

AKΦ

THE ALPHA KAPPA PHI REVIEW

ANNUAL JOURNAL OF UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH
IN THE HUMANITIES

VOLUME X
SPRING 2024

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PREFACE

An institution puts forth a mission statement to capture its primary purpose, center of attention, and dedication. Lindsey Wilson College shows the depth of its love for education and the student body with its statement, “Every Student, Every Day.” The *Alpha Kappa Phi Review* is an extension of this mindset, with an interest in the work of all students at Lindsey Wilson College.

This volume contains a broad range of student essays. These essays span a wide variety of topics and academic disciplines, including detailed analyses of works by major authors and solutions for pressing societal concerns that have major implications on our world today. All of the essays that appear in the *Alpha Kappa Phi Review* have gone through a rigorous peer-review selection and revision process resulting in the inclusion of only works that achieve the highest excellence. All of the essays rely on secondary research and/or extensive textual evidence to support their analyses and claims.

The *Review* has sought to include a wide variety of writing from Lindsey Wilson’s student body with this grouping, encompassing the work of freshman to graduating seniors. This volume includes nine student essays on a variety of topics ranging from literary criticism that analyzes African American identity to political debates in American society today. The reader will find the essays organized thematically, not alphabetically, into two categories.

The first five essays explore race, racism, and colonialism through a variety of critical and theoretical frameworks within literary studies. Kylie Jackson provides an analysis of Jean Rhys’s postcolonial rewriting of *Jane Eyre*, which illustrates how Creole women felt shut out of and disenfranchised by both patriarchal and British imperialist society. Following this, Megan Whitson analyzes Zora Neale Hurston’s novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* to highlight how Black American women negotiate the complex legacy of slavery and patriarchal oppression, focusing on Hurston’s nature imagery. Mattie Coomer further highlights the struggles for representation among African American women writers by analyzing Toni Morrison’s novel *Song of Solomon*. Michelle Cardwell continues this discussion of Black American subjectivity and representation through a biopolitical analysis of Tupac’s album *2Pacalypse Now* in light of contemporary activist movements like Black Lives Matter. Closing this section, Bryson Godby presents a psychoanalytic analysis of the work of H.P. Lovecraft in terms of the discourse of eugenics, race, and constructions of an Other in early 20th century American culture.

The second grouping of essays expands the focus of the volume to investigate pressing political and historical issues faced by contemporary American society. The first, by Jackson Logan, uses a Political Science and History framework to explore the political justifications for isolationism within American foreign policy from the founding fathers to the 20th century. Also investigating foundational debates in American society, Yesh Singayao highlights the Supreme Court’s interpretation of the Necessary and Proper Clause in terms of Constitutional Law and debates over originalism. Following these analyses of founding political and legal debates that shape the country, the last two essays move to contemporary debates within American society over the legal and political rights of women and collective efforts at memorializing national tragedies, respectively. Aven Sanders uses a feminist theory perspective to analyze the legal and cultural debates over reproductive rights in contemporary American politics. Closing the volume,

Morgan Bryant presents a rhetorical analysis of the obituary genre as a way to memorialize personal losses in American culture but also the collective trauma of 9/11 in the *New York Times*'s "Portraits of Grief" series.

The *Alpha Kappa Phi Review* is devoted to publishing the best student scholarly work that Lindsey Wilson College has to offer. We believe the broad range of topics and arguments within this volume showcase the excellent writing and research skills of Lindsey Wilson's student body.

—Michelle Cardwell, Editor-in-Chief



The editorial board would like to thank the following English, Political Science, and History faculty members for serving as Faculty Reviewers for this volume:

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Each submission to the *Alpha Kappa Phi Review* undergoes an extensive review process in which it is anonymously evaluated by both student editors and faculty.

We are grateful to Dr. Paul Thifault for founding and establishing the *Alpha Kappa Phi Review*, then the sole undergraduate research journal at Lindsey Wilson College. We are also grateful to Dr. Tip Shanklin for publishing the second volume. Finally, the last eight volumes of the *Review* would not have been possible without the mentorship of Dr. Steffens.



Critical essays in the Humanities, broadly defined as the fields of English, History, Women's and Gender Studies, Philosophy, Theology, Theatre, Film, Political Science, and Art, are welcomed and encouraged from current or recently graduated Lindsey Wilson College students.

For more information, please contact Dr. Karolyn Steffens, Associate Professor of English and Faculty Editor: steffensk@lindsey.edu.

Wide Sargasso Sea: Complexity within Hybridity and Community

Kylie Jackson

Identity is generally considered to be uniform and definite, providing security and influencing the way one connects to their culture and community. Hybridity is a term that complicates the uniformity of identity, as it blurs the construction and classification of culture and race. Though it is often portrayed as a source of strength within postcolonial texts, this is not the case for Creole women within 19th century literature. Failing to fully fit inside either of the communities within their hybridity, Creole women felt shut out by both races that make up their identity. Within *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Jean Rhys complicates this concept through the progressively worsening identity crisis seen within Antoinette, as her intersectionality of gender and race causes her to be shut out by various communities and face oppression at the hands of colonialism. In further analyzing the text, confirmations of Antoinette's complex identity emerge. Lastly, in incorporating Rochester's point of view, it becomes clear that hybridity is exploited by the colonizer in order to assert their own dominance, as well as manipulate the colonized subject, resulting in alienation, oppression, and an impaired sense of identity for Creole women like Antoinette.

In analyzing Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffin, and Helen Tiffin's "Introduction" of *The Empire Writes Back*, Antoinette's struggle for a stable sense of self can be better analyzed and interpreted through the provided definition of hybridity, specifically through place and displacement. Ashcroft identifies place and displacement as important factors underlying a colonized subject's identity, stating, "A major feature of post-colonial literature is the concern with place and displacement. It is here that the special post-colonial crisis of identity comes into being; the concern with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place" (Ashcroft, 8). Here, he emphasizes the importance of the colonized subject's personal tie to their location, which is often tainted by factors such as involuntary relocation, cultural denigration, or enslavement, all resulting from colonialism. Often, what was once home is spoiled through the effects of colonialism, resulting in a disconnect of culture and community. Building on this scholarship, I argue that Rhys elaborates upon the complexity of hybridity, emphasizing the way the colonizer manipulates its power into oppressing and exploiting the colonized subject, specifically Creole women. This can be seen primarily through Antoinette's battle to identify herself. As a Creole woman in Jamaica, Antoinette faces extreme

alienation when it comes to her identity, worsened through her inability to truly fit in within a community. Rhys highlights this struggle in order to argue that, though hybridity is often a source of empowerment for colonized subjects, this is not the case for Antoinette. Ultimately, this otherness shapes society into a powerful weapon used against Creole women.

Some critics argue that within the establishment of English identity through colonialism, the native subject is immediately alienated. Further, the indigenous woman is even further excluded, placed on an almost inhuman level. These ideas are expressed through Benita Parry's statement that, "...because the construction of the English cultural identity was inseparable from othering the native as its object, the articulation of the female subject within the emerging norm of feminist individualism during the age of imperialism, necessarily excluded the native female, who was positioned on the boundary between human and animal as the object of imperialism's social mission or soul-making" (Parry 247). Here, Parry is arguing that the English's establishment of power is at the expense of the native people in multiple aspects. This nods back to Rhys' argument that hybridity is especially damaging to the Creole woman's sense of identity, as the native female is placed on a dehumanizing level. Building on Parry's argument, Rhys expresses that in addition to the alienation faced by Creole women, their culture is also disregarded and disrespected by the colonizer. This can be seen in Rochester's acts of blatant disrespect for Creole culture seen throughout the novel. Further, In addition to the Creole women's constructed otherness, Parry argues that there are levels within this alienation. In comparing and contrasting Christophine and Antoinette, she states that though both are marginalized and oppressed, Christophine's defiance and lack of hybridity allows her to find a more sound sense of identity. Though Christophine is from Martinique and different from the island's indigenous people, she is still black. Because she is black, not a Creole like Antoinette, she is able to escape the racial middle ground Antoinette is caught between. Because Antoinette is a Creole woman, she cannot fit in one specific category or community. Further, because she is not accepted by a community, she is more vulnerable to the oppression inflicted by the colonizer, targeting their isolation. This further supports Rhys's argument that Creole women are unable to truly find a stable sense of self, and that the colonizer is able to manipulate their hybridity in order to further oppress and manipulate them as they please.

In addition to alienation impacting identity, other critics argue that displacement creates a multitude of issues in regard to the idea of home for colonized subjects, specifically Creole

women. Within “England: Dream and Nightmare,” author Judith Raiskin argues that through displacement, Creoles are faced with a complicated idea and grasp of England, their original homeland. This further disconnects the colonized subject from a stable sense of identity and community, as Rhys suggests. Raiskin supports this idea through Christophine, stating, “Christophine’s assessment of England as a ‘cold thief place’ captures the alienation and economic exploitation that Rhys’s women experience in England and France. As Rhys makes clear in her depictions of ‘alien’ women, selfhood depends not only on cultural reflections of one’s experience and environment but also on economic agency” (Raiskin 251). Here, Raiskin is arguing that the acknowledgement of the exploitation of the colonized subjects by England is reflective of their self-benefiting targeted oppression towards such subjects. This can be seen through Rochester’s attitude towards Antoinette, paired with his desire to return back to England. Knowing she has no sense of community or identity, he preys on this vulnerability, convincing her to return to England with him. Further, Raiskin states that a stable sense of identity emerges from not only one’s culture, but also establishment within society. Because both white and black races do not fully accept Creole women, marking them as a racial other, they are unable to get a true grasp of their societal and cultural identity. This goes back to Ashcroft, Griffin, and Tiffin’s emphasis upon the importance of place and displacement. In being displaced to the Caribbean, it disconnects their cultural ties to England. Further, this disconnect is worsened by racial and patriarchal oppression through the colonizer. Rhys reflects this idea through Antoinette’s intersectional identity, as her hybridity becomes a weakness. Ultimately, displacement, detachment, and discrimination all work together to worsen the crisis Creole women like Antoinette face in terms of identity and community.

Within *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Rhys undermines the subversive power often associated with hybridity through Antoinette’s failure to be accepted by a community. Foremost, the power of hybridity is diminished by the degrading classification of Antoinette by the black and mixed-race community. This intolerance is introduced early on, as Antoinette states, “I never looked at any strange negro. They hated us. They called us white cockroaches” (Rhys, 13). Here, Antoinette’s realization of the black population’s disregard of Creole women can be recognized early on in her life. Further, this rejection can also be seen through Amelie’s degrading song, as Antoinette states, ““It was a song about a white cockroach. That’s me. That’s what they call all of us who were here before their own people in Africa sold them to the slave traders. And I’ve heard

English women call us white n-” (Rhys, 60). Here, in reflecting upon this degrading nickname, Antoinette is questioning the correlation between history and a constructed identity for Creole women. Further, the inclusion of racial slurs reflects the utter disrespect and discrimination Antoinette and other Creole women face within the black and mixed-race community. Displaced by colonialism, Antoinette is treated with the same respect by this community as an unwanted pest within one’s home. She goes on, “So between you I often wonder who I am and where is my country and where do I belong and why was I ever born at all” (Rhys, 60). This statement is a reflection of Antoinette’s inner struggle with identity, as she lacks acceptance in her current home, but feels completely foreign to England. Here, the word “belong” stands out, as it is reflective of Antoinette’s search for a community, or home. Further, this confirms Ashcroft’s correlation between displacement and disconnection from one’s culture and identity, as Antoinette’s exclusion from a community causes her to in turn question her legitimacy and identity. Another form of discrimination against Creole women is expressed through the letters of Daniel Cosway, who intended to gain vengeance for himself, as well as his marginalized identity. Within his letter, his negative attitude towards Creole women is reflected through his statement, “...soon the madness that is in her, and in all these white Creoles, come out” (Rhys, 57). Here, he not only is degrading Antoinette and her family, but the entire population of Creole women in general. This is further impactful when considering his view of Creole women to potentially be the collective thoughts of the mixed-race population. Because Antoinette is a white Creole, she doesn’t fit the appearance of the mixed race population. Once again, this is yet another group Antoinette cannot be accepted into, further worsening her inability to identify herself.

Additionally, Antoinette also fails to fit within a white, or English, community. This exclusion is primarily presented through Rochester’s narration, as it provides his innermost thoughts towards Antoinette, and Creole women in general. From the beginning of his narration, it becomes clear that he considers Antoinette to be less than him, and almost inhuman. This is expressed through Rochester’s thoughts:

“I watched her critically. She wore a tricorne hat that became her. At least it shadowed her eyes which are too large and can be disconcerting. She never blinks at all it seems to me. Long, sad, dark alien eyes. Creole of pure English descent she may be, but they are not English or European either” (Rhys 39).

Here, Rochester's description of his wife mirrors that of a list of characteristics for an animal or otherworldly creature. The words "critically" and "disconcerting" stand out, as they are reflective of the judgmental uncertainty Rochester holds towards his wife. Further, the word "alien" is extremely telling, as it confirms the idea that he considers her to be not only less than himself, but possessing inhuman qualities. This goes back to Parry's statement that the Creole woman is placed on an inhuman level at the hands of the colonizer to justify their civilizing mission. In categorizing her in animalistic ways, he is able to justify not only his actions, but his lack of love for her as well. Lastly, his acknowledgement of her English descent is intriguing, but is quickly diminished as he states that her foreign, alien eyes invalidate her connection to her English roots. This reflects the disconnection the Creole population faces from their English roots in being displaced, as Raiskin expresses. Though she descended from the same community, Rochester refuses to acknowledge this, along with the rest of the English community. Another example of Rochester's of Antoinette can be found in his thoughts, "...one afternoon when I was watching her, hardly able to believe she was the pale silent creature I had married, watching her in the blue chemise, blue with white spots hitched up far above her knees, she stopped laughing, called a warning and threw a large pebble" (Rhys, 52). Once again, the animalistic qualities Rochester uses to describe Antoinette reflect the disregard he holds towards her validity as a human being. Though she is participating in a normal, human activity, Rochester watches her with the same curiosity one watches an animal. Further, the usage of "pale" and "creature" in the same sentence provides a canceling effect for the implication of her white descent. Once again, this confirms both Parry's points about the colonizer dehumanizing their subjects, as well as Raiskin's comments on the disconnect Creole women face towards England because of displacement resulting from colonialism. So, through utilizing Rochester's narration, Rhys is able to not only give the reader a new perspective, but further reflect Antoinette's inability to be accepted by the English community as a whole.

All in all, through Antoinette's identity crisis, Rhys argues that though it defies constructed barriers of race and identity, hybridity is a double-edged sword. In fact, for Creole women, it offers no true empowerment, as often reflected for other races and ethnic groups within postcolonial texts. In analyzing both the black and mixed-race community and the white community's rejection of Antoinette, the complexity of Creole identity becomes apparent. Further, hybridity acts against Antoinette in her search for identity and community. Through this

exclusion from a community, it makes Antoinette question her validity and purpose in living, which ultimately leads to her demise. All in all, *Wide Sargasso Sea* is certainly an insightful novel, with its impactful message extending far beyond the limits of the Caribbean and England, leaving its mark on postcolonial literature.

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Black Womanhood and Subject Position in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Megan Whitson

“Janie’s first dream was dead, so she became a woman” (Hurston 25). This powerful line within Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) signifies a moment in which Janie, Hurston's protagonist, comes to terms with the reality of marriage through her experience as a Black woman. As a whole, the construction of Black Womanhood has been grossly perpetuated and characterized for years as a sense of “otherness,” or a separation from traditional femininity into a union of necessity and displeasure. In the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Hurston challenges the gendered subject positions of wife and mother to which Black women are often reduced through Janie’s connection and interactions with the natural world.

In her analysis, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book,” African American literary critic Hortense Spillers explores the historical and social constraints which continuously define and shape Black women’s subjecthood. Spillers argues that Black women’s sexuality and sense of womanhood has been reduced to reproduction. She states that historically, for enslaved Black women, “gender, or sex-role assignation, or the clear differentiation of sexual stuff, sustained elsewhere in the culture, does not emerge for the African-American female [...] except through the process of birthing...” (79). Here, Spillers shows that, because of slavery, there are not always clearly defined “female” roles for Black women. Black women are excluded from the subject position of womanhood as it is recognized by the ideals of white femininity and privilege. Thereby, Spillers argues that for enslaved women, the only way to inhabit a female subject position was through childbirth, thus reinforcing the archaic perception of women as instruments through which to reproduce, eliminating any form of healthy sexuality they might have. Spillers also establishes that this unfortunate precedent of sexual repression and dehumanization has continued to endure long after the abolishment of slavery.

Within the concept of subject positions, the term “subjecthood” is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as “The state or condition of being a subject” (OED). In this regard, the idea of subjectivity or subject position refers to assigning an individual as a specific class or generalized group. Throughout both Spillers’s analysis and Hurston’s novel, this idea of grouping and assignation serves to pair the oppression of the legacy of enslavement with the oppression of female gender roles. In this way, subjecthood for Black women serves to isolate those who inhabit it from the privilege of whiteness as a whole, particularly “white femininity.”

This legacy of subjecthood and sexuality within Spillers is entirely present within *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, which follows the individualistic Janie's life from childhood to adulthood and the challenges she faced therein. Janie is raised by her Nanny, a formerly enslaved woman who understands the tensions Black women faced between love and legacy. Nanny laments that "Freedom found me wid a baby daughter in mah arms, so Ah said Ah'd take a broom and a cook pot and throw up a highway through de wilderness for her" (Hurston 16). While enslaved, Nanny is raped by her master and gives birth to a daughter, Janie's mother. Ultimately, Nanny understood the reality of love and family for not only enslaved women, but for free Black women as well: that love, marriage, and pleasure do not always go hand in hand. She attempts to impress on Janie the importance of remembering this legacy and valuing protection above intimacy. However, Janie ignores this legacy of oppression for Black women, which results in trouble for her in many ways, including the unmerciful vengeance of the hurricane that resulted in the death of Tea Cake, her true love, and forced Janie to reconcile her family's legacy with her own fate.

The circumstances of Nanny and the history of enslavement can also be connected to the larger conversation about the global Black diaspora and displacement, which the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as, "Any group of people who have spread or become dispersed beyond their traditional homeland or point of origin; the dispersion or spread of a group of people in this way..." (OED). In his analysis "Lying Up a Nation: Zora Neale Hurston and the local uses of Diaspora," Adam Ewing defines the premise and history of diaspora and how it is related back to and within the works of Hurston. He claims, "Diaspora, in other words, has emerged not merely as a subversive alternative to European chauvinism, but as a site for the construction of Black identity" (132). This analysis suggests that the prominent presence of Diaspora in African culture, namely a result of the Transatlantic Slave Trade and other brutalities, is also fundamental to the subject of Black identity. The existence of such a legacy, in Nanny's case, has resulted in a precedent of fear and isolation when examining society and navigating life. Nanny was forced into the element of diaspora which allowed her to be enslaved, assaulted, and traumatized for herself and her family. This trauma becomes the driving force for Nanny's life: to work, to raise her daughter and her daughter's daughter, and to impress on them both the importance of understanding that love is not a sustainable goal for Black women, but safety is. While Spillers argues about slavery in relation to horrific subject positions for Black women, Ewing presents

diaspora as another catalyst for Black subject positioning altogether; that is, those existing within the slavery aspect of diaspora are defined by that position and what they may have faced therein.

In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Hurston utilizes nature to reveal the female subject position of sexuality left by the legacy of slavery. Sex and sexual fulfillment are two concepts that should go hand in hand but are more realistically, mutually exclusive for women. In the opening of the novel, Janie is sixteen, lovely, and bursting with curiosity for the world around her. Hurston states that “She saw a dust bearing bee sink into a sanctum of a bloom; the thousand sister-calyxes arch to meet the love embrace and the ecstatic shiver of the tree from root to tiniest branch creaming in every blossom and frothing with delight. So this was a marriage!” (Hurston 11). This quote drips with powerful, natural imagery that centers back to sensuality and pleasure. The specific diction of “ecstatic,” “creaming,” and “frothing” illustrates the idea of the highest form of sexual satisfaction. Hurston writes an orgasm. This, along with the image of the bee and the flower, symbolize heterosexual sex as pleasure. The bee, who enters the bloom, is symbolic of a male role. The flower which arches to meet the bee in his action represents the female role. Significantly, Janie associates sex and marriage with natural pleasure.

As Spillers notes, under slavery, Black women’s sexuality was reduced to reproduction. Because of this, Black women are often denied the right to experience sex as natural pleasure rather than something performative or out of their control. However, Janie’s understanding of sex is not what Nanny tries to teach her of this legacy. This understanding is based on the hopefulness of the “ecstatic shiver” and “marriage” she found under the pear tree: it is the excitement and the mutual unity of pleasure that drives natural satisfaction. Through nature, Janie discovers her own ideas of fulfillment, matrimony, and consummation which will guide her conduct in relationships.

Nanny, driven by her experiences as an enslaved woman to seek safety for her granddaughter, marries Janie to the old, unappealing, but established Logan Killicks. Of their marriage, Janie tells Nanny, ““But Nanny, Ah wants to want him sometimes. Ah don’t want him to do all de wantin’” (23). Janie desperately expresses her grief to Nanny about the unfulfilled hopes—emotional and physical—that exist within her marriage. Though Killicks displays attraction to Janie, she cannot make herself feel the same for him. This disappointment festers resentment within Janie both towards Killicks and towards Nanny. Unfortunately, the perceptions Janie holds of marriage as pleasure and joy are immediately overturned. Through Janie’s sexual

awakening under the pear tree and her failed marriage to Killicks, Hurston illustrates that sex should be the simplest, most basic function in the world. However, it is slavery's legacies regarding race and gender that have allowed for so many complications, especially the stark contrast between the satisfaction of men versus women—the belief in exalting male pleasure and female reproduction as the purpose of sex. Throughout the rest of the novel, Janie pursues the sweetness and ecstasy she found within that bloom of spring, a quest which frees her from entrapment as an unhappy wife or mother. In this way, Janie finds her freedom in sexuality through this one interaction with the natural world.

Janie's marriage to Logan Killicks is the first indicator that Janie's idealistic view of love that she attained through nature is, in and of itself, a false prophet. Tracy Bealer examines the intricacies and social and gender implications of each of Janie's marriages in her essay, "The Kiss of Memory: The Problem of Love in Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*." After analyzing Janie's arranged marriage to Logan Killicks, Bealer states, "Marital relationships do not replicate the rhythmic and sacred patterns of the natural world [...] Janie has experienced the dissatisfaction a loveless marriage brings, but still does not grasp what Nanny inadequately tried to impart to her: sexual pleasure can be poisoned by racism and sexism" (316). Through this analysis, Bealer is contrasting the structural and artificial injustices of society with the beauty and authenticity of nature. That is to say that marriage, though classified as a normal, but sacred union, diminishes in importance when being overshadowed by these ideas of subject position, which Spillers has discussed. Janie was instructed to marry for safety because of Nanny's warning of the precarity of enslavement and the physical trauma—assault and labor—that Black women face at the hands of the institution. However, because these constructs exist and were the driving force behind Janie's unwilling marriage, the marriage in itself was destined to be unnatural and not bear any true fruits or pleasures—not in the way Janie experienced with the bee and the flower. Ultimately, nature will not allow anything unyielding to last, even if it is a marriage.

In addition to the natural world that serves to yield the pleasure Janie yearns for, it also manages to connect her back to a sense of home and joy. After her marriage to Tea Cake, the couple eventually relocated to the Everglades because of a big demand for workers. Most of the workers they came across, however, happened to be Black, and both Tea Cake and Janie found a companionship amongst their new neighbors, "The men held big arguments here like they used

to on the store porch. Only here, she could listen and laugh and even talk some herself if she wanted to. She got so she could tell big stories herself from listening to the rest” (134). Here, Hurston reveals the dynamics of the Everglade community as a positive and inclusive space—a harsh contrast to Eatonville, in which Janie was forbidden from socializing with the men of the town. In fact, in this particular scene, Hurston argues the importance of gathering and oral storytelling within Black communities, an action that both elicits excitement and is deeply revered. In this way, Hurston is not only speaking to the inclusivity of storytelling in Black communities, but also presenting the Everglades as a Black community while Jodie Clark’s Eatonville represents a place of both patriarchal and class performativity, a community of “white” characteristics and actions. It is because of these actions that Janie was never allowed to hold space except as an “obedient wife”. In the Everglades, Janie is finally recognized and treated as someone more than the subject position in which she was forced to uphold in her prior marriage.

