jamit!

Journal of American Studies in Italy

Nationalism: Hyper and Post

TABLE OF CONTENTS

OPEN SECTION

BOOK REVIEWS

ON JAMMING: "STUDY" AND THE UNSTUDIED

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In the early summer of 2017, Nicola Paladin, Alice Balestrino, and I reconvened in the Brace Commons at Dartmouth College to explore opportunities and outlooks for the AISNA Graduate Forum, the network of early-career researchers within the Italian Association for American Studies to which we belong. At the peak of the intellectual stimulation and the inevitable exhaustion that characterize the Futures of American Studies Institute, we began to speculate on potential tactics to stir the proverbial pot within (and beyond) the Italian academic-scape. Among our concerns was a sense of comparative insulation, especially between early career and tenured scholars and among the fields represented within the organization (mainly literature and history) and those excluded from it. How could we get scholars investigating the American hemisphere through different disciplinary lenses to interact more, and more actively, with one another? How could we put in conversation the different disciplinary clusters operating within and without the association? How could we connect scholars across geographical and generational lines? How could we foster transnational scholarly cross-pollination? How could we overcome the alienation that afflicts early career academics and especially first-generation graduate students? It did not take us long to realize that an academic journal could both serve as the tangible manifestation of the exchanges occurring within the Graduate Forum and provide a medium to broaden the spatial and intellectual scope of the conversation taking place in the realm of American Studies in Italy.

The inaugural issue of *JAm It!* comes into being almost two years after we first lucid dreamed it on that gusty New England night. However easy it might be to fall for such a definitive mythology, allow me to clarify that its origins cannot be solely identified in the enthusiasm of three individuals, nor in a single historical event. *JAm It!* came together as

an assemblage, as what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari have called a "fragmentary whole," a multiplicity in which what counts are not the terms or the elements, but what is *between* them, the in-between, a set of relations that are inseparable from each other (1994, 16). Such relations were informed by feelings, events, and relationships that unfolded and developed over a decade. For one, Manlio Della Marca's polemic on the state of American Studies in Italy at the Centro Studi Americani in Rome in 2014. Della Marca's call to arms to both junior faculty and graduate students, and his encouragement to try and reshuffle the hierarchies in our field of study, inspired my friendship with Marco Petrelli. Ever since, the two of us have attempted to devise ways not to merely *inhabit* but to *thrive* within a system intrinsically unable to empower and support us. The desire to retrieve a sense of the possible within an academic discourse often predicated upon a rhetoric of internal crisis and naturalized structural exploitation has also been the very catalyst for the development of a tight knit network of care in Turin, Naples, and New York City during my years as a graduate student. Within such contexts, the fellowship among the founding members of *JAm It!*'s editorial board – Claudio de Majo, Robert Moscaliuc, Angela Zottola, and Iuri Moscardi, in addition to those mentioned above – first developed. I, and we, can only hope the ethos that ensued from such spaces, and that informs our academic praxis, emerges in the pages that follow.

JAm It! aims to be yet another manifestation of the solidarity and tactics of resistance developed by and among graduate students, untenured faculty, and independent scholars locally and globally in and through their attempts to stay afloat and produce relevant scholarship within a system that works against the very conditions of possibility of their critical thinking and being. As an editorial board, as a Graduate Forum, as a network of care that stretches across continents and disciplines, we invite early career scholars in Italy and beyond to look horizontally, rather than vertically. Invoking Deleuze and Guattari's metaphor of the botanical rhizome to describe theory and research that allows for multiple, non-hierarchical entry and exit points, we promote a horizontal and non-hierarchical conception of knowledge, where anything (and anyone) may be linked to anything (and

anyone) else. As a model for culture, the rhizome resists the organizational structure of the arboreal system that charts causality along chronological lines and gestures towards, on the one hand, an original source and, on the other, a pinnacle or conclusion. In Deleuze and Guattari's model, culture spreads like the surface of a body of water: outwards or trickling downwards towards new spaces, through fissures and gaps, eroding what is in its way. In the formal and quasi-feudal structures we inhabit as precarious scholars and workers, structures that work against the very ontology of critical inquiry, we invoke the rhizome to encourage scholars to look horizontally for spaces of intellectual development – to rely on each other and abandon arborescent conceptions of knowledge and advancement in favor of otherwise modes of looking at and through, other modes of listening, feeling, and experiencing critically.

JAm It! is thus born in opposition to conditions of academic labor that are unconducive to what Stefano Harney and Fred Moten have called "study," a mode of critical engagement where the object of inquiry is but the *occasion* for its own existence. Neither bleak scrutiny nor quasi-religious worship of its subject, "study" is but a mean to enter a social world grounded in solidarity, intellectual generosity, and mutual conduciveness. *JAm It!* strives to achieve a kind of ecologizing with the communities it engages – a *modus operandi* discouraged (or at the very least, not encouraged) by both the "Publish or Perish" rationale that drives academia but also by the dynamics of a job market that often encourages uncritical pedagogy and production of knowledge marked by stasis and safeness. With regards to "study," Harney and Moten write

> Is there a way to be in the undercommons that isn't intellectual? Isn't there a way of being intellectual that isn't social? When I think about the way we use the term 'study,' I think we are committed to the idea that study is what you do with other people. It's talking and walking around with other people, working, dancing, suffering, some irreducible convergence of all three, held under the name of speculative practice. ... The point of calling it 'study' is to mark the incessant and irreversible intellectuality of these activities is already present. ... To do these things is to be involved in a kind of common intellectual practice. (2013, 110)

Riffing off Moten and Harney, *JAm It!* is a kind of thinking *with*: an attempt to see the academy as a vehicle to move us and move us *through* and *into* some new thinking, set of relations, and ways of being together, thinking together.

We believe refusing the imperatives of academic capitalism is particularly critical at a time when, as Ashley Dawson eloquently phrased in his opening editorial, we are inhabiting "a state of perpetual unacknowledged crisis, one of secular economic stagnation and [...] increasingly patent ideological bankruptcy of neoliberalism" (this issue, 13). We hold our community and communities accountable to push against the logics of what Mark Fisher calls "capital realism" and the pressure they put on our intellectual praxis. *JAm It!* encourages its contributors to resist self-referentiality, production for the sake of production, and dogmatic modes of critique; in other words, scholarship induced by what Franco "Bifo" Berardi defines as "governance [that] produces pure functionality without meaning, the automation of thought and will" (2011, 138). *JAm It!* attempts to break free from conceptions of knowledge informed by the tyranny of productivity. By lowering the stakes, we acknowledge the value of (and the necessity for) failure and pleasure in scholarly research; by encouraging scholars to experiment with different intellectual, academic, and editorial practices, we hope, at least in the privileged time and space that this journal creates and occupies, to reshuffle oxidized practices and arbitrary academic hierarchies.

Through *JAm It!*, we aim to create a platform for an upcoming generation of scholars to engage with the editorial process, gain professional experience, and foster community within and across generational lines. After two years of work, we have come to think of the intellectual conversation within *JAm It!* as a set of jam sessions, of informal solos, as what in Jazz is called a hang: an alchemical amalgamate of high level of musicianship, a relaxed atmosphere, and a sympathetic intergenerational crowd. The jam session is the heart of the after-hours jazz scene, a when/where often associated with what Shane Vogel calls "closing time, [...] the legislated hour by which nightclubs and bars must stop serving and close their doors, [...] a historical mode of temporality that reorganizes the normative temporal

order upon which logics of familial reproduction and capitalist productivity are constituted and maintained" (2009, 112). *JAm It!*'s very modes of production – from below; decentered; fragmented; irregular; dramatic; affectionate; queer, if you will – cast it as a journal that operates in similar modes of fugitivity. Jam sessions also foster what Samuel R. Delaney calls *contact* – modes of casually promoted opportunity, social interaction, and conversations that challenge structured *networking* encounters, such as conferences, workshops, and cocktail parties, often promoted under the rubric of productivity – moments where *things happen*, when the social fabric of a scene is maintained and interwoven. We believe it is in this setting of fugitivity, stripped of the roles set upon us by the structure, that younger and older generations of scholars can interact freely effectively. Within this space, we encourage love, exchange, fellowship, and a reconfiguration of being and belonging that can only be achieved via a tear down, however temporary, of the system we inhabit. Jamming sessions exist in and for their audience and the ambiance is part not only of their execution, but also of their inception. They teach us that the absence of a formal structure calls for a kind of experimentation that engenders spontaneous and informal modes of being. At the same time, jamming does not eschew rigor, but rather calls for a heightened attention to one another, to the care and growth of our individual and collective capacity.

JAm It! did not come to life without some of the emotional, intellectual, and methodological turmoil that characterizes the productive, active, and unending process of creating being-in-common. Not only does a common not pre-exist the agonistic struggle to activate it, but, as per Stuart Hall's retrospective on his experience at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, such struggles are often "central to reorganiz[ing academic] fields in concrete ways" (1996, 269). For our moments of both collective enthusiasm and internal friction, my uttermost gratitude to the editorial board, to Lorenzo Costaguta and Virginia Pignagnoli (my fellow co-chairs of the AISNA Graduate Forum), and the AISNA Board. Especially instrumental to this endeavor have been Elisabetta Vezzosi, Andrea Carosso, Fiorenzo Iuliano, Gianna Fusco, and Serenella Iovino

(accountable for the much-cherished title of this journal). *Grazie* also to all the folks who have trusted us with their work and contributed to this opening issue.

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INTRODUCTION

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When Donald Trump unveiled his *America First Energy Plan* while on the campaign trail back in 2016, he summoned coal miners to stand at his side. Flanked by these brawny emissaries from a bygone age of American industrial might, Trump announced his plan to "end the war on coal" and promised to use the resulting revenues to rebuild the nation's roads, schools, bridges and public infrastructure (Lakely 2018). The miners may have helped legitimate Trump's rollback of Obama-era efforts to fight climate change, but they functioned above all as symbols of an American working class betrayed and abandoned during more than four decades of bipartisan support for neoliberal globalization (Davenport and Rubin 2017). When Trump stood surrounded by these men and proclaimed that "We will unleash the full power of American energy, ending the job killing restrictions on shale, oil, natural gas and clean, beautiful coal," he seemed to promise to elevate not simply coal country but all of the country's willfully forgotten workers.

But Trump's promises to the failing coal industry have proven to be hollow. Opening federal lands to coal mining has not brought jobs back to economically depressed communities in coal country, where mechanization of the industry began to destroy jobs as long ago as the 1970s (Climate Nexus 2017). The real reason for the coal industry's decline, however, is that power plants have been abandoning coal for natural gas as the price of gas has plummeted following the fracking revolution, a bonanza that began under the Obama administration (Fears 2017). Over the last seven years, over half of the coal-fired power plants in the US have either shut down or announced plans to retire, and natural gas is now the biggest source of the nation's electricity. It should be no surprise that Trump's promises to revive coal have failed, since they are incoherent: his *American First Energy*

Plan promises support for natural gas as well as coal, despite the fact that the former is the main reason for the death of the latter.

Trump's unbridled support for fossil fuels has, however, helped the US achieve and indeed surpass the goal of "energy independence" that Presidents since Richard Nixon have promised but failed to achieve. The explosive expansion of fossil fuel production under Trump has turned the US into "Saudi America," generating what Trump and energy-industry minions in his administration celebrate as "energy dominance." Trump has successfully fomented a new oil bloc – consisting of the US, Russia and Saudi Arabia – which has effectively replaced OPEC as the dominant global energy superpower.

Notwithstanding his populist rhetoric about saving the American working class, Trump's hyper-nationalism actually serves the interests of a corrupt ruling oligarchy. As is the case in the other countries with which the US now finds itself in a baleful triumvirate, Trump's hyper-nationalism is a very thin fig-leaf covering the monstrous appetites of a self-interested, globe-trotting elite. Hyper-nationalism might thus be said to be the current mode of post-nationalism; the former should be seen not so much as an antithesis of the latter as the means of securing hegemony for a parasitic elite under contemporary conditions of crisis-ridden capitalism. That is, if Trump – and counterparts of his in nations such as Hungary, the Philippines, and Brazil – have come to power by sensing and articulating popular rage at the manifest failures of a neoliberal capitalist order that has been globally hegemonic for nearly three decades, they do not offer any significant solutions to the resulting crisis but rather seek to exploit it for their own narrow interests. In the process, they pile up the contradictions of the system ever higher.

