspiracy" (Lepore 16). She also accuses fundamentalists of selectively choosing what history to cite and becoming overly devoted to those events: "[h]istorical fundamentalism is marked by the belief that a particular and quite narrowly defined past—the founding—is ageless and sacred and to be worshipped" (Lepore 16). Lepore also claims that fundamentalists bend and conflate time to prove their points. She writes fundamentalists either place society in history or history in society: "[i]t wasn't 'our struggle is like theirs.' It was 'we are there' or 'they are here'" (Lepore 15). Fundamentalists view the American Revolution and modern day as one and the same, and therefore the laws of the older era can be directly applied to contemporary situations. In outlining several critiques of anti-fundamentalism, Lepore seeks to expose the anti-intellectualism and logical inconsistencies of the approach.

While Lepore might criticize fundamentalists in similar ways as her anti-fundamentalist predecessors, she diverges from previous theory through her method of countering the anti-historic narratives painted by fundamentalism. While other anti-fundamentalists argue that people should not use the Constitution for political arguments, Lepore argues that it is acceptable to use the Constitution as long as history is looked at holistically. Lepore mentions George Curtis, an early

anti-fundamentalist who encouraged Americans to stop using history for political arguments. She writes, “[Curtis] just wished people would study the Revolution instead of using it to make political arguments” (Lepore 7). Lepore differs by claiming that historical events providing context can combat this antihistory: “This book is an argument against historical fundamentalism. It makes that argument by measuring the distance between the past and the present” (Lepore 19). She implies that measuring “the distance between past and present” can contextualize historical events and prevent rampant misuse of history. By proposing a holistic view of history, Lepore’s theory could prevent one set of documents from dominating contemporary decisions.

Lepore argues that Americans should not solely use the Constitution to make contemporary decisions for two reasons. First of all, she claims that there is no obligation to the Founders, stating, “The Founding Fathers haven’t been rolling over in their graves for very long either. Not one was roused from his eternal slumber...until about the time that Harding called the Founders our fathers [in 1916]” (Lepore 17). This implies that the notion of the Founders “rolling over” was manufactured for political gain, and the sarcasm behind Lepore’s description suggests that what we do has no effect on these men because they are no longer alive. It is illogical to assume Americans have to appease them in any way. She further compounds this attitude by saying: “we cannot go back to the eighteenth century, and the Founding Fathers are not, in fact, here with us today” (Lepore 16). Lepore emphasizes that the Founders and their work, such as the Constitution, are removed from the modern era, and should not influence current laws as strictly as they do. Second, Lepore states that the revolution lacks relevance today. She emphasizes the eighteenth century metaphorically “lies fathoms below the surface [in the ocean of time]” (Lepore 19). This indicates that the Constitution was written so long ago that it is part of a completely different era and difficult to understand, which makes it nearly impossible to apply to modern situations. Lepore’s theory states that the Constitution is temporally removed from today, and that Americans lack any obligations to the Founders or their documents. Therefore, the Constitution should not solely be used to decide important cases in the United States.

Lepore argues that instead of looking at the Constitution, judges and lawyers should look at historical facts and events to make decisions. She says to counter fundamentalism Americans must “rather than skip over the passage of time, dwell on the passage of time...and take soundings in the distance between then and now” (Lepore 18-19). This emphasis on the passage of time shows that Lepore’s theory requires understanding the full historical context and timeline surrounding any events or laws to be able to acceptably apply the Constitution. By focusing on the “soundings” over time, it is apparent that Lepore’s theory considers the events that have transpired over time as a counter to fundamental uses of history. By drastically reducing the significance of the Constitution and instead focusing on

events that happen over the years, Lepore's theory provides an approach to arguing with history that accounts for many relevant factors rather than simply relying on the Constitution.

If Lepore's theory was widely implemented, this holistic shift would have major consequences in contemporary America. Lepore's theory would heavily impact the approach to certain legal processes in the United States Supreme Court. The 2008 case of *District of Columbia v. Heller* will be used as an example of a case that could have had a vastly different outcome if Lepore's theory of holistic history were adopted.

In 2008, the Supreme Court case *District of Columbia vs Heller* upheld that the Second Amendment protects an individual's right to own a firearm unconnected to service in a militia. This decision overturned a handgun ban in DC on the basis that it was unconstitutional. This case was the first to use the Second Amendment to protect an individual's right to bear arms, and ultimately set the precedent for many subsequent states overturning gun laws on the same basis (Solum 926-927). The majority of the case's arguments focus on the details of the Second Amendment. In the *Northwestern Law Review*, Professor Solum observed that a primary argument of the case was the wording of the Second Amendment: "[t]he Court examined each of the operative words and phrases in the Second Amendment, examining the semantic content of 'the people,' 'keep,' 'bear,' and 'arms'" (939). This focus on the Second Amendment's wording is exactly what Lepore would consider historical fundamentalism. She writes that fundamentalists consider the text as "ageless and sacred and to be worshipped," and by analyzing each individual word in court, it is clear that fundamentalism influenced the decision (Lepore 16). Solum even says that "it is hard to imagine finding a clearer example of original public meaning originalism in an actual judicial decision" (940). Lepore argues that historical fundamentalism is a stricter version of originalism, and her theory would label this court process and decision as heavily devoted to fundamentalism.

If Lepore's theory was implemented, it could change this case's methodology. First, Lepore's skepticism of the relevance and applicability of the Constitution to contemporary society would drastically reduce the amount of focus spent on the Second Amendment. Lepore writes that metaphorically the "eighteenth century lies fathoms below," (19) meaning that it is incredibly removed from today, and therefore hard to apply to contemporary events. She also emphasizes that Americans do not have any obligation to follow the Constitution precisely, stating the "Founders are not actually here" (Lepore 16). As a result of this, Lepore's theory would allow the court to look at the intended effect of the Second Amendment, but not focus on it so heavily that the semantics are influencing the court's decision. Therefore, because of both its lack of contemporary relevance and lack of influence on our decisions, the Court would not have been as heavily influenced by the Second Amendment had Lepore's theory been adopted.

Lepore's theory would instead encourage courts to look at historical events that would be relevant to the case. Lepore writes that she likes to "dwell on the passage of time" rather than skip over it (18). Therefore, her theory would urge the court to focus much more on relevant developments and historical events of firearm technology than the actual wording of the Constitution when deciding this case. As a result, Lepore's theory would account for the differences in firearm efficiency over the years, the lack of need for a militia in the contemporary United States, and the rising level of gun violence. This way, the case would focus on history as a holistic set of events that pertain to the case as well as the Constitution rather than just the Second Amendment.

Firearm technology has improved drastically since the Constitution was written, which facilitates deadlier potential. The guns at the time of the Revolution could only fire at very limited speeds. In a *Vintage News* Article "The evolution of guns since the revolutionary war," Ian Harvey writes, "At the time when colonial settlers took up arms against the British... even the best soldiers could only get off approximately three or four rounds a minute." With three or four bullets shot per minute, an individual can only shoot a limited amount of people in a short time frame, and overall weapon deadliness had been limited. However, modern technology now enables much higher fire rates. The AR-15, an American assault rifle, legal in many states, "can fire 400 rounds per minute" (Leefeldt). This allows a single shooter to have much more potential to kill within a short time frame. Additionally, the article states that these guns had poor accuracy "these rounds—spherical lead balls—had little accuracy," but by 1861, firearms became much more accurate (Harvey). Increased accuracy allows any shooter a higher chance of killing their intended target. Therefore, over time the deadliness of firearms has vastly improved, and Lepore's theory would count this as highly relevant towards a decision about gun laws.

Furthermore, gun ownership has become heavily correlated with increased homicide rates. In a study done for the *American Journal of public health*, the results found that gun ownership increases the likelihood of gun-related deaths: "[w]e observed a robust correlation between higher levels of gun ownership and higher firearm homicide rates" (Siegel, Ross, King 2102). Also, the United States, a country with lax gun control, has vastly higher rates of firearm homicide than other countries with strictly enforced gun laws. Gun control works in other countries: "[t]he population of the US is 14.4 times that of Australia; the US has 141 times as many deaths from firearms as Australia (31224 in 2007 vs 221 in 2008). In 1996, [the Australian] government introduced massively supported gun laws that banned citizens' access to semi-automatic rifles and pump action shot guns" (Chapman 399). Loose firearm regulations are correlated with higher rates of gun violence. As this case is directly centered around firearm possession, Lepore's theory would see this as crucial to the case.

While maintaining the importance of the passage of time, Lepore's theory would examine why the Second Amendment was created, and if it is still needed. The Founding Fathers wrote the Amendment to ensure that militias would be able to wield firearms when they needed. In a Washington Post article "What the Second Amendment really meant to the Founders," Noah Shusterman writes "the Amendment's primary justification was to prevent the United States from needing a standing army." The right to bear arms was intended to allow the United States to have a strong militia, and hence not need an army. It was never explicitly intended to protect citizens individuals' rights to own weapons. Also, by 2008, the U.S military budget was approximately \$620 billion (*Statista.com*). With such a large and powerful army, it is clear that over time, the need for an American militia decreased, and so did the need for civilian gun ownership. This is a major historical change that Lepore's theory would "dwell on" especially given its relevance to this case (Lepore 18).

Applying Lepore's theory to the District of Columbia v. Heller case could heavily change its methodology. Rather than "examining the semantic content" of the Second Amendment, she would focus on relevant events regarding firearms throughout history and cite them alongside the Constitution (Solum 939). While applying Lepore's theory to this case does not necessarily imply a different outcome, it does provide a theoretical framework for a more practical approach to court decisions in the United States. In this hypothetical case revision, this theory would examine more relevant and practical information. By taking "soundings in the ocean of time" her theory requires that judiciary decisions factor in relevant information that affects the people of the United States alongside the Constitution, and therefore prevents gross misuse or over-reliance on any one document (Lepore 19).

Lepore's theory is a branch of anti-fundamentalism, which is important because it criticizes the anti-historic fundamentalist approaches. However, what's more important about Her theory is that it does not dismiss the Constitution as an irrelevant or inapplicable document, but rather advocates against its misuse or overuse. Lepore's theory simply states that to counter fundamentalism we must study more historical events and better contextualize these documents. Lepore's theory ties the past with the present, but still understands that the two eras are separate. By forcing contextualization of history, Lepore's theory provides a more objective view of history and provides the framework for a more holistic, relevant, and objective use of history in arguments.