Ultimately, the environment of the Everglades and the people within allow Janie to anchor herself positively as a Black woman within a community. Nodding back to Ewing’s analysis of diaspora, he notes, “Hurston points to an opportunity not only to include women in the narrative of diaspora, but to refocus the concept of diaspora in a way in which women stand beside men at the center” (131). While the concept of diaspora and its roots in slavery have caused a deep, mutual trauma with Black individuals in relation to subject and identity, Ewing describes how this trauma is both acknowledged and reconciled within Hurston’s work. Within *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Hurston portrays the disillusionment of slavery within Nanny, the attempted performativity of whiteness within Eatonville, and finally, the reconciliation of both within the Everglades, in which both Janie and Tea Cake are allowed to find their roots. These roots aren’t necessarily in terms of genealogy, but as a close-knit and unified Black community. Here, Janie escapes the classifications that slavery placed upon Black women by, in a sense, going back home. This functions to allow Janie to reclaim the legacy of diaspora as something positive for both African Americans and as a woman taking this space.

While the bee and the flower gave Janie the false hope that marriage and pleasure always coexist harmoniously, and while the Everglades ground Janie in a sense of community that she never experienced, the hurricane at the conclusion teaches her that she cannot ignore her history. Hurston personifies the hurricane as “a monstropolous beast,” evoking an image of a vengeful

nature purging the impurities of plantation life, or forcing Janie to confront the history that she ignores in her own family tree (161). Hurston furthers this interpretation of the hurricane through biblical allusions. While Janie and Tea Cake are attempting to escape the colossus of a hurricane, they come across another experiencing the wrath of nature: “Another man clung to a cypress tree on a tiny island...The man dared not move a step to his right lest this crushing blade split him open. He dared not step left for a large rattlesnake was stretched full length with his head in the wind” (165). The imagery of the tree and the snake is an allusion to the Garden of Eden and the downfall of man. The cypress tree symbolizes Janie’s forceful confrontation with her repressed family history, as she faces the knowledge of what the plantation system did to her grandmother and mother.

This continual disregard for Nanny’s warnings about Black womanhood suggests that Janie is the catalyst behind Tea Cake’s untimely death. Spillers, reflecting on the intersection of race and gender, states that, “In other words, in the historic outline of dominance, the respective subject-positions of “female” and “male” adhere to no symbolic integrity” (Spillers 66). Essentially, this quote from Spillers states that, particularly for Black society, there is nothing essential in gender. This can be seen after Tea Cake beats Janie because of the imposing Mrs. Turner attempting to set her brother up with Janie. Janie did not attempt to fight back to Tea Cake’s abuse and her submission sparked envy among the other men in the Everglades, “[...] and the helpless way she hung onto him made men dream dreams” (147). This action by Janie is separate from the boldness she carries throughout the duration of the novel and displays a shift from identifying gender roles as arbitrary to consciously deciding to embody the submissive “female” archetype. By allowing Tea Cake to dominate her in this way, she aligns herself with the principles of white womanhood and directly defies not only her own standard for independence, but also the standards for Black womanhood in itself. This wayward attempt to subvert the subject-position of Black women and ignore the footprint left by slavery leads to Tea Cake’s demise.

Such violence displayed by Tea Cake—though classified as minor—is yet another result of the structures of race and gender. Bealer describes Tea Cake as such, “However despite his many positive attributes and profound dissimilarity from Joe, Tea Cake also uses violence against Janie to shore up his racial and class anxieties.” (Bealer 318). While Janie’s response to this abuse aligns her with the ideals of submissive, white womanhood, Tea Cake’s outburst stems from his

own insecurities about societal ideas of colorism. This action occurred after Mrs. Turner made racist comments about Tea Cake's character in relation to Janie's "almost white" appearance and attitude and goes so far as to attempt to set her up with her brother. Unlike Spillers critique of the Moynihan reports' perception of absent Black husbands, Tea Cake's response to this act of colorism aligned him with the idea of the patriarchal white man staking claim over his innocent wife. This action displays a response of not only domination over Janie, but also an act of rebellion against the societal principles that the proximity to whiteness yields purity amongst its wearers.

As Janie and Tea Cake continue to brave the hurricane, Tea Cake is bitten by a rabid dog while attempting to save Janie. This event unsettles Janie for both Tea Cake's injury and the demeanor of the dog, "Ah'm never tuh fuhgit dem eyes. He wuzn't nothin' all over but pure hate" (Hurston 167). This description of "pure hate" in the eyes of a once gentle dog is unnerving and foreshadows Tea Cake's transformation as he contracts rabies from the dog and tries to murder Janie. In spite of the ugliness and senselessness of Tea Cake's death, Hurston is using it as a means of sacrifice. Janie ignored Nanny and her family's history, ultimately ignoring the legacy of slavery and its impacts on Black women, in the name of forging her own path of love. Because of her ignorance, nature became both Janie's mentor and her unmerciful God. Janie is able to escape slavery's sexual legacy through her encounter with the pear tree, and yet, because she tries to perform a feminine subject position with Tea Cake, nature takes the love Janie has spent her life seeking.

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What's In a Name: Toni Morrison's Use of Names in *Song of Solomon*

Mattie Coomer

Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* (1977) may bear little resemblance to its biblical namesake, but its success is in integrating ancient myth and typology with more modern questions of race and identity. By weaving a complex web of characters with their heavy-laden names and backstories, Morrison is able to draw from timeless archetypes while also addressing relevant topics within Black culture. These names communicate a great deal both implicitly and explicitly, bearing direct impact on the plot itself. Morrison loads characters' names in *Song of Solomon* with multiple layers of meaning to convey not only an allegorical significance, but also to comment on the way that understanding personal history, or the lack of it, is critical in the formation of selfhood, as seen in the development of Milkman throughout the novel. She chooses to include alternative nicknames as well to show that through taking ownership over one's own identity, the subject is able to break through the confines of externally imposed subject positions in language and names. This escape may be related to issues of place, but is also achieved through uncovering truth.

African American literary critic Hortense Spillers, in her work "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," approaches the issue of naming in how it creates multiple layers of subject positions buried within language. She asserts that these layers of meaning are assigned by external systems and must be stripped down to understand them. After giving several names that have personally been used for her, Spillers explains:

The terms enclosed in quotation marks in the preceding paragraph isolate overdetermined nominative properties. Embedded in bizarre axiological ground, they demonstrate a sort of telegraphic coding; they are markers so loaded with mythical prepossession that there is no easy way for the agents buried beneath them to come clean... I must strip down through layers of attenuated meanings, made an excess in time, over time, assigned by a particular historical order. (65)

Morrison utilizes this "telegraphic coding" and "layers of attenuated meanings" to build a subject position for characters like Milkman. Both Spillers and Morrison recognize the importance of "nominative properties" in determining the subject's understanding of themselves within certain historical and ideological contexts. Spillers points out that names and "markers" build up more meanings as time goes on, and as a result it becomes harder to penetrate the "bizarre axiological

ground” they are founded on. Outside forces like “historical [orders]” act on them to confound the essential meaning of “nominative properties,” meaning they continue to morph to suit a certain connotation. In other words, names are powerful in that they carry meanings that are often understood implicitly, but not necessarily by choice of the person with the name. Names are placed on a person without their consent, and in this way are arbitrary constructions of who they are or should be. In the context of *Song of Solomon*, names certainly serve a “mythical,” “historical” purpose that can only be understood by disentangling the myth from the history in the novel.

Building on this framework, literary critic Kimberly W. Benston makes the case that naming in Black culture involves not only a sense of historical “othering,” but also of familial and personal identity formation. In “‘I Yam What I Am’: Naming and Unnaming in Afro-American Literature,” he argues that:

[Naming] is the means by which the mind takes possession of the named, at once fixing the named as irreversibly Other and representing it in crystalized isolation from all conditions of externality... For the Afro-American, then, self-creation and reformation of a fragmented familial past are endlessly interwoven: Naming is inevitably genealogical revisionism. (667)

According to Benston, naming is both a passive act and an act of “revisionism.” Names are placed on things and people in order to “[take] possession of them” and differentiate them. In essence, language is itself a system of saying “You are this because you are not this other thing.” At the same time, the choice of a name is an act of “self-creation,” but confined within the context of a “fragmented familial past.” Benston indicates that identity is wrapped up in both self-determining acts and also in community. A name holds both the weight of the individual it labels and the history that it derived from.

In a broader sense, Susan Blake explores Morrison’s use of folklore to show how it underscores the varying roles of community in the novel, and how those elements provide a vehicle for Milkman’s self-actualization in names. The framework of the traditional “flying Africans” story refers to an African American folktale that became prominent during the times of the transatlantic slave trade. This myth served as a source of hope and power to enslaved peoples that they would somehow be able to “fly” back to their places of origin in Africa, whether supernaturally or figuratively. Acknowledging the influence of the myth of the flying Africans in

Morrison's writing, Blake highlights the unique way she interacts with this piece of folklore, arguing that:

In fact, however, the end of Milkman's quest is not the discovery of community, but a solitary leap into the void. And its mythical foundation is not the typical tale of the Africans flying as a group to their common home, but a highly individualistic variant... Although Milkman cannot achieve identity without recognizing community, the identity he achieves is individual. (79)

Blake argues that community in *Song of Solomon* is subordinate to Milkman's personal, "solitary" journey. He "cannot achieve identity" without community, but she argues that Morrison is aiming at a more personal level of understanding the self, rather than for his family. Folklore is the common thread that connects the novel, but it ultimately serves as a backdrop to the "highly individualistic variant" of that legend that Milkman lives out. However, this foundation of myth is integral in that it paves the way, from the first page to the last, for Milkman to trace his past in names. The importance of the communal, familial, and ancestral, signified through the myth of the flying Africans, drives Milkman's personal journey to belonging, searching for his idea of a "common home" that Blake mentions. Yet another divergence that Milkman's story takes from the traditional myth is that his search takes on a lonely kind of character— "a solitary leap into the void." He does not yearn for his ancestral lands or way of life, but rather a deeper agency over himself. This is complicated by the fact that he achieves this through a greater connection to his origins.

In the context of this legend from an era of American slavery, Morrison further harkens back to the legacy of slavery within the novel's plot by displaying the haphazard nature of naming by the Dead family, revealing how the loss of one's sense of personhood and submitting to a predetermined fate can hinder one from achieving fulfillment. A case in point is Macon Dead Sr., who fully subscribes to his status as a "Dead," unable to find joy in the life he has created. Morrison describes him by saying:

But who this lithe young man was... could never be known. No. Nor his name. His own parents, in some mood of perverseness or resignation, had agreed to abide by a naming done to them by somebody who couldn't have cared less. Agreed to take and pass on to all their issue this heavy name scrawled in perfect thoughtlessness by a drunken Yankee in the Union Army. (18)

The language of passivity and defeat is clear here in saying the Deads were “[resigned]” to the “thoughtlessness” that underscores their name. However, there is another element to their passivity, which Morrison calls “perverseness.” The Oxford English Dictionary describes the meaning of perverse in terms of irrationality: of going against reason (“perverse, adj.”). It is as if there is no rhyme or reason to their history, or rather, that Macon Dead’s parents chose to willingly relinquish their own identity in keeping a name “scrawled in perfect thoughtlessness by a drunken Yankee.” Their name, like many Black people throughout history (especially in terms of American slavery), was given without their consent, but it has sublimated into their understanding of who they are, “heavy” as it is. This is certainly true in the case of Macon Sr., who can “never be known,” and then in his son. This pattern aligns back directly to Benston’s point about a “fragmented familial past” in naming. The members of the Dead family are certainly set apart in the bearing that their name has on their conception of self. Instead of initiating a moment of “reformation” in their family, Macon Dead’s parents perpetuate the trend of familial loss in passivity to the past. In their “perverseness,” as Morrison puts it, they submit to the identity given arbitrarily to them and deny the opportunity of self-creation.

Morrison uses Milkman’s journey to Virginia to show how connection to real places, people, and things unleashes the possibility of true belonging for the individual, especially, in Milkman’s case, through understanding names. As he travels down the road, Milkman wonders:

How many dead lives and fading memories were buried in and beneath the names of the places in this country. Under the recorded names were other names, just as “Macon Dead,” recorded for all time in some dusty file, hid from view the real names of people, places, and things. Names that had meaning. No wonder Pilate put hers in her ear. When you know your name, you should hang on to it, for unless it is noted down and remembered, it will die when you do. (Morrison 329)

As Milkman has discovered the truth of his family and his great-grandfather Solomon, echoing throughout his life in the “Sugarman” song, he has realized that the key to understanding his life has been hidden right before his eyes— “Dead lives and fading memories [that were] buried in and beneath the names.” The fact that “Sugarman” was hiding “from view the real names of people... that had meaning” like Solomon excites Milkman to no end, feeling more accomplished in this discovery than if he had successfully brought home the gold he set out for. Morrison indicates that being empowered with this knowledge and surge of selfhood is more

valuable than the things Milkman's father puts value on, like material wealth. Spillers's idea of "stripping down" names from all their "bizarre axiological" definitions to determine their source is played out here in this scene of Milkman traveling down the road from his ancestors' homes. Just like Spillers working to uncover the "mythical" meanings of certain names she has been called, Milkman must physically travel and search for the meaning behind his own name, and ultimately to find out who he is. It is a hard work of recovery and gradual unearthing. Although "Dead" is the legacy, the destiny that was passed on to him, Milkman discovers the truth beneath the shroud of death, which is his family's real names, giving him new life and purpose. He also feels a new kinship to his aunt Pilate, who physically attached her own name to her body while disconnecting herself from the "deadness" and lack of life that characterizes her brother's family. She "[hung] on" to her true identity, which enabled her to live a more fulfilled life, with true relationships and a family she built for herself. This is why her influence enlivens Milkman, if even for a brief period at the end of the novel. She "noted down" her name so that it would not die with her. Her connection to her roots are ever present in the voice of her father that she hears calling to her, even though she misinterprets his message. Within her name, as well, lies a connotation of a guiding influence, showing Milkman the way to reverse the Dead curse. Her death at the end of the novel is a type of torch passing, as her nephew has learned what it is to belong, and to stand on one's own feet. Whether or not Milkman actually died on Solomon's Leap, both the influence of truth and place, along with the meaning they carry, gave him what he needed to feel like he could finally fly away, just like his ancestor.

The themes of naming, personal identity and tracing heritage all converge in the last scene of the novel in a tense coexistence. After the death of his aunt, Milkman:

Without wiping away the tears, taking a deep breath, or even bending his knees— he leaped. As fleet and bright as a lodestar he wheeled toward Guitar and it did not matter which one of them would give up his ghost in the killing arms of his brother. For now he knew what Shalimar knew: If you surrendered to the air, you could *ride* it. (Morrison 337)

In this last paragraph of the novel, there is a strain between personal self-realization and the seeming violation of relationship. Like a guiding "lodestar," Milkman jumps, released into the unknown by the truth he had learned of his origins in "Shalimar." That name, which had been misconstrued and hidden under layers of myth, unlocked the way into freedom, even at the cost

of those he left behind. Calling back to the original “Sugarman” song (““O Sugarman done fly away...” [6]), Milkman learns how to channel the power of his ancestors in a new way. Milkman’s breakthrough into a version of selfhood takes place on the site of family history and newfound community, but it is peculiarly personal, especially in context of the myth of the flying Africans. As Blake argues, “In making Milkman's flying ancestor a single individual and focusing his story on the wife and children he left behind, Morrison refers not to a community unified by its political experience, but to a conflict of identification between political and personal communities” (80). Instead of simply writing a novel about “a community unified by its political experience,” Morrison chooses to fixate on a character like Milkman— removed from his familial roots both physically and spiritually. She ties the story into communal Black experience by utilizing the framework of the flying African myth, but makes pointed decisions about “Milkman’s flying ancestor” and how Milkman interacts with this heritage. The impetus of the plot becomes less about group politics as it does a greater statement on the state of the Black subject position on an individual level, and how it can easily become “othered” as they are denied a sense of their own history. This deeper, personal focus allows for an examination and interrogation of a process like naming. Naming ultimately can tie into a community, even if on “bizarre axiological ground,” and it can also set apart, redefine, and empower.

The story of *Song of Solomon* is built upon a name, propelled by the fatalistic but also opportunistic ways that names control the subject. Names can be entryways into the past, but also evidence of how conceptions of selfhood become inextricably tied up in families, communities, and even misunderstandings about those things. Through Morrison’s multilayered challenges to personal autonomy, ignorance and passivity are transformed into Milkman’s deliberate possession of his history and also his future. From being a child disenchanted with life and deadened to any real aspirations for himself, Milkman’s character shifts to an almost fanaticism by the end of the novel, all because he traced the names of the people and places down to their source. From this, he was able to draw strength from his personal history to do what he did not think could be done, which was fly away, gaining true freedom at last.

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Tupac: Defender of Black Consciousness

Michelle Cardwell

On May 25, 2020 George Floyd was suffocated by an officer kneeling on his neck for over nine minutes. Floyd continued to say “I can’t breathe” but yet the officer never moved. This murder sparked mass protests across the nation over the treatment of Black Americans by police. Millions began to protest to express a desire for racial justice in the United States, which became encapsulated by the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter. This hashtag became a way for protesters to express their grief and anger in a society that aimed to repress the Black community, often through violent disregard of the value of their lives. The Black Lives Matter movement has become a national fight for freedom, liberation, and justice for the Black community. It is a social movement with the goal of political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise.

Floyd’s murder in 2020 was not the first time that a member of the Black community had been targeted by the white supremacist political system. On March 3, 1991 a high-speed chase resulted in a charge of 50,000 volts and 56 baton blows to a single individual: Rodney King. His beaten body lay hopelessly on the ground as his hands were cuffed behind his back. George Holiday captured the beating in an 89 second video that triggered a national debate on police brutality against Black men. Four officers were responsible for the beating of Rodney King and were acquitted of all charges, resulting in the L.A. riots. These riots later became known as the most destructive U.S. civil disturbance of the 20th century—a brutal beating that ignited the Black community to fight back against racist abuse from a white supremacist nation. Much like the murder of George Floyd in 2020, the fight for liberation among the Black community has always been a form of Black Lives Matter, just not always under that name. The protest movements in the 1990s and 2020s operated with the aim of bringing awareness to police brutality and the value of Black life in a white supremacist society that systematically devalues that same Black life. Both movements hinge on saying the names of the individuals like Rodney King and George Floyd who have been violently beaten and did not receive legal justice in an effort to posthumously restore agency and value to their lives.

One major form of literary and artistic expression that has been used by the Black community to voice their lived experience and restore such agency is hip-hop and rap music. In the 1990s, Tupac became a voice for Black experiences, exposing a great deal of political and

social issues that are faced by the Black community through his lyrics. Tupac's 1991 debut album, *2Pacalypse Now* became a form of protest against white supremacist American society that holds the Black community in social and political captivity. In the 1980s and 1990s, Black males were facing higher incarceration rates than had been seen since the 19th century and slavery. Tupac purposely presents explicit lyrics to highlight the harsh reality that had become daily life among the Black community. The reality of life for Black Americans was plagued by a federal war on drugs that actively targeted urban Black communities and imprisoned Black males. Rappers in the 1980s and 1990s became the news reporters of the projects and their music was used as a way to write back against a white supremacist state that devalued their life and rendered it meaningless. Hip-hop became an artistic and cultural phenomenon and the Black community illustrated their oppression through this new rising genre of music by rewriting these narratives and stereotypes to more accurately reflect their lived experiences.

Tupac spoke to this oppression in *2Pacalypse Now* and became known for his warrior-like persona that challenged white supremacy by embodying the criminal and activist side of himself. His explicit lyrics illuminate the value of Black life in a white supremacist prison complex that originates from a society with endemic racism. I will employ biopolitics throughout this essay to analyze Tupac's lyrics and the strategy of the wider Black Lives Matter movement in writing back to such systemic racism. Tupac uses his album to illustrate the biopolitical state that had become the nation's way to control Black lives politically and socially. Building on Michel Foucault's argument that modern society is characterized by discipline and a panoptic control and surveillance of life, Giorgio Agamben argues that biopower renders certain citizens as the bare life, which allows them to be killed (not sacrificed) by the state without punishment. In other words, certain lives in a society carry more worth than others and the consequences for killing such lives, such as Black Americans' lives, do not rise to the level of sacrifice and thus are not grievable and the perpetrators are not held to account, such as in the case of the acquittal of Rodney King's attackers. This theory builds the base for postcolonial philosopher Achille Mbembe's theory of necropolitics. Mbembe's theory expands biopolitics by turning to Black lives on a global scale, exposing how under the conditions of necropower the lines between resistance and suicide, sacrifice and redemption are blurred when it comes to Black bodies under white supremacist colonial rule. He defines necropower as the capacity to control the life and death of citizens, with contemporary Western democracy embracing a dark side that is based on

the desires, fears, affects, relations, and violence that drove colonialism and continues to thrive at the expense of Black lives. Finally, building on Agamben and Mbembe, Critical Race Theorist Fred Moten applies biopolitics to systemic racism in the United States, interpreting it as a visible difference in American society with blackness as the space between thing, criminal, and human. Black bodies in American society are heavily criminalized and are highly visible but simultaneously invisible because they are never seen as fully autonomous beings. Moten contends that this racist dynamic is the nocturnal logic of democracy, with the absence and death corroding Black bodies that are held tightly within the regulation of in/visibility.

These theories from biopolitics provide a framework for interpreting Tupac's exposition of the Black body as a subject that can be killed but not sacrificed because of the lack of value that American society has placed upon Black lives. *2Pacalypse Now* centers upon the issues of systemic racism that have plagued America since its founding and have been used to take control of the Black community. Tupac explicitly references police brutality, gang violence, black on black violence, teen pregnancy, and racism to illustrate the white supremacist prison complex that has actively worked to destroy and curtail the full agency and autonomy of Black subjects. Unlike the theoretical concepts with which it engages, *2Pacalypse Now* is presented in a way that can be easily understood by not only the Black community but also their oppressors. Many scholars and critics have analyzed this album in terms of how Tupac fights back against oppression and speaks his truth to power. I build on these previous analyses by adding the wider biopolitical theoretical framework, which has yet to be done in connection with Tupac's political activism and the current Black Lives Matter movement. Tupac presents this album as a way to portray that Black lives do matter and do have value, in many ways previewing the contemporary platform of the Black Lives Matter movement. I expand on the critical discourse about Tupac by examining how the Black body represented in his lyrics is trapped within a white supremacist prison complex that aims to gain political and social control by reducing the Black subject to bare life.

Rather than live as a disposable being, Tupac illuminates how the Black community can subvert an American white supremacist discourse and culture that forces sacrifice of their bodily autonomy in the form of mass incarceration rates and a disregard for Black lives. Tupac's lyrical performance style of political activism provides a voice for the Black experience and insists that Black individuals become their own citizens as opposed to a nocturnal body of democracy that is

controlled by the white supremacist nation. *2Pacalypse Now* vividly exposes the racial disparity in the 1980s and 1990s that was used as a way to demonize Black males. Tupac illuminates how the high rising incarceration rates of Black males was directly tied to the war on drugs and a general disregard of the value of Black life within American society. This political captivity is used to render Black males not fully autonomous subjects in the eyes of the state. Tupac subverts such a white supremacist American discourse and political policy through his poetic genius by writing the legitimacy of his life to fully illustrate that black lives do matter and should be considered full citizens in society.