We have been here before. At the outset of the current era of conservative counterrevolution in the late 1970s, Stuart Hall and his colleagues at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Britain analyzed the onset of what they called popular authoritarianism in response to the crisis of the postwar Keynesian capitalist order (Hall et al. 1978). On the eve of Margaret Thatcher's electoral victory, Hall and his colleagues anatomized the rise of what they termed a "moral panic" over mugging in Britain. According to the police, the courts, and the media, the culprits for this crime wave were

Britain's Black and Asian British population, who at the time constituted less than 5 percent of the national population. Hall and his comrades showed that the mugging scare was in fact generated not so much by a real rise in crime but rather, by growing anxiety about eroding social consensus as the postwar Keynesian economic order frayed. The crisis of this model of accumulation and the social quietus it helped secure manifested itself most clearly, Hall and his colleagues argued, in fears among the British police and judiciary about the transatlantic spread of "American mugging" and other social crises such as unrest in urban ghettos, which in turn led to targeting of Black and Asian communities by these organs of state power, which then led to heightened statistics about crime, in a ramifying feedback loop. Media coverage of the purported "crime wave" of the era helped generate a sense of an implied dominant, consensual, and homogenous national body under threat, one said to be characterized above all by respect for law and order. The result was the consolidation of an authoritarian popular consensus in which the majority of the British public consented to the erosion of their collective rights in the name of cracking down on social scapegoats – the country's racialized populations – who were blamed for the economic downturn and social disorganization that generated public anxiety in the first place (Hall et al. 1978, 157). This racist moral panic culminated in the Thatcher regime's Nationality Act, which intended to terminate the rights of subjects born in the British colonies to citizenship.[1]

Donald Trump's public persona was crafted during this era of capitalist crisis, racist moral panic, and conservative counterrevolution. His public pronouncements continue to reflect this genealogy of racist authoritarian populism. Indeed, his campaign for president was characterized by a paroxysm of authoritarian populist rhetoric that sought to suture the sort of scapegoating tactics that Hall anatomized so effectively to mendacious promises to make the white working-class whole. As was true of Thatcherism, Trump's policies have only inflamed the gaping social wounds that they promised to heal. Although it should be noted that many Trump voters were actually quite well-heeled, and it is therefore a fallacy

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[1] For a more extended discussion of how this politics of racial scapegoating played out in Britain, see my book Mongrel Nation (2007).

to blame the working class for his victory, Trump's rhetoric nonetheless resonated with significant numbers of people in the US precisely because the material conditions of the working and middle classes have deteriorated significantly since the crisis of the 1970s. Since then, elites have overseen the creation of a new international division of labor that has shipped much – if not all – industrial production abroad. In the US, a bipartisan consensus among the established political parties in favor of "globalization" has meant little opposition to these trends, no matter who is in office. In tandem, as economists such as Thomas Piketty have documented, economic and social inequality have ballooned grotesquely (2014). Elites have dealt with the gargantuan fortunes they have accumulated thanks to this counterrevolution by investing in the stock market and in real estate, leading to forms of financialization and galloping gentrification that have added to the deterioration of the life conditions of the majority. Elites have dealt particularly harshly with traditionally excluded portions of the American population through the establishment of carceral gulags and militarized policing.

The primary salve to this parlous situation has not been any creative new economic and ideological dispensation, but rather fresh rounds of authoritarian populism yoked to the inclusion of ever-greater segments of the American population in credit-fueled asset bubbles. The extension of housing mortgages to African Americans, who had previously been denied access to this – the most significant form of government subvention to the US middle class – is the most telling example. But in 2008 this creditocracy came crashing down (Ross 2014). We have lived since then in a state of perpetual unacknowledged crisis, one of secular economic stagnation and the increasingly patent ideological bankruptcy of neoliberalism. Hyper-nationalism is the result of these worsening contradictions: liberal elites who have embraced neoliberal governance that benefits the 1% are everywhere being displaced by a strident authoritarian populism, whether in the form of the election of Donald Trump, the Brexit vote in the UK, or in the slide towards explicit fascism evident in the rise of figures like Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil and Matteo Salvini in Italy, and parties like the *Front Nationale* in France and *Alternativ für Deutschland* in Germany.

Given the bankruptcy of most "mainstream" thinking about this crisis, it is not clear what the exit from the present cul-de-sac will be, but there is one overarching factor that suggests that another round of savage dispossession will not solve the increasingly intractable contradictions of the global capitalist system: the climate emergency. The ultimate bankruptcy of an economic system predicated on ceaseless expansion on a finite planetary natural resource base is becoming increasingly clear to masses of people, not least because the climate emergency is generating "natural" disasters and slow-onset tragedies that affect increasing numbers of people, including those in the wealthy nations. In this regard, the destructive impact of Trumpian oligarchy is epic. Under Trump regulatory agencies charged with protecting the environment and public health have been turned into subsidiaries of Big Oil, the EPA has dismantled the Obama Clean Power Plan and eliminated rules regulating methane emissions and coal ash waste, Congress has opened up drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Preserve, and the Interior Department has rescinded rules designed to make offshore drilling safer after the Deepwater Horizon tragedy – to name but a few of the elements of the Trump administration's full-throttle attack on the environment. In the process, the Trump regime has overseen a significant expansion of carbon emissions, thereby helping to condemn the planet to catastrophic climate change (Juhasz 2018). We are confronted with nothing short of planetary ecocide, although, as the movement of climate justice constantly reminds us, the impact of the climate emergency will be borne first and foremost by the people of the Global South and by dispossessed peoples in the wealthy nations. In other words, those who are least responsible for carbon emissions will bear the heaviest brunt of the climate emergency.

Fortunately, there are countervailing tendencies, heroic activists and movements around the world who are fighting against the Right-wing surge and planetary ecocide. While it might be easy to conclude that the upsurge of hope that accompanied the Arab Spring, the Occupy Movement, and the rise of radical parties like *Syriza* in Greece after 2008 was misplaced given the rise of the far Right, progressive struggles against the contradictions of the neoliberal order have in fact intensified over the last decade. Movements in the US such as Black Lives Matter, the struggle of the Standing Rock Sioux

and their allies against the Dakota Access Pipeline, the Women's March and #MeToo movement, and movements against Islamophobia and for immigrant rights have proliferated despite the heavy repression meted out to them under both the Obama and Trump administrations. Although there have been tensions within and between these movements, they are nonetheless striking for their solidarity. Indeed, it is in these movements that truly radical forms of transnational affiliation are gestating. The rise of global Indigenous solidarity that was evident in the mobilization at Standing Rock is an obvious example. Another clear example of this transnational ethic is the enduring solidarity between Black Lives Matter activists and Palestinians.

These movements are definitively not post-national, at least not in the sense of the term that enjoyed prominence in discussions of globalization in the 1990s and early 2000s – including among radicals such as Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt in *Empire* (2000). In the case of Indigenous peoples, the insistence on national sovereignty in the face of settler colonialism and the repeated abrogation of treaties by countries like the US and Canada is a constant. But the determination to engage with and remake existing structures of national governance is equally clear among other contemporary radical movements. Take the movement for a Green New Deal. This notion has been in circulation in the US and Europe at least since the onset of the Great Recession in 2008, but it has recently reignited as a result of the efforts of newly elected US Congressperson Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. Working with the Sunrise Movement, Ocasio-Cortez has insisted that the Democratic leadership in the House of Representatives constitute a committee to develop a plan for rapid and sweeping climate action. As its name suggests, this plan would entail a massive program of investments in clean energy jobs and infrastructure that would transform not just the energy sector but the entire US economy, making it far more egalitarian and just. The proposal for a Green New Deal has caught fire in the US because of its sweeping ambitions to remake a country whose people have been devastated by decades of neoliberal austerity, who are angry with the political status quo, and who are hungry for climate action plans that constitute genuine responses to the unfolding climate emergency. This desire for transformation is, in other words, the same one that Donald Trump tapped, although it

is of course intent on countering the odious bigotry embedded in Trump's "Make America Great Again" rhetoric. Like the Depression-era programs for which it is named, the Green New Deal would remake the American economy, but would also allow the US to export cutting edge renewable energy technologies in order to ensure a global just transition. The Green New Deal, in other words, aims to be a genuine program of national uplift that would also be part of a progressive internationalism aimed at averting planetary ecocide.

JAm It! debuts and must inevitably be shaped by this context of political extremes and radical movements of various stripes in the US and in Italy and other European nations. While American Studies in Italy has, according to a commentator such as Maurizio Vaudagna, largely retreated behind the walls of the academy, this is decisively not the case across the Atlantic (Vaudagna 2007, 57). The last decade or so in the US has seen not just the politically inspired transnational turn in American Studies but also the public support of the American Studies Association for the Boycott, Divest, and Sanctions movement. The ASA's courageous public stance in a country where public statements challenging Israel's policies towards Palestinians have long been anathema is mirrored and augmented by recent scholarly work in American Studies scholarship on settler colonialism, decolonization, critical prison studies, queer studies, and similar topics.[2] These trends have only intensified during the Trump years. The politicization of American Studies in the US has also been propelled by the job market, which, as in Italy, is terrible. In the US, it is clear that the lack of openings for younger scholars is in significant part a result of political decisions: on the part of state legislatures to cut back support for public education, and on the part of university presidents to hire cadres of handsomely paid administrators and ill-paid adjuncts rather than tenure-track professors. Such transformations of the American university are animated by decades of Right-wing attacks on "identity politics" and the interdisciplinary programs (American Studies, Women's Studies, Ethnic Studies) that

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[2] Recent issues of *American Quarterly* offer ample testimony to the radical bent of contemporary American Studies in the US.

social movements have managed to establish within the US academy.[3] Critical university studies has therefore also become an important branch of US studies.[4]

JAm It! will no doubt bring a lively awareness of this terrain of struggle to American Studies in Italy. It promises to offer younger Italian scholars of American Studies an important venue for publication and intervention, a key intervention given the relative sclerosis of the field that the dismal job market in Italy has precipitated. It is not too much to hope that the journal will also play a role in catalyzing and solidifying new circuits of progressive transnational solidarity, both within academia and in broader public life. After all, we know that despite their bellicose nationalist rhetoric, leaders of the extreme Right like Steve Bannon are organizing transnationally. The malignant presence of fascist organs like *Breitbart* in the US and multiple European countries demonstrates this clearly. The task of all those opposed to the fascist creep must be to develop new stories of radical political and social possibility, and to learn from and support one another through new bonds of solidarity. I very much hope that *JAm It!* will play an important role in this great struggle against the contemporary onslaught of barbarism.

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[3] On the history of these attacks, see Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (Beacon Press, 2003).
[4] See, for example, Roderick A. Ferguson's *The Reorder of Things: The University and Its Pedagogies of Minority Difference* (University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

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NOTES ON A SURREALIST PAINTING

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When Paul Beatty came to Turin in November 2016 to talk about his National Book Critics Circle Award-winning novel *The Sellout* (2015), people in the audience asked him a question about THE election. The question had been looming large in the overcrowded room akin to a bad omen even before the Q&A section started. The discussion about the book itself felt like a preamble to that question. Donald J. Trump had just become the 45th President of the United States, and the incredulity at the fact was still fresh as if we had been woken up to discover that surrealism could, after all, invade the real and claim dominion over a vast swathe of it. Like in a surrealist painting, Trump's presidency seemed a *non sequitur,* an unexpected juxtaposition. The question ran along the lines of "what are we to make of this?" and Beatty did not seem to be taken off guard by it. "More art will come out of it," he replied, and although his answer sounded tentative, the tension in the room seemed to dissipate and be replaced by a general sigh of relief.

Beatty is not the only one to emphasize this aspect. In an essay on the challenges of becoming an American writer included in *How to Write an Autobiographical Novel* (2018), Alexander Chee recounts a similar moment of disbelief following the election results. It felt as if someone had assassinated the president, Chee recalls, "but the president was alive. Instead, the country we thought we would be living in was dead. As if a president had assassinated a country" (Chee 2018, 253). Akin to those writers who experienced writer's block immediately after 9/11, Chee finds himself wondering whether there is any sense in pursuing a career in writing. What is the point of that, one of his students asks in class, "if this can happen?" Chee's reply follows Beatty's almost to a tee: "art endures past governments, countries, and emperors, and their would-be replacements" (276) and our

biggest failure would be to stop engaging with it either by creating it or weighing its implications.

What both Chee and Beatty seem to agree on is that when politics fail, we turn to art. If not to repair that failure, then at least to make sense of it. What they both fail to mention, or at least specify, is what they mean by *art*. Considering that both of them are writers, are we to infer that what *they* regard as art is confined to the realm of literature? Yes and no. Beatty's novel, *The Sellout*, has been described by book reviewers as a "deliberate subversion of harmful cultural assumptions" challenging "the sacred tenets of the United States Constitution" (Walls 2015). Chee's highly autobiographical novel, *Edinburgh* (2001), tackles the issue of sexual abuse and examines "the unspeakable" (McIntosh 2018) that surrounds it akin to a protective cocoon. To them, art *is* literature, but that is only because both happen to be writers. Given the nature of their work, art is more like a label attached to works that challenge and subvert, as well as drive debate. Literature, then, becomes art only when it engenders a particular response outside itself, opposing jaundiced discourses to make space for a critical stance. This kind of criticism, in its most political and thus artistic form, is what we wanted to accomplish with the creation of the *Journal of American Studies in Italy* (*JAm It!*).

It is within this context, at the nexus between politics and art, that the first issue of *JAm It!* wants to leave its mark by engaging young scholars in a lively debate about the intricacies of contemporary U.S. politics and beyond. The papers included in this inaugural issue engage with some of the most critical debates in this historical moment, looking at the discordant trajectories of social drifts marked by the antonymic relationship between hyper-nationalist and post-nationalist ideologies and the political movements representing them. They make new connections and look at both past and present with a keen eye for detail and contradictions to shed new light on nuances and grey areas. The concepts these papers scrutinize also touch upon more consolidated notions of contemporary academic discourse, such as cultural hegemony, ethno-nationalism, exceptionalism, transnationalism, subversive narratives, and representations. The examples these authors choose in their scrutiny are not merely representative but also challenging because most of

them are poised between the transformative desire to trigger action and the disheartening awareness that the society they seek to alter is ultimately unable to produce satisfying outcomes.