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DISASTER AESTHETICS AND THE FORCE OF  
THE ELEMENTAL IN THOMAS COLE'S  
THE COURSE OF EMPIRE



Thomas Cole was a profoundly influential American landscape painter. His five-canvas allegory *The Course of Empire* is the most ambitious and complicated of his artistic career. In these five paintings—The Savage State (Figure 1), The Pastoral State (Figure 2), The Consummation of Empire (Figure 3), Destruction (Figure 4), and Desolation (Figure 5)—Cole issued a dire warning to the aggressively expanding American republic about the attenuating and ultimately lethal consequences of imperial excess. The separate paintings are notable for their early pastoral vision, depiction of elemental disaster, and final painting which depicts monumental ruins. However, it is representations of cataclysm—the likes of which reside in the penultimate painting, Destruction — that has remained an under-studied aspect of Cole’s oeuvre. While cataclysmic and apocalyptic iconographies in this painting are deployed to dramatic effect to capture the riotous energies of the moment, as some scholars have noted, they also signal the collapse of American ascendancy in the global context. In so doing, disaster imagery rights socio-political injustice and brings empire to heel.

This paper begins by introducing the paintings and their context. I then argue that because settler-colonialism is intertwined with the conquest of Indigenous lands, elemental disaster aligns itself with the colonized who are invariably excised from the pastoral tradition. This renegotiation of political power is evident in post-9/11 filmography as noted by Maurizia Natali (2006), who draws a connection between 19th century westward expansion and the response to 9/11 as events which both signify imperial excursions into Indigenous territories. Next, I argue that Cole infuses ideology into the landscape tradition which was contemporarily understood as a genre lacking social or political content, resulting in an expression of profound anxiety with respect to social upheaval (Barrett 2013). Cole’s interjection of politics into the landscape is a re-politicizing of the right-wing apolitical landscape tradition, which emphasizes the paintings’ representation of imperialist decay. Lastly, I contend that the post-disaster ruin phase as seen in Desolation represents an idealized vision of social order because in reverting to a wilderness, society is metaphorically cleansed of hierarchies.

Cole was an influential member of the Hudson River School, a mid-19th century American art movement comprised of landscape painters. He is generally considered the father of the artistic school, with an aesthetic vision strongly influenced by Romanticism. Cole even quoted the great Romantic writer Lord Byron in his newspaper advertisements for *The Course of Empire*:

First freedom and then Glory — when that falls,  
Wealth, vice, corruption... (Byron qtd. in Hay 48).

Cole completed the painting series, the most ambitious and complicated project of his artistic career, between 1834 and 1836. The oil paintings are epic in scale,

massive 39.5-inch by 63.5-inch canvases, except for *Consummation of Empire*, which is an even larger 51 inches by 76 inches. The series was commissioned by the wealthy American entrepreneur Luman Reed. However, in 1958, the New York Gallery of Fine Arts endowed all five paintings to the New York Historical Society, where the series is presently housed. Cole's separate paintings narrate the life-cycle of an unnamed civilization: from forest origins to pastoral innocence, prideful decadence, destruction, and finally waning. The empire which he depicts exists over the span of a day. This is illustrated through the mountain in the top right corner which is present in all five paintings as the sun and moon shift throughout the canvases. The city is situated on the lower end of a river valley where it meets the bay of a sea, a symbolic location representing the city's relationship with the outside world.

Scholars reading Cole's painting most often situate the series firmly within Cole's political and ideological inclinations. For example, Miller (1993) was the first to note that Cole often expressed anti-Jacksonian sentiment in his private writings and that he was closely affiliated with the political leanings of the ultraconservative Whig party (65). Many scholars, including Barrett (2013), use Cole's political and ideological affiliations to conclude that the painter's works were a comment on the Democratic Party under Jackson, which saw a wave of political violence break out in the form of riots. Cole was inspired to begin the paintings as he was sitting among the ruins of Imperial Rome in the early 1830s. Although the neoclassical architecture might suggest that Cole was painting the ancient Roman empire, it is accepted that the painting is an allegory of the young American republic. Cole thus drew a direct parallel between what he observed in ancient empires to the United States — what he perceived to be the latter's nascent imperial form. Emphasizing the contemporary influence of Cole's series, Natali offers a re-reading of the painting to suggest it offers "models for infinite future scenarios" (96) which reverberate past the 19th century moment Cole was capturing and into the 21st-century.

## INDIGENEITY AND THE PASTORAL TRADITION

The first painting in Cole's series, *The Savage State*, depicts a primeval state with a nomadic hunter in skins pursuing a deer towards the left in the middle ground. The tonal palette of this painting is earthy, and as a result most distinction between human and non-human life is blurred. Moreover, trees and wildlife in this painting are contorted and horrific. This is a lush, green landscape with plenty of trees and bushes abound, most of which — as the word "savage" would portend are untamed by humans. However, one can observe precursors to what will be imperial practices of commerce and trade in the form of canoes on the harbour which suggest

transportation and exploration. Additionally, the settlement appears to be transient as any human control of the land pales in comparison to nature's ascendancy over forms of human settlement. The transience of this settlement is illustrated in the cluster of wigwams which suggest the growth of a nucleus of a city which stands in contrast to the settled culture of later paintings. In all, the references to Indigenous life in this painting are significant. Of note, the sky in this painting has storm clouds.

In the subsequent painting, *The Arcadian or Pastoral State*, the sky has cleared. The land is more settled, there are plowed fields and an indication that what was once only a potential place of rest is now a permanent settlement. Further, women in white robes in the middle ground are dancing gracefully and some are playing the flute, indicating the beginnings of music and leisurely pursuits more generally. An old man, presumably a sage, is sketching a geometric shape in the dirt, suggesting the early stages of science and logic. A white temple in the middle ground signifies the beginnings of monumental architecture. This painting is an idealized, pre-urban ancient Greece. The canoes from *The Savage State* have evolved into more complex ships, foreshadowing the beginnings of sea trade, imperial expansion, and commerce. This painting, as Barrett (2013) argues, is consistent with a republican ideal of harmony, a clear sense of coexistence between human and natural life forms. The viewer is led to interpret that this represents an idyllic phase of this society due to the compositional balance and clear, unambiguously happy expressions on human figures. Additionally, the storm clouds have disappeared, and the weather is serene.

Consummation is a drastic step forward in the progression of empire. In fact, this painting features the empire at its zenith. The architectural style, neoclassical, is a direct echo of ancient Greco-Roman empires. The fictitious city is replete with tapestries, mirrored waters, and fountains. In this painting, brass trumpets have replaced the flutes of the previous landscape, suggesting a dramatic advancement of the cultural realm. More generally, there is a sense of overindulgence and hedonism, as noted by the widespread leisure and unbridled wealth that has accumulated in the city. Inhabitants of this city are seen reclining as processions are taking place. As well, children are playing and have expressions of amusement on their faces. Cole dramatizes the extent of this city's opulence in the size of his canvas. As previously mentioned, this painting is the largest in an otherwise uniformly-sized series.

In contrast to the earlier paintings, in this one human control of natural elements is palpable as there are fountains and potted plants throughout. Additionally, mountains are covered with human-made structures, pillars, and temples suggest a change from natural to human domination. The skies have cleared completely and thus the natural world reflects the fortunes of this empire. Spears and military garb are indicative of a fully militarized society — a significant

element of the imperialist or expansionist ideologies of several empires throughout history, including imperial Rome and Greece. The widened waterway in the painting speaks to the greater interconnections between the city and the greater world. This empire is now a bustling mecca of commerce and trade and as boats at the port would suggest, this city is no longer self-contained and has reconfigured itself with the surrounding world in mind.

In “Thomas Cole and Jacksonian America: *The Course of Empire* as Political Allegory,” Miller (1993) argues that there is an interpretive impulse to divorce ideology, specifically social and political, from American landscape art. Miller goes on to argue that this view has only been bolstered by the assumption that the pastoral landscape tradition was understood as a “genre lacking social or political content” (65). Not only does this assumption erase nature’s central role in American culture along with its role in nation-building, this very interpretation of the pastoral de-politicizes the notable absence of Indigenous peoples in pastoral paintings, or their inclusion solely as parts of the landscape akin to nonhuman fauna. Their blended and indistinct composition within the painting attest to this impulse to equate Indigenous peoples with nature. A popular understanding of the pastoral as apolitical serves to legitimate and rationalize a “sterile,” empty representation of Indigenous land primed for settlement (Kolodny 1975). Not only is the pastoral intimately tied to the violence of westward expansion and Manifest Destiny, the genre is also a key example of the aesthetic erasure of Indigenous presence. Nonetheless, as I explore next, the natural world’s instinctual drive towards imperial destabilization in the form of cataclysm, contributes to the shift in power away from the nation-state.

## DISASTER PHASE OR DESTRUCTION

In the fourth painting, Destruction, an epic storm is circulating. The focus of the painting is the action of the sacking and destruction of the city. There are burning buildings, solitary fighters and victims of this incursion. The fall of this empire is not minor, but rather catastrophic. The annihilation of this empire is enormous as this is a disaster of sublime proportions. A fleet of enemy warriors has overthrown the city’s militarized defenses and is burning the city, killing and raping its inhabitants. The bridge on which the triumphal procession of Consummation crossed is now broken apart. In this painting, the natural world has revealed itself to be vengeful and volatile specifically towards imperial ambition and prideful fluorescence. Nature echoes the chaos of the empire’s destruction in the form of storm clouds, wind, and fire. Notably, a tempest is in full swing in the background. The disaster takes place in the air and is likely a hurricane. The tempest also serves as the backdrop for other assaults to the body in the foreground of the painting as

suggested by the collapse of this society into sexual violence. For example, an invading soldier is grabbing a woman who attempts to jump into the sea, likely choosing death over corporeal violation. Bodies in this painting look indistinguishable from one another. This lack of individualization suggests an inscrutable mass that resists being understood.

While the scale of the disaster is epic, the storm does not directly cause death. Rather, it is the collapse of infrastructure and civility that is lethal. The storm is merely backdrop, and not a central aspect of the painting. In fact, it is likely that human destruction has caused the storm, just as overconsumption and overproduction have resulted in catastrophic climate change. Cole's painting, therefore, constitutes a meta-critique of imperial excesses by portraying the imminent downfall of society in this prophetic lamentation. Ultimately, this series is a jeremiad, a strongly moralistic text that denounces society's downfall and illustrates a Republican ethos that Barrett (2013) proffers, intended to be disseminated among members of the commission (47).

As Natali notes in "*The Course of Empire: Sublime Landscapes in American Cinema*," the ideological ties to the Roman Empire, specifically in the penultimate Destruction, were also inspired by the painter John Martin's biblical fantasies (96). Moreover, the disaster scene is often read as a metaphor for social tumult under Jackson's presidency. As Miller suggests, natural metaphors have long served as a way for artists and writers to articulate the profound anxieties of social upheaval and tumult, and the natural world often serves as an extension of the social — a plastic medium wherein the burdens of society can be inscribed. In his writings to Cole prior to commissioning Destruction, Reed stated, "in this scene there should be a fierce chiaroscuro, masses and groups swaying about like stormy waves. This is the scene of destruction or vicious state" (Reed qtd. in Legrand 178). Thus, in this painting, bodies, infrastructures, and history symbolically and literally collide to engender a particular affective environment, as illustrated through the form, density, and movement of the human masses. Additionally, there is a blurring of the social and the natural here which is indicative of profound anxieties about the era's social tumult. The fact that Cole represented social tumult via natural imagery suggests that power meant to be exerted in the natural sphere is redirected to the human scale as the power of the natural world supersedes any sense of human dominion of the land.