War on The Black Community

Tupac used his music as a way to empower the Black community in their conquest for liberation from the white supremacist nation. *2Pacalypse Now* vividly exposes the harsh realities that were faced by the Black community in the 1980s and 1990s. During this time, Black males were criminalized and racially profiled on various drug charges that resulted in mass incarceration rates. This systematic war on drugs and racial profiling that flooded this time period became the cause for higher incarceration rates among Black males. These disparities were used against Black men as a way to demonize and criminalize their very being. Alongside racial disparities, Black men were imprisoned on a multitude of charges resulting from the war on drugs and emergence of crack in the 1980s. Dorothy Roberts, an American sociologist and law professor, details how racial disparities have aided in the mass incarceration rates in “The Social and Moral Cost of Mass Incarceration in African American Communities”. She states, “The War on Drugs is responsible for this level of black incarceration. The explosion of both the prison population and its racial disparity are largely attributable to aggressive street-level enforcement of the drug laws and harsh sentencing of drug offenders” (1275). This quotation shows that the war on drugs was the main way Black males were criminalized in the 1980s and 1990s. However, this was not the only force that worked against Black men’s imprisonment. The war on drugs, alongside racial disparities, worked to actively criminalize Black men with harsh enforcement of strict drug policies that aimed to target the Black community. Roberts further highlights the mass incarceration of Black Americans by stating, “More important than mass incarceration's role in crime control is its role in controlling the social, economic, and political engagement of African American communities in the national polity” (1298). Through this quotation, she illuminates how imprisonment affects the Black community by becoming a source

of control that is greater than just prison. The Black community is forced to face a reality that not only criminalizes their being, but also works to control their every movement within society. Roberts explains how the mass incarceration rates among Black communities are morally repugnant and have damaged social citizenships by serving as a repressive political function that is immoral. The government responded to the war on drugs and emergence of crack with harsh drug laws as opposed to treating it as a public health crisis. The new emerging drug laws were forced upon the Black community as a way to marginalize their being as second-class democratic citizens.

During this era of the war on drugs, the federal government also created laws that punished crack cocaine offenses much more severely than powder cocaine offenses, a tactic that was used as a way to imprison Black males especially in the 1980s. Michal Tonry and Matthew Melewski, in “The Malign Effects of Drug and Crime Control Policies on Black Americans” argue that these laws have essentially become the replacement of Jim Crow laws and were used as a mechanism of slavery to maintain white dominance over the Black community. In their article they detail how harsh punishments have become the normal reaction to Black crime in America, by stating, “Modern wars on crimes and drugs, which date from the early 1970s, shortly after the first serious federal antidiscrimination laws were enacted, could not more effectively have kept black Americans ‘in their place’ had they been designed with that aim in mind” (3). This quotation shows the political white supremacist nation had actively worked to reform the government in a way that targeted the downfall and imprisonment of Black lives. Starting in the 1970s, harsher drug laws were put in place to specifically work to incarcerate a large amount of the Black community, especially men, which also broke up the Black family. These laws were endorsed by Reagan, Clinton, and both Bush administrations as a way to seek further control over Black life. All throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Black Americans were sentenced for crimes that often resulted in prison sentences, which incarcerated nearly 1/3 of the young Black male population (Melewski 2). This sentencing and arrest records illustrated that Black citizens were more likely to be stopped by the police than white Americans. The harsher sentencing had become a continuous war between the Black community and a white supremacist nation.

In response to this systematic oppression, during the 1980s and 1990s, the Black Panther Party fought for justice for the Black community. To understand the motives of the Black

Panther Party, it is important to first understand their framework. Jessica Harris, a professor at UCLA and author of “Revolutionary Black Nationalism: The Black Panther Party” illuminates how the Black Panther Party is a movement that fights back against the injustice of white supremacy by arguing for a separatist movement for Black Americans. Revolutionary Black Nationalism maintains that the Black community cannot achieve liberation in the United States within the current political and economical system since the United States is founded on white supremacy. Harris elaborates on the Party’s involvement through Black Nationalism by stating, “The Black Panther Party felt that the present government and its subsidiary institution were illegitimate because they failed to meet the needs of the people; therefore, they had no right to exist” (411). This quotation illustrates that the Black Panther Party actively worked to create a Black Nationalist movement that would fight back for political emancipation, economic well-being, and fundamental human rights by dismantling the current white supremacist state. The Party actively believed in self-determination and felt that Black Americans had to gain control of land and political power in order to achieve any form of national liberation. Through this self-determination and socialist politics, members of the Black Panther Party strove to create an America that encompassed Black unity and Black autonomy. The Party believed that the current white supremacist political system needed to be entirely void in order for the Black community to make any headway toward liberation. Members of the Party fought through political acts to achieve changes in a flawed government system that worked to oppress and imprison the Black community. The Black Panther Party employed defiant young men and women to raise their fists against racism and to destroy the American capitalist system that actively worked to control the Black community. During the 1960s and 1970s, the Black Panther Party organized self-defense groups that worked to defend the Black community from racist police oppression and brutality. These groups continued throughout the 1980s and 1990s as the emerging war on drugs created mass incarceration of Black males. The Party first originated in Oakland, California in 1969 (Harris 414), which is where Tupac spent the majority of his life. The Black Nationalist ideas that influenced the Party also inspired Tupac’s writing back against oppressive power. Through his mother and step-fathers’ involvement in the Party, Tupac became heavily impacted and actively worked to channel his aggression into his lyrics as opposed to physically overthrowing the state, which was clearly seen by other militant arms of the Party.

Biopolitical Control Over Black Life

Biopolitics was first coined by French theorist Michel Foucault, specifically as he moved from his argument that modern society is characterized by discipline and a panoptic control to surveillance of life. This disciplinarian control by the state began in the 18th and 19th centuries when the European states turned to maximizing the life of the population in the name of public health, with the state turning to controlling life itself. Foucault died as he began to theorize the biopolitical state, with later philosophers picking up his arguments, such as Giorgio Agamben who argues that biopower renders certain citizens as bare life, allowing them to be killed (not sacrificed) by the state without punishment. Agamben states, “In the notion of bare life the interlacing of politics and life has become so tight that it cannot easily be analyzed” (120). This quotation illustrates that the bonds that have been created between life and politics cannot be separated because they have been otherwise merged. This raises the question of which life is valuable enough to be sacrificed and which must only be killed in the eyes of the state. The state says that it is maximizing the life spans and quality of life of its people through public health measures that justify state surveillance and control over bodies. When applied to race, however, it becomes apparent that this state control over life itself is used to advance certain lives over others—specifically the well-being of white citizens. In contrast, Black lives are deemed not as important or worthy of the same attention.

Giorgio Agamben explains how biopolitics is the state’s control over life itself. Although he does not focus on blackness, but instead writes in the context of the ancient Greeks and the Holocaust, his theory is foundational for later critical race theorists using biopolitics. Agamben argues that the biopower wielded by the state creates the condition of bare life: subjects in the state who can be killed but not sacrificed, or what he calls *homo sacer*. For example, the Jewish people in the Holocaust became *homo sacer* during the Third Reich, with the concentration camp as the new model for society, according to Agamben. When applying biopower to an American white supremacist state, bare life is exactly what is done to Black minorities. A white life that is lost in battle would be seen as a sacrifice for one’s country whereas a Black life lost to police brutality during the crack epidemic would be seen as simply killed. A bare life is an individual that can be killed with no legal consequences—just as in the case of Rodney King, Trevon Martin, and others—since it was never a full citizen in the first place. Agamben states, “It is not the free man and his statuses and prerogatives, nor even simply *homo*, but rather *corpus* that is the new subject of politics. And democracy is born precisely as the assertion and presentation of this

‘body’” (124). In biopolitics, in other words, democracy focuses on the body politic, or the body of the citizens, in an effort to grow and multiply the life of the body politic. The Black body becomes the subject of the white supremacist political gain, with Black bodies being disposable since not deemed fully human but merely corpus, or body. For Agamben, no physical body is free from the power of the state, since everyone is a construction of the biopolitical state. Agamben’s theory of biopolitics as the growing inclusion of man’s natural life through the calculations of power are illustrated in Tupac’s lyrical genius by voicing the lack of value that is placed on Black lives. This connection of natural life and political power allows for a more inclusive understanding of the power that is asserted over one’s life concerning white supremacist political constructions that seek to control Black individuals’ realities. Agamben concludes his theory with a very pessimistic view on the agency of Black individuals. He does not believe that there is any possible way for the Black subject to break out of a biopolitical state.

Expanding on Agamben’s theory, Mbembe coined necropolitics as a way to further explain the biopolitical state when applied to Black subjects under colonialism. In *Necropolitics*, Mbembe exposes a world that is plagued by racial enmity as a legacy of colonialism and slavery through the illustration of the subjugation of life to the power of death. Mbembe argues that the global white supremacy fosters a slavery plantation ideology that creates Black subjects that reside in between life and death. He states, “I have argued that contemporary forms of subjugating life to the power of death (necropolitics) are deeply reconfiguring the relations between resistance, sacrifice, and terror” (92). This illustrates that the biopolitical state, coined by Foucault, has since expanded into a necropolitical state that cuts along the lines of racial differences. This blurs the lines between resistance and terror and illuminates the Black body as captive under a global white supremacist state that operates as a constant form of slavery. He illuminates what he calls a nocturnal body of democracy that is based on the desires and fears that drove colonialism and continue today. The brutality of colonial democracies has been replaced with the nocturnal body of democracy that creates a *pro-slavery democracy* that accommodates a moral disjunction (Mbembe 17). Mbembe further explains that this democracy and the emergency of universal human rights discourse occurs simultaneously alongside the complete exploitation and disavowal of the humanity of Black subjects. He explains how this democracy can only be a community of separation and furthers this understanding by stating, “They are governed by the law of inequality. This inequality and the law establishing it, and that

is its base, is founded on the prejudice of race” (17). This quotation illustrates that Western democracy was built upon a racist standard that actively worked to keep slaves as the foreign beings that did not need rights, which is perpetuated today in a postcolonial era. Having a democracy that was created on racial prejudice allowed for a clear division between the Black and white body. This division furthered a form of political slavery that holds the Black body captive under a white supremacist global order. Being governed by a law of inequality created a new-found fear in Black bodies that forced their being into an oppressive state of political control. Mbembe further explains this political control by stating, “the human being thus truly *becomes a subject*—that is, separated from the animal—in the struggle and work through which death (understood as the violence of negativity) is confronted” (68). This quotation illuminates the lack of value that was placed upon a slave’s life throughout colonialism. The Black body was seen as simply a subject defined by death due to this confrontation with death. Mbembe illustrates that the Black slave subject is nothing more than a thing that is possessed by another person and appears to be the perfect shadow of a full citizen (75). Living in a postcolonial state, the Black subject is not allowed to reject this possession and is not allowed to confront the violence of negativity. The slave is simply required to remain as a shadow that is controlled by the state. This subjugation created a life that can be killed, but not sacrificed. Black beings all throughout colonialism were treated harshly and endured cruel punishments that often resulted in a death that had no meaning. Mbembe illuminates this subjugation through a biopolitical lens to illustrate the ultimate expression of sovereignty that resides in the power to dictate who is able to be killed and who is worthy of being sacrificed. The legacy of colonialism creates a world that has no real option for agency since, as Agamben demonstrates, the concentration camp becomes the new model for all of society. Mbembe’s pessimistic view illuminates that the Black slave subject cannot regain autonomy and agency in the wake of this legacy.

Critical Race Theorist Fred Moten applies the context of biopolitics specifically to the African American experience. Moten argues that blackness is a visible difference that occupies the space between thing, criminal, and human. He presents the concept of Black fugitivity through police control by claiming, “Being black is belonging to a state organized according to its ignorance of your perspective—a state that does not, that cannot, know your mind” (22). This concept of Black fugitivity highlights the industrial prison complex in which racism is an endemic plague that captures Black minorities in social constructions that refuse to give them

full citizenship of human rights. Moten highlights that blackness in American society is heavily policed and highly visible but simultaneously invisible because Black beings are not seen as full subjects in the eyes of the state. They are always already fugitives and criminals that, if using Agamben's phrase, are viewed merely as bodies capable of being killed. He explains that the origin of blackness is presented through the laws of a white supremacist state to silence the Black community and prevent the Black body from becoming visible as a fully realized, autonomous subject. Moten illuminates this in his work, *The Stolen Life* by stating, "We do know, however, what blackness indicates: existence without standing in the modern world system. To be black is to exist in exchange without being a party to exchange" (18). This quotation shows that the Black being is not considered a full being in American society but is instead a disposable being that lacks value—a commodity that can be exchanged but cannot control the terms of exchange. As a being that lacks value in the political and economic society, Black beings are forcefully oppressed by the white supremacist prison complex. Through his theory, Moten illuminates how blackness is a brutal imposition of the deadly gift of the impossibility of existing. He vividly describes the Black body as being seen as the nothingness that is there and the nothingness that is not there. Nonetheless, Moten has a more optimistic view on the agency that can be accomplished by Black subjects. Through Black radicalism the Black subject can gain the ability to subvert the white supremacist nation and ultimately fight back against the exposure to death; however, the Black subject will never be fully liberated from this biopolitical state.

Tupac furthers this theory by becoming the voice that fights back against the white supremacist nation to make known that the fears and violence that are forced upon the Black community are used as a way to politically and socially control their being. Tupac's lyrical genius speaks up for the Black community by exposing the injustices seen among various minority groups throughout colonialism. He becomes the voice for the Black community and the defender of the Black consciousness in a white supremacist prison complex that aims to control every aspect of Black lives. Tupac knows that he as an individual cannot achieve liberation but that his musical legacy will continue through other members of the Black community. His optimistic view upon the agency of Black individuals illuminates that the power of language can write back against the power that white supremacist nation holds over the Black community.

Never Ignorant Getting Goals Accomplished

In the 1980s and 1990s, the Black community discourse, revolving around hip-hop culture began to expand through the expression of anger in regard to the evolving war on drugs that was actively working to imprison Black males. Through this continuous fight for liberation, Black artists began to flirt with the culture of death by producing music that illustrates the special relationship between blackness and the dead. Sharon Holland, the author of “Bill T. Jones, Tupac Shakur and the (Queer) Art of Death” discusses how the body is used as a way to represent the space between death and life which is illustrated through hip-hop culture as a new form of Black identification. She argues that the Black community discourse is represented through Bill Jones and Tupac Shakur by each performing the event of their own death and illuminating this event into their art. Holland explains that death has become unmasked and through this unmasking it has created an art with no power. This is to assure that the individual spirit is not worth celebrating as anything more than a subject in a political group. Holland further explains this concept by stating, “Unleashing the potential of black subjectivity to speak from the dead exposes the end-point of governmental policies and programs which materially and physically ‘kill’ the nation’s black subjects” (385). Through this quotation, she illustrates the forced subjectivity from the white supremacist nation that politically controlled Black beings. Critics, Jeanita Richardson and Kim Scott use their work, “Rap Music and Its Violent Progeny: America’s Culture of Violence in Context” to further expand on Holland’s argument. Their work illustrates the subjugation of Black life in a way that brings awareness to the senseless violence that American culture has tried to normalize. They argue that rap music is used as a creative expression to portray America’s violent culture and has become a tool for the evolution of the Black oral rhetoric. In connecting Tupac to this violent form of rap, they state, “a young Black urban male who was murdered, lyrics were more than a social commentary, they were prophetic. Tupac became a victim of the very violence he depicted in his music and in the process became a rap icon” (176). This quotation explains why Tupac’s rap became as influential as it did and further elaborates on how his lived experiences were truly reflected in his music. Many literary critics characterize Tupac as a rap artist that uses violence in his music to respond to the violence that he experiences on the streets. Literary critics further examine his music in relation to harsh realities that were faced within the Black community.

Literary critics work to bring awareness to Tupac’s lyrics through their interpretations by examining how his lyrics worked to change politics. Literary critic Karin Stanford examines how

Tupac's rap and political activism were heavily influenced by his personal experience as a Black male in America during the hip-hop era and the crack cocaine epidemic. Through her work, "Keepin' It Real in Hip Hop Politics: A Political Perspective of Tupac Shakur", she explains how Tupac is generally perceived as a socially aware rapper whose political activism is illustrated through his lyrical criticisms of racism. She further elaborates on this political influence by stating, "Tupac's prose acknowledges the subordination of African people and the sacrifices of Black political prisoners and rejects patriotic symbols" (6). In other words, Tupac was heavily influenced by the oppressive white supremacist nation and reflected this influence into his raps as a way to critique it and refuse patriotism that would endorse the system.

Walter Edwards, author of "From Poetry to Rap: The Lyrics of Tupac Shakur" furthers this argument by performing an in-depth examination that compares the linguistic and discourse features of Tupac's poetry with his very first album *2Pacalypse Now*. Edwards highlights the separate literary forms by stating, "Tupac inhabited and mastered: the world of school and the world of hood. Each body of composition reveals important aspects of Tupac's art and gives a different perspective on his talents" (62). This quotation illuminates how Tupac was taught to succeed in formal schooling of creative arts and used this education to write love poetry that exposed a vulnerable part of his being. Edwards also explains how Tupac was taught the culture of survival in the urban hood and expressed this harsh reality through violent raps. Through violent raps, *2Pacalypse Now* illuminates the overall passion for reform that Tupac had and is seen as a more influential outlet than his poetry. Given this conversation, it is clear that the consensus among literary critics is to analyze the work of Tupac from a political perspective that explains his violent form of rap. I agree with this analysis of the political impact that is seen throughout Tupac's rap and further expand on this view by considering the connection his rap has to the biopolitical state. Literary critics agree that Tupac was able to make a tangible impact on the Black community through his lyrics and that he successfully wrote back against the power of the white supremacist state. I expand on this criticism to further illustrate that music and language can provide a form of agency to Black individuals against the biopolitical state.

As the L.A. Riots show, Tupac writes at a moment in which Black individuals are challenging the white supremacist biopolitical police state. Through his song "Trapped", Tupac presents the police as brutal forces when he states, "They got me trapped, can barely walk the city streets / without a cop harassin' me, searching me, then askin' my / identity" (1.42-1.46).

He purposely chose the word “trapped” to illustrate life under social and political structural oppression as being like living in a white supremacist prison. Tupac’s lyrical form is very influential to the analysis of his work. He uses enjambment with the word “identity” to illustrate the importance of this word. In the eyes of the state, Black lives do not have any identity or value—they are bare life. Tupac writes back to this by emphasizing his identity as a full identity and the value of his life in his own, political construction. Literary critic Walter Edwards also examines this specific song and illuminates the oppression that Tupac clearly voices through his lyrical delivery. Edwards states, “Tupac describes the oppressive life of a thug: the continuous dehumanizing harassment by police often leading to fatal confrontations; the constant pressure to assert his manhood by fighting or shooting individuals who disrespect him; the fugitive existence” (65). This quotation exposes the rawness behind Tupac’s rap by highlighting the complex worldview of a thug with passion that voices the hopelessness that has become the Black community’s view of life. Through Tupac’s description of thug life, he illuminates the Black being as constantly dehumanized by society. Edwards highlights this description by explaining how Tupac is able to communicate the complex worldview of thug life. I agree with Edwards’ analysis of “Trapped” as exposing the lived experiences in the Black community. To further this interpretation, it is important to note that Tupac’s lyrical genius was also used to illuminate the Black body as being politically and socially controlled by the white supremacist nation.

In conversation with critics who argue that Tupac successfully uses his music to critique public policy, I argue that his song “Violent” illustrates the refusal to conform to the construction that social and political aspects forced upon the Black community. Tupac states, “If this is violence, then violent’s what I gotta be / If you investigate you’ll find out where it’s comin’ from / Look through our history, America’s the violent one” (Shakur 1.12-1.19). These few lines represent the violence that the political and social world have created within Black individuals; however, Tupac argues that this violence is not the individual, but is America. He purposely uses the word “investigate” to show that this is a construction of identity that white America wants to hide from the individual to give the illusion that they are not controlled by political matters. Nonetheless, his lyrical genius illustrates otherwise and exposes the fact that America is the cause of the problem. He argues that this construction reduces individuals to only a body which supports the refusal to conform. Tupac follows this by stating, “Unlock my brain, break

the chains of your misery / This time the payback for evil shit you did to me / They call me militant, racist 'cause I will resist" (Shakur 1.20-1.29). This illustrates the lock that has been placed in the mind of every individual which has resulted in a miserable life under sovereign control. Tupac elaborates on the identified "militant" to illustrate how Black individuals were defined when they fought back against the political and social construction. His work in "Violent" is presented to illustrate how African Americans are forced under sovereign control but use rap as a way to voice their lived experiences to fight back against all constructions to their identity. Tupac illustrates that America is the problem, but once Black individuals try to fight back against this white supremacist prison complex then they are presented as the problem. He does this to further represent the white supremacist biopolitical state that works to continuously inform Black subjects that they have no individual liberties. Tupac utilizes his rap as a form of consciousness-raising in the Black community to educate Black individuals about the systemic issues that encompass their being.

Tupac represents the larger battle against political construction and the bare life in politics through his work in "Words of Wisdom". In conjunction with the criticism of this work being centered around "economic inequality and inadequate employment opportunities" (Stanford,7), I argue that Tupac presents the overt control that politics has on the individual life. He states, "Break the chains in our brains that made us fear, yeah / Pledge allegiance to a flag that neglects us / Honor a man that refuses to respect us / Emancipation, proclamation, please" (Shakur 1.09-1.17). These few lines show the complete control that political construction has on a Black individual's mind and how intensified this control has become. Tupac purposely uses the phrase "chains in our brains" to illustrate how the white supremacist biopolitical state has a hold over Black individuals which further represents the lack of value that their lives were seen to have. He follows this line by depicting politics as a neglecting force that is only concerned with utter control over the bare life by stripping a Black individual of all clarity. Tupac wrote a great majority of his music to appeal to the Black community, which further explains the use of "Emancipation, proclamation". He does this to illustrate the fight back against white supremacist political construction while being forced to live in a world that wants nothing but complete control over the individual. Tupac further illustrates the fight on the Black community from police brutality by stating, "Killing us one by one / In one way or another / America will find a way to eliminate the problem" (0.09-0.15).

This quotation illuminates that America has demonized Black bodies as the problem that plagues the white supremacist nation. Tupac purposely starts this song with the line “Killing us one by one” to show that the Black community is being targeted as a life that can be killed but not sacrificed. His violent rap is intentional and further explains how blackness has become very visible but simultaneously invisible within the biopolitical state that is controlled by white supremacists. Tupac continues to voice the criminalization of the Black community by stating, “The war on drugs is a war on you and me / And yet they say this is the ‘Home of the Free’ / But if you ask me its all about hypocrisy / The constitution, yo, it don’t apply to me” (1.26-1.34). These few lines illuminate that the war on drugs has simply become a war on the Black community. The harsher drug laws have become a way to keep the Black community held under sovereign political control. Tupac voices his anger with the nation by explaining the hypocrisy that is the constitution because it is a document that has been created to cater to the white community while keeping the Black community oppressed. This specific song represents the political control that the white supremacist nation has over Black bodies.

In a continuous fight against the political system, the Black community has become soldiers fighting for their liberation. Through the growth of the Black Panther Party, militancy has expanded within the Black community. This expansion, built on revolutionary Black Nationalism, has forced Black individuals to fight alongside the Black Panther Party against the white supremacist nation. Tupac illustrates this fight in his song, “Soulja’s Story”. Literary critics describe this song as being, “the political semantics of the ‘hood’ by describing young Black males as soldiers in battle against the system” (Edwards 66). I agree with this interpretation since Tupac’s lyrics do illuminate the battle of young Black males. However, this song is also used to illustrate the war on drugs as being the expected life path of a Black male in the 1980s and 1990s. Tupac describes this by stating, “Is it my fault, just cause I’m a young black male? / Cops sweat me as if my destiny is makin crack sales” (0.54-1.01). These few lines show that Black males have become more targeted by police since the emergence of crack. This emergence has led to police brutality against the entire Black community and Tupac speaks up against this violence. Tupac specifically uses the word “destiny” to show that the war on drugs has become a way for the white supremacist nation to further target the Black community. He continues to describe the Black community’s fight for liberation by stating, “Cops on my tail, so I bail ‘til I dodge ‘em / They finally pull me over and I laugh / ‘Remember Rodney King?’ And I

blast on his punk ass” (1.04-1.12). These few lines illustrate that police brutality has become normalized among the Black community. As a way to tease other members of the Black community, cops have started to reference back to previous beatings to show that they have the power to control the Black body. Tupac was not a Black male that feared this brutality, as he states in his song, “And I blast on his punk ass”. He purposely does this to show that the only way for the Black community to achieve liberation is through violent acts of courage against the white supremacist nation. Tupac’s rap forges a more unique path when compared to the Black Panther Party; however, both have optimistic views on the agency of Black lives. The Black Panther Party takes a less violent approach to political reform, whereas Tupac utilizes violent lyrics to write back against the biopolitical state that captivates Black individuals. By using language as his weapon, Tupac illustrates that the Black community must never succumb to the white supremacist nation because this will only create further oppression. His song “I Don’t Give A Fuck” illuminates how the nation does not see Black bodies as being worthy of life but sees them as a being to be disposed of. He shows this by stating, “Cause who in the hell cares / About a black man with a black need / They wanna jack me like some kind of crack fiend” (2.36-2.42). These few lines show that during the 1980s and 1990s the Black community had been continuously criminalized and were expected to be nothing more than crack fiends. Tupac expresses his anger with America by voicing that the nation does not care about the Black community and only works to keep them oppressed. This song is purposefully violent to illuminate the struggles within the Black community. Tupac does this to show that America has become more concerned with simply killing Black bodies as opposed to sacrificing their beings with value. Through lyrical delivery, the Black community can subvert the white supremacist prison complex that actively incarcerates Black males on drug charges. This subversion will allow for the Black body to be considered as a full being that is visible within society. By inscribing their agency, the Black community can use language as a weapon to fight back against the sovereign control of the biopolitical state.