In "The Death of the Transformational Presidency?", Laura Ellyn Smith introduces the main debate of our current issue. By employing the notion of "transformational presidency" to interpret the current political situation in the U.S., Smith argues for the twenty-first century as a post-national era, in which globalization can act as a check to presidential power. Modern technology, Smith contends, alongside globalization, have strengthened America's system of checks and balances meant to curb presidential powers and have magnified context by adding to it a form of international accountability and an extra layer of obligations. The paper draws a crucial distinction between the concept of transnational election campaigns and that of transnational presidency by demonstrating how the two do not necessarily intertwine, as was the case with Trump's election.

Global issues, such as climate change, can also be interpreted (and reinterpreted) in light of the discussion regarding hyper- and post-nationalism. In "Intersections Between Streams of Nationalism and Global Issues: the Influence of Hyper-Nationalist Elements in the Climate Politics of the Trump Presidency," Sakina Groeppmaier argues that different nationalistic ideologies have had an impact on Trump's climate change agenda. She does so by analyzing Trump's speeches and interviews in conjunction with the works of political analysts and sociologists such as Arjun Appadurai, Francis Fukuyama, and John Mearsheimer, and scientific studies on climate change produced by prominent national and transnational organizations such as the U.S. Department of Energy and the United Nations.

Tala Makhoul takes a different approach to transnationalism by comparing three different ethno-nationalist movements: the alt-right in the U.S., Zionists in Israel, and Maronite Christian ethno-nationalists in Lebanon. The main contribution of "Ethnonationalism in the U.S., Lebanon, and Israel: a Transnational Analysis" is to prove that all three movements rely on the same ideology, as well as to move away from the tendency to paint the alt-right and other right-wing movements worldwide with a broad

brush. By focusing on the three groups' reception of Trump's decision to move the U.S. embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, Makhoul traces a connection between the alt-right tendencies that fueled Trump supporters, Israeli Zionists, and Lebanese Maronites by defining them as ethno-nationalist, a category that is much more accurate and less stereotype-ridden than fascist or neo-fascist.

Other contributions to this issue place the Trump presidency and its policies into historical perspective by looking at inherent continuities and disharmonies. In "Darkest Italy Revisited: American Hyper-Nationalism and the Making of the 'Criminal Immigrant' from the Age of Thomas Jefferson to the Rise of Donald J. Trump 1776–2018," Anthony J. Antonucci establishes a connection between the refusal of admission of Mexican (and, more generally, LatinX) immigrants into the U.S. by Donald Trump and the treatment Italian immigrants received upon entering the country. For Antonucci, both these reactions, which he sees as hyper-nationalist manifestations, are rooted in the same premises: the compulsion to establish a distinction between 'real' Americans and immigrants. To support this thesis, Antonucci analyzes the descriptions given by three American writers who visited Italy in the late eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century. In his view, contemporary Trumpian ideas descend from an old and well-established notion of Italian 'national character,' as expressed by the three writers and to a view of Italy that dates back to the age of Jefferson.

American nationalism in the age of Trump is also put into perspective by Karl E. Martin when he frames it into a religious discourse expressly construed to represent Americans as a chosen people. Although it is part of our journal's open section, Martin's paper obliquely engages with the topic of our first issue. "Laying Claim to a Christian America: Evangelical Narratives of Exceptionalism" analyzes *The Light and the Glory* (1973), *From Sea to Shining Sea* (1985), and *Sounding Forth the Trumpet* (1997), a trilogy of historical narratives written by Peter Marshall and David Manuel, in view of unearthing their rhetorical structure and showing their adherence to the American Jeremiad as described by Sacvan Bercovitch. In doing so, Martin demonstrates how the texts blend

religious rhetoric with U.S. secular history, following and renewing the classic Puritan bias to view American history as a reflection of God's will.

Transnationalism can take different forms that aim to reform different parts of society, particularly in politically-charged climates. In "'To Work Black Magic': Richard Bruce Nugent's Queer Transnational Insurgency," Ryan Tracy argues that Nugent's provocative short story, "Pope Pius the Only," stands out as a radically non-aligned way of considering identity and human relations, especially if one considers this text in the broader context of post-WWI nationalistic resurgence. The short story is thus a means to describe the author's belief that blackness and queerness could redefine intimate relations between men in a historical context where nationalisms of all kinds were at work as disruptive and dividing forces. In Tracy's view, Nugent deconstructs American national identity by opposing white nationalism (specifically, Italian jingoism) with a "decadent" work that aims at defining a non-hegemonic, ex-centric identity based on ethnicity and gender.

At other times, notions of transnationalism morph into ones of post-nationalism to challenge, albeit obliquely, the *status quo*. In "Postnational Visions in Thomas Pynchon's *Against the Day*," Ali Dehdarirad argues that Pynchon's novel depicts a post-national vision that questions the metanarrative of "nation-ness," as defined by Sascha Pölmann. Given this, Dehdarirad reveals how the alternative worlds of the novel portray a trans/post-national vision that is resistant to the rooted hegemony of nationalism in the world.

Dehdarirad is not the only one to point to how fiction reveals the inner workings of the American cultural apparatus. In "The State as the Intruder: Cultural Hegemony and Self Repression in *The Boys in the Band*," Simone Aramu explores the relation between the gay community and the state by undertaking an in-depth analysis of the only heterosexual character, Alan, in Mart Crowley's play (1968). The paper thus discusses the role of the State in the perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity and cultural hegemony during the sixties, a crucial period for the creation of a revolutionary movement fighting for sexual and racial freedom. By using Michel Foucault's theoretical framework concerning biopower and

panopticism, the paper explores the relations between the gay community and the State through the bonds and attitudes of the play's main characters.

On a similar line of reasoning, in "'Message Queens': AIDS Protest Literature, the Gay Community and Writing as a Political Act," another paper included in our open section, Anna Ferrari aims to show that during the AIDS crisis of the 1980s in the U.S., and specifically in NYC, literature became a space of protest. Within it, writers strived to inform and warn the gay community of the dangers of the epidemic, as well as to raise the awareness of the American political apparatus. To do this, Ferrari discusses texts by Larry Kramer, David B. Feinberg, and Sarah Schulman, literary works that corroborate the idea that throughout the crisis fiction became a space of protest. Given that the mainstream media avoided the topic because the victims were mostly members of the gay community, literature became the only way to disseminate the message.

Debates might not always lead to meaningful, or noticeable, change. However, it is the insufficiency of debate that leads to the deadening effects of entrenched dogmas and notions. By empowering discussion among young scholars about contemporary issues, *JAm It!* thus seeks to make space in an academic world that seems to be increasingly insular and prone to entrenchment. If more art is to come out of hard times, we will strive to supplement the debate that not only strengthens its effects but also makes it even more conspicuous.

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THE DEATH OF THE TRANSFORMATIONAL PRESIDENCY?

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ABSTRACT

Political scientist Stephen Skowronek defines transformational presidents as those who altered the political system and the nation. Voters' dissatisfaction with Barack Obama, the backlash evident in the election of Donald Trump and analysis of his presidency thus far raises two important questions. Firstly, can there be a transformational presidency in the twenty-first century? Secondly, have transformational presidential elections replaced the transformational presidency? Utilizing news media sources, this article demonstrates that the twenty-first century can best be described as the era of post-nationalism, with globalization providing a check on presidential power. It is now nearly impossible for a transformational candidate to become a transformational president.

Keywords: Presidency, Elections, Globalization

INTRODUCTION

The Harvard forum entitled "War Stories: Inside Campaign 2016," between Donald Trump campaign manager Kellyanne Conway and Hillary Clinton campaign manager Robby Mook, was especially controversial (Harvard 2016). In reference to Trump's tweet that claimed the existence of mass illegal voting Conway stated: "Well he's President-elect so that's presidential behavior" (Diaz 2016). At the crux of her statement was the belief that the man makes the office of president, as opposed to the office making the man. While the role of the individual is significant in determining presidential success or failure, equally important is the impact of context.

Political scientist Stephen Skowronek emphasizes context through his theory concerning presidential authority, leadership and a cycle of political time. Skowronek has identified distinct types of presidential authority that have occurred cyclically throughout American presidential history (Skowronek 1997, 34). Written during the 2010 midterm elections, Skowronek sought to ascertain whether Barack Obama will eventually be

classified as a transformational, or in his terms "reconstructive or preemptive" president (Skowronek 2011, 167). Skowronek defines how "Transformational leaders reconstruct American government and politics; they set it operating on (to use the Obama locution) 'a new foundation'" (Skowronek 2011, 171). Conversely, Skowronek defines a preemptive presidency as identifiable by "Hyphenated party labels, hybrid agendas, personal leadership, independent appeals" (Skowronek 2011, 107-108). While Obama's 2008 campaign and rhetoric emphasized transformation and change, his presidency was comparatively lackluster and did not meet Skowronek's definition of a transformational president who changed "the playing field of national politics, durably, substantially, and on his own terms" (171). Skowronek identifies Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, Abraham Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR), and Ronald Reagan as transformational presidents (171). Skowronek explains that "while it is difficult to imagine a more disparate group of personalities, it is evident that these men shared the most promising of all situations for the exercise of political leadership" (36-37). The five presidents Skowronek identifies altered the political system and the nation within the political context of their terms in office, which, while diverse, similarly proffered an opportunity for transformation. With debate increasing among political scientists and historians alike over the Obama legacy, the time has come to reassess presidential leadership and power. In the twenty-first century, the forces of globalization and the technology revolution spurred by fast-paced changes in global communication have converged to create innumerable crises and issues demanding immediate attention on a daily basis, thereby placing intense pressure on presidential leadership and limiting presidential power.

The commentary of news media sources provides insight for analyzing various perceptions of modern presidential power and leadership. Despite Trump's recent and ongoing attacks on "media bias," credible news media sources that base their stories on facts and expert analysis, including newspapers such as *The Washington Post*, news magazines like *The Atlantic*, and television news network websites such as *CNN*, retain their importance as worthy sources for academic analysis (Stelter 2016; Hughes 2017, 691-719). Indeed, perhaps it is even more pertinent to emphasize analysis of news media sources

considering the impact of "fake news" during the 2016 election and the increasingly insular nature in which new technology is utilized to identify an individual's political preference and continuously reinforce that same viewpoint (Dougherty 2016). Regardless of "media bias" to the left or right of the political spectrum, news media sources provide a deeper understanding of the public perception of the modern presidency and presidential elections through their reporting. Writing on the front lines of history, journalists and political commentators provide indications of the trajectory of American history by reporting stories that will become part of future historical research. The first section of this article will therefore examine the potential for a transformational presidency in the twenty-first century. The second section will analyze whether transformational elections have replaced the transformational presidency.

A TRANSFORMATIONAL PRESIDENCY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY?

Following Trump's election, some media outlets emphasized the significance of Obama's presidency to American history. The most convincing part of this argument is the emphasis on the fact that Obama, as an African American, was elected at all. However, while Obama's election may have been transformational, his presidency hardly fits Skowronek's definition of a "reconstructive" president that "reconstruct[ed] American government and politics" (Skowronek 2011, 171). Arguably "American government itself is understood differently" as a result of the election of Trump, instead of the Obama legacy (171). While cause and effect exists between Obama's presidency and Trump's election, Obama did not fundamentally alter government or politics in any durable fashion.

Although Obama cannot be classified as a transformational president under Skowronek's definition, did Obama ever have the opportunity to become transformational? Undoubtedly, Obama's ability to bring about change was severely hindered by the rise of domestic opposition. The 2010 midterm elections established Republican dominance in the House of Representatives and national disunity was reflected through political disunity (Best 2016). The creation of the Tea Party strengthened the crescendo of conservative rhetoric. Published in the cover story of the January/February 2017 issue of *The Atlantic*,

Ta-Nehisi Coates focuses on Obama's legacy and rightly states that "Much ink has been spilled in an attempt to understand the Tea Party protests, and the 2016 presidential candidacy of Donald Trump, which ultimately emerged out of them" (Coates 2017, 63). Coates criticizes the generalization that the Tea Party "was largely the discontented rumblings of a white working class threatened by the menace of globalization and crony capitalism" (63). Coates accurately emphasizes the role of racism in the Tea Party movement, while accepting that "Deindustrialization, globalization, and broad income inequality are real" and had an impact (63).