The natural world operates in an equitable fashion as it undoes the imperial ambitions of this fictitious empire. Natali argues that American film landscapes ideologically and aesthetically enact an imperial imaginary. Specifically, the post-9/11 era was a time of imperial consolidation as the United States began excursions into Indigenous territories abroad:

For the U.S.'s ideo-logistic dream, the whole world is one vast background and the object of infinite "road maps." On

the screen, the latter being our most popular interface for mainstream culture, the U.S. let flow their persistent fantasies of being the empire, of being the Consummation of Empire, and of ambitiously rescuing people from nightmarish scenarios of Destruction and Desolation, many of which they have either allowed or staged directly (105).

In her reading of Cole's paintings, U.S. hegemony is punished allegorically by the natural world, as nature "renews its dominion over historical empires" (Natali 98). Disaster inverts geopolitical realities of conquest and dominion as observed through the invading army in *Destruction*, thereby reflecting upon the nation a trauma-scape projected elsewhere. Although cataclysm is harmful and tragic in the national context, disaster arrests the chain of sequence for victims of imperial aggrandizement on the global scale. Disaster in the painting therefore functions as an equilibrating force. The locus of power has shifted away from the fictional empire as it no longer harbours excessive wealth and prosperity and in an inversion of geopolitical realities, becomes the site of military incursions.

#### ATMOSPHERICS AND COLE'S POST-CATASTROPHE VISION

The disaster is demonstrative of the ways in which the natural world can territorialize new power relations into the soil of empire. As previously noted, while the disaster is confined to the skies in *Destruction*, it is nonetheless able to reconfigure new political relations. This uncanny ability of disaster to operate equitably actually reterritorializes the confines of empire. Specifically, as observed in the subsequent painting *Desolation*, the frame of reference has shifted, and the grandiosity of the empire has diminished greatly. This is a direct result of the cataclysm as it has disrupted any sense of beginnings and ends to the imperial regime. Most indicators of the existence of a historic empire are lost since the harbour depicted in the painting could be any number of harbours. This is evident through the sense of regularity to the landscape in the final painting and the quality of the ruins, which, although gesturing towards a history of greatness, also suggest the instinctual drive of the natural world to return to a state of quiescence.

The final painting, *Desolation*, features the city in a post-disaster state, presumably several years later. The landscape has returned to wilderness as nature re-establishes itself over human dominion. However, there is also the dominion of the empire, including over territorial acquisitions abroad. While we cannot see the effects of empire abroad, one might question the costs of this relative prosperity and security, specifically due to both the extensive heavy militarization of this

society and its overblown excesses as seen in *Consummation*. As previously suggested, the lingering presence of Indigenous life signals the exclusion of the repressed. Cole depicts this landscape of primeval ruins as an idealized scenario. Furthermore, ruins beget a new kind of social intimacy as a pair of birds are perched on a ruined pillar, potentially alluding to survivors of the Biblical flood. Although humans cannot anticipate this new collectivism, the natural world operates justly and punitively. Ultimately, disaster restores balance on a global scale, although internally it has damaged the fully-flourished empire.

Cole's paintings tell the story of a rising empire that swells to bloating and eventually crumbles in decadent splendor. While scholars have tended to see his understudied fourth canvas *Destruction* as a metaphor for the social upheaval of Jacksonian society and as a reflection of Cole's staunch conservatism, this impulse resists reading the paintings of their own accord. The pastoral stages in the series, as a precursor to the extinguishing of America's global primacy via elemental disaster, erase Indigenous presence in the United States. In addition, they signal the existence of a repressed Indigenous presence which is at the receiving end of a renegotiation of power that occurs at the hands of cataclysm. While disaster is clearly harmful, it can be beneficial for forms within and outside the painting's frame of reference, specifically natural life forms and the repressed Other in Cole's paintings. The atmosphere figures centrally in Cole's series of paintings and the natural world reasserts its primacy over imperial nations in reterritorializing the global order of social relations. Thus, the natural world operates indifferently yet equitably as it continues to destroy vegetation. However, because disaster curtails expansion and progress, it is therefore homeostatic in a global sense and therefore aligns itself with that which is repressed and bedevils the landscape, ultimately revealing the natural world to be just in its ability to restore order in the world.

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*APPENDIX*



Figure 1. The Savage State.



Figure 2. The Arcadian or Pastoral State.



Figure 3. The Consummation of Empire.



Figure 4. Destruction.



Figure 5. Desolation.

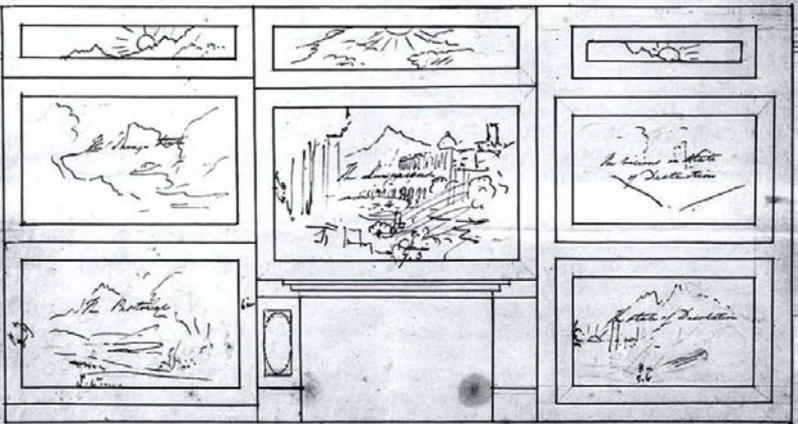
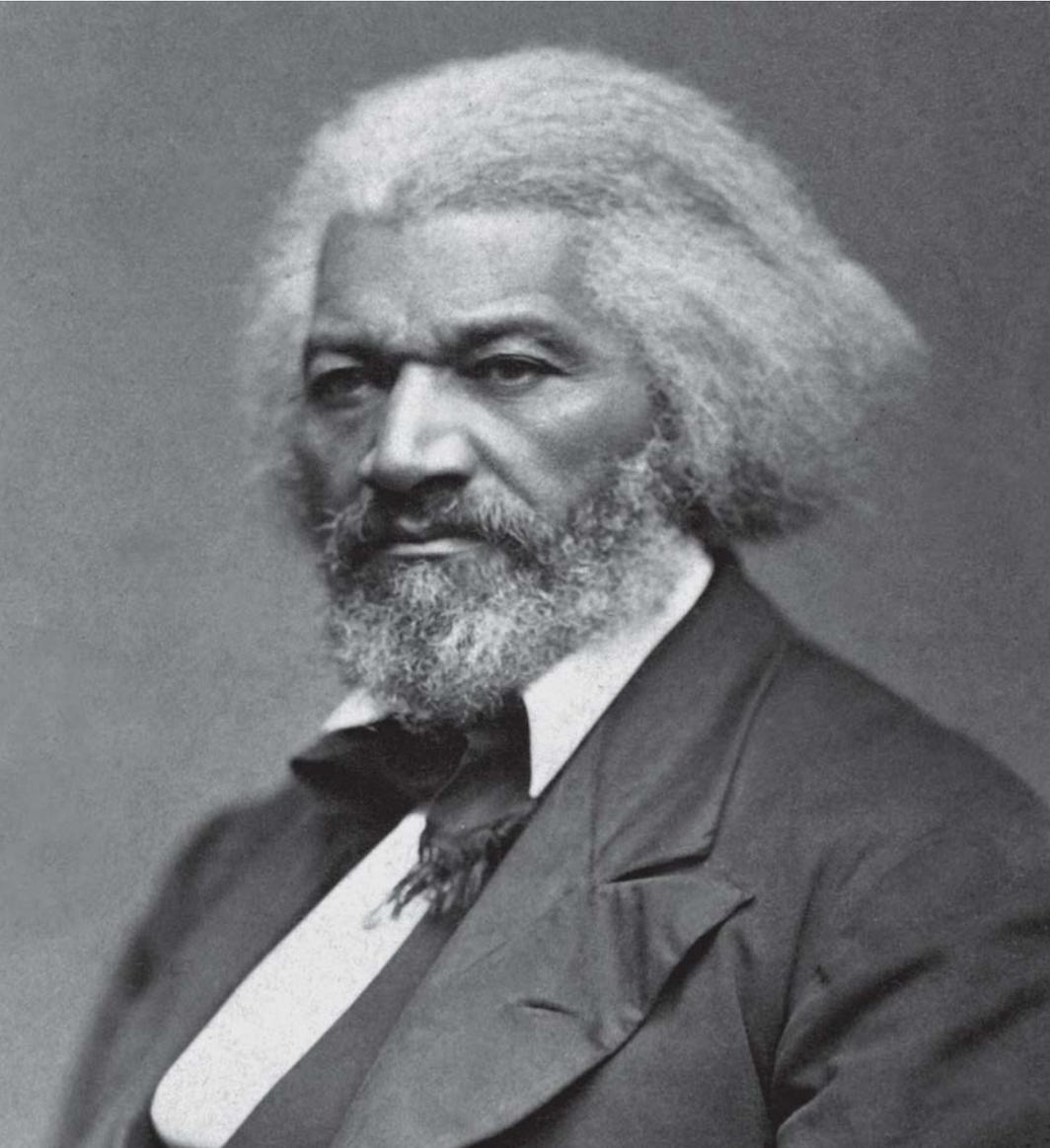


Figure 6. Cole's installation diagram for the arrangement of the paintings. The series progresses roughly from left to right

*Samara Gottesman*

BETWEEN STYLES, BETWEEN WORLDS:  
DEFYING BINARIES OF RACIAL IDENTITY  
AND WRITING STYLES IN NARRATIVE OF THE  
LIFE OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS



*Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* captures the experience of living between the worlds of slavery and freedom, deconstructing binary structures, strict categories with clear divisions in which something or someone must fit within only one. Douglass writes in the pre-Civil War slaveholding United States, a context in which one's place on the racial identity binary had the most significant ramifications: deciding one's fate as an enslaved or free person. As a liminal character of biracial origin, Douglass does not adhere to strict binary categorizations in his own racial identity. Rather, his experience of enslavement consists of occupying multiple realms. Thus, in order to capture the complexity of his black and white racial identity, the mode of writing must be capacious in order to accommodate. Douglass writes during the American Romantic era which focuses on internal worlds and emotional experiences. This preceding era is separated from the American realist writing tradition, which works to depict an accurate account of life as it were. The text demonstrates that Douglass relies on a combination of writing styles to convey both mundane, realistic details and affective experiences as an enslaved African-American man. Specifically, Douglass expresses the duality of his identity through experimenting and combining aspects of both American romanticism and realism, thus underscoring his deconstruction of strict dichotomous structures of genre and racial identity. These styles are exemplified by Douglass's use of detailed lists of clothing to provide readers with realistic descriptions of the banal details of his life and affective language in the slave song passage to provide access to his emotional experience. Finally, the horse passage presents both styles working together. The experimentation and combination of these two styles allows Douglass to more accurately represent his experience. The oscillation between and ultimate combination of these two styles represents the synthesis of the two racial identities of which he is a product.