In conclusion, Tupac illuminates how the Black community can subvert an American white supremacist discourse and culture that forces sacrifice on their bodily autonomy in the form of mass incarceration rates and a disregard for Black lives. Tupac’s lyrical performance style of political activism provides a voice for the Black experience and insists that Black individuals become their own citizens as opposed to a nocturnal body of democracy that is

controlled by the white supremacist nation. *2Pacalypse Now* vividly exposes the racial disparity in the 1980s and 1990s that was used as a way to demonize Black males. Tupac illuminates how the high rising incarceration rates of Black males was directly tied to the war on drugs and a general disregard of the value of Black life within American society. This political captivity is used to render Black males not fully autonomous subjects in the eyes of the state. Tupac subverts such a white supremacist American discourse and political policy through his poetic genius by writing the legitimacy of his life to fully illustrate that Black lives do matter and should be considered full citizens in society. His rap became part of the Black Lives Matter movement of the 1980s and 1990s and was actively used as a way to fight back against the continuous oppression of the Black community. Tupac was prophetic in his writing and described a world that demonized Black individuals in a way that reduced their being to only a body. This world is America, a place that has been created through the control of white supremacist over Black individuals. A world that is not only plagued with racial enmity but also a world that does nothing to change this. Tupac fought back against this and worked for a change within the nation by voicing his lived experiences.

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A Dead World Dreaming: The Afterlives of HP Lovecraft and His Monsters

Bryson Godby

At the end of the Great War in 1918, millions were dead and the world seemed permanently sundered. Western Civilization's years of progress had resulted in mass destruction and devastation, largely due to the very technology used to benchmark this progress. Unprecedented lives lost to violence shrank the global population. Conflict became the unifying hallmark of humanity across borders and cultures, bringing the depravity formerly reserved for victims of colonialism home to European nations. Germany ended the war in economic ruin due to the Treaty of Versailles's harsh restrictions, which ultimately played a major role in setting the stage for the inevitability of World War II. As this dark night of the soul for Western civilization was happening on a global scale, America was in the throes of its own crisis: the "nadir of American race relations" was a time period in which racism was at its peak in a post-abolition United States. The ghost of slavery still haunted the nation, driven by white antipathy toward the newfound freedom of former enslaved peoples. Eugenics gained popularity as a "science." Miscegenation laws were passing; "separate but equal" was the running motto of American society in the Jim Crow era; lynching became a widespread, extrajudicial way to terrorize Black Americans on the flimsiest, most circumstantial evidence of wrongdoing. Looming over all this bloodshed and already-indescribable horror was the fast-approaching Holocaust.

Of course, intense political strife begs for a literary response. One of the burgeoning modernist movement's primary preoccupations was with World War I. How can humanity have come so far societally and technologically only to turn around and kill each other in such a barbaric fashion, often using these same advancements as instruments of destruction? The modernists were not the only ones whose work responded to the dire state of the world in the early twentieth century. Through the 1920s and 1930s, a small pulp writer out of Massachusetts made waves among his small, niche audience for his inventive approach to horror. Combining the Gothic with science fiction and philosophical nihilism, Howard Phillips Lovecraft invented "cosmicism," or horror with a focus on humanity's indifference in the face of the incomprehensibly-vast universe, represented through extra-dimensional creatures that often struggle to be described by Lovecraft's narrators. When Lovecraft died in 1937, he was largely known as the local author who kept a journal documenting the progression of his cancer. Since, he has developed a cult following which has slowly eased him into the mainstream. Lovecraft's

writing has influenced everyone from Stephen King to Black Sabbath. Film, television, and video game adaptations of his stories have been created. Of his dozens of short stories, HP Lovecraft's works, "The Call of Cthulhu" (1928) and "The Shadow over Innsmouth" (1936), are seen by many critics and fans alike as the purest, most distilled iterations of his cosmic vision of horror; of man's lack of importance in, or even his ability to comprehend, the vast sea of existential indifference. This nihilism was largely born of Lovecraft, an avowed white supremacist, seeing the Western Civilization he and many others at the time fetishized as a mark of "Aryan" supremacy destroying its own (white) populations in the first World War.

While much has been written on the nihilistic nature of Lovecraft's genre fiction, I would prefer, instead, to focus on the sociohistorical factors that likely led to Lovecraft viewing the world through this cosmic lens. Lovecraft's fiction finds a solution for these ills in the racism which had found justification in academic circles in the form of eugenics. Building on earlier, pseudo-scientific Social Darwinist claims justifying slavery and colonialism, eugenics was taking off as a concept throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The idea that a population could rid itself of those it finds "undesirable" by disincentivizing said undesirables from reproducing was echoed in Ivy League universities and by some of the most influential people of the time including government officials. Born from this were numerous attempts to put eugenics into action including immigration laws and sterilizations, all in an attempt to create a utopian society dedicated to maximizing the health and life of a (majority white) population. While uniquely vile and a major catalyst for growing racial tensions, these kinds of eugenicist policies were not wholly removed from Jim Crow-era ideologies. If Jim Crow was the institutionalized, legal racial caste system post-slavery, eugenics was a way to legitimize racism within the scientific world. Lovecraft's fiction is written with a mix of outdated language ("shewn" is commonly used instead of "shown") and in a dry, professor-like tone. With eugenics having emerged from the academic world, Lovecraft's authorial voice is perfectly suited to proselytize its values.

Another disaffected writer during this time was the father of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud. In 1930, he released *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Partially in response to the traumatic Great War, Freud pondered how such atrocities can happen. *Civilization* serves as a departure from his prior (and more famous) musings on psychosexual development. Instead of being driven by a pursuit of pleasure, he now posits that humanity's subconscious, a part of the mind

inaccessible save for during psychoanalysis called the *id*, is partially ruled by a death drive (*Thanatos*). This death drive, a compulsion toward destruction and aggression, to Freud, is the reason for worldwide conflict and war: people have a natural instinct to hurt and kill each other which is repressed in order to function as a society but inevitably bubbles to the surface. Thanatos, especially when doubled with social fears and anxieties of the Other, is expressed through violence such as lynching and World War II. Bringing Freud into an analysis of Lovecraft is important as Freud's Thanatos provides an alternative rationale for the violence that Lovecraft blames on the dismantling of white supremacist power systems by way of race mixing and moral degradation.

Lovecraft's emphasis on dreams and his own clear repression of fears of the racial Other throughout his work (including "The Call of Cthulhu") makes it difficult to not view his writing as an opportunity to "peek behind the curtain" with a psychoanalytic approach. While Lovecraft expressed disdain for Freud, applying psychoanalysis to Lovecraft's most famous stories yields results far more "nameable" than his slime-covered monsters. Just as the poets and "aesthetes" in his story are the ones most sensitive to Cthulhu's "call," Lovecraft's pen transcribes his society's own repressed interwar-period anxieties about race relations but also a fear of the repetition of the horrors of World War I. These anxieties manifest themselves in a breakdown of reality and geometry as we know it and become a fear of the racialized other being accepted into white society, as seen in the fish people of Innsmouth who walk among humans before returning to the sea for their grotesque rituals. And, of course, anxieties regarding future wars and devastation are embodied in the towering, amorphous, tentacle-headed Cthulhu, who resides beneath the sea, dead and dreaming—the living embodiment of the next wave of indescribable horror: World War II. Reading early 20th century America's racial and existential repressions through this Lovecraftian lens is important to shed light on a specific demographic of America during Lovecraft's time, one which he, himself, belonged to: those aware the world is broken in some fundamental way as to allow The Great War, but who mistakenly place the blame for modernity's faults on people of color, inadvertently creating a fatalistic domino effect that directly contributes to the eugenicist policies of the Nazis, with the apex of these atrocities being, of course, the Holocaust. Through this reading, I intend to posthumously reclaim Lovecraft. His fiction was the product of a mind addled with fears of a world without racial boundaries. However, his inexplicable extra-dimensional monsters can be seen as embodiments of much

larger psychological and sociological forces outside of the racism which inspired them. If war and conflict are simply the inevitable end result of our constant repression of Thanatos erupting forth, Lovecraft's already-bleak stories become even more nihilistic—not only are chaos and violence a symptom of an uncaring universe, eugenics does nothing to stop it.

Unnameable Horrors: The History

The Great War was the outcome of a series of sociopolitical dominoes that began falling with the assassination of the Archduke of Austria-Hungary, Franz Ferdinand, in 1914. The war was, for the purposes of this paper, most notable for occurring during a time in history when technology was beginning to heavily modernize, which led to elevated numbers of casualties. Primitive planes, machine guns, tanks, and chemical weapons were all readily deployed, along with less immediately-destructive technology such as telephones and radio communication. Trench warfare became the predominant mode of combat out of necessity to avoid the rapid-fire weapons being used. Paul Fussell writes, "Every war is ironic because every war is worse than expected [...] But the Great War was more ironic than any before or since. It was a hideous embarrassment in the prevailing Meliorist myth which had dominated the public consciousness for a century. It reversed the Idea of Progress" (7-8). Advancement in technology is seen by many as a material demonstration of civilizational progress. The Great War challenged this as these technological advancements were now being used for mass slaughter. Tied to this idea, progress can also be seen as measured in how "civilized" a society becomes. World War I effectively destroyed both of these concepts. Millions of deaths as a result of the technological progress—especially such brutal deaths as those from chemical weapons—challenged the notion that advancing technology can be the hallmark of progress, along with the notion that the world of the early twentieth century is wholly more "civilized" than the ancient civilizations of the past who waged war with spears and swords. This line of thinking can lead quickly to very nihilistic thought patterns regarding the point of civilization; if progress is an illusion and at any moment a force greater than one's comprehension can cut short countless lives, why maintain it through such extensive bloodshed? Is human life merely a tool to maintain civilization? Making the nihilism particularly more potent was how convoluted the events leading up to the war were. An archduke being assassinated led to millions of deaths. I do not intend to water down the complicated geopolitics of these events, but the question of "why?" certainly haunted those involved, making them question their place in the trenches when it seems diplomacy could have

just as well solved these crises. This uncertainty of one's place in civilization and the purpose of one's life, as well as the nihilism of knowing the (white) world was responsible for such massive violence, were horrors that Lovecraft would readily tap into.

America in the early twentieth century—the same time as the World Wars—had its own problems. The “nadir of American race relations” was a time after slavery when some historians believe treatment of Black Americans was at its lowest point in the nation's history—even beyond slavery. Apart from the more infamous and systemic rulings such as *Plessy v. Ferguson* (in which the Supreme Court upheld “separate but equal”), American courts were often sites of cruelty, where contemporary white fears such as miscegenation and race-mixing could be directed toward individual targets. For instance, *Rhineland v. Rhineland* was an infamous court case from the mid-1920s in which Kip Rhineland petitioned for an annulment in his marriage to Alice Jones on the basis that she was part African American, with Kip claiming he did not know when he married her. “New York courts readily accepted knowledge about a spouse's race to be a factor so crucial to the understanding of the marital contract that fraud about it rendered the marriage voidable and thus eligible to be annulled from its start” (Onwuachi-Willig 2396). The case demonstrates how pseudoscientific eugenics became integrated in a legal context. Alice was forced to strip parts of her clothes in court and be humiliated over her ex-husband's revelation that she was Black, highlighted that America feared non-whites' ability to “blend in” and “pass” as white in white America. If even one's spouse could hide their true race, this opens questions as to how one defines race and classifies people. It becomes difficult to Other ethnic minorities when the boundaries separating them break down. Further, another fear Lovecraft would exploit: could oneself be a different, non-white race and not even know?

The commonality between these two historical episodes--the global Great War and the more intimately-scoped, violent racism of the United States--is how they break down social strata and classifications. Given the history of the world through its brutalities, World War I as a site of lost innocence may seem bizarre. Colonization was at its peak, with developing nations having been taken over and exploited by larger, industrialized countries through force throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. After all, only a few years before the Great War began, Joseph Conrad penned *Heart of Darkness*, a fictionalized account of King Leopold II of Belgium's atrocities in the Congo. Yet, these large-scale acts of destruction and violence did not register for many the same way the Great War did. For white, Western nations, this imperialist conquest

was, if anything, *evidence* for social progress. It was seen by many as a civilizing mission. The resources allowed countries like Spain, the United States, and Great Britain to rapidly accelerate as superpowers. As mentioned previously, much of the “new” technology had been used in occupied territories, but the victims did not resemble the largely-white populations victimized in World War I. Not only was the Great War “novel” for its brutality, but was novel for who was on the receiving end of said brutality—Anglo-Saxons. This kind of devastation was, while not acceptable, far less existentially concerning when happening to those "beneath" Caucasians. World War I's democratization of violence to white people meant the imaginary barriers between races began to break down, just as how the realization one could be married to (or even themselves be) a nonwhite person and not even know worked to deteriorate what had previously been a natural system of organization.

Enter eugenics, a pseudoscientific ideology which became recognized as a legitimate discipline in numerous universities in the 1900s. Its presence in these institutions lent eugenics an even larger air of legitimacy, especially as it received more outside attention and funding. On the surface, eugenics promises a utopian vision of a world where society has bred out less-desirable characteristics such as illness and has artificially raised intelligence and health, for instance, through selective breeding. Unsurprisingly, eugenics became popular among the elite class. Also unsurprisingly, many people had differing opinions on what constitutes a characteristic worthy of being eliminated. In a time where Black Americans were forbidden from sitting at the front of the bus, eugenics became the hammer and white racists began seeing nails. Eugenics inspired several sweeping changes across the United States. Alexandra Minna Stern, Dean of Humanities and English and History professor at the Institute for Society and Genetics, demonstrates how California became a breeding ground of eugenicist policies. California, from “the 1910s to the 1930s, the Deportation Agent, the Eugenics Section of the CCC [a fraternal society looking for solutions to Californian problems], and nativists with university credentials vilified Mexicans as defective, diseased, and overly fecund and urged that they be barred from the state” (Stern 92). This is an example of eugenics being taken from the world of “academia” and “science” and being utilized to reinforce the racial hierarchy eugenics was believed to be defending. Eugenicists became activists not only for forced sterilizations of non-whites, but key players in passing anti-miscegenation laws and increasing restrictions on immigration, such as for Mexicans in California. While this is one instance from the opposite site of the country from

Lovecraft, Stern ultimately argues that California's eugenicist movement "supplied national leadership, presaging many of the trends that would reconfigure hereditarianism in the second half of the century" (110). Put simply, California was a predictor of what was to come legislatively and socially throughout the twentieth century. Returning to Lovecraft, this was occurring not long before he began drafting the pieces covered in this essay. While he was a Massachusetts-based writer, examples like California would have been encouraging for eugenicists.

Ominously, the legal and scientific racism so prevalent in the United States at the time would go on to provide inspiration for the Third Reich. Hitler borrowed from the United States's segregation laws in order to confine the Jewish and non-Aryan populations to ghettos and concentration camps. As historian James Whitman states, the United States demonstrated "how natural and inevitable racist legislation was" (123). In other words, the United States showed Hitler and the other Nazis in power that it was not only possible but the logical conclusion of a nation built atop a racial hierarchy to set said racial order into law. If people are not only divided by race but ordered by it, would it not make sense to institute that into a proper legal system? Legal theorist Mary Dudziak wrote that, "When crafting the Nuremberg Laws, Germans looked to other countries for examples of how to draft immigration and citizenship law that would ensure ethnic homogeneity" (1182). This is textbook eugenics at play. Germany was heavily crippled after World War I due in large part to the Great War's concluding Treaty of Versailles, which shrank Germany territory and heavily indebted them as retribution for the war. With a new fascist regime in power in the thirties, over a decade after the treaty's signing, the now-ruling Third Reich sought "solutions" for the state of affairs by implementing a genocide against the Jewish population. The solution, irrevocably tied to a eugenicist ideology, was simply the logical end result of seeking to cleanse "undesirables" to strengthen a population. It was a solution many Americans would have cosigned, including Lovecraft himself. It is ironic that the fascist regime seeking to "fix" the problems caused by the first World War would be responsible for the second, along with the United States's racial codes (and, more broadly, Western colonial powers) being partially responsible for assisting them, along with more direct fault being laid at the overly-harsh Treaty of Versailles which devastated the German economy. The desperation of the Germans had them seeking answers to their problems, and the eugenics which justified imperialism and colonialism just so happened to provide a "solution."

A Certain Kind of Madness: The Theoretical

At the same time as these historical events were occurring, Sigmund Freud was exploring the mind's inner machinations, with many of his discoveries providing insight into the violence happening in the world. Psychoanalysis as a school of thought began with Freud who developed it through his clinical practice and put it into writing with titles such as *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), and *The Ego and the Id* (1923). Within psychoanalysis, the mind is divided into three factions: the ego, the superego, and the id. The id is the most base, instinctual element of the mind. Here, one's deepest and darkest desires lie—desires which are often incompatible with society. Additionally, according to Freud, the *id* is largely split between two warring drives: *Eros* (desire for pleasure) and *Thanatos* (death drive). It is through these two drives Freud explains the conditions that led to World War I. Above the id is the ego, the “surface level” of one's personality which directs the id's desires into more acceptable outlets. In other words, the ego is the waking, conscious mind. Finally, there is the superego, which serves as a bridge between the subconscious id and the conscious ego, with the bulk of the superego belonging in the subconscious. The superego upholds the moral standards as held and demonstrated by the society in which a person is born. These hierarchies within the mind are applied to dream interpretation, with the Freudian concepts of latent versus manifest content being relevant to my literary analysis of Lovecraft. Freud states, “What is the psychical process which has transformed the latent content of the dream into the manifest one which is known to me from memory?” (Freud 148). What Freud is asking is how his mind takes an ideal—a desire from waking life such as in wish fulfillment—and distorts it into something almost unrecognizable to waking life, which is represented within dreams. The ideal is the latent content—the news story one might have read during their waking hours about the terrifying increase in lynching—where manifest content is the literal content of a dream—for instance how that fear is represented as a giant octopus monster, whose tentacles curiously look like ropes in the harsh, unforgiving moonlight.

While his psychoanalytic school of thought encompasses a wide array of developmental and psychosexual theory, as well as discussion of mental illness and “deviancy,” the key elements for this paper lie in *Civilization and Its Discontents* and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. *Pleasure Principle*, a key post-World War I work of Freud's, is where he introduces *Thanatos* and describes its function as being a destructive equivalent to *Eros*—*Eros* seeks pleasure whereas

Thanatos seeks destruction. Both are repressed, which drives civilization as a whole to become neurotic. Freud says as much himself in *Civilization*: “If the development of civilization has such a far-reaching similarity to the individual and if it employs the same methods, may we not be justified in reaching the diagnosis that, under the influence of cultural urges, some civilizations [...] have become ‘neurotic’?” (771). If an individual can be neurotic as a result of repression, so can an entire civilization. That said, repression does not last forever. Thanatos cannot be indefinitely contained. Eventually, it will produce a violent outcome such as the Great War. In publishing *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud expands his framework away from merely the individual neurotic patient and instead critiques the foundations of Western civilization itself. That said, he does not necessarily do a “factory reset” on his prior work, but merely develops upon and nuances it through a newfound sociological lens. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud argues that “it is impossible to overlook the extent to which civilization is built up upon a renunciation of instinct, how much it presupposes precisely the non-satisfaction (by suppression, repression or some other means?) of powerful instincts” (742). In other words, for civilization to function, or even exist at all, it requires its populace to forsake their instinctual urges—to repress these urges deep into the unconscious. This is necessary as a society filled with people constantly giving in to their urges for violence or raw sexual urges would be unstable. Thus, to maintain society, one must regulate a part of who they are. However, while this sacrifice keeps the gears of civilization turning, it leads to the same civilization becoming neurotic, as “neurotic symptoms are, in their essence, substitutive satisfactions for unfulfilled sexual wishes [...] an instinctual trend undergoes repression, its libidinal elements are turned into symptoms, and its aggressive components into a sense of guilt” (Freud 767). Freud, here, is saying that if the id does not get what it wants, it will look for a substitute, and this is what produces neurosis in an individual. With that in mind, if repression is necessary to take part in society, it makes sense, then, for that society to become inherently neurotic as a whole.

Lacan, following in Freud’s footsteps and seeking to marry psychoanalysis with poststructuralist linguistics, posits that the subconscious is structured similarly to a language. In a passage more in line with Nietzsche than with Freud, Lacan says, “to break out of the circle of the *Innenwelt* into the *Umwelt* generates the inexhaustible quadrature of the ego’s verifications” (1114). In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the *Innenwelt* is essentially the mind and the *Umwelt* is the environment which interacts with the mind. So, despite the subconscious’s language-like format,

and Lacan's belief that the psychoanalyst's job is—in part—to “translate” the subconscious by interpreting one's dreams (through which the subconscious “speaks”), *there is no* “thing itself.” Whereas for Freud the analyst can effectively translate the manifest content and make it cohere with the latent content from waking life, for Lacan this process of substitution is never complete and there is no definitive interpretation to the dream. Language is inherently *only* metaphorical and only self-referential. There *is* a subconscious but attempts to understand it only end with the essence of who one is being further deferred. The subconscious's pure form is forever elusive. The self becomes, to borrow a Lovecraftian-ism, indescribable.

Lacan is also, famously, responsible for his concept of the “mirror stage” which attempts to explain how the ego is formed. Lacan suggests that seeing oneself in the mirror “by the child at the *infans* stage, still sunk in his motor incapacity and nursling dependence, would seem to exhibit in an exemplary situation the symbolic matrix in which the *I* is precipitated in a primordial form, before it is objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other, and before language restores to it, in the universal, its function as subject” (1112). In other words, when one sees themselves in the mirror as a child, this makes real an experience which has been, at that point, mostly internal and disconnected. Arms, feet, and thought, previously mere tools to engage with the world, are placed into the larger picture of who one is—the *gestalt*. From here, the child develops an image of themselves that they can never *truly* be. There is a being in the *Umwelt* but it is not correlative to the internal identity, the *Innewelt*. This creates a sense of lack that cannot be defined, much less fulfilled, thus leading to an eternal chase for “the thing itself” to fill this gap. However, as language is inadequate to fully capture what this “thing itself” is, the chase is never-ending. In Lovecraft's work, this “chase” can be seen as the fruitless chase for meaning his protagonists often go on, only to be met with an “indescribable” cosmic entity which represents a crippling realization that the universe is so large as to render not only the individual, but civilization and the chase itself as inconsequential.