Constrained by new global threats that have accompanied modern globalization, Obama demonstrated how presidents are now inhibited from becoming transformational by having to work within a global narrative and respond to struggles that are international in scale. The concept of globalization as a constraint on presidential power is controversial. Prior to the 2010 midterm elections, Saskia Sassen, a professor of sociology, wrote a column in *The Huffington Post* that argued that the expansion of the globalized economy has had an enduring effect on increasing presidential power (Sassen 2010). Through emphasizing economics in her discussion of how "the executive branch gains power partly through its increasing international activities," Sassen directly confronts what she identifies as "a key argument in much of the globalization literature . . . that the rise of the global economy has weakened the state" (Sassen 2010). Indeed, she goes so far as to claim that the globalized economy "has actually strengthened the power of the executive even as many other components of the state, notably the legislature, have lost authority" (Sassen 2010). However, the federal government shutdowns in 2013, 2018, and especially the unprecedentedly long shutdown in 2019 that ended with executive capitulation in the face of the legislature's resolve, appear to contradict Sassen's thesis (Appleton and Stracqualursi 2014; Scott, Golshan and Nilsen 2018; Baker 2019).

Additionally, through her overemphasis on the economy, Sassen neglects other key facets of globalization in the twenty-first century. The Council on Foreign Relations defines globalization as "not just an economic phenomenon, but a political, cultural, military, and environmental one" (Lindsay, Greenberg and Daalder, 2003). The "terrible new perils" of

modern globalization include global warming, electronic hacking, and terrorism (Lindsay, Greenberg and Daalder, 2003). The increased mobility and migration that has accompanied globalization in the twenty-first century has clearly been a central cause for concern, as reflected in Trump's appeals to hyper-nationalism and election rhetoric to "build the wall" (Barbaro et al. 2016). While Trump opportunistically takes advantage of the general fear of terrorism and mass immigration, the crux of the issue remains that globalization and the innumerable complex issues that it has created constrain presidential power and limit the potential of a candidate whose election campaign transformed the nation to become a transformational president in the twenty-first century. Indeed, as political scientist Matthew Laing recognizes, "Major challenges to presidential exercise of authority are occurring, with important consequences for how Skowronek's original cyclical model plays out" (Laing 2012, 259). This is especially apparent in the diminishing potential for a transformational presidency to occur as Trump is operating in an era of post-nationalism and political globalism, that despite challenges, continues to define the post 9/11 world – an era that strips away independence from, or, at the very least, directly challenges the hegemonic power structure of the American presidency.

In the context of the Trump presidency, executive orders can be understood as a sign of presidential weakness through their legal limitations. Trump's infamous travel ban that was suspended by the federal appeals court is a vivid example of limitations on presidential power (Smith 2017). The time lapse between the suspension of his original travel ban and the issuing of a third revised, narrower travel ban reflects the necessity for the president to work alongside other branches of government and other bureaucracies, such as the State Department (Almasy and Simon 2017; Barnes 2017). The exclusion of Iraq further demonstrates the impact of geo-political considerations on presidential power (De Vogue, Diamond and Liptak 2017; Barnes 2017). Political scientist Keith Whittington emphasizes the power of transformational presidents by describing them as "likely to disagree with the constitutional understandings of the [Supreme] Court, and they have the ambitions and capacity to displace the judicial authority to interpret the Constitution with their own" (Whittington 2007, 161). Nevertheless, the strength of the checks exerted by the

judiciary on presidential power currently remain evident in the Supreme Court's decision to uphold the third and limited version of the travel ban (De Vogue and Stracqualursi 2018).

A lot has changed since 2008, both socio-culturally and politically. The increasing influence of globalization, interconnectedness, and the technology revolution in the twenty-first century should never be underestimated. Articles such as "The Technology Revolution and Its Role in Our Lives," that appeared in *The Huffington Post* in 2014, have convincingly emphasized the ways in which modern technology has impacted our socio-cultural lives (Nazarian 2014). The impact of modern technology on the economy, such as ambitious projections "that 47% of jobs categories will become automated in the next decade," are consistently stressed (Nazarian 2014). However, the effect of new technology on politics has not been fully explored, for example in her book on American elections, political scientist Pippa Norris cites the threat of hacking as the singular technological issue relating to concerns over electoral integrity in 2016 (Norris 2017, 5-6). The speed with which technology changes and adapts makes it difficult for academics to provide in-depth analysis of its overall significance to any particular political context. While social media clearly has a huge impact on politics, its influence may be unquantifiable.

The impact of modern technology on presidential power is a controversial question. Some scholars such as Daniel M. Cook and Andrew J. Polsky imply that technology enables an increase of presidential power, arguing that "Although the organizational setting is doubtless more complex today than in the age of Jackson, Jefferson, or even FDR, the means at the disposal of an emergent regime are also vastly greater" (Cook and Polsky 2005, 600). However, the speed of technology can be clearly understood as inhibiting presidential power, as it creates innumerable issues that require the president's immediate attention or response. This is demonstrated in how the communications revolution has resulted in chain reactions, where, for example, nationwide Black Lives Matter and #MeToo movement protests are becoming a persistent presence (Capehart 2015; Gilbert 2017). Overall, while the information and communications revolutions of the twenty-first century have had clear benefits for democracy in providing "enhanced possibilities for coordinating

activism" and giving a voice to the discontented, this rising clamor of voters with increasing expectations simultaneously provides a check on presidential power (Schroeder 2018, 40).

Additionally, Trump's persistent use of Twitter during both his election and presidency continue to demonstrate the prominence of social media as a communications outlet and as "weapons of mass distraction" (Begala 2017). Notably, Trump has attempted to justify his use of social media in a tweet stating "My use of social media is not Presidential – it's MODERN DAY PRESIDENTIAL" (LeBlanc 2017). While Trump appears to understand the way in which he communicates as successfully utilizing contemporary technology in an innovative way, he simultaneously does not seem to recognize that the controversies he inspires make it unlikely that any future president will replicate his use of social media. Nevertheless, Trump projects unbridled confidence, holding his first re-election campaign fundraiser in June 2017 and even filing for re-election on his inauguration day, making history for being the earliest incumbent president to do so (Sinclair 2017). Trump's constant campaigning and avoidance of governing raises the question of whether he even distinguishes between a transformational election and a transformational president.

Despite Trump's confidence in the power of Twitter as a platform, social media presents far more numerous constraints than benefits on the ability of a president to become transformational. The growing anti-Trump movement also utilizes social media to enhance their message and has disrupted Republican town halls nationwide (Dreier 2017). Undoubtedly, new technology also possesses unintended consequences such as encrypted applications that enable terrorist networks to communicate effectively without being apprehended, bringing into question a president's ability to balance privacy and security in policies concerning surveillance (Fink, Pagliery and Segall 2015). Perhaps the ongoing investigation over the role of Russia in Trump's election campaign may provide some illumination of the consequences of modern technology and the power it holds over the presidency (Bayoumy 2016). Regardless, as a result of globalization and the technology revolution, international checks and balances now inhibit the presidency alongside America's domestic system of checks and balances.

The impact of the information revolution that has been supported by the technology revolution in the twenty-first century is a matter that Skowronek briefly mentions in his 2010 analysis of Obama's potential to become a transformational president (Skowronek 2011, 173). Skowronek muses that "It may be that so many major issues are presented simultaneously in a modern presidency that it has become harder for the public to calibrate the balance of repudiation and accommodation" (173). Trump's election can certainly be understood as a repudiation of the Obama presidency and his legacy. The transformations that have occurred as a result of the information and technology revolutions in the twenty-first century and the impact they have had upon the presidency and the public's rising and arguably unrealistic expectations have been dramatic.

Conversely, Republican support of Trump is clearly not guaranteed and Trump's controversial political style is a vital deviation from Skowronek's definition of how "Reconstructive leaders establish a new majority that can be depended upon to support the president's new commitments and priorities" (176). Evidence of divisions between Trump and the Republican Party is brewing. Indeed, Trump cannot rely on party unity, as exemplified by the battle over repealing and replacing Obamacare and the growing divide between and among the moderate Tuesday group and the conservative Freedom Caucus (Golshan 2017). Additionally, Trump's nominee for Labor secretary Andrew Puzder was forced to withdraw as a result of Republican disunity in the Senate (Rappeport 2017). Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos made history by being the first cabinet nominee who required the vice-president to cast the decisive affirmative vote in the Senate, due to defections in the president's own party (Huetteman and Alcindor 2017).

Both Republican divisions and Democratic opposition pose a persistent challenge to Trump. This was exemplified in the need for Republicans to invoke "the nuclear option" to confirm Trump's Supreme Court nominee Neil Gorsuch (Weaver and Dye 2017). The liability Trump presents to the Republican Party is especially apparent in the fact that Trump set a record for being the first president elected with less than a 50 percent approval rating (Gallup Politics 2017). Indeed, Trump's job approval rating as president has never been over 50 percent and his average rating is 39 percent (Gallup Presidential 2019). This is

comparable to the immensely unpopular George W. Bush's 34 percent approval rating at the end of his second term (Gallup Presidential 2009).

Trump's lack of credibility and divisiveness were key in destroying the honeymoon period a new presidential administration usually enjoys. A lack of transparency has plagued the Trump administration and led to the early enforced resignation of National Security Advisor Michael Flynn, as well as the firing of F.B.I. Director James Comey and the recusal of former Attorney General Jeff Sessions from the ongoing investigation into Russia's role in the election has exacerbated Trump's credibility gap (Bump 2017). Indeed, Trump's firing of Comey has been seen as reminiscent of President Richard Nixon's firing of special prosecutor Archibald Cox during the Watergate investigation (Hopper 2017). Trump's disregard for factual accuracy created bipartisan and international consternation following his unsubstantiated accusation that Obama ordered the wiretapping of Trump Tower prior to the election (Heigl 2017). Overall, therefore, numerous controversial issues that are rife with the possibility of conflict between the president and his party and Trump's divisive political style made the supposed presidential honeymoon period nonexistent.

Trump's firebrand rhetoric persistently prevents any opportunity for unity. Through his loss of the popular vote Trump lacks a mandate from the general public, who elected Republican congressional majorities that included Trump critics such as Senators Marco Rubio and John McCain (Ayres 2016; Phillips 2016). Specifically, divisions between congressional Republicans and Trump were vividly displayed through Trump's controversial budget, which Rubio and other Republicans critiqued (Bresnahan, Ferris and Scholtes 2017). Therefore despite Republican control of both the executive and legislative branches, significantly, Trump's much-heralded legislative agenda appears in practice to be potentially limited to a single tax reform bill (Long 2017). Similar to the majority of Obama's presidential tenure when he faced a partisan Republican Congress, the federal government remains gridlocked despite current Republican control of the Senate and executive branch. This gridlock was painfully evident in the recent government shutdown, historic for its longevity and reflective of the hyper-partisanship and divisive intra-party struggles present under the Trump presidency (Baker 2019).

Notably, none of the four presidents who lost the popular vote (John Quincy Adams, Rutherford B. Hayes, Benjamin Harrison, and George W. Bush) were transformational (Gore 2016). Indeed, as Trump is identified as a divisive and polarizing figure both inter- and intraparty, the congressional partisanship that checked Obama could give way to interparty, bipartisan pro- and anti-Trump factions. However, even if party loyalty remains intact, Trump's prospects for reliable Republican support, and thereby his prospects to become a transformational president seem bleak. Skowronek himself cites both Trump's loss of the popular vote and the divisions he wrought amongst Republicans during the 2016 election as strong indicators that Trump will fail to become a transformational president (Kreitner 2016).

Skowronek additionally associates transformational presidents with "Party building and institutional reconstruction" (176). Trump's reliance on the politics of personality means that he will most likely achieve limited results in terms of party building. The strength of Trump's anti-establishment sentiment may preclude any positive, constructive party building through re-organization of the Republican Party, let alone party unity, which is a necessity for transformational presidents. His highly controversial comments make it appear unlikely that he will ever achieve completely unified support from the Republican Party. Another possible option for Trump would be to create a new political party but, for this to succeed and for history to define his presidency as transformational, this new party would have to outlive his presidency and survive on its own. Due to the numerous obstacles to Trump's success in party building, it therefore seems unlikely that Trump will revive the transformational presidency within the context of the twenty-first century.

Indeed, based on the electoral success of the Republicans in 2016, party building may become a broader and more localized effort, rather than a top-down facet of presidential "reconstruction." In this sense, parties may become or be forced to become more reflective of society and its demands and concerns. This trend may already be apparent in the demographic and ideological diversity represented by the congressmen and women elected in the 2018 mid-terms to serve in the Democratic majority in the House of Representatives (Viebeck 2018). These freshmen congressmen and women have had a trial

by fire in beginning their time in Washington during the record-breaking government shutdown (Baker 2019). The solidarity of Democrats in the House of Representatives forced President Trump to end the shutdown without gaining the money he demanded to build the southern border wall between America and Mexico, thereby demonstrating the organizational ability of parties to reflect society's concerns, in this case the federal government reopening, while simultaneously stymieing the power of the presidency (Baker 2019).

Writing in 2010, Skowronek mused that "we have to wonder whether a political reconstruction is ever again likely to come from the American Left" (193). However, it now appears more pertinent to question if "political reconstruction," or in other words a transformational presidency, will ever come again from either the political Left or the Right. Overall, Trump's divisiveness seems to preclude any possibility for re-organization of the Republican Party, as was called for following the GOP's loss of the 2012 presidential election (Cheney 2016). Transformational leaders are usually identifiable through the party unity and loyalty they inspire, a feature that is certainly lacking in Trump's divisive administration so far. Indeed, Republicans have reason to be nervous over Trump's limited coattails considering Republican Roy Moore's loss of the senatorial race in Alabama in 2017 and Democrats takeover of the House of Representatives following the 2018 mid-term elections (Sullivan, Weigel and Scherer 2017; BBC 2018). It is entirely possible that the transformational presidency may be extinct.