As the son of a Black mother and a white father, Douglass reveals the duality of his identity compared to binaristic racial categorizations through the description of his relationship with his father. Douglass describes the experience of having a "double relation of master and father" (14). Importantly, the use of the word double indicates that both the relation of master to slave and of father to son are incorporated into his identity. This complicates a clear division between the white slave owner's family and his slaves, placing Douglass in the centre of the binary of Black and white people. Further, Douglass explains that he heard about his paternal roots from "the whisper" of others (14). By characterizing the discovery of his own biracial identity through a whisper, he reveals the secrecy associated with his identity, something that is told only in hushed tones. In this way, his liminal racial identity, as neither conforming to a strict Black or white dichotomy is kept quiet among other slaves and slaveholders rather than being openly discussed. While Douglass's Black roots

are presumably visually obvious to others, his father's whiteness remains hidden. Douglass moves between certainty and uncertainty in describing his identity, highlighting his difficulty in articulating such a duality. Douglass first explains that "[his] father was a white man" yet he later continues that his father doubling as his master "may or may not be true" (13). Douglass oscillates between language of certainty, that his father was in fact a white man, and language of possibility that it may or may not be the case. This underscores the challenge Douglass faces in trying to express and translate his identity onto the written page for others, signalling that his nuanced identity requires a writing style that can accommodate this complexity. Douglass's racial identity begins the narrative with a complication to the simple binary structure of enslaved versus free as his biracial identity creates double relations for Douglass with his own master — this duality is complex and difficult to capture in written form. Therefore, in writing his own narrative, Douglass employs multiple writing styles to capture his complicated experiences as he exists between the worlds of black slaves and white free men, rather than neatly within one end of the racial binary of this historical moment.

Due to the complexity of Douglass's racial identity, the narrative includes multiple styles of writing to relay his personal history. Although writing during the American romantic period, Douglass uses a realist writing impulse by listing items to convey the easily observable details of his daily life as a slave, thus reflecting his black racial identity rather than his hidden white heritage. A peculiar inclusion in this personal narrative is the various lists of mundane objects, such as clothing rations. Douglass recounts the yearly allowances of clothing including "two coarse linen shirts, one pair of linen trousers...one jacket, one pair of trousers for winter" (18). The inclusion of these quotidian, practical aspects of a slave's life infuses the text with an element of realism as it works to realistically depict the minutiae of enslaved life to readers. These lists serve the important function of providing enough information to readers historically separated from slavery form a clear conceptualization of this experience. Thus, this passage speaks to the yearly allowance of the general slave populace, rather than Douglass's exclusive experience. In making this section more objective, readers are given an accessible understanding of what could be easily observed at the time. This cataloguing of easily observable elements of Douglass's experience as a slave reflects the Black element of Douglass's racial identity, which are easily observable through his physical appearance and lead to his categorization as a Black slave. In this way, the description of easily observable details mirrors the easily observed Blackness of his identity. At a time when Romanticism was prevalent, Douglass's use of realist style allows readers to imagine everyday life as a slave, thus reflecting his Black racial roots. This diversion from Romanticism significantly marks

Douglass's experimentation with style, creating a liminal writing style which echoes his in-between racial identity.

Douglass also employs affective language which characterized the Romantic movement to describe the inner emotional experience of being a slave, thus symbolically representing the hidden white aspect of his identity. In the slave song passage, Douglass uses evocative language to reveal his emotional expressions of his personal experience as a slave. Douglass first explains that he considers slave songs to be a "tale of woe" (21). The affective language to describe the songs themselves conjures the feelings of inner turmoil experienced by Douglass and his fellow slaves. Further, Douglass expresses that the act of hearing slave songs led to an emotional experience as a slave, they "depressed [his] spirit, and filled [him] with ineffable sadness" (21). Importantly, Douglass portrays a profound sadness and solemnity in his use of the word 'depressed' to signify the severity and depth of the emotional impact. He characterizes this sadness as so troubling that it is in effect too difficult to fully speak of and relay to others. This emotive language continues as Douglass remarks that he often found himself in tears while listening to the songs and he characterizes this emotional experience as the songs "afflict[ing]" him (21). Furthermore, the imagery of affliction attributed to his emotional experience conveys an attendant sense of deep physical pain. This passage, and others within the text such as Douglass's reflections on the white sails at Chesapeake Bay, give readers a window into his internal world as a slave and begin to share the emotional toll and turmoil experienced by the narrator and his fellow enslaved men. Just as Douglass's white background is hidden from view and rather lies deep within him, the affective language works to take the internal, hidden emotional experiences of slavery and relay that to his audience. Douglass uses evocative language to connect his inner, emotional experience of slavery within his bifurcated and concealed identity.

Finally, Douglass blends both American Romantic and realist styles of writing in order to convey both the mundane details and affective experience of slaves' work, symbolizing the duality of his racial identity. In the horse passage, Douglass explains the cruel treatment of slaves working with horses when their work is deemed subpar by their master. While the content of the comparison between the expected humane handling of these animals versus the treatment of the human slaves is not the focus of this paper, the form of this passage is significant. Douglass uses the realist mode as he lists the numerous ways the horses must be cared for and the tasks that must be completed. He explains that they must be concerned with whether the horse had "not been properly fed; his food was too wet or too dry; he got it too soon or too late; he was too hot or too cold" (23). Douglass lists the realistic details of everyday lives of slaves caring for these animals as they are tasked with feeding, keeping to a timely

schedule for the animal as well as keeping track of the temperature of the horse. These elements create an image of the labour involved in attending to and caring for these horses. However, Douglass also employs affective language in this same passage, noting it was “painful to stand near the stable-door” (22) — to hear masters complain about the slaves’ work dealing with the horses. Thus, just after listing the easily observable tasks of a slave caring for this animal, Douglass reveals an innermost emotional response and the difficulty he experiences in witnessing cruelty towards fellow slaves. This passage brings together and blurs the simplistic categories of the American realist and romantic writing styles. In doing so this passage symbolically conjoins the two seemingly disparate and opposed aspects of Douglass’s racial identity. Douglass here suggests that both the outward, easily observable realistic details of his slave experience, nodding to his observable Black racial origin, and the inner personal emotions that stand in for his hidden white racial roots, are necessary and complementary in relaying his experience.

Douglass employs these multiple writing styles as no single style is capable of capturing and translating all elements of his experience to readers. Specifically, Douglass uses the mundane, detail oriented lists from the realist tradition to give readers enough information to begin forming some conception of what daily life as a slave was like, while his use of affective language stems from the romantic tradition allowing readers a window into the emotional and deeper impact of slavery. The experimentation of two writing styles used within one slave narrative text contrasts beliefs in clear divisions between eras and writing styles. Douglass’s text seamlessly blends together two distinct styles in order to create a coherent narrative. Just as Douglass’s life experience is made up of elements seemingly at odds with one another in a racial binary yet work together to create his complex identity, so too can writing styles blend and blur the lines in order to represent a real, nuanced, human experience. As Douglass uses the two styles to represent and convey the duality of his racial history, the oscillation and blending of multiple writing styles makes a political statement about his own biracial identity. Contrary to his time, Douglass supports an existence where disparate origins of a racial identity, such as his easily observable Black roots and his interior secret white roots, are both equally important to conveying his lived experience under conditions of enslavement.

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*Tuli Chowdhury*

VISIONS OF A MEANINGLESS WORLD  
IN THE POETRY OF LANGSTON HUGHES



Within the poems “Harlem,” “Cross,” and “Theme for English B,” Langston Hughes presents a tension between the lived experiences of people of colour, particularly those who are Black, and the “universals” that are meant to define their lives. By doing so, he challenges white assumptions, and even privileges, of meaning as a ‘universal’ — an immutable and imposed standard. These poems explore how fixed meanings interfere with the black poetic speakers’ ability to understand and express their real, individual experience. Hughes illustrates their resistance of ‘universal’ definitions by destabilizing, questioning, and de-familiarizing the fixity of “common” things. In particular, Hughes exceptionalizes the structure and presentation of common things in poetry, thus opposing the universals imposed on the black poetic voice and their self-expression.

In Hughes’s poems, common objects are stripped completely of their normalcy and are made to seem confusing and unrelatable. In one instance, Hughes attacks the fixed meaning allotted to common objects by presenting them in an eternal state of decay. He does so by extensively cataloguing bleak items and experiences. For example, in “Harlem,” Hughes’s second stanza consists completely of rotting but mundane images; he compares a “dream deferred” (1) to a “raisin in the sun” (2), a “sore [that] festers” (4), “rotten meat” (6), a “syrupy sweet” (8), and a “heavy load” (10). The speaker conflates the meanings of these seemingly unrelated items by consecutively listing them and using them to define the singular “dream.” Their excessiveness of overly mundane images displays a connected significance to a decayed “dream”. All the above images point at the poignant and prolonged act of decaying: whether it is the raisin that is infinitely drying, the sore that is festering, or the rotting meat that will forever rot. Their prospective sweetness is sickened by their “syrupy” quality (“Harlem,” 8). Together, these images evoke overpowering feelings of aversion. The speaker thus takes overly ordinary objects and portrays them as deceitful, showing that even the prospect of its ordinariness generalizes a truth that does not uphold to every experience of what is ‘ordinary,’ particularly in Harlem. Additionally, displaying these strange images in a listed fashion has the effect of familiarizing that which is fundamentally out of the ordinary. The items themselves do not carry abstract meaning, but it is the personal way that the black poetic speaker sees them that makes them significant. The meaning of an item is thus fragile, uncertain and dynamic and cannot be confined to one meaning, especially in, as the speaker depicts, a volatile, decaying world.