Dreamer of a Dead World: Lovecraft Himself

As a horror and science fiction author, Lovecraft's work is uniquely suited to capture the concerns of his age through the use of monsters. One is not afraid of the monster itself (the manifest content) but rather what it represents within its sociohistorical (and psychological) contexts (the latent content). Working backward from the monster can reveal what these fears are. As Chris Dumas says in his primer on psychoanalysis and horror, “Rationally, we know that

zombies do not actually exist, so if we are afraid of zombies, we must be afraid of something *else*, something that zombies *represent*” (30). As Dumas argues, the fear generated by horror media truly stems from a secondary source that the on-screen or on-the-page horror evokes. The horror is not the undead creatures, to use the zombies, but the fear of being eaten or the fear of illness or societal collapse (there was, after all, a renaissance of zombie media in the 2000s during the SARS outbreak of 2002, the Swine Flu epidemic and the financial collapse that could have contributed to a rise in these fears). While Dumas opts to use zombies as an example instead of Lovecraftian horrors, the same can be said of extradimensional, squamous gods—they are not scary because of their mere existence within the text, but because of the sociocultural context surrounding them. Cthulhu is not scary because he has tentacles on his head, but because Cthulhu’s existence implies an apocalyptic event that further crumbles a white supremacist social order on which Western civilization is based. Cthulhu implies a lack of meaning and a lack of purpose. The nihilism implied through Cthulhu’s mere existence is a cultural fear relevant to contemporary Americans at the time he was conceived—similar to the zombie renaissance of the 2000s—because of what was happening at the time: a war leaving millions of whites dead by way of the technology which had previously indicated their superiority and civilizational progress, and a decimation of American racial lines through miscegenation fears.

Lovecraft would be as surprised as his contemporary critics that his pulp fiction has achieved the level of fame that it has. He died penniless and largely unknown. His biggest claim to fame was being a bizarre local pulp author who kept a “death journal” documenting the progression of his cancer. Now, thanks to his friend and mentee, August Derleth, Lovecraft’s work has been saved from languishing in pulp magazines and has entered the halls of pop culture iconography as well as academia where much work has been done on Lovecraft. Despite his slow crawl into something approximating a literary canon—or, perhaps, because of it—Lovecraftian scholarship tends to be scattershot in direction and trends. There are sociohistorical analyses, feminist analyses, and even several that approach Lovecraft from a mathematics perspective. That said, one commonality in academic scholarship, as well as a hot topic of conversation among casual readership, is the large emphasis on racist and eugenicist elements in his fiction. Mitch Frye, a scholar of twentieth-century American Literature and African-American literature, writes that Lovecraft has a “desire to villainize his racial others. He fears the communities from which he is excluded and he fantasizes about their ‘evil possibilities’ in his

writings' (240). Frye argues that Lovecraft's fear of the racial other infiltrates his texts, a fear born out of the unknown, where his mind generates all sorts of sordid possibilities (manifest content). Where I would like to join the conversation surrounding Lovecraft is with a novel that the sociohistorical context—the nadir of American race relations and the Great War—serves to undermine large-scale societal narratives that allow white supremacy its validation. There is no Meliorist ideal of progress, nor is there a natural racial hierarchy. My use of psychoanalysis is also novel, as I posit that it—particularly Thanatos—serves as an alternative interpretation of Lovecraft's racism. The racism does not disappear, but does become contextualized. It is not the breakdown of racial hierarchies which causes conflict, but the inevitable outcome of civilization repressing Thanatos. Lovecraft essentially destroys his own argument in favor of eugenics by unconsciously repeating Freudian psychoanalysis through “The Call of Cthulhu” and “The Shadow over Innsmouth.”

Lovecraft's paranoia surrounding the decimation of racial lines can be seen in both “The Call of Cthulhu” and “The Shadow over Innsmouth,” but they are most prominent in “Innsmouth.” In the story, an unnamed narrator ventures into the run-down coastal town of Innsmouth, which he discovers is populated by fish people called the Deep Ones. They are creatures who rise from the water, consort with humans, create human-fish hybrid offspring, and return to the sea. Clearly, fish people are the stuff of fantasy, but they do represent the fantastical fever-dream vision which demonstrates Lovecraft's feelings on race, specifically race-mixing. Mitch Frye touches on these same points, arguing that the fish-people of Innsmouth represent an exaggerated, allegorical nightmare of miscegenation. Frye says:

“Innsmouth” shows us an idealized form of miscegenation. The Deep Ones are not nearly so alien as the intangible Yog-Sothoth, but they are [...] removed from the human race [...] We naturally cringe upon imagining human-amphibian relationships, and the story encourages our disgust with its descriptions of the resultant progeny. The offspring the Deep Ones create with the citizens of Innsmouth are so horrible that humans and animals alike shun them [...] Lovecraft attempts to facilitate the expansion of our Innsmouth-aversion into our opinions concerning other, less-extreme forms of miscegenation (Frye 248).

In other words, “The Shadow over Innsmouth” is a heightened form of miscegenation where the act is no longer between humans but rather unholy affairs with fish people. Frye argues that

Lovecraft is attempting to show the most outrageous form of miscegenation as a way of “poisoning the well” against everyday race-mixing. While I agree with Frye that *Innsmouth* is an anti-miscegenation story at its core, I feel that the ties between real-world race-mixing and the fantastical interspecies cross-pollination of “*Innsmouth*” are closer than Frye gives the story credit for. I also feel the story’s anxieties surrounding the degradation of racial lines is important for my analysis. Early in the story, Lovecraft describes one of the Deep Ones who are in the process of shedding their humanity.

[The driver] had a narrow head, bulging, watery blue eyes that seemed never to wink, a flat nose [...] His long thick lip and coarse-pored, greyish cheeks seemed almost beardless except for some sparse yellow hairs that [curled]. His hands were large and heavily veined, and had a very unusual greyish-blue tinge [...] A certain greasiness about the fellow increased my dislike [...] Just what foreign blood was in him I could not even guess. His oddities certainly did not look Asiatic, Polynesian, Levantine, or negroid, yet I could see why people found him alien. I myself would have thought of biological degeneration rather than alienage (584-585).

Here, the dissolution of racial lines as mentioned previously is in full effect. The narrator cannot even tell what race the “man” is, which contributes to his disdain for him and he empathizes with those that “[find] him alien.” While the narrator does state that he did not appear to be any particular ethnicity, many of the features described allude to an exaggerated depiction of someone from another race. The driver is non-white with an unnaturally dark complexion (“greyish-blue” skin) and “thick lips,” reminiscent of blackface or minstrel shows. Lovecraft refers to specific demographics such as “Levantine,” though uses “negroid” in lieu of African or some more acute descriptor. The effect is that “negroid” appears less important than the other “alien” races mentioned previously, and therefore less worthy of recognition. They are all, though, categorized as “oddities” as a result of their racial features. The use of the word “alien” serves as foreshadowing of the driver’s true lineage of extra-terrestrial monsters while also equating said monsters with non-whites, thus beginning to dissolve the difference between the two within the context of the story. The race-mixing which the narrator believes may have resulted in the man’s strange appearance is also seen as equivalent to inbreeding with the last line, solidifying it as something the narrator (and by extension, Lovecraft) views as a moral wrong. However, the real discomfort for the narrator is his inability to ascertain the driver’s race

by looking at him. This is reminiscent of the age of “passing” and bringing one’s spouse to court to clarify their ethnic heritage as seen in the *Rhineland v. Rhineland* case. While the narrator does not request the driver strip parts of his clothes for a jury, the implication is that if one cannot immediately tell one’s racial makeup, the person in question is aberrant and “alien.” This is a source of anxiety and fear.

In “The Call of Cthulhu,” the great being known as Cthulhu sends out telepathic beacons (his “call”) to humanity in an unintelligible extra-dimensional language. For the time being, Cthulhu resides beneath the sea, “dead but dreaming.” It is revealed, though, that his return is inevitable, coming closer, and the return will be apocalyptic. Lucas Kwong, from a Deleuzian perspective, argues that “The Call of Cthulhu” serves as an allegory for being radicalized into far-right views on race, referring to it as a “radicalizing assemblage” (though, he does also point out that Lovecraft seems to dismantle his own arguments throughout the story). He posits:

[In] “The Call of Cthulhu,” assemblage envelops both racialized subjects and white supremacists who rule in the name of a “new materialism” that co-creates the system it purports to observe [...] ‘Anglo Materialism,’ an ideology in which the Anglo-Saxon mind’s signature achievement, the emblem of its racial superiority, consists of embracing a godless universe (Kwong 384)

Kwong, here, argues that the racial caste is self-created and thus self-defeating. The materialist worldview is generated by its own adherents and then propped up by them as a science. I don’t wholly disagree with Kwong’s interpretation. Kwong is correct that Lovecraft unknowingly appears to argue against himself, but the documents unveiling Cthulhu clearly have a negative effect on the story’s narrator. Lovecraft, a racist, would likely not have included this and ended the story on a more optimistic note if it were a right-wing radicalization narrative and Thurston arrived at the “correct” ideology.

Cthulhu’s call has effects on those sensitive to it. This is seen when Thurston, the narrator of the story, describes some of the events his uncle came across while researching Cthulhu:

The press cuttings, as I have intimated, touched on cases of panic, mania, and eccentricity during the [period in which Wilcox had the strange dreams]. Voodoo orgies multiply in Hayti [sic], and African outposts report ominous mutterings. American officers in the Philippines find certain tribes bothersome about this time, and New York policemen are mobbed by hysterical Levantines. (Lovecraft 132-133).

All of the above groups, of course, make up a smattering of various ethnic demographics whose one commonality is their minority status (at least, concerning Americans). It is because of these groups that the presumably-white officials and soldiers struggle to keep the peace, particularly in America where “hysterical Levantines” violently attack police officers. While, of course, none of these instances of “ominous mutterings” escalate into full-scale war or into the scope of, say, colonial rule, these merely happen at the suggestion of Cthulhu. The locations chosen also vary wildly at first glance—what does Haiti have to do with New York?—but the connective tissue lies in areas that have been colonized or marked by immigration. The Congo in Africa was, as mentioned earlier in this paper, the site of horrific, genocidal oppression by Belgium, and Britain controlled a large portion of Africa for several years. Haiti was a site of horror for colonizers—Haiti experienced a (rare) successful slave uprising that granted them independence. Much like the Great War democratizing violence toward white people, the Haitian Revolution breaks down barriers by showcasing the “natural order” of things is not Black people enslaved or oppressed. If non-white people are capable of overthrowing their white overseers, this erodes the racial hierarchy. That said, to a eugenicist segregationist, this conflict would have occurred as a result of this hierarchy not being well-enough enforced. The barriers break down, chaos ensues, and (white) people die. The “ominous mutterings” in Africa, with this in mind, become an implicit threat of an uprising against the white-dominated outposts. The “bothersome” Filipino tribes are dismissed (“bothersome” is not a very threatening word) but the unifying theme of revolt stretches from Haiti to other sites of colonization. These happenings occur only with Cthulhu’s call. Upon his rise from the sea, it is left for the reader to interpret how “bothersome” these communities will become. From a racial perspective, this section does attempt to stoke fears about what can happen if a racial order is not maintained, preferably by force as implied through the targets of these small-scale revolts being soldiers and police.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, Lovecraft portrays the voice as an outside force. The “call” of Cthulhu, by tapping into one’s subconscious, drives non-whites into a Dionysian frenzy of their basest desires. While no number is ever given, a not-insignificant portion of the population is experiencing this call. An interviewee of Thurston, Wilcox, “talked of his dreams in a strangely poetic fashion; making me see with terrible vividness the damp Cyclopean city of slimy green stone—whose geometry, he oddly said, was all wrong—and hear with frightened expectancy the ceaseless, half-mental calling from underground: ‘Cthulhu fhtagn,’ ‘Cthulhu

fhagn” (Lovecraft 145). Those with artistic backgrounds—such as poets and aesthetes—are both more sensitive to and better able to transcribe Cthulhu’s call without readily going mad. Wilcox relays the experiences he had while dreaming in a “poetic fashion.” The act of translating the “call” into art, then, is seen as a way of repressing the subconscious. This can quickly become quite metatextual. If artists’ transmogrifying of their dreams into art is repression of Thanatos or the id, then the multiple artists and “aesthetes” mentioned in the story seem to indicate society is repressing and is not limited to a single mind. The description of the “Cyclopean” city is also worthy of attention. This solidifies the subconscious as being incomprehensible. The structure of R’lyeh is, to borrow a Lovecraft favorite, “non-Euclidean.” R’lyeh is impossible by one’s understanding of physics and geometry. This can be seen as an extension of the “language” of the subconscious (it is structured like a language after all; R’lyeh is the literal “structure”). Lovecraft may be suggesting that non-whites—who are the aggravating forces in “Cthulhu”—are less capable of restraining Thanatos than whites (Wilcox is white). However, the very acknowledgment of an outside influence erodes the argument that it is merely the decay of racial lines which is the fault of unrest. After all, if the Great War proved white people could unleash Thanatos upon each other on a grander scale than previously seen, they are also subject to Cthulhu’s call.

This is where my interpretation of Cthulhu as a destructive force prescient of the then-building World War II is important. If racial degradation is Lovecraft’s cause for violent conflict, then World War II would be the ultimate iteration of this violence. However, given the aforementioned scattershot nature of Lovecraft scholarship, seeking an answer to “what is Cthulhu?” will yield a myriad of answers. Some scholars do place Cthulhu as an embodiment of strife and destruction which consumes the globe. In his paper on Lovecraft, “Historicizing Lovecraft’: The Great War and America’s Cosmic Dread,” historian W. Scott Poole writes:

Cthulhu emerges as the monster on the horizon that’s not ahead of us but rather bearing down upon us. He will rise when the stars are right and bring about the end of human time. [...] Cthulhu tells the secret that Lovecraft always told and the secret was death [...] History, even the allegedly “exceptional” history of the American experience, ceases to have meaning in the Lovecraftian universe in which even human thought becomes fragmentary and meaningless in the face of the random chaos of the cosmic. (47-48)

While Poole writes primarily from the perspective of situating Lovecraft between modernists and postmodernists, his argument does reside a great deal in Lovecraft's preoccupation with the Great War. Here, he argues that Cthulhu represents the death of "humanity" which sparks the collapse of historical narratives of "exceptionalism." Being an American ceases to matter in the face of the apocalyptic power of Cthulhu. I feel that the interpretation can be pushed further into a clear, prescient fear of an approaching, devastating global event. Take the ending of "Cthulhu," which reads as:

Cthulhu still lives, too, I suppose, again in that chasm of stone which has shielded him since the sun was young. His accursed city is sunken once more, for the *Vigilant* sailed over the spot after the April storm; but his ministers on earth still bellow and prance and slay around idol-capped monoliths in lonely places. He must have been trapped by the sinking whilst within his black abyss, or else the world would by now be screaming with fright and frenzy. Who knows the end? What has risen may sink, and what has sunk may rise. Loathsomeness waits and dreams in the deep and decay spreads over the tottering cities of men (Lovecraft 157).

This section ties Lovecraft's themes together and is the best evidence for my case: Cthulhu is a psychic manifestation of Lovecraft's anxieties surrounding future, global conflict. Cthulhu, at this point in the story, has just risen and sunk again due to actions by a group of unsuspecting Norwegian sailors. Cthulhu is a fear that has been repressed by being sent beneath the sea, beneath the waking world and conscious mind. He is the id and Thanatos made manifest, made literal and fully-formed as an octopus-headed monster. The implication that he sank implies he was once above the surface both literally—he does rise in the story to terrify the aforementioned Norwegian sailors—but figuratively as an expression of a second Thanatos-fueled Great War. While he is asleep now—this is the interwar period, after all—Thurston (and, by proxy, Lovecraft) clearly dreads the possibility of him rising again: "what has sunk may rise." The Great War has ended (or "sunk"), but Germany is in ruin from the Treaty of Versailles and exists in a state of turmoil. The Nazi Party had begun gaining relevance following Hitler's incarceration. Further, and arguably most importantly, the Great War showed that it is possible for "civilized" nations of white people to slaughter each other for seemingly no reason. The door had been opened and could no longer be shut; the possibility always loomed like an eldritch god of chaos. The line after that is also apocalyptic and evocative of Great War imagery: "decay

spreads over the tottering cities of men.” It is also curiously prescient of World War II, namely the London *Blitzkrieg*, Dresden, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki which left cities decimated by the same advances in technology which would otherwise serve as hallmarks of civilizational progress. The atomic bomb “spread decay,” permanently searing shadows of its victims into what structures remained after it was dropped. It could also be seen as, perhaps, the ashes of Holocaust victims. Anti-semitism “has risen” cyclically throughout history. Cthulhu’s rise can resemble the apocalyptic endpoint of it. If Thanatos breaking free of repression led to the Great War, the inevitability of it breaking free again simply implies there will be another one.

Further building from Kwong, there is a passage in “Cthulhu” which both serves as a counter to his argument that “The Call of Cthulhu” is a radicalizing narrative, but also demonstrates he is correct in his assertion that Lovecraft writes stories that present better alternatives to his own worldview. At the end of the story, the narrator, Thurston, is mentally broken from his discovery of Cthulhu:

I have placed [the document recounting a sighting of Cthulhu] in the tin box beside the bas-relief and the papers of [Thurston’s uncle] Professor Angell. With it shall go this record of mine—this test of my own sanity, wherein is pieced together that which I hope may never be pieced together again. I have looked upon all that the universe has to hold of horror, and even the skies of spring and the flowers of summer must ever afterward be poison to me. I do not think my life will be long. As my uncle went [...] I shall go. I know too much, and the cult still lives (156-157).

Thurston’s presence in the story is almost exclusively a connective tissue between the more disparate elements of the narrative. There are large breaks from his involvement altogether, such as in the final section of the story in which Lovecraft includes a several-page newspaper clipping. Thurston is a tool to solve a problem and little else, other than the brief glimpses of his mental degradation as he learns more and more about his uncle’s research and Cthulhu. In this way, Thurston exists somewhat pre-gestalt. He is not a fully-formed person. The texts he sorts through and the interviews he conducts act as a sort of “mirror stage.” Thurston’s test of sanity is unsuccessful. He is paranoid and conspiratorial, believing that the Cthulhu cult had his ninety-something-year-old great-uncle killed rather than natural causes. He believes the cult is now out to kill him because he knows “too much” about Cthulhu. This neurosis is a direct link to the “mirror stage” of discovering the disparate pieces of a larger puzzle revolving around the

Cthulhu cult. As with Lacan, attempts to chase the “thing itself” has only resulted in being further from the “truth” and a realization that the truth can never be fully attained—hence Cthulhu being cosmicism embodied. What was once good and calming—the “skies of spring and the flowers of summer” (157)—Thurston took for granted and can no longer look to them for a source of comfort, much as how civilization once looked to race and “progress” as narratives which fulfilled their lives. This “chase” inevitably leads to a lack of closure and understanding (are revealed to be untrue).

Additionally, it is imperative to note that Thurston never truly comes face to face with Cthulhu himself. He only knows of his existence from secondhand sources, furthering Thurston from the “chase” and true closure from knowing “the thing itself” and forming a unified sense of the self and the world. Merely the idea the chase exists is enough to drive him to madness. Where Lacan sees this chase as an area in which one can enjoy attempting to find the Truth, or the thing itself, Lovecraft sees this as a horrific loss of meaning and value—it is a horror story, after all. Thurston’s “mirror stage,” which is seeing the evidence of Cthulhu’s existence from second-hand sources, is what drives him to madness. Attempting to place himself as a white male in a world of increasingly difficult-to-define boundaries and definitions—much like a child realizing they are part of the world they have been experiencing—pushes him over the edge into an existential nightmare. If, however, Cthulhu represents nihilism personified, as evidence that the chase has barely even begun, this would validate the assertion that race has no meaning.

The horrifically, fantastically racist fever dream that *is* “Innsmouth” also points to Lovecraft’s “solution” to the “problems” leading to future strife—to Cthulhu’s rising. After all, if Cthulhu is a repressed fear of another Great War or the failure of the repression of Thanatos, it makes sense for this fear to go somewhere; it needs to be projected elsewhere. It finds perch in Lovecraft’s racism. Fortunately (for Lovecraft), the early-twentieth century could provide hope in the form of eugenics, a pseudoscience that promises racial lines can be clearly drawn and maintained. While Lovecraft in the story never says the word “eugenics” aloud, “Innsmouth” showcases how Lovecraft strived to continue pushing for eugenics long after it lost mainstream appeal. Lovett-Graff writes:

When ‘The Shadow over Innsmouth’ appeared in 1932, the eugenics and anti-immigration movements had already seen their heyday. Slowly losing members as the Great Depression swept up citizens with more pressing issues, both movements moved

on to new areas of concern. But not Lovecraft. While ‘Shadow’ may be distinguished from his earlier tales of degeneration [...] its focus on questions of racial degeneration kept it solidly within the spectrum of anxieties of his early tales (175-176).

To paraphrase, by the time “Innsmouth” was written, eugenics had already largely been left by the wayside, with the movement now only consisting of its true believers: the Nazis and fascists both abroad and at home. Whether it is because of Lovecraft’s fetishization of academia without properly understanding it or simply because he was an atheist materialist seeking any kind of scientific rationalization of what he feared (and likely knew) to be an incorrect view of the world, the fears at the core of “Innsmouth” show he had not forgone eugenics. I agree with Lovett-Graff’s reading. Where I would push it further is that Lovecraft’s support for eugenics serves as a counterbalance to the violence in the story. Much of the tale is a bizarre, feverish lynching narrative. However, in “Innsmouth,” the violence is directed toward the unnamed narrator, who is forced to flee as the entire town bears down on him with violent intent. Innsmouth only becomes a place of refuge after it is revealed the narrator has Deep One heritage. Lovecraft concludes the story with the following:

The mirror definitely told me I had acquired the *Innsmouth look*. So far I have not shot myself as my uncle Douglas did. I bought an automatic and almost took the step, but certain dreams deterred me [...] Stupendous and unheard of splendours await me below, and I shall seek them soon. *Ia-Rlyeh! Cthulhu fhtagn! Ia! Ia!* [...] We shall swim out to that brooding reef in the sea and dive down through black abysses to Cyclopean [...] Y’hantleii, and in that lair of the Deep Ones we shall dwell amidst wonder and glory forever (Lovecraft 641-642).

The conclusion of “Innsmouth,” with the narrator accepting his fate and venturing to join his companions under the sea, is clearly meant to be the height of the story’s horror. The “Innsmouth look”—the fish-person features which hint at racial-ambiguity as describing the driver in an earlier paragraph—has been built up over the course of the story as a sign of fear and anxiety. It is a sign of *difference*. Those who are different are a source of violence. The unnamed narrator goes from being nearly lynched by his unknowing Deep One relatives to being giddy about the “splendours” of ocean life. He speaks in the language of Cthulhu, saying, “*Cthulhu fhtagn!*” (642), implying a connection to some form of hivemind which the eldritch god uses to commune and, perhaps even, command the Deep Ones (or, the unleashing of the Freudian Thanatos). With

the Deep Ones having previously been a source of terror, his sudden acceptance of his new life as a fish person implies a future of participation in this violence. While he speaks of “wonder and glory,” the word “lair” has a distinctly villainous connotation. “Black abysses” also appears contradictory, like his rational human mind (the “white” side) is being infected or taken over as his alienness consumes him. The suicide attempt being a failure is clearly meant to be tragic through this lens. Death is a better alternative to Lovecraft than living as a mixed-race person. Given the sociohistorical context of “Innsmouth,” a horror story taking the unknowability of race highlighted by cases such as *Rhineland v. Rhineland* to their logical extremes (how can one tell what race *anyone*, including themselves, is?), this implication of death being preferable to miscegenation is bleak. It also carries implications of political prescriptivism. If death is better than life as a mixed-race person, and anyone can be mixed-race, the logical solution to the problem is to simply prevent races from mixing. Lovecraft had an affinity for academia, though was largely uneducated. With how prevalent eugenics was as a science on many college campuses, it is unsurprising that an atheist materialist such as Lovecraft would jump at the opportunity to justify the unjustifiable racism he possessed. Eugenics promises that racial castes are not only natural but can be rigidly kept in order. “Innsmouth,” with its fish monsters essentially performing rape-by-deception on the human population in order to generate more Deep One offspring, is a story begging for a solution to the Deep One problem. Just as eugenics would later provide the Third Reich with a “science” to “cleanse” Germany, Lovecraft assures the reader that the Innsmouth ordeal can be solved with preventative measures on breeding. It is ironic that Lovecraft’s search for a fix to the projected fear of racial harmony only serves to fuel the original, repressed idea of more devastating conflict.