TRANSFORMATIONAL ELECTION CAMPAIGNS INSTEAD OF A TRANSFORMATIONAL PRESIDENCY?

The presidential elections of 2008 and 2016 were both transformational and unprecedented in the different nature in which the campaigns were fought. In 2008, America elected its first African American president and in 2016, Trump threw out the proverbial political playbook and altered the electoral map. Most significantly, however, both elections fit into a definition of a transformational election – the election of a presidential candidate who embodies and whose campaign is underpinned by a larger social movement. In this sense,

a transformational election is representative of a more durable force in American politics, regardless of whether the movement actually achieves any consequential successes with their candidate in office, as the strength of the movement has already been proved in the election. The campaigns of 2008 and 2016 therefore show how a presidential election campaign can be transformational, despite it being almost impossible for a transformational presidency to occur in the twenty-first century. Furthermore, it is plausible that W. Bush was the final imperial president. While Skowronek's emphasis on context and his definition of the Bush presidency as "a conjunction of circumstances uniquely conducive to no-holds-barred presidentialism," is compelling, he continues by stating that during the Bush presidency there was, "a transit of power and authority from which there might be no turning back," (161). This concern of Skowronek's has not come to fruition, as there is no evidence that the presidency grew in power under Obama. Instead, Obama's power as president was limited by increasingly interconnected technology, which impacted globalization and created further checks on presidential power.

Vital to recognizing transformational election campaigns in the twenty-first century is the ability to identify their historical predecessors. Significantly, the five presidents that Skowronek recognizes as transformational, (Jefferson, Jackson, Lincoln, FDR and Reagan), all embodied the core tenets of the social movement that had undergirded their transformational elections (Skowronek 2011, 171). These five distinct social movements all predated each presidential candidate and were indicative of longstanding socio-political fault lines among Americans. Prior to the increased obstacles for a potential transformative presidency to occur in the twenty-first century, it may have seemed unnecessary to consider a particular president's election, with scholars choosing instead to focus on the accomplishments of presidents. The recent rise of new impediments to presidential power may explain why Skowronek does not discuss transformational elections.

The presidents Skowronek identifies as transformational all had transformational elections that were underpinned by social movements specific to their political time and context. Jefferson's election was the nation's first bitter and partisan campaign that resulted in the first transfer of the power of the executive between political parties (Miller Center

2017). The social movement for democratic agrarianism and a small federal government as espoused by Jefferson's Democratic-Republican Party was a critical component for Jefferson's election (Sharp 2010, 3). Although Jackson claimed to be Jefferson's political heir, despite Jefferson having referred to him as "a *dangerous man*," Jackson's election was supported by a different social movement (Feller, 2016a; Heidlers 2011, 173). Scholars such as Lynn Hudson Parsons and James M. McPherson have cited Jackson's election in 1828 as transformative in that he was the first presidential candidate who began to embrace the "modern" concept of actively campaigning, while establishing "a cult of personality" (Parsons 2009, x). Jackson's cult of personality strengthened his populist appeal, which courted the contemporaneous social movement concerned with expanding democracy for the "common man" (Genovese 2001, 61-62). Perhaps the most indisputable transformational election was that of Lincoln, who was the first presidential candidate of a major political party to be elected while openly advocating against the expansion of slavery, with anti-slavery being the social movement clearly undergirding his election (Mieczkowski 2001, 52-53). FDR's first election in 1932 was transformational through his representation of the rise of liberalism in American politics, evident in his advocacy of New Deal policies (Ritchie 2008; Library of Congress 2017). In the midst of the Great Depression, the labor movement was a critical component of FDR's base of support (Ritchie 2007, 5). Finally, presidential scholar Iwan Morgan in writing the latest biography of Reagan describes how Reagan's 1980 election has been understood as "a revolutionary event that signaled the end of the New Deal political order established by Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1930s" (Morgan 2016, xiii). Notably, political scientist Theodore J. Lowi compares Reagan to FDR regarding Reagan's first election: while the breadth of FDR's and Reagan's policy agendas are comparable, the latter candidate was more open than the former in revealing his plans (Lowi 1985, 12). In terms of the "revolutionary" style and tactics Reagan successfully used to be elected, Laing describes how "Reagan's election campaigns and presidency illustrate the *ceremonialization* of presidential rhetoric," that combined emotive calls couched in a glorified portrayal of America's past, while directly challenging the size of the federal government (Laing 2012, 244). Reagan's election was transformational

as it symbolized the rise of the conservative right, the social movement he represented. Overall therefore, there is a clear historical connection between a transformational election and a transformational president.

A pertinent example of historical connections is evident in how Trump has frequently been compared and has himself cited Jackson, a nineteenth century president that Skowronek recognizes as transformational (Parks 2017). What Trump fails to recognize is that both he and Jackson thrived within the given contexts of their campaigns by tapping into the heightened public suspicion of government elites and railing against supposed corruption (Feller, 2016a). They both utilized an anti-establishment message in their populist campaigns (Feller, 2016b). Through rewarding his loyalists with political appointments, Trump has also been reminiscent of Jackson, who established the "spoils system" (Feller, 2016b). This tendency is especially evident in the choice of numerous Wall Street executives friendly to Trump as appointees to federal government positions, as well as the choice of Ben Carson as secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (Wright 2016). Running transformational election campaigns, both Jackson and Trump spoke as the opposition, against those in power. Voters that supported these men were either enthralled by their candidate's personality or disillusioned by the opposing party in power (Feller, 2016a). Jackson's opponents were often deemed elitist and a similar problem now seems to plague the Democrats (Ball 2017).

A common theme that Skowronek identifies among the transformational presidents in American history is that they "consistently claim that they have discovered the true basis of national unity and that they are acting to restore it" (174). This is another similarity between Jackson's campaigns and Trump's campaign to "Make America Great Again." Furthermore, Skowronek describes transformational presidents as having "characteristically connect[ed] forthright repudiation of their immediate inheritance to a ringing reaffirmation of values emblematic of the American polity that seem to have been lost or squandered in the indulgences of the old order" (174). Trump's campaign reiterated this sentiment through his rhetoric that repetitively attacked the "rigged" political system (Johnson 2016). As president, Trump has continued to campaign and his rhetoric that

describes how he "inherited a mess" remains unchanged (Morin 2017). Skowronek stated in an interview that "Trump won the 2016 election by talking up this fabricated image of the Obama presidency as a failure, but it had very little foundation in reality," thereby attempting to explain Trump's election in the context of his political time theory (Kreitner 2016).

However, globalization in the twenty-first century and the rise of the informational and technological revolutions have presented presidents with increasing challenges and have seemingly divorced a transformational election from a transformational presidency. Indeed, while transformational elections supported by social movements can still occur, a transformational presidency may no longer be a possibility. Both Obama's 2008 election and Trump's 2016 election were underpinned by two divergent social movements. Although Obama's campaign was representative of a broad yearning for "change," economic equality was a central tenet of this change, espoused by a burgeoning social movement concerned with economic inequities during the Great Recession (Lizza 2008). The rise of Occupy Wall Street during Obama's first term demonstrated his incapability of delivering on his hopeful campaign promises and his inability to remain in control of the narrative of protest that had galvanized his supporters and been integral to his election (Levitin 2015). In stark contrast to concerns over equality, Trump's election can be defined as a nativist movement, based on a virulent anti-immigration stance and appeals to a shared national heritage, through for example embracing (sometimes literally) the American flag (*Washington Post* 2018).

The 2008 and 2016 elections may provide evidence of the replacement of the transformational presidency with transformational elections. It is possible to argue that as both Obama and Trump created a legacy through being elected, pressure to create a legacy as a transformational president was lacking. On the other hand, the creation of a legacy through a transformational election can be better understood as providing contextual pressure on a president to become transformational. Under the scrutiny of the twenty-first century media and twenty-four hour news cycle, this pressure likely intensifies on presidents who find themselves constrained by the impact of globalization on their ability

and power to control events. The constraints of the presidency thereby sharply contrast with the relative freedom of a presidential candidate. The methods evinced by the Obama and Trump campaigns demonstrate new ways in which a candidate can become president by transforming the nation through a campaign that brings a social movement to its zenith.

Obama's election transformed America by proving that it is possible for an African American to be elected president. Trump's election transformed America through the impact of his rhetoric that contradicted the proverbial political playbook by destroying the illusion of America living in the age of political correctness and, as some analysts have accurately stated, "opened up a new public square, where racists and misogynists could boast of their views and claim themselves validated" (Scherer 2016, 41). Additionally, Trump's election defeated scholars' projections of how "long-term demographic shifts favor the Democrats," in the Electoral College (Balkin 2012). Nevertheless, Clinton's 2016 winning of the popular vote was reliant on her landslide victory in California and thereby consistent with projections based on demographics (*New York Times* 2016). Overall, it is vital to understand the tactics and ways in which Obama and Trump as candidates succeeded in transforming the nation through their election campaigns.

Rhetoric was key for both Obama and Trump, although the difference in tone between the two could not be starker. Obama embodied optimism about the American dream, as represented in his 2008 campaign slogan "Yes We Can" (Obama 2008). In comparison to Obama's message of hope, Trump's rallying cry of "Make America Great Again," became a euphemism for his negative and nativist portrayal of America in 2016. Notably, while the catchphrase "Make America Great Again" originally served as part of Reagan's successful election to the presidency in 1980, his campaign presented optimistic rhetoric, such as describing immigrants as part of the American dream, which is a far cry from Trump's rhetoric and use of the slogan (Klein 2018). In its 2016 issue that named Trump "Person of the Year," *Time* magazine persuasively describes Trump's method as that "of a demagogue. The more the elites denounced his transgressions, the more his growing movement felt validated" (Scherer 2016, 42). Trump and his advisors consistently dismissed concerns over the negative impact of his rhetoric on socio-cultural relations both

domestically and internationally. Following the election, Conway defined Trump's appeal by stating that "There's a difference for voters between what offends you and what affects you" (Scherer 2016, 42). As Trump's campaign manager, Conway persistently defended her candidate; as she has explained, "You cannot underestimate the role of the backlash against political correctness – the us vs. the elite," thereby depicting Trump's controversial comments as the brave voice of the silent majority (Scherer 2016, 41).

Both Obama and Trump were elected through campaigns that promised change. In 2008, Democrats steadfastly believed they had elected the next transformative president, a man who would alter the political system and the nation. Journalists have referred to "the myth that Obama's election represented a permanent shift for the nation" and while Obama's legacy has yet to be determined, voters have voiced their disappointment with his eight-year presidential tenure and its lack of transformational qualities (Scherer 2016, 42). Skowronek consistently stresses presidential action over rhetoric or elections more broadly (Kreitner 2016). Nevertheless, even if Skowronek does not consider that elections have the potential to be transformational in and of themselves, elections remain significant to a presidency. A president cannot escape the context in which they were elected, especially the pressure to fulfill the promises they made as a candidate representative of a broader social movement and to maintain their base of supporters.

Political scientist Jack Balkin aptly describes how "In 2008 Obama certainly campaigned as if he planned to be a transformative president. His campaign slogans of hope and change promised that old political assumptions would be swept away and that American politics would be placed on new foundations" (Balkin 2012). However, these new foundations never materialized, as Obama was unable to turn his transformational candidacy into a transformational presidency. In 2010, Skowronek considered that "It may be that the promise of transformational leadership has been hollowed out by modern campaign hyperbole, that it is now just a matter of electoral positioning for momentary advantage" (169-170). While there is likely some truth in Skowronek's statement, candidates like Obama are prone to be idealistic and unrealistic about what they could achieve as president, so although "modern campaign hyperbole" continues apace, it may be too

cynical to identify it as "just a matter of electoral positioning for momentary advantage" (Sandel 2010). Both the 2008 and 2016 presidential campaigns demonstrate the power of political rhetoric for candidates unrestrained by the responsibility of the executive office.

Both Obama and Trump utilized personality politics to depict themselves as the face of change, while encouraging voters to identify with them. Additionally, both relied upon grassroots movements that supported their promises of change. Referring to Obama, Skowronek stresses "the significance to reconstructive politics of social mobilization independent of campaign organizations and interest groups" (193). Indeed, Obama's 2008 campaign received its primary financial support through social mobilization of small grassroots donors and replicated this successful tactic for his reelection in 2012 (Eggen 2012). In 2008 and 2016 both Obama and Trump increased social media mobilization in support of their elections through utilizing new forms of communication with social media, made available as part of the technology revolution. For Obama in 2008, campaigning through social media was revolutionary and transformational in and of itself due to the unprecedented form of the technology. Obama's successful election was recognized as being partially the result of his campaign's use of social media and columnists have convincingly described the "bolting together [of] social networking applications under the banner of a movement, [through which] they created an unforeseen force to raise money, organize locally, fight smear campaigns and get out the vote" (Carr 2008). Embodying a social movement enabled Obama to benefit from grassroots mobilization through his modern use of social media, thereby transforming both America and the nature and future of campaigning.