This similar cataloguing effect is present in “Theme for English B.” When returning back to his home from his class, the speaker notes:

The steps from the hill lead down into Harlem,  
through a park, then I cross St. Nicholas, Eight Avenue,  
Seventh, and I come to the Y,  
the Harlem Branch Y, where I take the elevator  
up to my room, sit down and write this page. (Hughes,  
“Theme for English B,” lines 11-15).

This casual act of walking is portrayed with obsessive specificity, broken down with numerous commas, and lengthened by excessive wordiness to evoke breathlessness and exhaustion. Hughes takes a simple act of walking home and turns it into an experience of personalized and unique hardship. Although this walk has specific end stops and details, its simultaneous choppy flow and superfluous description makes it seem futile and directionless — a metaphor for the speaker's forced journey in trying to find a true self but within the confines of a singular page. This sense of difficulty evoked by following these steps points to the irony of the white instructor suggesting that there is a true self, and thus problematically imposing a singular truth onto the speaker who lives many truths at once. The black speaker has to literally go the extra mile and still does not achieve this goal, pointing to how infeasible and unnatural this 'simple' task is that is demanded by the white speaker, presenting a tension between the fixed conception of something and the actual lived experience itself. The use of anaphora in the following passage serves the same purpose:

Well, I like to eat, sleep, drink, and be in love.  
I like to work, read, learn, and understand life.  
I like a pipe for a Christmas present,  
or records – Bessie, bop, or Bach (22-25).

Within this passage, the speaker lists several specifics that are fairly general. When trying to find truth, the speaker delves into the minutest details of interest that span from biological, like eating, to interpersonal, like music and being in love. By consecutively using the personal affirmation of "I like" in juxtaposition which such a wide variety of actions, both voluntary and involuntary, the speaker makes "liking" both a subjective and general action, which differs from the usual sense of freedom and individualism that this word connotes. The repetitiveness of "I like" and the cataloguing of seemingly unrelated actions make this speaker's identity both universal, by including things like "sleep" that anyone quintessentially likes as a human, and personal, by showing that the things he likes are also specific and nuanced like his interest in "Bessie." Hughes thus destabilizes the notion of the unified, fixed self-definition as he convolutes the basic tenement of choice, that is to like, and makes it both personal and impersonal at the same time. This speaks to the larger theme of the poem which challenges the racial binary of "black" and "white," showing that there is no easy way to define anything in a binary construct and by extension, categorize an identity.

Hughes' use of rhyme is also used to defy normative constructs. In "Cross" the rhyme scheme generally is ABCB, with the exception of the first stanza that proceeds ABAB. This poem is tightly packed into 12 lines that rhyme and have every other line fixed in 6 syllables, excluding the last one. The rhyming schemes

make the poem sound sweet and analogous to a children's nursery song, however, this is incongruent with the themes and ideas of the poem, including death, hell, and racial dehumanization (Hughes, "Cross," lines 6-12). The cookie-cutter sounds the rhymes elicit, incorporated with the overwhelming sense of hopelessness the poem carries, makes the rhyme ironic. Rhyme usually works to make poetry sound melodious and euphoric, but in this context Hughes uses this preconceived notion to create irony — it making the concept of death seem upbeat. By making the meaning of the poem antagonize its presentation through this use of rhyme, Hughes distorts the poem and makes its overall meaning ambiguous. Just like the speaker who is torn between two "constants" of black and white, the form of the poem together with its meaning traps the poem into a grey area that cannot be clustered into one unified feeling or category.

A similar rhyme pattern is found in "Harlem" where every other line rhymes except for the last rhyming segment which consists of consecutive end rhymes. The rhyming of "sun" (Hughes, "Harlem," 3) and "run" (5), "meat" (6) and "sweet" (8), and "load" (10) and "explode" (11) makes the poem upbeat, but when juxtaposed with its content that is filled with recurring images of decay, such as "rotten meat" (6) and "festering sore" (4) — the cheerfulness becomes a sinister prevarication. This again creates conflict between the universal connotation of rhyme and the individual application by the speaker. The tainting of the euphoric evocations of rhyme speaks to the larger fallibility of ideals and of dreams in America for the marginalized Black individual. The hopeful American dream presented as a universal goal that anyone can achieve with hard work must however, be "deferred", postponed, put off in Harlem, a predominantly Black neighbourhood. Thus, this American standard is paradoxical and unrealistic by nature as it is a universalized notion that is disproportionately possible, favouring a white population. This application of rhyme rips apart the inclusive and hopeful value of the American dream, as it is ignorant to the inequities in place, and to the various struggles and barriers that people, in particular Black individuals, face consistently. Rhyme thus functions ironically — presenting itself in a seemingly flippant, in a short and uniform fashion but yet it encapsulates images of prolonged desolation and deprivation, mimicking the experience of the Black speaker whose hopes are dashed by the oppression that has been imposed on them.

The same effect is present in "Theme for English B" but with inconsistent and loose rhyming; Hughes randomly rhymes words throughout the poem, such as "you" (Hughes, "Theme for English B," 4), "true" (5), and "who" (20), and "free" (43) and "B" (44). At times the rhymes speed up the rhythm and renders gibberish-like sounds like in the following line: "hear you, hear me — we two—you, me..." (Hughes, "Theme for English B," 19). The random order and arbitrary rhyming serve to bewilder and confuse the audience. Where rhyme typically provides a sense of rhythm and musicality to a poem, rhyme in this case leads the readers astray,

confusing the true tone and thoughts of the speaker. Where this poem is intended to be “simple” (6) as the instructor says, free verse and random and inconsistent rhyming patterns make it difficult for the reader to follow along closely. The poem becomes disorderly, with mixtures of sections with rhyme and others that have no semblance of similarity, thus reflecting the overall refusal of constants in the poem. The lack of concision of the rhyme removes its normative upbeat and cohesive effects, and again points to the destabilization of fixed meaning.

The repeated use of question marks similarly defamiliarizes the common, both by literally questioning it and by changing the usually introspective and expressive nature of poetry. In “Cross,” the speaker concludes by asking “I wonder where I’m going to die,/Being neither white nor black?” (11-12) — this is the single use of the question mark in the entire poem. However, in “Harlem,” there are an abundance of questions. The first stanza consists of the speaker asking, “What happens to a dream deferred?” (1) — almost every other line following the first one ends with a question mark. This motif of unrelenting questioning in Hughes’ poems points to the inadequacy of fixed meanings, or the lack thereof, that have been imposed on the speakers. Hughes deconstructs fixed definitions and conditions the world imposes on his speakers by repeatedly questioning and omitting any definitive answers within his poems. This also conflicts with the notion that poems themselves are “true” interpretations of the human experience, as the use of constant examination makes the poem itself void of a consistent truth. In “Cross,” for example, the speaker imagines a divide in lived experiences between his father and mother — the former a “white old man” (1) and the latter “who is black” (2) —but he questions whether he will die “being neither white nor black” (12). The presence of two constants, his father and mother, is evidently not sufficient to give the speaker a solid sense of identity, leaving him to question the one constant of human existence: death. The speaker also shows ambivalence towards his parents, once “cursing” (4) his white father but later “taking [it] back” (4), and similarly reproaching his mother at first but then “wishing her well” (5-8). This again destabilizes any sense of a constant definition, even in the binary construct of racial categories. The oppositional pairing of the mother and father have left no resolution for the individual speaker, who is half of each. The question marks therefore reflect the half-white and half-black individual’s lack of definition in a world that stems from such an indefinite set of truths.

In the same vein, the repeated rhetorical questions in “Harlem” also add a prolonged sense of irresolution and suspense. The poem seeks to answer the question of “what happens to a dream deferred” (1) and tries unintuitively to do so by asking more questions. This endless examination reflects the position of the black poetic speaker who has lost control, as depicted through the aforementioned images of futility and decay. The poem itself tries to find meaning but cannot, showing again the inability to find meaning in the world at large. The repeated

questions result in similar questioning by the reader, and any semblance of a conclusion is dismissed by the suspenseful ending of the poem with “explode?” (12). The poem never does what it initially set out to do: to define, which ultimately portrays the process of seeking definition as an inconclusive means to gaining knowledge and truth.

Hughes thus explores the tension between the particular, personal lived experience of the marginalized, Black speaker and common, seemingly “universal” definitions. He destabilizes any constant within these poems, whether it is with objects or poetic structures, and makes them seem questionable in unique ways. By doing so, he shines light on the very crucial problem of lost meaning for marginalized groups, especially in the face of inadequate “universal” omnipresent definitions. Rather than focusing on how to define the self, Hughes resists against the very notion of definitions and exposes them as contrivances that do not hold true to every lived experience but vary person to person. He shows, moreover, that they are constructs: they are made to suit and privilege the white experience in America and therefore stagnate the Black individual by stopping them from truly expressing the full complexity of lived experience and identity. His poems do more than bring awareness to this problem— indeed by redefining these constants that are prevalent in the world through his poetic voice, he is resisting the erasure and suppression of marginalized writers and their truths.

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*Willow Chadwick*

EQUAL REPRESENTATION FOR WHOM?:  
AN ANALYSIS OF GERRYMANDERING AND THE  
ROLE IT PLAYS IN LIMITING DEMOCRATIC  
RIGHTS OF MARGINALIZED GROUPS  
IN THE UNITED STATES



The right to vote directly for elected representatives is often referred to as one of the foremost tenets of democratic nations. However, throughout the history of the United States, marginalized groups have had their votes devalued. Political scientist Robert Dixon asserts “apportionment and districting decisions as primary determinants of the quality of representative democracy” (Gelman and King 543). The goal of this essay is to evaluate the American institutions of district gerrymandering and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to discover whether they limit or further democratic representation as a metric of democratic function. The traditional school of thought is that gerrymandering, a state process governed by federal law, draws boundaries around geographic areas to ensure each district results in “fair” representation (Croker 22). Contrastingly, critical race theorists suggest that the process of gerrymandering enshrined in the Voting Rights Act limits voters’ rights for partisan gain, at the expense of marginalized voters (Waymer and Heath 636). This essay will illuminate the extensive role of gerrymandering in infringing on the political freedoms of American citizens, specifically marginalized groups, through the mandate of majority-minority districts.

This paper begins by examining the origins and importance of the Voting Rights Act in order to highlight the factors that make gerrymandering such an influential part of elections. Next, the process and outcome of redistricting majority-minority districts will be investigated to shed light on its restrictive effects upon different socioeconomic, minority, and ethnic groups within the United States. This will be done by comparing two opposing theories of how representation should be employed: descriptive and substantive representation. This paper contends that substantive representation is the superior method yet is currently disregarded through the use of majority-minority districting. Finally, possible solutions to the contemporary confining redistricting process are addressed, specifically ones which would employ third party district line drawings.