Conclusion

In a paper that also seeks to answer “what is Cthulhu?” David Peak states that, “Cthulhu is perhaps representative of an inability to correlate scientific findings into a comprehensible system” (176). Given Lovecraft opens “The Call of Cthulhu” this interpretation might lack specificity, the broad argument is quite universally applicable. I would push this further by turning it against Lovecraft himself. Is eugenics also not a science that will be demolished upon Cthulhu’s return to the surface? There is no evidence that miscegenation laws would have prevented World War II in any way. If anything, the legalized racial caste system in America only proved to Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party that it was possible to institute a pro-Aryan

society in Germany during the 1930s. Lovecraft's "solution"--eugenics, the bedrock of miscegenation laws and segregation--directly contributed, however small, to World War II, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. However, Lovecraft's seemingly-unconscious repetition of Freudian concepts implies that the psychoanalytic truth is a deeper one, less affected by the cosmic nihilism of Cthulhu who renders scientific explanations dead in his rising wake. Lovecraft's stories become a primordial expression of repression of the knowledge that the Meliorist myth of Western superiority is hollow. The fear of a Great War is repressed much like the fear of Western civilization's grand narratives being just as fictitious as Cthulhu, the fear of Cthulhu sinking beneath the waves, and the fear is projected onto non-white races, whom Lovecraft and a not-insignificant portion of America at the time blamed for the world's woes. If the problems were caused by the dissolution of racial barriers, this was a problem many believed could be solved through eugenics. It, however, completely ignores the issue which is closer to the truth: in order for civilization to function, it requires repressing one's deepest desires. Some of these desires are destructive, and cannot be repressed forever. This can be mitigated from a Freudian perspective. If repression is the issue, simply live freer and promote a civilization that does not feed its own neuroses through moral purity. Without these changes, the Thanatos desires will inevitably unshackle themselves. They will commit genocide and murders and mow soldiers down with machine guns in trenches. The unstoppable of Thanatos is, ironically, more horrifying and more in line with the cosmic nihilism that Cthulhu heralds. It makes Lovecraft's work more tragic and more prescient than he was likely aware of. HP Lovecraft wrote about a dead world dreaming. And it dreamt terrible, horrible things.

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Isolationism and Interventionism in U.S. Foreign Policy

Jackson Logan

Throughout its history, the United States has commonly been described as an isolationist country. However, given the role the United States has played on the world stage recently, it has now often been referred to as a police force utilizing unilateral interventionism across the globe. The question that has thus often been posed to historians is this: At what point did the United States' identity transition from an isolationist nation to one that is willing to exercise force internationally? While at certain times in its history the United States has had non-interventionist intentions, the main contention of this paper is, that not only has the United States never been an isolationist country, but since the mid-20th century it also has never been non-interventionist. Instead, through the utilization of expansionist policy in its early years leading to an identity of exceptionalism in political spaces, the United States grew into an interventionist nation as it developed a firm foothold as a superpower.

To begin, the terms isolationism and interventionism should be defined. To be isolationist as a country means to adopt a policy of non-involvement and remain apart from the policies and affairs of other nations. Interventionism is the opposite to isolationism in the sense that an interventionist policy actively looks to involve a country in the affairs of other states, normally economically or politically (Merriam-Webster). With this understanding of isolationism in mind, consider the formative years of the United States. This new country found itself philosophically sympathetic to an international revolution that was unfolding in France, while at the same time trying to avoid implicating itself in the historical rivalry between France and Britain, the former colonizer of the United States. These tensions ultimately pushed the nascent United States into adopting “a bipartisan policy of detached non-entanglement with regard to European rivalries and ultimately a spheres-of-influence demarcation of global authority” (Quinn, 2010, p. 2). Given these tensions, the closest to isolationism United States foreign policy looked was in its very early days. The young country stayed outside of the growing tension between France and Britain and, through the Monroe Doctrine, effectively declared a “no-fly zone” in the western hemisphere to stave off European involvement in their backyard. The strongest influence for isolationism at the time was in Washington's farewell address, where he warned against involvement in foreign affairs stating, “The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little political connection

as possible” (Washington, 1796). Washington means here that, although the United States as a country should seek to trade with other countries, it is wise to avoid overtly connecting with them in any way politically. Washington did however understand that there was no possible way in which the United States could be truly isolated from the rest of the world as he goes on to state, “The West derives from the East supplies requisite to its growth and comfort” (Washington, 1796). This illustrates that Washington had some understanding that the old and new were already intertwined and that this connection could not be undone, but only mitigated through careful political exercise. Furthermore, he argues that even if it could be severed the old and new world would still need to be connected at least economically for the growth of a fledgling nation.

This alleged adherence to isolation was not isolated to just Washington. As John Quincy Adams stated in his “In Search of Monsters to Destroy” speech, “She [the United States] well knows that by once enlisting under other banners than her own, were they even the banners of foreign independence, she would involve herself beyond the power of extrication” (Adams, 1821). Adams states here that American involvement in wars, even if for causes that the majority of the United States agrees with (in other words intervention), would render the United States unremovable from the landscape of European politics. As such, Adams continues by advocating that: “But she [the United States] goes not abroad, in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own.” (Adams, 1821). He further illustrates this point of non-intervention in European affairs by making it abundantly clear that the United States should serve as an example or an exemplar, rather than a missionary of liberty and justice for all. In short, these two American forefathers argue that the United States is not one to intervene in foreign affairs, but will come crashing down in defense of her own. This kind of political thought was a development of Washington’s earlier address and while it certainly advocates for a lack of military involvement in Europe and European affairs, Adams does little to talk against trade between the old and new world.

While this talk from Washington and Adams certainly flirts with the idea of isolationism, it never fully commits to it. A more nuanced examination of alleged US isolationism reveals some rather deep commitments to expansion and interventionism. Restad makes this clear when she states, “the old thesis of expansionism as isolationism rested on a Eurocentric view of American foreign policy, a perspective that viewed US international relations as primarily faced

toward the Atlantic Ocean” (2012, p.64). This statement illustrates that although many historians up to that point had viewed the early United States as isolationist, this was only through the narrow lens of examining the relationship between the United States and Europe while failing to consider what kind of policy was being carried out as the United States expanded into the rest of North America. She continues this point by stating, “The argument of ‘exemplary expansion’ only holds, however, if we assume that the acquisition of new territory, previously not belonging to one’s country, somehow falls within the realm of domestic, as opposed to foreign, policy” (p. 56). This essentially means that although historians viewed this time period through the lens of European relations and the founding fathers’ insistence on staying out of European affairs, the United States actively blazing a trail through neighboring territory and consistently expanding cannot by definition be isolationist. Though there is no evidence here to suggest that the United States was in any way interventionist in the early 1800s, instead, Restad argues the point that rather than being purely isolationist the United States existed as an Exemplary or Missionary Exceptionality, even going on to say that “contemporary historians do not think early US foreign policy was isolationist at all, and the term itself only appeared in the early twentieth century as an accusation” (Restad, 2012, p. 62). This is even further evidence that at no point in time in its early history was the United States isolationist, and as it continued its development into the late 1800s and early 1900s there was actually a trend toward interventionism.

As the United States entered the industrial age and the world stage it began to shed much of its non-interventionist motives as it sought to make an impact and carve out a spot in the international landscape. According to Mead, in “The American Foreign Policy Tradition,” there is an intentional viewpoint held by Americans about their own identity on the national landscape stating, “Americans of 1900 thought they had an active, indeed a global foreign policy” (2009, p. 3). Mead is thus suggesting that, by the turn of the 20th century, the active foreign policy of the United States must have changed from the non-interventionism advised by Washington and Adams into a much more hands-on approach to the global stage. In a further statement about the early foreign policy of the United States, Mead argues “the young American republic quickly established itself as a force to be reckoned with... American diplomacy managed to outmaneuver Great Britain and the continental powers on a number of occasions” (2009, p. 8). He then goes on to list several achievements of American foreign policy such as the Louisiana Purchase, Expansion to the Pacific, and opening trade with Japan (2009, p.8). This kind of incredibly

international foreign policy has pockmarked the era of American history which others would claim was its isolationist period. In fact, Mead argues that, by the mid-1800s, the United States had shed any illusion of isolationism, and “by 1860 the marines had already been far to the west and south of Mexico as well as to the east and north of Libya” (2009, p.25). This ultimately implies that U.S. military power had already been spread far and wide globally even before the Civil War had been settled. This kind of weight-throwing mentality would be evident in other American actions where the policy of interventionism began to set in, such as the opening of Japan to foreign trade through the threat of military force. This brand of American intervention policy would especially increase after the Second World War when the United States and the U.S.S.R. emerged as the two superpowers on the global stage.

Both before and after the First World War, the United States was in a position as a very important player on the international level, due to both the aftermath of the Spanish-American War as the cornerstone of a new American empire and the need for Europe to rebuild following World War Two. The new American interest shifted to the protection of its businesses internationally. In the article “U.S. Foreign Policy of Interventionism” Walli makes this point when he states, “Even during Roosevelt's administration, non-military interventionist methods were employed to frustrate Cuba's revolution of 1933, and to create major difficulties for the Cardena regime in Mexico after it nationalized US oil hold” (Walli, 1976, p. 43). He goes on to say that in the defense of its business interests in the international realm, the United States’ foreign policy became a “Holy war” against any opposing ideology (Walli, 1976, p. 43). This kind of intervention policy put the United States in a position firmly against the Communist U.S.S.R. and set into motion the policies of containment which led to increased American intervention in many conflicts throughout the latter half of the 20th century. This kind of behavior would mark the United States as a policing force on the world stage, or as Walli puts it “The United States took upon itself the role of self-styled policeman. It had been even so before but it assumed global dimension in the post-war world of cataclysmic changes” (Walli, 1976, p. 45). Embracing this new role, the United States began to exert its will and, in at least a public-facing way, took up the causes originally warned against by Adams seeking out “monsters” and claiming to defend democracy wherever it was threatened.

This same mindset would permeate into the present day, especially in consideration of American intervention in the Middle East and the war on terror. In the present-day United States,

there is an argument over which type of foreign policy would be better for the United States to adopt moving forward. Although there are many arguments against interventionism and for it, there are equally calls to “return” to the isolationism practiced in the past. This type of argument is based on the aforementioned assumptions, where the United States is perceived to be an isolationist country. In fact, as made clear by Fensterwald “American Isolationism has never been more than pseudo-isolationism” (Fensterwald, 1958, p. 138). This means that, although there may be a non-interventionism shading to decisions made throughout American history, there is no true isolationist policy to return to. Another reason for this type of fallacy perpetuating the myth of isolationism is, as Fensterwald describes, the intersection of American Expansionism and the European view of the United States in its early years as “aloof” from European affairs. This was a key reason for the perception of being isolationist that America received and instilling a false sense of security and importance in the development of the Manifest Destiny which guided American foreign policy (Fensterwald, 1958: 116-117). While the United States had the western hemisphere free from European interference for a while, these values would eventually lead to increased activity as the United States sought to fulfill its “Manifest Destiny”.

The question at hand is then this: Which policy would be best for the United States to pursue as its foreign policy? To answer this question the nature of the dichotomy between isolationism and interventionism must be addressed. While some political scientists would defend them as being opposite sides of the same spectrum, others such as Ravenal in “‘Isolationism’ as the Denial of Intervention: What Foreign Policy Is and Isn’t” state that “To frame foreign policy as a compromise between ‘global policeman’ and ‘isolationism’ misses the point entirely” (Ravenal, 2000, p.1). This statement flies exactly in the face of the idea of a spectrum between intervention and isolation. Rather than foreign policy as a whole being determined by an overlaying theory, it is merely a split difference in each decision based on the current leadership’s opinion on what is worth protecting and what is not. Obviously given the situation surrounding the War on Terror, there is a large amount of American military activity in the Middle East. As Ravenal predicted “There will be, predictively—there already is, impending—a denial of American military intervention, particularly with significant ground forces, in other regions of the world” (Ravenal, 2000, p. 7). This is widely true as American military forces are being pulled out of areas which were previously hotly contested, mostly

alongside calls to return to an isolationist policy and stop overinvolvement. So as America moves forward, instead of deciding on an isolationist or interventionist policy it may be best to find the middle ground and utilize prudence in determining when and where to act.

In conclusion, although at times the United States has engaged in certain isolationist tendencies, it is wrongly categorized as being a primarily isolationist nation. Throughout the history of the United State, the country has engaged in foreign policy seeking to serve as a guide for other countries to base themselves on. It has militarily challenged the goals of other countries all over the world since the 1800s, and in present-day acts as an interventionist force on the world stage with the stated goal of the preservation of democracy. Economically, it has been involved with hundreds of countries as trade partners even forcing trade on countries at times. While this type of interventionism is preferred to abject isolationism, there are downsides evident in terror response and a view on the world stage as a “bully.” As a result, a middle-ground approach to future international endeavors may be preferred, with theories about selective engagement determining where and when to act not only at a military level, but also as far as trade and cooperation in global affairs are concerned.

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**The Necessity of the Necessary and Proper Clause:
Its Interpretation by the Supreme Court and Its Effects on Society**

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Abstract

This paper examines the Necessary and Proper Clause in Article 1 of the Constitution of the United States, and how the Supreme Court has interpreted it throughout history. At the founding of the United States, the powers of the Federal government were very limited. However, after a major landmark case in 1819, the Necessary and Proper Clause was used to greatly expand federal power. By examining Supreme Court cases, involving interpretations of the Necessary and Proper Clause in the Founding Era, in relation to the Commerce Clause, and in the modern day, this paper seeks to understand its constitutional interpretations by the Supreme Court, and its impact on American society.

Keywords: *Necessary and Proper Clause, Commerce Clause, Supreme Court.*

The Necessity of the Necessary and Proper Clause.

At the founding of the United States, the Federal government's power was very limited. However, that began to change after the Supreme Court granted a powerful tool to the government that allowed it to use its powers more effectively. This tool was a relatively small piece of text located in the Constitution. The Necessary and Proper Clause in the years since then has acted as a major source of authority, from which the government has derived a large amount of its power. It can even be said that without it, the government would not be able to fulfill many of its duties. Using this clause, the government has been able to enact positive societal changes in a wide variety of social issues concerning everything from the economy to civil rights, and justice. However, the ability of the Government to support positive social changes using the Necessary and Proper Clause has always depended on the Supreme Court's interpretations throughout history, which have ranged from a more conservative interpretation to a more liberal one, that developed due to the court's legal defining and usage of the clause itself.

To understand the power of the Necessary and Proper Clause, and the Supreme Court's role in defining that power, one must first examine the text of the Necessary and Proper Clause itself, important legal cases involving the clause in early American history, and the roles of originalist and non-originalist interpretations, in defining it. Secondly, one must examine the

importance of the Commerce Clause and its relation to the Necessary and Proper Clause, and several major court cases involving commerce and trade. Finally, an examination of relatively recent major cases is necessary for understanding how the Necessary and Proper Clause has been defined in the modern day, and how that has had an impact on society. Through examining the Necessary and Proper Clause through rulings by the Supreme Court in the Founding Era of the United States, in relation to the Commerce Clause, and in the modern day, one can understand how a non-originalist mindset has led to positive changes in American society. Some of these include improvements in the economy, civil rights, justice, and the efficient functioning of the government. A more conservative originalist mindset, in contrast, has led to regressive changes in these areas.

The Necessary and Proper Clause, Constitutional interpretations, and Supreme Court cases.

The Necessary and Proper Clause.

The first step in understanding the Necessary and Proper Clause, and its effects, is understanding the clause itself, its history, and the interpretations that have defined it. The powers of Congress are mainly outlined in a large number of clauses, listed in Article 1 section 8 of the Constitution. The last of these clauses gives Congress the power, "...To make all laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into execution the foregoing powers, and all other powers vested by this Constitution in the Government of the United States or in any department or Officer thereof" (The Constitution of the United States and The Declaration of Independence, 2019, p. 7). Located at the end, at first glance, this clause seems fairly mundane. After all, what it is basically saying, is that the Constitution gives the government the legal power to carry out its legal powers. This is clearly a necessary feature. However, it can be argued that its obviousness and mundaneness are what makes it so important since clarity is vital when it comes to legal matters pertaining to government actions.

A somewhat mundane example to make this point is when the Necessary and Proper Clause is used by the government to obtain land for building post offices. The authority to perform this action itself is not explicitly stated in the Constitution, but it is still a justifiable action under the Necessary and Proper Clause since it helps the government carry out the duties of one of its enumerated powers in the Constitution (May, C. N., Ides, A., & Grossi, S. 2016, pp. 231-232). Since the enacting of the powers given to Congress by the Constitution is an essential

reason for the federal system to work, this clause helps to ensure, at the very least, that the government runs smoothly. If the government does not run smoothly, the system collapses. However, the importance of this clause is not just limited to that, but also to much more.

McCulloch V. Maryland.

The most important event that one needs to examine to understand the importance of the Necessary and Proper Clause is the landmark Supreme Court case, *McCulloch V. Maryland*. The case, coming to the court in 1819, started as a dispute over a Maryland tax on the Bank of the United States. The case went before the Supreme Court, and the authority of the federal government to create the bank was questioned. Ultimately, John Marshall, the Chief Justice, ruled in favor of the Bank's existence and the federal government's power to have made it, and as a result, allowed the federal government to assert itself more strongly in national affairs. (Nowak, J. E., & Rotunda, R. D. 1991, pp. 117-121). Multiple major precedents were set by this case that have shaped constitutional law to this very day. Among these precedents was an examination of the Necessary and Proper Clause. John Marshall reasoned in the case, that the powers given to Congress were meant to be executed to the best of their abilities. He used the Necessary and Proper Clause to support his reasoning by saying, "...this provision is made in a constitution intended to endure for ages to come, and consequently, to be adapted to the various crises of human affairs..." (May, C. N., Ides, A., & Grossi, S. 2016, p. 233). What John Marshall said here was that the Constitution was made to be adaptable to any problems or issues that the nation needed to take on. This more flexible viewpoint was in stark contrast to the reasoning of the viewpoint of the legal counsel of Maryland, Luther Martin, who attended the original constitutional convention. He argued for a stricter interpretation of the government's power, on the basis that the original farmers of the constitution had no intention to give such power (Hoffer, P. C., Hoffer, W., & H., H. N. E. 2018, p. 68). This stricter interpretation, and the opposing more liberal interpretation, continued to develop, and have become considerable factors when determining the constitutionality of the law.

Originalism and Non-Originalism

Two main interpretations continue to play a considerable role in the Supreme Court's decisions. These two interpretations are the originalist and non-originalist viewpoints. The main argument of the originalist viewpoint is that if an issue is not specifically mentioned in the Constitution, the courts cannot interfere and that any change meant to address it has to come

through amendments. This viewpoint supports more strict readings of the constitution, that stray very little from the original meanings and intentions of the text. In contrast, the non-originalist approach believes that the courts can intervene on issues that are not stated in the Constitution and that interpretations of constitutional texts can change to be more suited to changing times (Chemerinsky, E. 1997 pp. 22-25). Both of these interpretations have been around in some form ever since early American history. As one can guess, the originalist viewpoint supports a more conservative mindset, since it is more disposed toward maintaining a legal status quo. The non-originalist viewpoint supports a more liberal mindset since it advocates for change and progress in the law. These two viewpoints have played a large role in defining the Necessary and Proper Clause, ever since *McCulloch V. Maryland*.

Wayman V. Southard and Gibbons V. Ogden.

Two other major cases that took place during the Founding Era, besides *McCulloch*, also involved the Necessary and Proper Clause. In *Wayman V. Southard*, John Marshall upheld the authority of the federal government to delegate power to the federal courts, to allow the judicial system to regulate its own rules and procedures, by declaring, “The legislature makes, the executive executes, and the judiciary construes the law, but the maker of the law may commit something to the discretion of the other departments” (Lawson, G. 2016, pp. 101-102). This helped to reinforce the Necessary and Proper Clause’s other use by the Congress, besides giving legal power to Congress to carry out its powers, to strengthen the authority of the other branches of the Federal government (Epstein, R. A. 2014). This case would go on to become a major precedent for future rulings also utilizing the Necessary and Proper Clause to reinforce the functioning of the government.

Gibbons V. Ogden, the other case involving the Necessary and Proper Clause, and just as important as *McCulloch* in early American legal history, involved the crucial issue at the time, of commerce in the nation. At the time, commerce on the nation’s waterways involving steamboats, one of the main forms of transporting goods across the nation, was being severely affected by monopolies given to individuals, because of favoritism created by the states. The growing crisis caused some serious friction among the states, and there was even talk of a few of the states going to war with one another over it. John Marshall tackled the issue and after careful consideration, invoked the Necessary and Proper Clause to break up these monopolies. Similar to his previous rulings, he also took a less strict viewpoint of constitutional law, by specifically

arguing against a strict interpretation of the Constitution, John Marshall's ruling helped to ease tensions and also helped to drastically increase commerce and boost the economy of the country (Fairman, C. 1950 pp. 179-192). This last case also involved another important Constitutional clause, known as the Commerce Clause. Paired with the Necessary and Proper Clause, the Commerce Clause, interpreted with a more adaptable and non-originalist constitutional interpretation, has led to positive changes in society. However, when these clauses are limited or ignored, it has led to regressive changes.

The Commerce Clause, and related cases

Commerce Clause

One of the most important pieces of text in the Constitution is the Commerce Clause. Located in Article 1 Section 8, it authorizes Congress, "To regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several states, and with the Indian Tribes" (Nowak, J. E., & Rotunda, R. D. 1991, p. 129). On the surface, this seems like a fairly mundane piece of text. However, like the Necessary and Proper Clause, it has a lot of power behind it as well. In terms of domestic policy, this clause gives Congress the power to control factors that affect the economy. Since many activities in the country have a direct or indirect effect on the economy, the clause allows Congress to intervene in a wide range of issues, even those not seemingly related to commerce. Using this clause, the federal government has been able to pass legislation not only involving the economy but also legislation involving civil rights, criminal law, the environment, and a host of other issues. Coupled with the Necessary and Proper Clause, it is the quintessential example of the U.S government's exercise of its authority, and as a result, both together have been frequently examined by the Supreme Court (Nowak, J. E., & Rotunda, R. D. 1991, p. 129; Chemerinsky, E. 1997 p. 154). Just like the Necessary and Proper Clause, the defining of the Commerce Clause authority in the Court's examinations, and its subsequent effects, have depended on the Court's interpretation in various court cases.

Commerce Clause cases relating to the economy.

One of the most important early cases involving the Commerce Clause was *Gibbons V. Ogden*, where it was used with the Necessary and Proper Clause. John Marshall set a broad interpretation of the word, "commerce," which he interpreted as all interactions and dealing involving business. This broad interpretation set the precedent for how the Commerce Clause was used in the future (Chemerinsky, E. 1997 p. 155). This view of the Commerce Clause was

well suited to be adaptable to increasingly complex economic issues that the country faced. Issues involving modern manufacturing are a good example of one such complex issue. In the instance of *United States V. Darby*, the precedents set for the Commerce Clause along with the Necessary and Proper Clause, in *Gibbons V. Ogden* and *McCulloch V. Maryland*, were used to enforce better working standards, that included a universal minimum wage, maximum work hours, and stricter child labor rules (Urofsky, M.I. 1989, p. 198; Justia Law, *United States V. Darby*, 312 U.S. 100, 1941). Since the poor working conditions created by the Industrial Revolution weren't present at the time the clause was written, an ever-changing non-originalist Constitutional approach was necessary to address the problem.

Heart of Atlanta Motel Inc. V. United States.