During his election campaign in 2016, Trump was regarded with either preeminence or infamy for his use of Twitter as his primary form of communication. Notably, Twitter is a more equalizing site for social media as all messages are limited to the same number of characters (Hess 2016). Through his continuous use of Twitter, which some critics continue to regard as obsessional, Trump sharpened his rhetorical skills, mobilizing and growing a nativist movement to which he became the figurehead (Barber, Sevastopulo and Tett 2017). Nevertheless, despite the controversy surrounding many of Trump's tweets and re-tweets,

his use of Twitter as a medium for directly communicating his populist message was clearly successful.

Unlike Obama's broad use of social media as a campaign tactic, Trump continues to express his unique political style through Twitter. Although the role of social media in campaigns is only likely to increase during the twenty-first century, Trump's focus on one social media outlet can best be described as unique and unlikely to be replicated by a future presidential candidate. Nevertheless, both men were able to harness the use of social media to their advantage and turn their campaign into a space of protest for their different social movements, while the consumption of information became increasingly ideologically insular (Mitchell, Gottfried and Barthel 2017).

Regardless of the similarities and differences in campaign tactics, the 2008 and 2016 elections were both transformative in electing candidates that were representative of social movements. Unlike previous transformative elections, however, the constraints placed on the presidency in the twenty-first century makes it almost impossible for a transformational candidate to become a transformational president.

CONCLUSION

Ominous of the death of the transformational presidency is that the elections of both Obama and Trump did not shield them from questions concerning their legitimacy as leaders. With Trump's encouragement, the "Birther Movement" plagued Obama throughout his presidency (Abramson 2016). However, Trump's own election legitimacy was questioned, as he lost the popular vote, and American security agencies continue to emphasize the significance of Russia's hacking during the campaign (Entousand and Nakashima 2016). Additionally, Trump's unsubstantiated insistence on voter fraud that supposedly caused him to lose the popular vote and the blame he placed on the lack of co-operation from states in explaining the disbanding of a voter fraud commission further delegitimize his own victory (Nelson 2017; Tackett and Wines 2018). Perhaps voters' perception of the death of the transformational presidency even increased the political disillusionment that was integral to Trump's election.

While only the future will tell whether a transformational presidency is still possible in the twenty-first century, the information and technology revolutions undoubtedly provide a check on presidential power. Although the use of modern technology is an extremely effective tool for a transformational election campaign, the increased expectations and responsibilities that have accompanied the technology revolution have placed a huge burden on the presidency and can act as a serious constraint to presidential power. There is a great likelihood that a president could lose control of the social movement they previously represented and the united space of protest their campaign created as activists splinter to protest for space, thereby overwhelming their agenda. Furthermore, appeals to hyper-nationalism, while reflective of fears associated with globalization, cannot stem the influence of contextual post-nationalism that directly challenges the hegemonic power structure of the American presidency. In the twenty-first century it therefore appears nearly impossible for the candidate who was elected through a transformational campaign to become a transformational president.

Context is critical for both a transformational presidency and a transformational campaign. A transformational candidate will have come to embody a social movement and during the election campaign will have succeeded in manipulating and utilizing context to their best advantage. This manipulation of context is evident, for example, in the tools both candidates used, as Obama demonstrated groundbreaking campaigning through social media and Trump displayed a unique political style that utilized Twitter to deliver his populist rhetoric. In these ways, both men created a groundswell of grassroots support that propelled them to the presidency to deliver the change that they promised.

Presidential power has always been limited through the sharing of power between the executive, judicial and legislative branches of government. However, international checks and balances now act in addition to America's system of domestic checks and balances due to the impact of modern technology in strengthening globalization in the twenty-first century. The potential for a president to become transformational is thereby further constrained. For the president, neither rhetoric nor tweets are free from responsibility: consequences of presidential action or even inaction, unintended or

otherwise, should never be underestimated. In the twenty-first century, as a result of the information and technology revolutions, context, whether domestic or international, is magnified. The result is that transformational election campaigns have become divorced from any potential for a transformational presidency.

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RISING STREAMS OF NATIONALISM AND THE RETREAT OF INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENT: AN EXAMINATION OF THE INFLUENCE OF HYPER-NATIONALIST ELEMENTS IN THE CLIMATE POLITICS OF THE TRUMP PRESIDENCY

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ABSTRACT

The first years of the Trump presidency have exhibited provocative interactions with global issues, particularly that of climate change. The globality of climate change has necessitated international cooperation. On the other hand, Trump's politics and rhetoric have indicated an inward nationalist turn. This article examines how different streams of nationalism interact with climate change debates in the U.S. political arena. Nationalism diverges in many ways, but it is elements of hypernationalism, it will be argued, that have the greatest influence on the climate politics of the Trump presidency, and partisan party-allegiances in the bipartisan political system of the United States are what ultimately perpetuate public attitudes on climate change itself.

Keywords: Nationalism, Hyper-Nationalism, Trump, Climate Politics, Globalization

INTRODUCTION

In June 2017, Donald Trump announced that he would be withdrawing the United States from the Paris Agreement, a major global accord that called for mitigating climate change, predominantly by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The Paris Agreement is an international agreement that requires national action – signatory countries must cooperate to limit global warming by adopting low greenhouse gas emissions development and reporting efforts to reduce national emissions.[1] The underscoring component of the agreement is that a reduction in national greenhouse gas emissions would contribute to the worldwide reduction of global greenhouse gas emissions, allowing for a global peak of greenhouse gas emissions to become thing of the past. The very nature of this international agreement hinges on national action, as states are to hold themselves responsible for their own conduct when it comes to emissions within their domain – this evident from emphasis placed by the United

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[1] An English language text of the Paris Agreement can be downloaded from the website of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC) secretariat: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf

Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC) on nationally determined contributions—more commonly referred to as NDCs—which are seen to be "the heart of the agreement" (United Nations Climate Change, 2018). It is important to consider the absence of binding targets, which were a core component of the Kyoto Protocol, the landmark international treaty that set the legal precedent for international cooperation on climate change. Regarding its targets, the Kyoto Protocol is considered a failure (Rosen 2015; Brandt and Svendsen 2002). A major criticism of the treaty is the lack of consideration it gave to industry interests in cost-effectiveness and efficiency, and the binding targets have been seen as inflexible at best (Philibert 2004, 314 and 319). With no binding targets in the Paris Agreement, however, the reliability of world leaders and their pledges for national action is essential, as is national consensus – neither can be seen in the United States, as Trump's reliability has repeatedly been viewed as questionable and polarization on the debate on climate change, particularly whether or not it is anthropogenic, continues to increase on a political and societal level as divisions in the bipartisan politics of the country appear to deepen. Moreover, the Trump administration's attitudes towards climate politics (or lack thereof)[2] are emboldened by hyper-nationalist elements, a factor that perpetuates hyper-nationalist tendencies in much of the Republican-allied public.

There are political and societal divisions coming to the fore in Trump's United States – divisions that can categorically be positioned as different to administrations of the recent past. Since the post-war period, the United States has been vocal about its leadership of the world, and rhetorics of American exceptionalism[3] have been repeatedly employed in U.S. political discourse, both for national and international audiences. To be sure, this in itself is not particularly different under the recent administration; after all, Trump began his inauguration address by thanking "fellow Americans" and the "people of the world" (Trump, January 20, 2017). Divisions differ,

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2 Despite the absence of U.S. climate policy and the hesitance of Republican party to use the words climate change explicitly, it is climate politics I prefer using as this article is exclusively in the context of climate change.
3 *American exceptionalism* is a term that refers to the perception or to ideologies that the United States is unique in the world in comparison to other countries or nations, often specifically in its history and attitudes towards freedom and democracy. Notable works on this include: Seymour Martin Lipset, *American Exceptionalism: A Double Edged Sword* (New York: Norton, 1996); *America Different?: A New Look at American Exceptionalism*, ed. Byron E. Shafer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. Phillips Bradley, trans. Henry Reeve (New York: Knopf, 1948): 36-37; Deborah Madsen, *American Exceptionalism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998); Joseph Lepgold and Timothy McKeown, "Is American Foreign Policy Exceptional? An Empirical Analysis," *Political Science Quarterly* 110, no. 3 (1995): 369-384.

however, in the framing of the relationship between national economy and climate change mitigation, as Trump and his administration position them as diametrical opposites. Climate change, whether anthropogenic or not, seems to be largely ignored when approaching intersecting topics of industry, employment, or trade; if it is considered, it is from a skeptical mindset (Freudenburg and Muselli 2012, 784; McCright 2016, 83). This, in turn, is reflected in societal divisions, as partisan perspectives on climate change are split amongst both politicians and their constituents (McCright 2003, 354). For affirmers of climate change and actions towards mitigation, there are visible tendencies towards post-national citizenship and for skeptics it is seems that an elevated love of the country through its economy that is positioned as a priority.

Climate change is a unique issue in its intrinsic globality. Approaches to the importance of climate change mitigation can be demonstrative of nationalist attitudes in the context of an increasingly connected international community, and this is especially relevant to the political atmosphere of the United States in the Trump era. The strengthening of U.S. economy and the importance of industry continue to be cornerstones of the Republican platform, but these issues have taken an increasingly nationalist tone under Trump. Other major topics since the 2016 presidential election have often been concerned with national borders, such as immigration reform and border control between the United States and Mexico (Pew Research Center, July 7, 2016, 31-39; Andrews and Kaplan 2015). While industry, economy, and immigration are issues that can be framed within national borders, climate change simply cannot. Climate does not adhere to national borders and cannot be approached with a border mentality. Transnational thinking and post-national perspectives are essential in this regard. Many U.S. perspectives, however, are turning inwards, and signals of hyper-nationalism have been appearing in discourses related to prioritizing the nation.

This article will examine rising elements of nationalism in the context of perspectives on and approaches to climate change mitigation in the United States since the rise of Donald Trump as a leading political figure. A central question to this discussion is: How do different streams of nationalism shape climate politics in the United States, particularly throughout the first years of the Trump presidency? Trump's political rhetoric of putting "America First" has not only undermined burgeoning U.S. cooperation with the international community on climate change, but has also had

notable influences on climate change perspectives in U.S. society. The dichotomy of climate change affirmers and skeptics is embedded with varying nationalist elements, and elements of post-nationalism and hyper-nationalism are two that can, respectively, be paired with this dichotomy. In Trump's politics, it is the hyper-nationalist that dominates climate politics, particularly as his administration appears to leans towards climate skepticism. In examining the intersections between nationalist elements, Trump's climate politics, and attitudes towards climate change, a brief foray into a history of globalization and nationalism in the United States will first be taken, followed by a short but relevant outline of different streams of nationalism and how they are perpetuated – these sections are imperative to contextualize the contemporary history of this article, as they ground my examination of nationalism and climate politics during the Trump presidency in both a conceptual and historical framework. It will then be necessary to examine the climate politics in the United States, particularly in relation to the nationalist elements that shape attitudes towards climate change, as well the bipartisan political system of the United States and its role in perpetuating perspectives on climate change mitigation. These discussions will be framed around Trump's announcement of U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Agreement and general themes prevalent in Trump's political rhetoric since his election to demonstrate that even his brand of nationalism does not function as a monolith. Indeed, the varying nationalistic strains in the United States reflected in political discourse and its public influence can be used to examine deepening national divisions in the framework of an intrinsically global issue.

GLOBALIZATION AND NATIONALISM IN THE UNITED STATES, BEFORE AND UNDER TRUMP

Globalization has historically been intertwined with capitalism and as the inevitable result of free market economics. It is also used as a conceptual framework to explain how the world's economic and social relations have developed since the growth of cross-border networks of exchange (Hodson 2000, 103). The flow of people, goods and services, and information and ideas across borders has raised necessary questions about the development and state of national cultures and identities, as homogenization, polarization, and hybridity are often connected to not only a global culture, but also to

what scholars such as Mel van Elteren refer to as the *Americanization* of the world (Elteren 2006). The use of the term *Americanization* when referring to the solely the United States further demonstrates the hegemonic influence of the country in global culture, particularly as the Americas consist of numerous countries, none of which are referred to as America in colloquial English except the United States.

Moreover, internationality was already deep-seated in the establishment of the United States as an independent country. Joel Hodson argues that the United States was global before it was national since its establishment as a state came after waves of transoceanic migration from various origins and its growth was based on international trade due to its historical connection to a colonial system (Hodson 2000, 105-106). Before the United States established itself as an autonomous nation, it was a product of global processes and movements which became inherent to its national identity (Hodson 2000, 107). But this was also problematic in the definition of national identity, since its population diversity meant that it was not composed of a single majority ethnicity, religion, or origin. The United States, then, was a model of a nation composed of a multicultural society united by shared common national values, such as freedom and liberty (Hodson 2000, 108). These shared values are a core of national U.S. identity today, and this is demonstrated by the importance of the national anthem and gathering around the U.S. flag on Independence Day. More specifically, these values are codified in the so-called American Creed, the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence, by Thomas Jefferson: ". . . all men . . . are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (Stimson 2004, 76).