Every decade, Congress uses the process of appointment and redistricting to create a US House of Representatives that accurately reflects state populations in the legislative process. The goals of the redistricting process within states are such that each congressional district shall be represented by a single Member, nearly equal in population within each state, and moderately unequal in population among states (Croker 1). The right to draw district lines is protected under the Constitution, but subsequent acts and amendments have furthered political and racial polarization, such as the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The Act was created with the intent to grant racial minorities the right to vote in elections, but can be considered responsible for contemporary racial gerrymandering, or the act of “discriminatory districting which operates unfairly to inflate the political strength of one group and deflate that of another” (Croker 22). This legislation was conceived and developed solely to require districts to submit proposed annexations for review by the Department of Justice to ensure the change would not dilute or

deny votes to racial or ethnic minorities (Durst 939). Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act prohibits any state practice that results in members of a racial or language minority having “less opportunity than other members of the electorate to participate in the political process and to elect representatives of their choice” (Shapiro 190).

The Supreme Court’s 1986 *Thornburg v. Gingles* decision required that race be taken into account during the redistricting process in order to prevent the “dilution” of minority votes. The Court specified that in order for a minority to prove that its ability to elect one of its own had been diminished by redistricting, it had to be large enough to comprise a majority of a district, politically cohesive, and be able to prove that bloc voting by the majority usually defeated the minority’s candidate (Croker 8). Political scientist Howard Shapiro views the central limitation of the Voting Rights Act is its failure to articulate a theory of equal electoral opportunity, and ultimately, offering little guidance for those courts seeking to depart from anything outside of the factors set in this case (Shapiro 192). Measuring the extent of partisan or racial gerrymandering is difficult due to the presence of competing factors which influence how district lines are drawn. As such, the criteria set by *Thornburg v. Gingles* cannot always be proven, thus creating the issue of majority-minority districts.

The Voting Rights Act prohibited the common practice of spreading minorities across voting districts, which would leave them too few in number in any given district to successfully elect their preferred candidates. The result was the implementation of majority-minority districts in which racial or linguistic profiles of voters are used to ensure that the majority of the voters are non-white minorities. This mechanism was designed to further minorities’ democratic ability by allowing them a better chance at electing the candidate that would best fit the constituency’s desires and needs. However as with most laws in America, the Voting Rights Act can be interpreted in many ways. Some scholars believe that the Act provides constitutionality for the implementation of majority-minority districts to increase the representation of minorities, whereas others believe it should protect minorities from majority-minority districts. Ultimately, the disagreement is over whether the Act guarantees descriptive representation, the number of minority office holders, or substantive representation, enacting legislation that furthers the interests of the minority community (Cameron, Epstein and O’Halloran 793).

Those who adhere to the Affirmative Action Theory or descriptive representation method view the Voting Rights Act as a response to the claim that white voters would never vote for a minority candidate in sufficient numbers to elect a non-white candidate from a majority white district (Lublin 39). This belief assumes that minorities will continue to have their values and desires underrepresented unless they are directly in the representative’s position. The Voting Rights Act had a notable influence on the election of Black officials through the use of majority-minority

districts. By compacting a minority into a single district, as opposed to two or three, the influence on the vote will be stronger. For instance, if the Black voting population of a given district was below thirty percent of the total voting age population, it was highly unlikely that the preferred candidate of the minority group would be elected. But if the adjacent district also has a thirty percent minority population, then minority voters from this district can be placed into the first district to enhance the odds that a minority's preferred candidate would win. By the end of the year 1965, approximately 250,000 African Americans were newly registered which resulted in the doubling of the amount of minority representatives in the House by 1993 (Veroni 8). Scholars who align with descriptive representation attribute this increase to the concentration of minorities in districts, which to enhanced the influence of their vote. However, between 1993 and 2003, there was only an increase in minority representatives by two (Richie 1). This stagnation can be attributed to the fact that this theory does not account for the important role that substantive representation plays in elections and politics in general. Substantive representation is more comprehensive to descriptive because it accounts for the ideas and values of the electorate, rather than just the same ethnicity or linguistic background. Before discussing the methods in which substantive representation furthers the democratic rights of minorities, one must look at the political ideologies and values of said minorities that they are looking to have represented.

It is common amongst political scientists to victimize the Democratic Party in literature about gerrymandering, and although this is often critiqued by right-wing commentators, this narrative does have a fair basis. If minority voters were distributed evenly throughout the ideological spectrum, then redistricting authorities motivated by partisanship would have no reason to pay attention to race. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Minorities in America have almost entirely aligned with Democratic values since the shift from Republican to Democrat during the New Deal Era (Lublin 58). Minority opinion is cohesive and substantively more liberal than the white voter opinion; compared to white voters, who are typically split around the middle, eighty percent of African-Americans identify as Democrats and less than 15% identify as Republican (Lublin 76). Although non-white voters are becoming increasingly conservative from the development of a Black middle-class, it is acknowledged that this group overwhelmingly still votes for the Democratic Party. In the last six presidential elections, more than eighty-four percent of African American voters voted for the Democratic candidate; and in the last three presidential elections, more than eighty-nine percent (Cox and Holden 572). African Americans who vote conservative only account for less than ten percent of the total African American voters (Veroni 26). When considering economic, social welfare, and racial issues, minorities are more likely than white voters to side with the Democratic values. For instance, the percent of white voters opposed to increases in welfare spending

is typically around seventy-five to ninety percent, whereas black voters have never surpassed one-third (Lublin 73). The addition of a common group identity resulting from a history of past oppression and the need for electoral representation has resulted in non-white voters siding regularly with Democrats. Since non-white voters more consistently vote for Democratic or left-winged candidates, there is a greater likelihood of a Republican legislator using race to determine district lines at the expense of minorities.

Since non-white voters are not the only faction of Democratic voters, it should be remembered that the combination of white and non-white voters are what right-winged legislators are trying to avoid. For instance, in Texas' 33rd district under the 115th Congress, non-white voters represented eighty-three percent of the voter population which resulted in the incumbent Democratic representative to secure eighty-six percent of the vote (*Ballotpedia*). The additional thirty-six percent votes over the bare majority can be considered wasted votes that could have aided influence in another district. Ultimately, right-winged legislators take advantage of districts who already elect minority candidates by packing more minority constituents into them. This is a prime example of non-white minority voters having their voting influence defused by being packed into majority-minority districts.

Substantive representation therefore increases minority groups' democratic rights by acting on the basis of common interest of policy and action rather than descriptive representation which relies only on a common interest of race. Descriptive representation and majority-minority districts carry out the exact opposite of the Voting Rights Act's intention, to disallow discrimination on the basis of race. Substantive representation does not assume that just because a representative is a minority that they are guaranteed to align themselves with said minorities' ideas (Waymer and Heath 644). In addition to basing redistricting on race, majority-minority districts isolate minorities to one district which reduces their influence elsewhere. What ultimately occurs as a result of majority-minority districts are multiple districts dominated by white voters and few dominated by minorities. This reduction of influence further strains minority's power by limiting the number of districts where representatives with their political beliefs are elected. This can result in a loss of power at the state legislator or the presidency. For instance, in South Carolina, white voters make up two-thirds of the population but occupy six-sevenths of the House Representatives (Waymer and Heath 638). In the 2014 election, South Carolina's 6th district was drawn to be a majority-minority district. The result was an overwhelming Democratic win of 72.8% of the votes (Waymer and Heath 645). However, if minority voters from the 6<sup>th</sup> District, which had a Republican win of forty-one percent of the vote, were placed into the 5<sup>th</sup> District, they would have affected the results in multiple districts (Waymer and Heath 645). Instead of one Democratic district in South Carolina, there would have been two, which would make a much larger impact on the policy making

process by increasing the chance of the House to adopt policies favoured by minorities. If minorities' democratic rights were to be protected to ensure there was no dilution of votes as the Voting Rights Act decrees, then a redistricting method that equally counts the votes of minorities would create a more democratic outcome.

Although the contemporary process of redistricting and reappointment produces clear discrimination based on both ideology and race, it is still an integral institution in the United States. Gerrymandering assures population equality among districts within the same state, minimizes the number of split political subdivisions and communities of interest within congressional districts, and preserves historical stability in the cores of previous congressional districts (Croker 23). Additionally, gerrymandering creates an increase in electoral responsiveness through its ability to modify the political system through drawing multiple amalgamations of district lines which ultimately causes an ambiguous election result. Thus, there must be a solution to the conflict of the prominence of race and ideology when forming district lines. This desired result can be found by removing the partisanship and personal gain from the equation. Many reformers see Independent Redistricting Commissions (IRCs)—committees which have been granted the authority from state legislators to create and enforce district lines—as a solution to gerrymandering and have been proposed (Edwards, Crespin, Williamson and Palmer 723). Given binding authority and political independence, this method is critiqued because IRCs are not an elected body, despite the mandate of the IRCs to remove partisanship. Removing the direct participation of elected representatives in the redistricting process also removes the possibility of partisan gain. The goals of the commissions are to remove discriminatory district lines and instead redistrict according to legal standards, including traditional principles found in state statutes and constitutions, in an impartial manner after considering the relevant evidence (Edwards, Crespin, Williamson and Palmer 723). Ultimately, the core advantage to the use of IRCs is the restraint of the arduous task of proving unconstitutional gerrymandering, lowering the costs of campaigns, and facilitating responsive representation.

So long as politicians and legislators with something to gain are drawing the lines of American districts, racial gerrymandering will forever exist. It is unsurprising why vast swaths of Americans, especially minority voters, believe that their votes do not matter because they are being defused. Instead of using poll taxes and literacy tests to completely deny voting to marginalized groups (Durst 934), legislators are now using majority-minority districts to limit the democratic rights of minority voters that have been inscribed in the Constitution. The question remaining is, will American politicians seek to right this injustice? Or will they continue the cycle that favours their political gain at the expense of marginalized voters? Ultimately, this relies on the extent that the ability and right to vote directly for one's representative is considered to be an important component of democracy in the United States.

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*Clare O'Brien*

WHITE SUPREMACY IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT:  
COMPARING THE MEDIATION OF RACISM IN  
THE 1960S TO TODAY



In 1969, Professor Locksley Edmondson of Cornell University wrote that, although “fewer whites now speak of (or assume) their inherent superiority” to Black Americans, “the fundamental issue of race and power remains unsolved” (715). While conservative authors and pundits in the 1990s asserted that racism was largely a thing of the past (Foster 1), an analysis of contemporary media and news coverage suggests otherwise. The end of the 1960s did not mean usher an end to white supremacy, instead it has just taken on a different iteration.

In the 1960s, white supremacy was mediated through television and radio broadcasting. Such programming consisted of interviews with those for and against equal rights for Black citizens, televised footage of protests, and presidential speeches regarding the current state of the civil rights movement. The 1960s civil rights movement emerged alongside the rise of television, resulting in many of the decade’s events unfolding on camera and being broadcast on national TV networks. By the mid-1960s, “it was an acknowledged fact that most Americans had come to depend on television as their chief source of news” (Blue and Murphree 209). Television was quickly becoming a pervasive medium during this era, and white supremacists took advantage of the new opportunities it afforded their ability to disseminate their beliefs.