In addition to helping the law address the ever-changing and complex economic issues of the modern day, the Commerce Clause has also helped the law address ever-changing social issues. When civil rights came to the forefront of the nation's problems, the government used the clause to combat segregation in businesses. The heart of *Atlanta Motel Inc. V. United States* case in 1964, was one such instance. This case was originally started by a Georgia motel owner, to prevent African Americans from using his services. The legality of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which enforced racial integration and desegregation policies, was challenged, and the case was sent up to the Supreme Court. After deliberation, the Supreme Court concluded that the effects that discrimination had on commerce and business were well within the rights of the Federal government to address under the Commerce Clause. They backed this assertion of federal authority by also citing the Necessary and Proper Clause. Ultimately, the constitutionality of the Civil Rights Act was upheld (Chemerinsky, E. 1997 p. 162; Justia Law, *Heart of Atlanta Motel, Inc. V. United States*, 379 U.S. 241, 1964). This ruling helped to address the crisis of a changing time, that is, the issue of racial inequality. Without a more flexible mindset that allowed for a broad application of the Necessary and Proper Clause, such a ruling would have been harder to justify. In fact, one such strict interpretation of both clauses, led to the problem of segregation and discrimination, that the Civil Rights movement was trying to overturn in this case.

The Civil Rights Cases

The Civil Rights Cases examined by the Supreme Court in 1883 are a major example of when the court prevented positive social change from happening. This case was an amalgamation of multiple cases involving African Americans suing various businesses for discrimination, using

the anti-discrimination provisions under the Civil Rights Act of 1876. The Supreme Court used a strict textual interpretation of the 13th and 14th Amendments, with the court arguing that since the amendments did not explicitly address this issue, the government passage of the anti-discrimination provisions of the Act, was unconstitutional. The court reinforced this strict ruling, by also deciding that the Necessary and Proper Clause and the Commerce Clause, could not be used to justify the passing of the anti-discrimination legislation either. This ruling helped to set the stage for further discrimination against African Americans, well into the next century (Justia Law, Civil Rights Cases, 109 U.S. 3, 1883). This decision was a massive blow to positive social progress in the United States and is a major example of how a strict originalist interpretation of constitutional law, including the exclusion of the authority granted to the government under the Necessary and Proper Clause can lead to social regression.

The ruling in the Civil Rights Cases was especially tragic, considering the opinion of the lone dissenting justice in the cases. Justice John Marshal Harlan, perhaps channeling the spirit of his famous namesake, argued against such a strict interpretation of the Amendments, and that the Amendments could be used to uphold the act. He argued that such an interpretation was also against the spirit of the amendments. He also argued that the Necessary and Proper Clause did grant authority to Congress to enforce the provisions of the act and questioned the rest of the court's dismissal of the Commerce Clause. Summing up his overall view of the originalist interpretation of the rest of the court in the first part of his dissenting opinion he declared, "It is not the words of the law, but the internal sense of it that makes the law; the letter of the law is the body; the sense and reason of the law is the soul" (Justia Law, Civil Rights Cases, 109 U.S. 3, 1883.) If the rest of the court adopted such a view, perhaps discrimination and segregation could have been limited, and attempts to promote racial equality society allowed to prevail, but unfortunately this did not happen. So, when the Necessary and Proper Clause and Commerce Clause have been used with a non-originalist viewpoint, it has led to positive change in society, but when they have been restricted and strict originalism allowed to prevail, it can, and has led to regressive changes. In light of relatively recent court cases, perhaps that is the path that the nation will soon go on.

The Clauses in the Modern day.

Mistretta V. United States.

Just like previous periods in American history, a less strict examination by the Supreme Court of the Necessary and Proper Clause in relatively recent times, has had an important impact, especially in the assisting of the functioning of the government and justice. The case of *Mistretta V. United States* is one such instance. In an attempt to fix various problems with the sentencing system, the Sentencing Reform Act of 1984 was passed creating and delegating power to the United States Sentencing Commission, whose job it was to make sentencing more standardized. A man indicted for drug charges under this new system brought a case to court, challenging the constitutionality of the new Act. Ultimately, the Supreme Court decided that this delegation of power was constitutional, by citing John Marshall's use of the Necessary and Proper Clause in *Wayman V. Southard* (Lawson, G. 2016, p. 113-120; Justia law, *Mistretta V. United States*, 488 U.S. 361 1989). In this case, a less strict interpretation was used to justify this ruling. The Supreme Court declared that "...our jurisprudence has been driven by a practical understanding that, in our increasingly complex society, replete with ever-changing and more technical problems, Congress simply can't do its job absent an ability to delegate power under broad general directives" (Justia law, *Mistretta V. United States*, 488 U.S. 361 1989). By doing this, the Supreme Court explicitly recognized an interpretation that was similar to others in previous cases that moved away from a non-originalist viewpoint.

United States V. Comstock

The 2010 case *United States V. Comstock*, a similar case to *Mistretta*, involved an act permitting the Federal government to confine sexual predators for a longer period than in their original sentences. Five men, who were previously found guilty of various crimes against children, attempted to get off from further confinement, on the basis that this act exceeded Federal power. Two of the justices argued against the constitutionality of the act based on a strict textual interpretation. However, the rest of the court upheld the act using the Necessary and Proper Clause. Citing John Marshall in *McCulloch*, and other cases like *Darby V. United States* to back their reasoning up, they argued that since the act was meant to achieve a valid goal, under the power granted by the Commerce Clause, the Necessary and Proper Clause could be invoked to uphold the constitutionality of the act (Chemerinsky, E. 1997 p. 153; Justia Law, *United States V. Comstock*, 560 U.S. 126, 2010). Just like in previous cases, the Necessary and Proper Clause and the Commerce Clause were used with a more non-originalist interpretation to

enact a positive change, in this case, a measure to protect society from sexual predators. However, in other modern cases, the Supreme Court has not always taken this stance.

United States V. Morrison

United States V. Morrison, in 2000, involved the constitutionality of the Violence Against Women's Act, which provided women with legal actions against their abusers. The case was originally brought to courts, by a young college student who sued some of her fellow students for sexual assault, as well as her university for not punishing the offenders. The Supreme Court ultimately ruled against her, on the basis that the Commerce Clause, which was used to justify the passing of the act, was unconstitutional. By taking a more originalist interpretation, the Supreme Court narrowed the criteria for which the Commerce Clause could be used. However, four of the justices dissented against this originalist argument, by arguing that previous court precedents would have justified the existence of the Act and that Congress did not overstep its authority. (Chemerinsky, E. 1997 pp. 165-166; Justia law, *United States V. Morrison*, 529 U.S. 598 2000). While this case did establish a new originalist precedent, the court did not immediately stick to it, as evidenced by the Comstock case, however, in the most recent case involving the Necessary and Proper Clause, *National Federation of Independent Businesses V. Sebelius*, the Supreme Court did.

National Federation of Independent Businesses V. Sebelius

The case of *National Federation of Independent Businesses V. Sebelius* involved the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act which required states to cover Medicaid for people living under the poverty level. While the Court ultimately upheld the Act using Congress's taxing power, the Court decided that the Necessary and Proper Clause could not be used to justify the Act, on the basis that the passing of the Act could not be connected to an enumerated power given to Congress. Thus, a new precedent was set, which limited how the Necessary and Proper Clause could be used (Chemerinsky, E. 1997 p. 153; Justia law, *National Federation of Independent Business V. Sebelius*, 567 U.S. 519 2012). This new precedent limited the power of the Necessary and Proper Clause, which signaled a shift into more originalist opinions by the court. Considering the recent changes in the overall political ideology of the court, it is very likely that this shift is unlikely to be reversed anytime soon. As shown by previous cases and precedent, this could lead to less legal support for positive changes in American society than the Necessary and Proper Clause justified and could very likely lead to regression.

Negative and Positive effects of the interpretations of the Necessary and Proper Clause

As shown by numerous cases throughout American history, when the Necessary and Proper Clause has been interpreted with a non-originalist mindset, it has helped to lead to positive changes in society. In the case of *Gibbons V. Ogden* for example, it helped to fix various issues that affected the American economy and helped prevent escalating tensions among the states (Fairman, C. 1950 pp. 179-192). Another example was in the *Heart of Atlanta Motel* case, where it was used to help support the Civil Rights Movement (Chemerinsky, E. 1997 p. 162; Justia Law, *Heart of Atlanta Motel, Inc. V. United States*, 379 U.S. 241, 1964). In *Mistretta*, it helped to support and improve the functioning of the government in the modern day (Lawson, G. 2016, p. 113-120; Justia law, *Mistretta V. United States*, 488 U.S. 361 1989). When the Necessary and Proper Clause and other legal instruments, like the Commerce Clause, have been restricted by an Originalist argument it has led to regression. In early America, an originalist court would have probably left the government unable to effectively address the issues that affected the young nation at the time, such as the issues that led to *McCulloch*, and *Gibbons*, and it would have probably prevented the necessary growth of the power and functioning of the government, such as the necessary growth and delegation of power given to the judicial branch in *Wayman* (Nowak, J. E., & Rotunda, R. D. 1991, pp. 117-121; May, C. N., Ides, A., & Grossi, S. 2016, p. 233; Hoffer, P. C., Hoffer, W., & H., H. N. E. 2018, p. 68 Lawson, G. 2016, pp. 101-102; Fairman, C. 1950 pp. 179-192; Chemerinsky, E. 1997 p. 155; Epstein, R. A. 2014). The decisions made by John Marshall, including the ones in these cases, helped to give the young United States a strong economy and a strong central government, which would serve it well in future years (Hall, K. L. 1992, pp. 422-423). An originalist interpretation struck down early attempts to fight for racial inequality in the Civil Rights Cases, which helped support segregation and discrimination against African Americans for generations afterward (Justia Law, *Civil Rights Cases*, 109 U.S. 3, 1883). In the modern day, a strict more originalist interpretation by the court in *Morrison* led to the closing up of legal pathways, which women could have used to seek some form of restitution from those who harmed them (Chemerinsky, E. 1997 pp. 165-166; Justia law, *United States V. Morrison*, 529 U.S. 598 2000). It is quite clear how interpretations of the Necessary and Proper Clause can affect American society.

Conclusion

It is clear, that when the Supreme Court has examined the Necessary and Proper Clause with a non-originalist mindset, it has helped to spur positive changes in society, such as in the economy, civil rights, and justice, and when it has been dismissed, it has led to societal regression. In the Founding Era, the court's non-originalist interpretation helped to address several issues that helped strengthen the economy and also led to the necessary growth of the power of the Federal government, which helped bind the nation together in its infancy. When the Supreme Court used this non-originalist interpretation of the Necessary and Proper Clause, in conjunction with the Commerce Clause, another important legal instrument, it helped provide protections for certain groups. When the court has taken a looser interpretation of the clause in the modern day, it has helped support important legislation that has given power to the branches of the government to fulfill their crucial duties, and when the government has taken a stricter originalist interpretation, it has led to societal regression.

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Reproductive Rights: Cultural Narratives and Legislative Realities

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Within feminist theory, womanhood is not defined as a set of traits and norms, but as an opposition to performing masculinity. In this way, hegemonic norms dictate that women are not in possession of complex personhood in the same way that men are, reducing women to an othered subject position that causes them to often be demonized, objectified, and dominated (Beard). This attitude further translates to social and political domination of the female body, especially in regard to reproduction and reproductive rights; because men, especially white men, are typically in charge of dictating norms and policies, women become subjected to a reality of womanhood that they cannot define for themselves. Instead, men take it upon themselves to define the reality of womanhood however they see fit, creating a culture that devalues and controls women and the ways in which they express themselves. In terms of policy, a clear example of this cultural and political domination would be the overturn of *Roe v. Wade* in June of 2022. This decision was based not on any woman's lived experience, but on manufactured narratives surrounding abortion and reproductive healthcare that stem from Christian Fundamentalist social movements. Therefore, the legislative reality of womanhood is not based in fact, but is itself a simulacrum manufactured by the Christian Fundamentalist narratives assigned to medical images by anti-abortion activists. By constructing moral arguments about abortion that hinge on the "objective reality" of images, anti-abortion activists exclude the pregnant person from reproductive rights discourse and manufacture narratives about women and abortion that are translated to legislative realities.

The alienation of women from discourse on their own bodies has a long history, with its roots in the patriarchal and hegemonic structures of society. Hegemony can be defined as a system of organizing cultural and social groups that privileges a specific group as the norm – in the case of Western society, this refers to wealthy, white, heterosexual, cisgender men. This hegemony helps to manufacture a binary that privileges men with the act of self-determination, while women (and those that exist between the binary positions) do not have this ability. The inability to determine one's own identity puts them at risk to be objectified, devalued, and disregarded, as they are then defined by their genitalia and gender performance. This has become so ingrained in Western culture that it has taken on the label of "tradition," disregarding the historical accounts that disprove the existence and validity of a tradition of patriarchy.

Nonetheless, these hegemonic norms do not provide a concrete definition of the binary positions of “man” and “woman,” instead enforcing a system of performance that determines one’s roles and status in a patriarchal society. For the purposes of this essay, the term “women” will be used to refer to people assigned female at birth, and capable of pregnancy. The term “mother” will be used to refer to the pregnant person, regardless of gender identity, for the sake of simplification.

In a hegemonic social system, what is deemed “feminine” is considered to be inferior to “masculine” traits and performance: in the West, this is applied to the experiences of menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, caregiving, and other experiences or roles assigned to women. Nonetheless, there is not a clear definition of what a woman actually is, which Judith Roof explores in “What Gender Is, What Gender Does.” In her essay, Roof showcases how the enforcement of hegemonic norms depends on the belief in a binary system of categorization and enforcement of gender performance. She demonstrates this via the argument that gender cannot be confined to a binary system of performance, as these systems are simply a reaction to the fluid nature of gender and sexuality (Roof, 13). By manufacturing a binary system of performance, Western societies do not allow for actual definitions of separate identities – instead, society depends on gender performance and difference to determine one’s gender. Specifically, Roof writes “As genders' homeostasis, binarism appears to ground genders' interpretation of sexual difference; but this binarism also provides the state of asymmetrical imbalance toward which gender systems incline insofar as cultures tend to value one gender (read sex) more highly than the other” (Roof, 23). Here, she is stating quite plainly that there is no concrete construction of which attributes pertain to which gender or sex. If the binary system were to crumble, then, women would not have a system of self-determination to rely on, as their position in society has previously been determined by strict gender roles and performance. As more women become empowered and recognize the systems of oppression working against them, more rhetoric enters the public sphere about women abandoning motherhood and choosing childless lives in favor of prosperous careers, threatening the power of men as they become more educated and successful. This has been seen historically, with backlash against feminist movements and cultural shifts that pushed women out of the domestic sphere still perforating discourse on women’s rights today. In regard to reproduction, the tactics used to devalue women and their autonomy have allowed for a manufactured narrative to proliferate that allows no room for women to determine their own

identity or fate, instead privileging men to set those standards and make decisions on behalf of women.

The danger of allowing others to determine one's identity and reality lies in the possibility of losing touch with reality, especially when the simulated reality becomes so real that it is imperceptibly integrated into the "profound reality," a term used to describe the tangible reality from which people derive meaning. Jean Baudrillard explores this subject in his work *Simulacra and Simulation*, defining and exploring the consequences of a simulated reality on the individual and the profound reality. To begin, he defines the process of manufacturing the simulacrum, stating

“[the image] is the reflection of a profound reality;
it masks and denatures a profound reality;
it masks the absence of a profound reality;
it has no relation to any reality whatsoever;
it is its own pure simulacrum.” (Baudrillard, 6).

Another way to think of this is to consider the image itself as a caricature, which mimics reality but does not encapsulate the profound reality. This caricature does not have its own meaning, but is later assigned one alongside its own reality. As this proliferates, the caricature becomes its own simulacrum, as immersive and real to the subject as augmented reality-based media. The danger of this is the loss of a profound reality, as the simulacra becomes integrated into the profound reality and is weaponized against groups that do not assimilate into the simulacra. When considering reproductive rights, the image is typically the sonogram of a fetus that is assigned a narrative and distributed among the masses. The narratives assigned to these images then dictate discourse on abortion, actively centering the discussion on the fetus and excluding the mother. As Christian Fundamentalist anti-abortion groups grew in number and influence, this simulacra then perforated the judicial sphere, leading to the Supreme Court's overturn of *Roe v. Wade* in the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* decision in June of 2022.

The overturn of *Roe* was not a result of fifty years of activism, but of a long-standing practice of excluding women from discussions of their own health. To better understand the history of women's health in conversation with bodily autonomy, it is helpful to turn to Terri Kapsalis's *Public Privates: Performing Gynecology From Both Ends of the Speculum*. In the second chapter, "Mastering the Female Pelvis: Race and Tools of Reproduction," she discusses

the beginnings of gynecological practice with J. Marion Sims, who is dubbed the “Father of Modern Gynecology” and “Architect of the Vagina” in various medical texts (Kapsalis, CR 385). What many textbooks neglect to mention, however, is that Sims did not develop his practice with the aid of willing participants, but the forced subjugation of enslaved Black women whose health and comfort were not the goal of his “treatments.” Instead, his goal was to create a spectacle with enslaved women as the subjects (Kapsalis, CR 387-392). In this way, the foundations of gynecological practice set the tone for the broader, modernized practice, which still does not consider women’s comfort with the same attention as men’s comfort. Women are still subjected to painful procedures, including cervical biopsies and intra-uterine device (IUD) insertion and removal, with little to no anesthesia or adequate pain management tactics. Because gynecology also involves prenatal and postnatal care, it is difficult to believe that women’s health and comfort is a priority in these circumstances, either. Especially considering contemporary cases of sexual assault, abuse, and medical gaslighting in gynecology – experiences that are all too common – it becomes evident that there is little room made for the opinions of the patient in regard to her own reproductive health. In his abuses of enslaved women, J. Marion Sims invented a school of medicine that claimed to serve women’s needs, but instead functioned to better understand women’s bodies in terms of their ability (or inability) to reproduce. By putting this foundation in conversation with the realities of anti-abortion rhetoric in the 21st century, it is once again made clear how a medical field aimed to provide women with specialized care continues to fall short when considering women’s health, pain levels, and potential for complications from pregnancy or reproductive tract issues as a result of its foundational practices.

The foundations of modern gynecology set the stage for a practice of medicine that does not seek to serve its patients, but instead to dictate their lives and exercise control over women. While medical imaging has seen many advancements in the recent centuries, much like other medical technology, these advancements have proven to be somewhat nefarious with the democratized access to such information. Rosalind Pollack Petchesky discusses in her essay “Fetal Images: The Power of Visual Culture in the Politics of Reproduction” how medical imaging regarding pregnancy has been co-opted into moral arguments about abortion. One notable example of this is the short film *The Silent Scream*, which was created by a formerly pro-choice doctor, Bernard Nathanson. In Petchesky’s words,

“*The Silent Scream* purports to show a medical event, a real-time ultrasound imaging of a twelve-week-old fetus being aborted. What we see in fact is an image of an image of an image; or, rather, we see three concentric frames: our television or VCR screen, which in turn frames the video screen of the filming studio, which in turn frames a shadowy, black-and-white, pulsating blob: the (alleged) fetus.” (Petchesky, CR 289).

Essentially, the film is a series of images, the response to which is guided by Dr. Nathanson. It is Dr. Nathanson who guides the viewer through what is happening on the screen, and his verbiage is specifically framed in a way that is meant to create an ominous atmosphere around the procedure shown on the screen. Using words like “dismember, crush, destroy,” the doctor makes it seem as though the “abortionist” is seeking to murder a living child, knowingly committing an act of horrific violence against said child (qtd. Petchesky, CR 289). The ultimate claim of the film is that the “science of fetology” validates the supposed fact of the fetus being indistinguishable from any other human being, making them the victim of a horrid crime. Petchesky further breaks down the film by discussing the masculine nature of visual culture, as most imaging is manufactured with a gender bias toward men – especially when considering the sciences as masculine, due to their association with rationality rather than pathos or interpretation – it is evident that medical imaging was not developed with the pregnant woman in mind (Petchesky, CR 298-299). The fact of male-dominated visual culture combined with moral narratives based on the perceived objectivity of medical imaging has allowed for the anti-abortion movement, dominated by imaging with assigned meaning, to become an echochamber of men’s opinions about women’s bodies instead of a genuine, data-driven debate about the health of the mother or fetus.

The sonogram is not the only form of medical technology that has been weaponized against women in the abortion conflict. The fetal doppler, which is used to detect the fetus’s heartbeat, is also weaponized against women as a defense of a fetus’s personhood. In Rebecca Lentjes’s “Sounds of Life: Fetal Heartbeat Bills and the Politics of Animacy,” she discusses how the technology that allows a mother to hear their child’s heartbeat has been weaponized against pregnant people seeking abortions. Lentjes specifically refers to heartbeat bills as articulating “the subjecthood of physicians and the objecthood of pregnant bodies; they also rely on the animating capacity of sound in their efforts to enliven embryos and fetuses” (Lentjes, 2). In other words, Lentjes is asserting that heartbeat bills enforce the concept of pregnant people (and, by

extension, all women) as objects while their physicians are subjects. She pushes this assertion further by discussing the reliance on sound to manufacture the idea of the fetus as a person, giving it a life and sovereignty that science does not defend. These concepts came into play in 2017, with the “Heartbeat Protection Act.” This legislation would make it illegal for a doctor to “‘knowingly perform an abortion: (1) without determining whether the fetus has a detectable heartbeat, (2) without informing the mother of the results, or (3) after determining that a fetus has a detectable heartbeat’” (qtd. Lentjes, 1). Again, it is clear that the goal of anti-abortion legislation is to prioritize the sovereignty and personhood of a fetus over the mother, reducing her ability to advocate for herself. In a post-*Roe* America, we can see how this kind of framing can lead to persecution of women who receive abortion services or even miscarry a fetus, which is medically labeled as “spontaneous abortion.” While the 2017 “Heartbeat Protection Act” was only a proposed piece of legislation, laws like it have been enacted in multiple states since the overturn of *Roe v. Wade*. Abortion is not the only instance in which a mother’s body is reduced to a mere vessel, as the fetus and the mother are often viewed as the property of a male – whether that be the partner of the mother, the biological father of the fetus, or the grandfather of the fetus (Lentjes, 3). In this way, mothers (and women in general) are viewed in terms of their capacity for pregnancy and motherhood, which detaches them from the privilege of personhood and instead awards that privilege to the fetus. These attitudes proliferate in everyday life, but manifest primarily in political disputes over abortion rights.

The loss of personhood for mothers in the social and political spheres also impact the validity of a woman’s political voice. The loss of a political voice does not necessarily mean the loss of voting rights, but the loss of credibility in political and social discourse. In the two generations since women’s suffrage was instituted nationwide, women have begun taking the civic duty for granted. However, this is not entirely due to their own disinterest, but due to the lack of adequate representation for women in the political sphere. While women do tend to vote in higher numbers than men, they still make up a minority of the Congressional population on the local and national level (Forman-Rabinovici & Johnson, 82). In their essay “Political Equality, Gender, and Democratic Legitimation in *Dobbs*,” Aliza Forman-Rabinovici and Olatunde C. A. Johnson discuss the inclusivity of legislatures in relation to the reasoning in the court opinions on *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*. According to Forman-Rabinovici and Johnson, one of the primary reasons for returning the abortion dispute to state

legislatures was the fact that women are capable of defending their own interests by voting. However, across the country, it has been reported that “states with the most restrictive abortion policies have, on average, ten percent fewer women representatives in their state legislature than those with more permissive policies.” (Forman-Rabinovici & Johnson, 83). Even if this were not the case, it is very well known that women do not come to a concise conclusion on the issue of abortion – there are many women who follow the doctrine of Christianity that believe that a fetus is a person from the moment it is conceived, while others of the same faith will stand by data that supports their pro-choice stance. Data also demonstrates that there are demographic factors, such as wealth and education, that influence opinions about abortion policy, supported by the fact that states like Kentucky and Mississippi have restrictive abortion policies and some of the lowest rates of secondary and higher education among their populations (Forman-Rabinovici & Johnson, 105). All of this data combines to support the claim that the Supreme Court has fallen prey to the illusion of equality in the United States, and these distortions have repercussions for women across the country. It is clear that not even the government is immune to the simulacra, which calls into question the validity of the Supreme Court’s decision in *Dobbs*.