In the centuries following the Declaration of Independence, the pursuit of happiness, became increasingly dependent on material comforts, while life in United States became increasingly intertwined with international trade. This interdependence came to the forefront during the oil crises of the 1970s, early in which the Arab oil embargo demonstrated that the United States was the not the sole determiner of the American way of life – being cut-off from Middle Eastern oil resulted in both an economic downturn as well as major petroleum shortages for the both the industry as well as the average consumer. The United States also experienced its first trade deficit in a century in the 1970s, and by the end of the decade the deficit stood at about $30

billion. U.S. businesses responded by restructuring corporate entities and relocating labor-expensive jobs out of the country to cheaper locations abroad (Hodson 2000, 121). Oil prices declined quickly after the energy crisis of the 1970s; harder times were soon forgotten, and labor-cheap but energy-expensive industrial activity once again was heavily encouraged.[4] In terms of trade and commerce, it became clear that the United States was an agent of globalization. The ratification of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) further promoted tariff-free trade between the United States, Canada, and Mexico, extending the freedoms businesses had in relocating labor and production related jobs to cheaper locations. Employment became a staple in U.S. discourses on American-ness. Trade continued to flow across borders and jobs moved south, perpetuating the growth of a managerial class in employment and augmenting class differences in society. As the U.S. share of global manufacturing decreased, the gap in average income continued to widen (Hodson 2000, 123; Spence, Katz, and Lawrence 2011, 170; Bachman 2017).

Economy, domestic production, and employment, the latter primarily in connection to jobs and domestic production, are issues that continue to dominate U.S. consciousness today, and were used by Trump as justifications why the U.S. should withdraw from the Paris agreement. In his announcement in June 2017, Trump argued that the Paris Agreement was to the detriment of the U.S. economy and the U.S. working class:

> The Paris climate accord is simply the latest example of Washington entering into an agreement that disadvantages the United States to the exclusive benefit of other countries, leaving American workers—who I love—and taxpayers to absorb the cost in terms of lost jobs, lower wages, shuttered factories, and vastly diminished economic production. (Trump, June 1, 2017)

Trump has repeatedly pledged to rebuilt the U.S. economy, and in doing so has simplified a complex history of international job relocation as justification for U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. This same rhetoric was essential to his presidential campaign – one that was run on presumptions of U.S. national identity.

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4 An example of this is the energy plan Ronald Reagan presented as part of his national energy strategy. *See* United States Department of Energy, *Securing America's Energy Future: The National Energy Policy Plan* (Springfield: National Technical Information Service, 1981), https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=inu.30000043810740;view=1up;seq=3.

These politics are a stark contrast to those of his predecessor. Barack Obama signed the Paris Agreement on November 4, 2016 – what was one of his last major actions as president symbolized the attitudes taken by his administration towards issues that would be addressed in a drastically different manner by Trump. There are a handful of overarching global challenges that Obama took action on which Trump spent his first year in office critiquing and attempting to dismantle, and climate policy is just one of them. This contrast is representative of the political reputations of two presidents: America with the world[5] versus America First.

"America First" became a crowing call of both Trump's election campaign and a phrase often used by the Trump administration; it is present when both Trump and Scott Pruitt—the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) administrator—discussed why the United States must withdraw from the Paris Agreement:

> [Trump] The Paris Agreement handicaps the United States economy . . . They don't put America first. I do, and I always will.
> [Pruitt] Your decision today to exit the Paris accord reflects your unflinching commitment to put America first. . . . today you've put America first with regard to international agreements and the environment. (Trump, June 1, 2017)

The phrase "America First," along with "Make America Great Again" were rhetorical cornerstones of Trump's 2016 election campaign as well as Trump's inaugural address in January 2017, the latter of which emphasized that for Trump, "it's going to be only America first" and that he would be a people's president, highlighting the unity of U.S. citizens, with whom he would "make America great again" (Trump, January 20, 2017). It was, however, clear that those who may have been considered Americans by his predecessor would not necessarily be considered true Americans by him. The unity he spoke of was not for all. Throughout his campaign, he repeatedly raised the idea of national security being threatened by personified threats: one speech perpetuated the image of Mexican immigrants as criminals and rapists and another portrayed Muslims

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5 Obama's iconic speech, delivered in Berlin in July 2008, was titled "A World that Stands as One" and focused on international unity, particularly when it came to imminent dangers that could not be contained by national borders (Croucher 2018, 204). Mores specific, in this regard, to climate change were Obama's remarks in Paris at the first session of the Paris Agreement negotiations, that repeatedly referred to his various visits, past and planned, to other countries and affirmations of U.S. commitment to international cooperation on mitigating climate change; see Barack Obama, "Remarks by President Obama at the First Session of COP21," *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (2015), https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/cop21cmp11_leaders_event_usa.pdf; for further analysis, see Robert Falkner, "The Paris Agreement and the New Logic of International Climate Politics," *International Affairs* 92, no. 5 (2016): 1111.

as inhabitants unable to assimilate in the United States (Croucher 2018, 112). Immigration became a major issue both during the campaign and the first year of his presidency, with the purported "Muslim ban" and a refugee policy prioritizing Christians (Croucher 2018, 113), a proposed wall built along the U.S.-Mexican border to block migration into the United States from Mexico (Martin 2017, 15-17), and an attempted overturn of Obama's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals act (S. M. 2018).

Trump's election campaign was deemed as populist by much mainstream media.[6] It is important here, thus, to distinguish between populism and nationalism but also, for the sake of my argument and to connect Trump's voter appeal with his approach to policy, to highlight the overlap between the two. Populism is often seen as antithetical to the establishment and not in the context of any specific political ideas; it is in the sense of an attitude and associated with emotions of frustration, resentment, and anger. Criticism of elites is a necessary element along with antipluralism, so populism has to do with the representation of certain groups and not a broad constituency. Moreover, populism and populists claim to have the moral high ground, painting their opposition as corrupt and immoral (Müller 2017, 1-3). Nationalism, meanwhile, has to do with prioritizing the value of the nation-state above all else, and particularly in the West, sees the nation-state as the embodiment of honorable values that are liberal, democratic, and good. There are different strains of nationalism, such as civic nationalism, which connects nationality with citizenship, and ethnic nationalism, which connects nationality with biological necessity and bloodlines (Scott 2015). Francis Fukuyama has defined what has emerged with the Trump presidency as populist nationalism. According to Fukayama, this has to do with the reversal of liberal economics and politics – economics that encourage an open global economy and politics by way of international trade agreements and institutions, such as NAFTA and the World Trade Organization, and politics that promote the build-up of international alliances such as North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Essential to both was the role of the United States as the world's leading liberal democracy (Fukuyama 2018, 7). Trump's announcement of U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Agreement embodies this trend

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6 For some examples, see: David A. Graham, "The Paradox of Trump's Populism," *The Atlantic,* June 29, 2018, https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/06/the-paradox-of-trumps-*populism*/564116/ *or* Francis Wilkinson, "Why Donald Trump Really Is A Populist," *Bloomberg*, February 16, 2017, https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2017-02-16/why-donald-trump-really-is-a-populist.

reversal; while the withdrawal has not formally taken place yet, Trump's rhetoric announcing it contains several sentiments that are not only populist nationalist by Fukayama's definition, but also hyper-nationalist in its intent.

STREAMS OF NATIONALISM – DIVERGENCE AND PERPETUATION

Fukuyama's populist nationalism is evident in Trump's strategy for public support, but there are other nationalistic streams that must also be examined. Specifically in the context of climate politics – whether they are termed as such by the leadership or not – there exist recognizable elements of hyper- and post-nationalism. Climate change, being an intrinsically global issue, has a tendency in the United States to be denied by those who lean right socially and politically and hold tradition and the maintaining the American way of life—as they know it—as ideological priorities (Collomb 2014, 17) and affirmed by those who have an inclination towards post-national citizenship (Croucher 2018, 203-205).

The term post-nationalism emerged in the 1990s, and according to Arjun Appadurai has to do with "organizational forms [that are] more diverse, more fluid, more ad hoc, more provisional, less coherent, less organized, and simply less implicated in the comparative advantages of the nation-state" (Appadurai 1996, 160). Appadurai, here, identifies supra-national organizations that work above the operational scope of nation-states as essential to post-nationalism; in line with this, the secretariat for the UNFCC embodies the post-national characteristics of a supra-national organization. The implication here for a national state is that in working with these organizations, the nation-state takes on an institutional role rather than the governing role it may be more traditionally used to. The secretariat for the UNFCC, in this regard, is responsible for facilitating negotiations for the Paris Agreement, and exists as a supranational body which the United States must negotiate through, rather than simply speak through, on international climate agreements. The post-nationality of this relationship, then, is at odds with the hyper-national elements of Trump's climate politics. Post-nationalism itself, however, is also reflected in U.S. identity, particularly considering its long global history. The United States, as a self-identified land built by immigrants, is a diasporic community. Civic unity aside, it is not necessarily one of a unified national identity. In

the era of post-nationalism, migrants come to the United States seeking fortune but no longer wish to leave their homeland, or their national identity, behind (Appadurai 1996, 172). An example of this is the hyphenation of identity, such as Italian-American or Asian-American vs. American, the latter a national determinant often more visible in the American right, and arguably the American white.

Nationalism has diversified with the varying composition of states, with civic nationalism nestling itself in nations comprised of multiple ethnicities. Nevertheless, the nationalism that contributed to major wars in Europe in the twentieth century has left the word associated with racial, and often negative, connotations. Today, with the varying prefixation of the word, hyper-nationalism can be most closely used to define the nationalism of those wars. A key difference to highlight between nationalism and hyper-nationalism is that while nationalists believe that their nation is unique, they do not necessarily hold it as superior in comparison to other nations (Gellner 2006, 1-8). Hyper-nationalism, on the other hand, is the belief that other nations are inferior and that they pose a threat that must be dealt with. It is attributed to be a causal factor of the two world wars in pre-1945 Europe, second to the character and distribution of military power between the states. Leading up to and during these wars, hyper-nationalism was used by political elites to mobilize public support for alleged national defense efforts (Mearsheimer 1998, 10; Murray 2011, 309). Writing at the start of the second World War, Joseph Sydney Werlin delineated hyper-nationalism as nationalism existing "through the instinct of self-preservation" (307), and as "transforming economics into a handmaiden of politics" (308). These delineations are visible in Trump's politics, in his insistence on "America First" when it comes to negotiating international trade and his use of economy and job creation as rhetorical platform cornerstones.

In comparing histories, bloodlines or ethnicity have never been the primary uniting national element in the United States (T. A. 2018). Yet, there indeed was once a time in the United States when people believed only specific ethnicities, namely those that were white and originated from Northern Europe, were the true Americans (Lieven 2012, 88). This changed legally with the 1965 amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, which repealed the national origins quota system (Chin 1996, 276). Still, by and large the nationalism of the United States was that of a civic sort,

based on shared values and often aligned with principles of supranational inclusivity and the values of internationalism. The rising nationalist sentiment in the Trump's United States, however, can be and have indeed been described as hyper-national – while they have long existed in U.S. society, under Trump they have risen to the surface in a resounding clash against post-national attitudes. The Economist, as one example, described Trump's America as angry, and as one of a new nationalism with pessimistic undertones that produces intolerance and becomes increasingly inward looking (The Economist 2016). An article in the Financial Times drew pronounced parallels between Trump's brand of nationalism and the far-right in Europe (Rachman 2018). In *The Atlantic*, Peter Beinart described Trump as "an unpatriotic hyper-nationalist" (Beinart 2018). Trump's nationalism, however, is different from dominant historical streams as it is based on exclusivity and seeks to withdraw the United States from its traditional role in global leadership.

> Trump's nationalism, unlike that of previous Presidents, is globally considered as a hyper-nationalism which is more inward-orientated and is least interested in global inclusivity, international totality and multilateral entirety, and which is said to be unfavorable for the globalism, internationalism and supra-nationalism of which the United States of America has not only been global propagator but also international advocator and that is also why, probably, America's global leadership potentiality has been widely acknowledged all over the World. (Ateeque 2018, 82-83)

Trump has not, and likely will not, isolate the United States completely. Globalization is not new, and in light of post-national trade alliances the United States would not survive if hyper-national attitudes became the norm, particularly in relation to economics and trade. However, striking elements of the hyper-national have become evident in Trump's United States, and these are discernable in contemporary climate change discourses. The United States has a decidedly low climate performance in comparison to other industrialized countries, which is all the more alarming considering it consistently ranks amongst the highest consumers of energy, both on an average and per capita basis (United States Energy Information Administration 2018).