Today, white supremacy is most prevalent in the form of the Alt-Right. A term coined by prominent white supremacist Richard Spencer, the Alt-Right is defined as a white-nationalist movement “with right-wing sensibilities that rejects the mainstream conservative movement” (Hawley 11; 51). White supremacy continues to be mediated through television, with Fox News being a primary source of information for those with Alt-Right beliefs. One of the most notable TV programs related to the Alt-Right is *Hannity*, hosted by conservative political commentator, and close ally of Donald Trump, Sean Hannity. According to reporter Alvin Chang, Hannity “peddles conspiracy theories more than any other news show in the US” and “often mirrors the language of online conspiracy forums” (“Sean Hannity Conspiracy Theorist”). The show, which has aired on Fox News since 2009, delivers news in the form of conspiracy theories; he was one of the instigators of the Birther scandal, in which some conservatives were convinced that then-President Barack Obama was born in Kenya and was therefore ineligible for the presidency (Chang, “Sean Hannity”). Despite neither Hannity nor Trump being members of the Alt-Right, their scepticism toward mainstream media and centre-right politics is parallel with Alt-Right beliefs.

In addition to television programming, social media is now the primary method through which white supremacy is mediated. According to George Hawley, the Alt-Right “is almost exclusively an online phenomenon” which uses social media as a means by which to penetrate public discourse (18; 161). White supremacists use chat rooms—like those available on 4chan, Reddit, and Gab—as well as mainstream websites like Twitter and YouTube, to disseminate their opinions and beliefs. The transition to online mediation has been a boon to the Alt-Right. Rather than printing newspapers or broadcasting its message on TV or radio, contemporary white supremacists are provided

with “inexpensive and efficient ways to broadcast [themselves] to broader audiences to an unprecedented extent” (Bliuc 82). Thus, the Alt-Right uses the advent of social media to its advantage.

A key difference between the mediation of white supremacy in the 1960s and now is the number of media outlets that are available. In the 1960s, only three television networks existed, which broadcasted local and national news related to the civil rights movement at specific times of the day (Blue and Murphree 205). Since there were so few channels, and the medium itself was very new, all perspectives were voiced on the same channel. Walter Cronkite felt that it was his responsibility to cover events in a way that was not emotional, but was “as calm, as factual, as impartial as good journalists can make them” (Blue and Murphree 210). This diversity of perspectives shown on the same channel had a positive outcome, in that it meant that all Americans received their information from the same sources and were able to come to their own conclusions based on what they were shown. In contrast, there are now a plethora of channels from which to choose, as well as online streaming at all hours of the day. However, perspectives are divided based on which network one chooses to watch. While CNN is filtered through a bias of left-wing ideology, Fox is more right-wing and explicitly pro-Trump. CNN host Brian Stelter argues that “you’d be missing the story” if “you only looked at CNN, MSNBC or CBS” and did not acknowledge Fox’s news coverage of the presidency (qtd. in Farhi, “CNN vs. Fox”). If one chooses to exclusively watch a certain channel over another, he or she would not be able to get the whole picture of the event. The number of outlets available during either era has especially impacted the way that news is created and received.

Another important distinction between the mediation of white supremacy in the 1960s and today is its potential reach. In the 1960s, national broadcasting was only just becoming possible. NBC connected local and national audiences by including Frank McGee’s reports on the network news, thereby showcasing civil rights as a nationwide movement (*The American Revolution of 1963*). Prior to these widely-publicized documentaries — and President Kennedy’s acknowledgement of the issue in televised addresses — the severity of white supremacy was not fully understood by those who lived in the North. Because of technological limitations in the 1960s, national broadcasting was as far as network news channels could reasonably reach. This technological barrier is nonexistent today. Contemporary media — and, by extension, the white supremacy movement — is transnational, meaning that a member of the Alt-Right can transmit his or her ideas at any time of day and reach people all across the world. The Internet and social media reach “not only larger audiences, but also geographically and ideologically isolated people” (Bliuc 82). The result is an elimination of spatial boundaries that “allows online communities to draw in otherwise isolated movement participants” (Niewert 259). Today’s technology affords white supremacists the ability to disseminate information and conspiracy theories at a rate and vastness that was impossible in the 1960s.

Changes in media practices since the 1960s have greatly altered our understanding of the issue of white supremacy. One way in which practices have changed is the fact that the media has become decentralized and democratized. During the 1960s civil rights movement, it was only those who were most involved in the issue—i.e. political leaders, protesters, and vocally racist whites—that were given screen time. Now, however, everyone has access to a public platform, regardless of whether or not the individual has ever physically or verbally expressed their opinions in real life. Contemporary white supremacists can post on personal blogs or social media accounts in order to be heard; they do not need to be vocal about their opinions outside of the Internet, or even be a central figure in the Alt-Right movement. Andrew Anglin, founder of neo-Nazi website *The Daily Stormer*, calls the Alt-Right “a type of mass-movement that could only exist on the Internet, where everyone’s voice is as loud as they are able to make it” and where “top-down hierarchy can only be based on the value, or perceived value, of someone’s ideas” (qtd. in Niewert 257). Unlike white supremacy in the 1960s, where only those who were most significant to the movement were given a public platform, the Alt-Right does not require an individual to be a central figure in the movement to have his or her voice heard.

Media practices have also changed in that they used to be more public. In the 1960s, a white supremacist expressed his or her feelings in a televised interview, which was then nationally broadcast for viewers who would know exactly who was speaking. In the NBC documentary *The American Revolution of 1963*, one segment shows a shop owner throwing raw eggs at a protester. When the TV reporter says that the shop owner appeared to be a “hateful man,” the shop owner responds, “I hope it never happens again...I would rather go out of business before I participate in anything like that again” (38:22). The shop owner feels ashamed of the way he looks on TV when expressing his white supremacist views. Contemporary white supremacists, however, are afforded more privacy if they so choose. While there are still a number of white supremacists who make their identities public, like Andrew Anglin and Richard Spencer—who “supports the idea of creating one or more white ethnostates in North America” (Hawley 15)—the majority of the Alt-Right hide behind screen names and aliases. According to Hawley, the Alt-Right is “predominantly anonymous” and gives white supremacists the opportunity to “say things anonymously on the Internet that they would never utter on the streets” (18; 26). Members of the Alt-Right can also post in exclusive online communities. In order to access a website like Gab, for example, one has to create an account, since guest users are unable to view the forums. Thus, those who publish racist comments on these forums do not have their thoughts out for everyone to see, only those who also believe in unrestricted free speech. Media depicting white supremacy was much more public in the 1960s than it is today.

Another way in which the media has altered our understanding of white supremacy is how the methods of recruitment and engagement have changed. In the 1960s, physical violence and fear-mongering were the primary tactics used by white

supremacists to convey their message on television. In the South, they exploited citizens' nostalgia for an old way of life, invoking state's rights as a reason to maintain the status quo and deny Black citizens their rights (Torres 18). White supremacy in the 1960s was built upon the threat of Black America's inclusion in American society. While fear-mongering continues to be a recruitment tactic used by the Alt-Right, one of their main methods of recruitment and engagement is comedy. White supremacists use humour to garner the attention of young people, drawing them in with subversive memes, comics, and news articles. The Alt-Right presents themselves to the public as mainstream by "reframing blatantly racist messages using social creativity strategies" (Bliuc 83). Thus, despite this content being "ostentatiously vulgar and offensive," it "offers something more attractive to potential supporters: edginess and fun" (Hawley 68; 25). This recruitment tactic has proven successful because it initially comes across as harmless fun. According to Hawley, "Someone who would never associate with a group like the Klan...might eagerly watch YouTube videos by the Alt-Right satirist RamZPaul" (25). This change in tactical approach is due to the Alt-Right's recognition that "the older white-nationalist movement's preferred tactics — such as marching in Nazi uniforms or KKK robes — are less than worthless when it comes to spreading a message; normal people are turned off by such methods" (Hawley 99). In contrast to the violence and fear that served as the method of engagement in the 1960s, the Alt-Right uses comedy to attract potential new members.

Another method used by the Alt-Right is extending their recruitment to those with different political affiliations. In order to prevent their content from falling into obscurity, the Alt-Right create shareable and plausible content with the goal that left-wing and mainstream channels will inadvertently circulate their content, giving them a larger platform. As explained by Hawley, the Alt-Right is able to circulate its message "by leaving sites specifically aimed at a radical right-wing audience and joining discussions at other message boards" like the comment sections of YouTube and major news venues (20). The Alt-Right was able to achieve such rapid growth within the past few years because of prominent writers who discussed them in their own venues, even to denounce the movement (Hawley 88). In addition to encouraging mainstream media outlets to pick up their news stories, the Alt-Right is highly adaptable. It is able to appeal to a wide range of audiences because of "its cultural agility — its ability to stay at the forefront of events, themes, ideas, and names in the media by adapting them to their own uses and then running wild with them" (Niewert 256). The Alt-Right is even able to access those who do not use social media by appropriating popular memes and introducing their terms and concepts into popular discussion (Hawley 82). A primary example of this tactic has been Pepe the Frog, which emerged as a seemingly innocent cartoon character but was co-opted by the Alt-Right and turned into their mascot (Willingham, "Creator of Pepe sues Infowars"). Creating content that is accessible to those on either side of the partisan line is one of the Alt-Right's most successful tactics for spreading awareness of their movement and recruiting new members.

As a result of the differences in how far media could reach in the 1960s and today, white supremacist communities are formed differently. In the 1960s, white supremacists found like-minded people primarily through local organizations and groups, including the Ku Klux Klan, meaning that they had to go to physical public spaces rather than make digital connections. This is no longer the case today. Although groups like the KKK still exist, white supremacy groups have largely relocated online. Those who belong to these online communities usually do not know the other members personally; they might be acquainted through screen names only, or communicate through text correspondence. The Internet is used to “build a sense of transnational community,” where isolated individuals can “use their global racist communities to gain a sense of belonging and connection with like-minded people” (Bliuc 82). However, despite the Internet’s ability to make isolated white supremacist individuals feel like they are part of a unified whole, the movement is still isolating in some ways. Hawley states that “the Alt-Right is without leaders in the usual sense. It is a disorganized mob that broadly shares a number of goals and beliefs” (70). Although contemporary media allows Alt-Right members to connect with each other globally, the movement lacks the unity of goals and motivations that white supremacist groups had in the 1960s. Without clear leaders and goals, the Alt-Right is much less organized than its predecessors.