Beyond the health implications of the “abortion wars” in the United States, there is the psychological impact of these narratives. In her essay “The Sonic Politics of the U.S. Abortion Wars,” Rebecca Lentjes demonstrates these ramifications through her discussion of anti-abortion protests outside of abortion clinics. As she discusses in her other work, Lentjes primarily explores the impact of “sonic patriarchy” on pregnant women who are silenced under the weight of their proselytizing (Lentjes, 303). The concept of sonic patriarchy asserts that privileges of self-determination and autonomy awarded to men contribute to their domination of sonic spheres in addition to the control of others via sound, specifically those determined to be “inferior” in a patriarchal social structure (Lentjes, 303-304). The reduction and objectification of women and their voices is further encouraged during pregnancy, as pregnancy is often viewed as signifying male ownership over a woman, with the fetus itself being viewed as his property. From the shared experiences of uncomfortable stares, inappropriate questioning, and non-consensual contact to the silencing of a mother’s voice, the pregnant body is consistently regarded as a mere vessel for the fetus rather than its own, sovereign body (Lentjes, 304). Because of the innate vulnerability of pregnancy, too, these conditions are exacerbated and leave the mother questioning her own personhood in relation to others. Sonic patriarchy does not stop there,

however, as the concept of “musical paternalism” demonstrates. This paternalism is used by anti-abortion activists to proselytize at clinics, overpowering the voices of the opposition to dominate a sonic space and silence pregnant women seeking reproductive care (Lentjes, 305). In this way, Christian Fundamentalist narratives begin to dominate the lived experiences of pregnant women who have received or will receive an abortion, making it even more difficult to make their stories and positions heard. The defense of “freedom of speech” cannot account for the real harm done by gendered sonic violence, as the conflation of these speech practices will only serve to further silence women and construct false narratives (Lentjes 307). As anti-abortion activists become increasingly emboldened, manufactured narratives proliferate and bleed into legislative reaction, integrating a simulation that completely obscures the profound complexity of reproductive rights issues and reality as a whole.

The ramifications of Christian Fundamentalism and paternalistic practice are not isolated to the United States. The practice of excluding women from discourse about their own health can be seen again in Carol Mason’s “Opposing Abortion to Protect Women: Transnational Strategy since the 1990s.” In this piece, she explores the ways in which the United States has spread its anti-abortion tactics throughout the world by examining two specific countries, Ireland and Russia. In doing so, Mason unveils many of the rhetorical strategies that are used to advance anti-abortion legislation and examines them through a feminist critical lens. Mason discusses three primary strategies: spreading Christian Fundamentalist right-to-life rhetoric, enforcing the American idea of Republican Motherhood, and claiming to protect the health and rights of women (Mason). Christian Fundamentalists, while making up approximately a quarter of all Christians, participate in some of the most outspoken political groups in the U.S. and are often the most represented in Congress. Because they make their voices so loud, it often seems that they are representing a widely-held belief about reproductive rights, but this is not the case (Carr). However, much of the anti-abortion rhetoric seen globally is influenced by Christian Fundamentalist doctrine, as seen in Ireland’s interaction with American organizations in the anti-abortion movement of the 1970s and early 1980s (Mason, CR 261). The pervasiveness of this doctrine is also seen in Russian policy, despite their secular federal structure. To appeal to the Russian population, American Evangelicals took it upon themselves to spread the doctrine of Republican Motherhood, a concept that ties reproductive ability to the preservation of the nation; in the context of Russia, this meant preserving the white population in the face of a growing

Muslim population (Mason, CR 270-271). Because so much of the discourse surrounding reproductive rights tends to center women as in a perpetually pre-pregnancy state, the fear of the growing Muslim population led to widespread sterilization of Muslim women alongside unanesthetized performance of the abortion procedure on white Russian women (Mason). By deploying an “apocalyptic” narrative in Russia, American anti-abortion groups successfully eliminated the right to abortion nationwide after years of back-and-forth legislation on the issue (Mason, CR 272). The proliferation of the anti-abortion movement signifies something more insidious as women lose their right to reproductive freedoms: the loss of a political voice. This loss signifies an opportunity for men to manufacture narratives for women, unchecked by the population that is most affected by their decisions.

Women’s loss of political autonomy is not simply a result of social narratives, but of the proliferation of these narratives and the adaptation into a more apocalyptic nature. Carol Mason discusses this issue in “Opposing Abortion to Protect Women,” but expands on the impact of these narratives in her essay “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Dare? Confronting Anti-Abortion Terrorism After 9/11.” While the 1990s saw the most growth in terms of anti-abortion narratives and movements, the early 2000s saw the apocalyptic nature of these narratives increase in response to the September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Center. As a result, there was a federal crackdown on militant anti-abortion activists, which intensified the apocalyptic nature of these narratives and created more tension and opposition as the American government attempted to protect the physicians performing abortion procedures and their patients (Mason, 796-797). Mason argues that the way to disrupt these apocalyptic narratives is not by introducing more “visual rhetoric,” but by intervening and deconstructing anti-choice visual rhetoric (Mason, 799-800). There are implied “rules” for the abortion debate, all of which are designed to position anti-abortion activists as bearing the “Truth” and pro-choice activists being unable to refute them. Because so much of this rhetoric hinges on visual media and apocalyptic narratives assigned to such visual media, it is difficult to combat it within the parameters of the “rules” that have been established. These rules force pro-choice activists to ignore radical feminism’s history, disregard intersectionality, focus on visual politics, buy into the lies that militant anti-abortionists are separate from the majority of anti-abortion activists, and “operate under the fear of conservative ‘backlash’” (Mason, 800). Many feminist scholars are guilty of playing it safe, staying within these parameters as they attempt to combat abortion. However, to combat an apocalyptic

simulacrum that has become indecipherable from reality, it becomes necessary to disregard the rules of the abortion debate and recognize the clear and present danger to women's rights on both the national and global scale.

It may be considered unwise, according to the "rules" of this debate, to combat an apocalyptic narrative with an opposing apocalyptic reality, but this is essentially what Elizabeth Maier does in "Hidden Meanings of the Culture War over Abortion in the United States." In her essay, Maier examines American cultural discourse regarding reproductive rights, ultimately arguing that the regulation of reproductive healthcare access is intrinsically connected to industrialism (Maier, 60). As Christian fundamentalism grew in the United States beginning in the 1970s, the anti-abortion debate saw a shocking consolidation of anti-abortion arguments under the ideology of "traditionalist-patriarchal" family structures, enforcement of states' rights, and a strictly Biblical mode of governing, showcasing the innate connection between reproductive rights discourse and Christian Fundamentalist narratives attached to it (Maier, 58). In support of this cause, the Republican Party officially included the "protection of the right to life for the unborn child" in their platform in 1980 (qtd. Maier, 59). This move contributed to the state of the modern Republican Party, which is all but inextricable from the Christian Fundamentalist doctrine pushed by lobbyists and activists. Placing this narrative on such a massive platform then helps to fuel the "us vs. them" apocalyptic narratives seen in discourse contemporarily, creating the appearance of binary positions on the issue and ignoring the nuance of reproductive rights discourse and reproductive justice (Maier, 59). Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign only fueled this fire, as he encouraged punishment of women who receive abortions despite his own history of infidelity and abuse that resulted in abortion procedures. This newfound conservatism was clearly a ploy to manipulate conservative voters, but what Trump truly did was expose some of the major oversights of the abortion debate and the possible implications of criminalizing the procedure (Maier 59-60). All of these factors coalesce into an anti-abortion movement centered on Biblical governing, paternalism, and industrialism, meaning that the primary focus of the anti-abortion movement is to reinforce the patriarchal structure by forcing women to have children, effectively endangering any woman capable of pregnancy.

It is difficult to sift through the manufactured narratives that dictate women's lives, peeling back the layers to get to the truth. Even the Supreme Court of the United States fell victim to these narratives, leading them to overturn *Roe* in the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health*

Organization decision in 2022. In the official court opinions, totaling 213 pages, the Justices assert their decision on the issue. Justice Alito begins with an assertion of abortion as a “profound moral issue,” followed by Justice Thomas’s encouragement to reconsider other cases ruled under the idea of substantive due process, including *Griswold v. Connecticut*, which protects the right for a woman to obtain birth control without consent from her husband (Sanders, 4-5). Justice Barrett also states in her concurring opinion that there is a need for increased birth rates in the United States, echoing the apocalyptic white nationalist narratives discussed in Mason’s works that were further reinforced by Mary Miller from Illinois, who states that the overturn of *Roe* was a “victory for ‘white life’” (qtd. Coen-Sanchez et al.). It is overwhelmingly clear that the narratives surrounding anti-abortion activism build on a foundation of white nationalism, Christian Fundamentalism, and patriarchy that serve to dominate and silence women, especially pregnant women. By using these foundational beliefs to build a movement, anti-abortion activists are creating and maintaining a simulacrum that hinges on their assertion of the “objective reality” of images, an idea used to lend credibility to the narratives created by these activist groups, determining both the social and political reality for women.

To conclude, the issue of reproductive rights and reproductive justice are almost inextricable from Christian Fundamentalism and patriarchal structures. Because of this intrinsic connection, these issues contribute to a simulated reality as a result of the manufactured narratives involved in the construction of reproductive rights discourse, further pushing this simulacrum into the legislative sphere. By enforcing the simulacrum on a national scale, the conflation of the profound reality and the simulated reality makes the two indistinguishable, making it impossible for women to insert their narratives into the broader discourse and practice self-determination. Therefore, the legislative reality of womanhood and pregnancy is not based in fact, but instead in manufactured narratives about abortion that translate to legislative realities. The danger of this inextricable simulation, then, is the disenfranchisement and silencing of women in discourse about their own lives, bodies, and rights.

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Portraits of Grief: The Exception to the Obituary Genre

Morgan Bryant

Obituaries, whether an individual has lost someone or is simply flipping through a local newspaper, are considered a standard in publishing and cultural memorialization. The language is usually direct, describes the deceased and where their services are being held, and perhaps even including an image if they are lucky. Some die of natural causes, such as cancer, old age, or the common cold. Others die in more traumatic ways: car crash, school shooting, or even suicide. Yet, whenever someone reads an obituary, there is the common knowledge that the people one is reading about are indeed dead. However, when one reads the “Portraits of Grief” published by the *New York Times* to memorialize those who died in the 9/11 attacks, it feels as if those on the pages are not dead. This, in turn, could be somewhat startling since as a collective society we know what happened on September 11th, 2001 and that those in this collection of words and images did in fact die. Why is that? It is my purpose in this paper to explore why “Portraits” is the exception in some regards for how the world memorializes and rhetorically mourns the dead in disasters like September 11th, 2001, especially in terms of how disruptive September 11th, 2001 was as a whole to our processes of memorialization.

To begin, before one can really analyze the language used for “Portraits” and how it is different from the average obituary genre, one must look at a simple obituary from 2023. The obituary I will be using will be that of a man by the name of Jerry Lee Morris, as provided by Goodwin-Sievers Vincennes Funeral Home. In Mr. Morris’s obituary, the type of language used is typical of what you may see in an obituary when you think of one: how he had lived to 91, passed away in his residence, and is survived by his daughter Konnie, son Michael, and wife Cindy. In addition to this, the obituary mentions how Mr. Morris was a part of the National Rifle Association, and how he loved to travel (Goodwin-Sievers). All of these details are carefully hand-picked to be as informative as well as neutral as possible, and in doing so one can still recognize the fact that Mr. Morris is dead.

Then, when an individual looks at the language of almost all of the selections in *New York Times*’s “Portraits,” they may notice that there is a hesitancy in saying that the people in this collection are dead. An example of this is Jack D’Ambrosi. There is no mention of funeral arrangements, who he is survived by, or even if he died in the attack. The actual words written on the page are as if someone took the small sentence about Mr. Morris being in the National

Rifle Association and loving to travel, and lengthened it to be about 200 words long. For Mr. D'Ambrosi, the Portrait is a reflection from his wife describing how much he loved to fish, how he had caught a fish nearly 32 pounds, and would share his catches with his community (*Times* 114). Yet, when one flips a couple of pages over and looks at Carol Demitz's Portrait, they may get a similar sensation when reading about how she loved motherhood, and enjoyed going through catalogs of clothes to pick and choose for her daughter to play with (*Times* 123). This type of language is repeated throughout nearly all of "Portraits," making little to no mention of any death or unhappiness, or even acknowledging the fact that all the people in the *New York Times* collection have passed away. Yet, once more when someone looks at Mr. Morris's obituary, they know for a fact that this man has passed away.

I pose that these differences are because when it comes to language and describing one's passing, often there are moments where there are no words to describe death and do justice to a lost life. I say this because when one talks about Mr. Morris's obituary, the nature of how he died is more obvious and more private than what the people on September 11th, 2001 had experienced. Mr. Morris died at his residence at the age of 91, living what most would consider a long and full life (Goodwin-Sievers). Even more so, the intimacy and privacy that the death of Mr. Morris had is even more apparent since, if I were to not use him as an example for writing this paper, I would have never read Mr. Morris's obituary and learned that he died, but by doing so I now know that he has. However, when I look at the *New York Time's* "Portraits," I do not need to even glance at them to know that every single name, face, and excerpt contains someone that is dead or presumed dead, even though there is no mention of death or that anyone explicitly has died in the pages of the text. I, as well as others, only get this context because of the lack of privacy and the global spectacle that these individuals received in their death, since on September 11th, 2001 many individuals turned on their televisions and radios, and learned the news or watched the second tower be hit live. This is expressed in Cheryl Mattingly, Marry Lawlor, and Lanita Jacobs-Huey's article "Narrating September 11: Race, Gender, and the Play of Cultural Identities" in which they describe how people as far as Los Angeles were flipping on their radios, hearing the reports, and saying things like, "You just won't believe what just happened.... This is nuts. This is unprecedented" (Mattingly et al. 743). Yet, one would be saying the same words about the private death at Mr. Morris's residence, showing the difference in privacy.

I say all this about Mr. Morris's obituary and the various stories one reads in "Portraits" because it is important to note the type of genre we are analyzing in regard to death and commemoration. Obituaries are often the result of trying to bring structure to something disastrous happening in a family, to provide information that the grieving loved ones cannot provide at the time. That is why I deliberately picked an obituary that came from a funeral home. Funeral directors are the ones that in times of crisis try to take the burden of death off the families that have just lost a loved one. However, sometimes individuals do not want to mention death, and for "Portraits" the detachment of death from the names and faces an individual reads about can seemingly provide a sense of comfort that those grieving families may want. Rhetorically, the obituaries in "Portraits" allow for the notion that their loved ones may still be alive. Having a place holder of telling stories in their Portrait is a better alternative than seeing a person's loved one in the local obituary section of the newspaper.

This comparative analysis connects to the theoretical work of Maurice Blanchot in his book *The Writing of the Disaster*. Responding to the Holocaust and the difficulties of writing about such a trauma, Blanchot writes how, "The disaster ruins everything, all the while leaving everything intact. It does not touch anyone in particular, 'I' am not threatened by it, but spared, left aside" (1). When I read this, I think about Mr. Morris; of course, he is dead but in a sense his passing is a minor disaster in itself. He is leaving behind family, with a stable figure in one's family life for 91 years now gone. The obituary itself is an attempt to describe that disaster to others. While the disaster may not be harmful to a reader, it is harming and subsequently threatening Mr. Morris and his family. Conversely, the visual spectacle and collective trauma that the September 11th, 2001 attacks had on the country shakes the foundation of Blanchot's words that the disaster does not threaten us. For the first time for many Americans, the idea of a disaster did threaten them as a collective body. Certainly, those that died, as well as bystanders in New York, Washington, and Shanksville were directly threatened, but the disaster did not just affect the families of those who were inside the pages of "Portraits," but the nation and world as a whole. Yes, Blanchot is also right in saying that the disaster also leaves everything intact. This once more is represented by "Portraits," because in the case of each story presented they show life before said attacks, once more when everything was intact. The disaster may have destroyed these families, but the memories that they have and are sharing in place of actual obituaries remains intact. Though Blanchot also makes note that the very writing of "Portraits" has an

additional motive behind it much like mentioned previously. Those who try to write about the disaster of losing their loved ones on September 11th, 2001 are doing it in an attempt to shape a narrative for their deceased loved ones. Thus, Blanchot writes, in the context of memorializing the Holocaust, that “The commentator says...: this is what you are, what you think; and thus the thought of writing — the ever-dissuade thought which disaster awaits — is made explicit in the name... it is as if saved...” (Blanchot 7). Undoubtedly those who wrote for the *New York Times* and the families who spoke to them are attempting to put their best foot forward naturally for their loved ones. Similarly to Mr. Morris, the main motive of his obituary is to provide information to an audience who are outsiders from the family, notifying them that he has died and where people can pay their respects. For those enclosed inside of “Portraits,” it is the family's attempts to shape their loved ones as real relatable people, ones that had lives and that those lives were meaningful ones.

Further, when mentioning how “Portraits” attempts to only show its individuals in a positive light, one also has to make note as to why the *New York Times* chose to do that. As mentioned before, September 11th, 2001 was nothing like any sort of normal obituary could contain. The visual spectacle and intensity of the disaster is something that was seen the world over, as mentioned previously with Mattingly and her collection of various discussions from members of the Los Angeles community (Mattingly et al.). But this brings me to the second portion of this paper in which I discuss how “Portraits” represents how shocking September 11th, 2001 actually was. As mentioned previously, “Portraits” are quite different from a typical obituary, and the lack of mentions of death or even suffering during their lives is quite apparent and not done without reason. This is shown in David Simpson’s book *9/11: The Culture of Commemoration* in which he analyzes how in “Portraits” tries to build the aforementioned frame for the narratives inside by making no mention of death or even despair in their lives. Simpson writes:

The sheer enormity of the effort to personalize this many deaths made us feel that everyone and everyman was here, or could be here... And yet powerful as they were, read in batches of a few at a time, the collective impression of these snapshots was and is troubling. They were clearly being put to work in the cause of a patriotic momentum... None here cheated on her spouse or abused his children, or was indifferent to community activities. One tends of course to speak only of the good things of the dead, but even

within the expected bounds of memorial decorum, the notices were formulaic. They seem regimented, even militarized, made to march to the beat of a single drum. (Simpson 23)

What Simpson is articulating is that the death that was caused by September 11th, 2001 is something that was so shattering due to the sheer number of casualties. Accordingly, there had to be a new specialized form of obituary –a shift in genre– of which “Portraits” is an example. One would expect to maybe only see three or so new obituaries in their newspaper, maybe only 300 dead in an entire state. However, for September 11th, 2001, nearly 3,000 people died in a matter of hours, something a regular obituary column in a national newspaper could barely manage. By giving them a typical obituary, it would rhetorically seem that their deaths were typical and normal, of natural causes. However, their deaths were not the same since they were something far more visual and less private than those aforementioned deaths. Yet, in an attempt to make the way one writes their deaths different, by neglecting the fact that they died, “Portraits” is somehow stripping another part of their humanity. By unfortunately and ultimately still giving each person in “Portraits” something formulaic just like a regular obituary would, it somehow still makes it less special for each person alone. As a result, by making these people seem as alive as possible, and living as good a life as one would wish, the collection almost strips the possibility of seeing these individuals as real people in an attempt to make September 11th, 2001 feel less shocking and abrupt to those grieving families. This occurs by stripping these individuals from being real people, real people that do sometimes abuse their children, real people that do sometimes cheat on their partners, real people that probably did not want to be at work that infamous Tuesday morning.

Continuing on this train of thought, there is also a desire to relate to the families through “Portraits” but not necessarily feel their pain by making the victims not feel like real people. In regard to this, humans want to be close to a disaster, but do not want to necessarily be a part of it, similarly to what Blanchot mentioned earlier by wanting to be a bystander (Blanchot 1). Additionally, there is also what MaryAnn Snyder-Körber discusses in her writing “Lost and Found Lives: ‘The Portraits of Grief’ and the Work of September 11 Mourning” that also provides a similar sentiment on how Americans want to become close and learn about our dead, but not get so close to see their deaths as necessarily real or lives as difficult. She describes how “There is a voyeuristic component to imaginatively entering the picnics of others, but it is not the same as regarding their pain” (Snyder-Körber 457). What she means by this is similar to what I

mentioned previously, that the individuals of “Portraits” and their relationship to the attacks of September 11th, 2001 are significant in the fact that people even more so crave this voyeuristic component rather than any other form of death commemoration. Again with Mr. Morris, there is not as much of a desire to learn about his death due to the nature of how he died, at his residence alone and privately. However, for those on September 11th, 2001 who died and now comprise the pages of the *New York Times*’s “Portraits,” as a country people want to learn about how they lived and who they were but not necessarily that they died and *how* they died. This idea inherently creates what makes “Portraits” so different from any other obituary; that people want to see the pain of what was lost, but not how it was lost or to acknowledge that it was lost in the first place. Furthermore, it also explains how shocking September 11th, 2001 was that called for this sort of commemoration that changed the genre of obituary for those that died on that day specifically.

Looking to another disaster, many would call the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School a total and utter disaster that resulted in the deaths of 17 individuals. However, the obituaries that resulted from the killings were not beautifully bound and changed from the original format one would see in the newspaper like the “Portraits” were. For example, Scott Beigel’s obituary provided by Legacy and the *Sun-Sentinel* reads much like Mr. Morris’s: noting how old he was, where his funeral is being held, and including only a brief blurb about the life he lived and how he protected his students (Legacy and Sun-Sentinel). Even though the event that caused his death was horrific and a collective trauma—something that made people stop and reflect as a country on how gun violence is an issue—Scott Beigel still got the same sort of obituary similar to that of Mr. Morris. This again reinforces the fact that the events that happened on September 11th, 2001, and the means in which those in “Portraits” died, is so culturally disruptive that it establishes a new framework of how we write trauma.

Before I fully conclude my thoughts, as well as my discussion of “Portraits” and how the collection frames September 11th, 2001 in a league of its own in disasters, I wanted to mention a rewriting of “Portraits.” For the tenth anniversary of the attack, the *New York Times* decided to do a video series catching up with families who had loved ones featured in the “Portraits.” I will examine Thomas H. McGinnis’s family for this analysis. In “Portraits,” his excerpt is his wife focuses on how he loved sports, specifically hockey, and reading (*Times* 323). For the video series *Portraits Redrawn* the narrative is altered. In the video, Iliana McGinnis, the wife of Mr.

McGinnis, actually talks about how her husband died, that he was not meant to go to the Twin Towers that day, and that things have been difficult without him (*Times Redrawn*). This is much different than what the original “Portraits” included, since at the time they were written it seemed as Mrs. McGinnis could not fully say that her husband was dead due to the shock of the event. However, ten years later and after reflection, Mrs. McGinnis and people as a nation seem ready to understand that those in the pages of “Portraits” did indeed die that day, resulting in the *Redrawn* series. The fact that it has taken this many years to thoroughly digest the disaster, and even begin to describe the event in words is nearly impossible, as Blanchot argues.

Finally, going through these obituaries of individuals who died just as Mr. Morris or Mr. Beigel did shows me just how much September 11th, 2001 was the exception to all the rules of death and commemoration. The lives of the individuals inside of “Portraits” were seemingly so real, that it was difficult to get people to understand that they are gone in the way they truly were in the immediate aftermath of the disaster. In addition, it also shows how similar but yet different “Portraits” were from a typical obituary, and that even after ten years people like Mrs. McGinnis are still hesitant to fully redraw the image that her husband's portrait evoked. Furthermore, I wish to mention how this made me see the narrative framing of September 11th, 2001. Whenever I read or watch moments from September 11th, 2001, there is often a disconnect. I mostly just read about the perspectives from survivors or grieving loved ones, or watch videos of the attacks as they unfolded. However, in doing so, I often become detached from the fact that I am seeing in real time that the people in the collection I have been covering for the entirety of this essay have been killed. In doing this paper, I have realized just how significant an event September 11th, 2001 was on society and culture as a whole, and by reading and analyzing “Portraits,” it thoroughly showed in a different sense how shocking that day truly was for grieving families. In doing so, my understanding of September 11th, 2001 and the people that were truthfully affected in the deepest way, with their lives, grows even deeper in a way that will forever make me realize what that day was truly like. Additionally, it allows for me to view the impact the disaster has caused for the future and how we talk about it, particularly through the various critics used throughout this essay that were in some ways trying to grasp how horrific disasters are and the challenges that face those who try to write them.

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NOTES ON THE CONTRIBUTORS

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