Issues of access to news coverage plagued Americans in the 1960s, and continue to do so today. In the 1960s, the scope of hatred coming from white supremacists was underestimated by those who did not have access to media that broadcasted these events. Prior to the 1960s, less than five percent of non-Southern whites saw civil rights as a pressing issue; they were largely unaware of the injustices still occurring against Black citizens because “most white Americans felt the Negro was making progress” (Santoro 1396; *American Revolution of 1963*, 25:40). One of the reporters in the NBC documentary, Ralph McGill, states that “television [enabled] people all over this country to see what was going on” (24:18). Northerners, and those in fringe communities within the South, did not realize how bad the racial situation was in the South until it was covered on the network news. The issue of white supremacy continues to be underestimated by those who do not consume media that covers this perspective. Those within the Alt-Right and those outside it draw from completely different data sets. While those outside the Alt-Right’s sphere of influence tend to get their information from mainstream sources, the Alt-Right is skeptical of the mainstream media and choose to trust so-called “alternative facts” and conspiracy theories instead (Niewert 33). This discrepancy had major consequences in the 2016 presidential election. The Alt-Right’s fervent support of Donald Trump was underestimated because, prior to 2015, “it lacked a real leader — a charismatic political figure around whom it could finally coalesce, whom its members could devote their energies to electing to office” (Niewert 261). Hidden in the recesses of the Internet, the Alt-Right “focused its energies on promoting Trump, trolling his opponents, and ratcheting up the polarization” right after Trump announced his intention to run (Hawley 118).

After Trump's win, Andrew Anglin praised the power of the Alt-Right, asserting that "we did this. If it were not for us, it wouldn't have been possible... The White race is back in the game" (qtd. in Niewert 321). When Trump was elected, it proved that the Alt-Right was actually a force to be reckoned with. The strength of white supremacy groups was underestimated in the 1960s, and continues to be underestimated today, because of restricted and unequal access to media.

Despite being published in mid-2017, George Hawley's book, *Making Sense of the Alt-Right*, is already outdated. He asserted that "anonymous Twitter accounts are not going to change the world fundamentally, especially if efforts to combat the Alt-Right continue to escalate" (172). Hawley was unable to anticipate the Alt-Right's ability to coalesce in the form of the "Unite the Right" rally that took place in Charlottesville, Virginia, in August of 2017. During the rally, one person was killed and nineteen were hurt when a speeding car slammed into a group of counterprotesters (Hanna, "Virginia governor to white nationalists: "shame on you"). Despite the Alt-Right's overwhelming virtual presence, the tragedy in Charlottesville proved that they are a dangerous and powerful force.

As several commentators have noted, Trump's America has witnessed a palpable uptick in racist and xenophobic crimes throughout the nation (Schwartz 296). According to Niewert, while white nationalism "had been lurking on the fringes of the American political right for a couple of decades," it was not until Trump entered the scene that the movement finally had the opportunity to "restore its previous legitimacy" (220; 355). It can no longer be denied that the Alt-Right has a threatening, palpable presence in contemporary American politics. Although white supremacy has existed both in the 1960s and in the present day, it has taken assumed different forms and has been mediated in different ways. Changes in technology, media platforms, methods of engagement and recruitment, all contributed to the evolution of white supremacy. By analysing the mediation of the Alt-Right today, it is abundantly clear that white supremacy did not end in the 1960s and while met with resistance, has continued to grow unabated.

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*Asqa Bhatti*

**FEATURE**

**#6MILLION:  
FELON DISENFRANCHISEMENT  
AND AMERICAN DEMOCRACY**



For centuries, laws in the United States have deprived women, people of colour, and the poor of their rights (Nelson). Today, felon disenfranchisement laws continue to impose on the civil rights of felons, who some scholars contend are among America's *most* disadvantaged group (Miller and Agnich 69). But who are felons? What is "felon disenfranchisement"? And why is it a threat to democracy?

To be "franchised" is by definition to have the right to vote. This basic civil right is central to any democratic nation and essential to the fundamental principles of democracy. The right to vote is demonstrative of the power people are afforded to elect political representatives of their choosing. A felon is someone who is found guilty of committing a crime — including non-violent ones — and punished by being imprisoned for over a year (*Legal Match*). So, when combined, felon *disenfranchisement* is the exclusion from voting of people who have currently or previously been convicted of a felony (*The Sentencing Project*) and are often referred to as "laws that prohibit Americans from voting" or "revoked civil rights." As of 2016, approximately 6.1 million people in the United States do not have the legal right to vote due to a felony conviction (Miller and Spillane). These citizens comprise roughly 2.6% of the voting-eligible population. Although this percentage may not appear large, there are more disenfranchised citizens in the United States than the total population of countries like Singapore, Denmark, and Lebanon (*Worldometers*). Approximately half of these formerly incarcerated people have completed their jail time, required probation, or parole period (Aviram, Bragg and Lewis). Their right to vote is permanently revoked, even after the successful completion of their sentence and reintegration into the community (*The Sentencing Project*). In a country that has the highest incarceration rate of any modern democratic nation, laws that prevent prisoners from voting threaten American democracy (Nelson). Felon disenfranchisement is one of the most pressing civil rights violations today, requiring immediate state and federal policy reform (Nelson).

## IN AMERICA? YES, IT IS A "RACE THING"

Within the United States, there is significant disparity among those who have the right to vote and those who do not. This phenomenon is especially evident at the state level. In 10 states — including Florida, Kentucky, and Iowa — ex-felons may lose their voting rights permanently. In the other 40 states, the severity of voter suppression varies in severity. Maine and Vermont are the only two states in the entire nation that allow felons to vote, even from within the confines of the prison. At the national level, 20% of African-Americans — or one in every five — are disenfranchised, despite comprising only 13% of the national population (Eisenberg). According to American sociologists, the population of racialized minorities is a determining factor in the severity of state disenfranchisement laws.

He found that the size of a state's minority population is a primary factor in determining how severe its policy on prohibiting the right to vote is (Preuhs). These laws represent the states' remaining freedom to withhold minorities from electoral participation. It should be no surprise that laws which prohibit felons from voting are rooted in America's ongoing conditions of institutional racism, a legacy born out of slavery, replaced by the legal system of Jim Crow, and preserved by mass incarceration and felon disenfranchisement laws.

Although the denial of voting rights on the basis of race, colour, or previous slave status is prohibited under the Constitution, explicit exceptions are made for people who "participate in rebellion, or other crime" (Eisenberg 540). Thus, the Fourteenth Amendment enabled former slave states to subvert the Amendment's very purpose, and instead use disenfranchisement as a consequence to crimes legislators believe are likely to be committed by African-Americans (Eisenberg). These crimes are primarily non-violent drug offences punished with lengthy mandatory sentences, resulting in the mass incarceration of Blacks and Latinos (Aviram, Bragg and Lewis). Today, sociologists have developed the myth of "colourblind laws" as a concept to better understand and explain laws that discriminate against people of colour (Powell). While colourblind laws appear neutral and objective, they are explicitly biased in writing and application. State felon disenfranchisement laws are a form of racism masked by this myth of colourblindness, which maintain and worsen racial inequality in the United States.

## **POLITICAL IMPACT: MISSING VOTES ARE IMPRISONING DEMOCRACY**

Although felon disenfranchisement laws are rooted in America's racist history, the annulment of the civil rights of any American — independent of race — is at odds with democracy. But, who benefits when over 6 million Americans are restricted from voting?

Historically, felon disenfranchisement laws have predominantly benefited political conservatives who continue to incentivize more restrictive voting laws (Powell). A 2002 study by sociologists Christopher Uggen and Jeff Manza found that as many as seven senatorial elections since 1978 would have had different outcomes without felon disenfranchisement laws. They also found a slight advantage to Republican candidates in every presidential and senatorial election from 1972-2000 (Uggen and Manza, 777-803). In the 2002 federal election, George W. Bush became the forty-third President of the United States when he won the state of Florida by 537 votes. Al Gore would have likely been elected President in the absence of voter suppression in Florida and on the basis of democrats in the state who were barred from participating in the election (Brooks).

This result would have portended a greater focus on health care and action on climate change. The American pillars of democracy and civil rights directly oppose felon disenfranchisement regardless of one's party affiliation. Therefore, the racist and politically charged policies of felon disenfranchisement should be revoked to protect the rights and freedoms of all Americans.

The revoked electoral power of many Americans even after they have paid their debt to society has tremendous national and global consequences. As the head of state and leader of a global superpower, the President of the United States governs policy and international relations which impact domestic and global affairs of the world's population. Although Manza and Uggen's study was conducted in 2002, the investigators suggested that similar results would yield in future elections with a continued rise in felony charges. Thus, in extrapolating the results of their study, one would find that some red states in the 2016 election would have otherwise gone blue, for example.

## RESPONDING TO COMMON CRITICISM

Those in favour of felon disenfranchisement contend that lawbreakers should not be entitled to enact legal change. However, voting, like other rights, is not a privilege which the government grants its citizens. It is fundamental to a democratic society. The United States' northern neighbours hold that, "democracy is premised on the notion that the voters select the politicians, not the politicians who select the voters" (*John Howard Society of Canada*). Prisoners and ex-convicts are the only group currently to be excluded from the vote, making them second-class citizens and placing them outside the laws that apply to all other citizens. As a comparative example, the John Howard Society of Canada states that "voting is an act which emphasizes the value of order and the rule of law. By allowing inmates to exercise their right to vote, we allow them to influence law and policy in a constructive manner." Allowing inmates and ex-felons to vote includes them in law-making processes, rather than amplifying their exclusion from society. .

Those in favour of restricting the right to vote also believe that advocates are "soft on crime." The Criminal Justice System is permitted to proportionately punish a criminal based on the crime they have committed. Thus, the act of revoking civil rights extends the state's power and reach over its citizens.

## "NOW WHAT?"

Felon disenfranchisement impacts current offenders, ex-felons, the state, and ultimately the political makeup of the United States, including future legislation

and policies which impact the globe. As these policies directly threaten democracy, felon disenfranchisement merits public attention and federal reform. Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe's recent executive order — which restored voting rights for over 200,000 Virginians with felony convictions — illustrates the powerful leadership desperately needed across the nation to combat this injustice (Nelson). Unless states and their representatives — like Governor McAuliffe in Virginia — step up, America requires federal reform. Numerous studies suggest that states are not equipped to deal with the issue of felon disenfranchisement independently (Eisenberg). As such, on the basis of evidence presented on variation in racially-discriminatory disenfranchisement policies across states, a national standard ought to be established (Eisenberg).

In order to enact further change, lawmakers must be confronted to amend existing state-based legislation and implement policy reform. It is imperative that the dialogue on this extremely pressing civil rights issue be continued. Join the conversation by using the hashtag #6Million.

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