THE POLARIZATION OF CLIMATE POLITICS – THE INFLUENCE OF NATIONALIST ELEMENTS IN INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

Despite the intrinsic globality of climate change issues, recognizing and adapting the structure of international systems is often not considered as an agent of mitigation or change. Rather, it is national strategy and action that are championed as change-makers in international climate accords such as the Paris Agreement. It is for this reason that scholars such as Thomas Pogge believe that such international agreements are doomed to failure, as a sole focus on national action ignores the structural international developments that have resulted in an energy-intensive global society which has arguably permutated climate (Pogge 2008, 147). States are inextricably engaged in a global economy through international institutions like the World Trade Organization, which encourage international trade and economic growth. These, however, come at a climate cost, as promoting greater trade worldwide and economic growth requires more natural resources and an ever-increasing use of energy, of which fossil fuels continues to be an essential. Higher emissions from greater fossil fuel use, which continues to be the most consumed energy, is an inevitable result, exacerbating rather than mitigating climate change (Caney 2006, 747). In this regard, calling for the implementation of climate change mitigation, particularly through a reduction in emissions as mandated by the Paris agreement, is impossible on national levels.

These factors may or may not be recognized by the U.S. administration, but regardless, climate change mitigation is a contentious issue in the United States. This was demonstrated early on with the Kyoto Protocol – the treaty entered force in February 2005 without the ratification of the United States (Hovi, Skodvin, and Andresen 2003). However, though the United States was not a signatory party, there have been several attempts to introduce climate legislation on a federal level, particularly in relation to reducing emissions (Fisher, Leifeld, and Yoko 2013, 524). But despite the prevalence of climate change discourse in U.S. politics, the United States has never had a national climate policy. This is largely because the issue is a deeply polarizing one, which is particularly affecting considering the bipartisan nature of U.S. politics. There have been several studies as to why this is. Aaron McCright and Riley Dunlap have found that conservative think tanks are major influencers on policy-making – in terms of climate change policy, they have been a successful deterrent

(McCright and Dunlap 2003). Some researchers have found that congressional hearings on climate change have a higher potential of occurrence in Democrat-controlled sessions over Republican-controlled sessions (Park, Xinsheng, and Vedlitz 2010). Democrats, in this regard, also have more testimonies from pro-environmental political actors and scientists engaged in mainstream publications. Republicans, on the other hand, have a higher rate of testimonies from people in business or industry sectors, and the content of these testimonies have a higher likelihood of challenging climate change science and highlighting the negative economic effects of climate change policy (Fisher, Leifeld, and Iwaki 2013; Park, Xinsheng, and Vedlitz 2010). This is particularly interesting, considering that studies conducted by the Pew Research Center show that scientific literacy does not strongly influence opinions on climate issues, demonstrating that members of neither party necessarily bases their climate politics on their understanding of scientific research related to climate change (Pew Research Center, October 4, 2016). Perhaps a reason for this lies in the theory that political liberals, like the Democrats, are more open to critically assessing the established order while political conservatives, like the Republicans, tend to justify the existing system (Feygina, Jost, and Goldsmith 2010, 328). A more tangible reason, though, is the important role played by business and industry actors. The polarization of climate politics, particularly in the context of climate change ideologies, often has to do with funding. Justin Farrell argues that campaigns to spread climate change skepticism, often through the production of alternative discourses, are well-funded and well-planned, and that lobbying firms working for corporations, industry groups, and other related associations are who often carry out these campaigns. The polarization these campaigns contribute to increasing public uncertainty on the issue (Farrel 2016, 92-93).

Uncertainty regarding climate change typically stems from the intangibility of the issue as climate history is beyond the scope of historical observations and human impact on climactic systems and on the trajectory of climate change are unpredictable (Weber and Stern 2011, 316). In line with this, a major challenge for climate change affirmers is that climate change impacts are both physically and temporally remote for most Americans (Albertson and Gadarian 2015, 30). According to Anthony Giddens, that the dangers posed by climate change aren't tangible or visible in the daily life of most Americans affects nearly every element of response to climate change concerns. Not

only is it inherent to climate change skepticism, it is also the reason that even climate change affirmers are not willing to alter their lives significantly as a mitigation strategy. Amongst political elites, it results in grand-sounding strategies that are missing practical content (Giddens 2011, 2-4). Such are the criticisms that have been levelled against the Paris Agreement as well as Democrat climate initiatives in the United States.[7]

Recognition of climate change by Americans has been considerable, but polls have found that there is a significant difference in how strongly scientists and non-scientists view climate change, particularly in an anthropogenic sense. In comparison to other signatory states of the Paris Agreement such as Canada, Germany, and Italy, where between 59%-65% of the public affirm their belief that climate change is anthropogenic, only 49% of the U.S. public affirm this belief. Uncertainty based on lack of scientific evidence or application of conventional understanding is a factor here, but another major one that is unique to the United States are the well-funded and organized climate change skepticism campaigns (Weber and Stern 2011, 317). Moreover, surveys of Americans have shown that while it is an important issue amongst environmental issues, it is typically considered secondary to economic and national security issues. This has to do with the bipartisan system as well, which is particularly relevant in the face of developing energy policy and supporting research for alternative energies. It has become more evident that Democrats and Republicans take different approaches to energy policy in the context of climate change. In 2012, for example, the Republican party advocated for increasing domestic production of natural gas and oil and decreasing EPA regulations without explicitly mentioning climate change, while the Democratic platform used climate change science as an argument for reducing emissions and increasing alternative energy use – these policies were framed respectively as supportive of the U.S. economy and protective of the environment (Albertson and Gadarian 2015, 111).

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7 For some examples, see: Robison Meyer, "Is Hope Possible After the Paris Agreement," *The Atlantic*, December 12, 2015, https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2015/12/can-we-hope-after-the-paris-agreement/420174/; David Roberts, "No Country on Earth is taking the 2 Degree Climate Target Seriously," *Vox*, April 29, 2018, https://www.vox.com/2016/10/4/13118594/2-degrees-no-more-fossil-fuels; Amy Harder, "What Liberals Get Wrong about Climate Change," *Axios*, August 21, 2017, https://www.axios.com/what-liberals-get-wrong-about-climate-change-1513304923-7409357f-2200-4853-ada8-be27868d2b6e.html.

It is also imperative to take into account the production of knowledge as the landscape of media continues to fragment and boundaries between truth and falsehood become increasingly blurred. Scholars like Joshua Busby have argued that that mass-public attitudes are deeply influenced by how much information has been received by the public while being shaped by elites, and when an opinion is polarized along party lines in the U.S. bipartisan system, people are more likely to adhere to the position of the political party they feel aligned with. In these issues, the elites who persuade the people are politicians rather than scientists (Busby 2017, 1004). This is particularly important in the context of climate change discourse, largely due to the prevalence of misinformation of the public. While the majority of the scientific community has reached consensus on the existence of climate change, the United States public is increasingly polarized. A Pew poll from 2010 showed that only 16 per cent of Republican voters agreed that climate change is real, caused by human activity, and dangerous when compared to over 50 percent of Democrat voters (Giddens 2011, 89-90). Naomi Oreske and Erik Conway have written on how disinformation campaigns against the scientific consensus on anthropogenic climate change have been successful in political polarization as well as in limiting societal engagement (Oreskes and Conway 2011, 232-241), and that politicizing science has been able to delay climate change policy in the United States. Some scholars have also argued that people's beliefs are often in line with identity-protective motivated reasoning, but that political polarization on climate change is, regardless, more likely to be a result of selective exposure to partisan media, and in this regard it is the Republican-aligned public that is far more likely to abject to scientific consensus in the face of counter messages (Van der Linden et al. 2017, 5). Interestingly then, the issue shifts into no longer being truly divided into affirmation of skepticism. A study by Leaf Van Boven, Phillip Ehret, and David Sherman showed that it is not affirmation or skepticism that informs climate policy, but the values each party associates it most strongly with. Boven, Ehret, and Sherman found that generally, both Democrats and Republicans are in general agreement about the reality of anthropogenic climate change, but generally supported policies that were associated with each party's, and historically these parties tended to disagree. Bipartisan disagreement overruled any shared opinions on climate change mitigation, and this, in turn, influenced public

opinion – republican constituents agreed with the Republican platform, and Democrat constituents with the Democrat platform (Van Boven, Ehret, and Sherman. 2018).

It is important to recognize the power of the individual as civil society and the long-term perspectives of standout individuals have to potential to spark major change both domestically and internationally (Giddens 2011, 5-6), but if the individuals constituting the greater U.S. public are blinded by partisanship, then change is hardly likely to come from the bottom up. If support for major issues is perpetuated by party allegiances rather than policy stances, it seems that effective climate policy will not be a priority under a Republican administration. At least according to Trump's prevalent political rhetoric, it is economy that needs significant attention first. Pre-occupation with economic growth drastically impacts the way nations deal with environmental concerns, and this is no different with climate change. While states are exerting pressure to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to prevent the potential of a future climate catastrophe, they also need to support industry and business to create jobs and provide income to their citizens and inhabitants (Anwar and Sam 2012, 40). This was addressed by Obama's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which was passed in February 2009 – a primary goal was transitioning to clean energy, and a cornerstone of doing so was investment in the creation of green jobs (Konisky and Woods 2016, 371). What has emerged under Trump, however, is a dichotomy of economic nationalism and eco-nationalism on both ends. The question of prioritization has yet to be addressed: to what scale can emissions reduction balance the state of industry and jobs?

There are cases to be made for economic nationalism, particularly in the context of globalization. In Trump's United States we can see a struggle between liberal trade and populist nationalism, particularly in the context of international relations. What Trump supporters find is missing for the former seems to be present for the latter: viable politics (Mason 2017, 32). Populist movements, particularly those where we see elements of hyper-nationalism, are largely defined around opposing the free movement of people and are not often seen in left-leaning politics. In the United States, where many socialist and labor movements come from other countries, radical politics often follow periods of high migration (Mason 2017, 29). This can certainly be considered in the rise in anti-immigrant rhetoric regarding, for one, migration into the United States from the south through Mexico. At the same time, the United States is said to have experienced a

decrease in international trade over the last decade when compared to the 1990s or the 2000s, and much of U.S. production and consumption is within national borders (Mason 2017, 30). Seemingly, the United States is attempting to assert its capability of self-sustenance, but it is also attempting to create barriers against external pressures. Historically, U.S. leadership has openly affirmed its position as a world leader and guide, but under Trump it seems it seems to retreat from any responsibility it may have previously taken in international issues. In this regard, it must also be considered that when Trump announced U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, he referred explicitly to "the Green Climate Fund, which is costing the United States a vast fortune" (Trump, June 1, 2017). The Green Climate Fund's stated objective is to provide financial support to assist developing countries to incorporate low-emission and climate-resilient economies in development and economic growth (Green Climate Fund, n.d.). The Green Climate Fund, for Trump, is a redistribution of U.S. wealth, and he argues that "under the Paris accord, billions of dollars that ought to be invested right here in America will be sent to the very countries that have taken our factories and our jobs away from us" (Trump, June 1, 2017). Trump, in positioning the recipients of money as takers of U.S. jobs, vilifies other countries and elevates the status of the United States, a hyper-nationalist tendency of viewing a personified other as a hostile threat to an innocent good.

CONCLUSION

Trump has manifested hyper-nationalist elements into repeated declarations of strengthening the economy and creating more jobs in the United States, both of which have become cornerstones of his politics and his platform for public appeal. Money and jobs are tangible elements easy for the layman to understand, and both are deemed necessary for the U.S. brand of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (Stimson 2004, 76). By positioning climate change mitigation in opposition to these material factors, Trump has created a dichotomy where they cannot co-exist. In this dichotomy, withdrawal from the Paris agreement becomes necessary for the United States to have a strong economy and enough jobs to ensure a satisfactory standard of living for its population. In the larger picture Trump portrays, the United States must not

compromise its national values to contribute to what the international community decides is necessary for a global good.

It is clear that the United States is not, in fact, united in their support of Trump. The bipartisan political system demands a societal divide which readily applies itself to climate politics: the Democrat constituents support what the Democrats advocate for, and the Republican constituents support what the Republicans advocate for. This perpetuates partisan attitudes on climate change, which filters down from political leadership to create societal factions. Blind partisan support bolsters uninformed attitudes on climate change, where people—both in politics and society—advocate the perspective of the party they feel most allied to, rather than creating one based on individual research or scientific consensus. This, combined with the hyper-national elements of Trump's climate politics, creates a breeding ground for the potency of misinformation.

Examining the intersections between nationalism and climate politics is especially important in the United States, where withdrawal from the international community seems to be taking place in issues where national action and accountability is of particular relevance. There is much more that needs to be explored on this subject, such as the dynamics between post-nationalism and hyper-nationalism in U.S. climate politics and policy-making, or the potential longevity of Trump as a Republican leader and his politics in the United States. If partisanship has such deep-seated influence, wavering Republican commitment to a Republican president could produce fissures in both political and public attitudes towards climate change mitigation. In this regard, a contemporary historical analysis of the nuances in correlating political and public opinion swing patterns on climate change would be of utmost value. U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Agreement is not yet in effect. But the symbolism of Trump's withdrawal announcement should not go unnoticed against the backdrop of inflating nationalist divergences in a country that has historically taken pride in rhetorics of national unity.

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POSTNATIONAL VISIONS IN THOMAS PYNCHON'S *AGAINST THE DAY*

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ABSTRACT

Thomas Pynchon is very often associated with the creation of alternative worlds and the category of postmodernism. These alternative realities have been analyzed by prominent scholars from different standpoints. For instance, the relation between Pynchon's multiple worlds and a trans/post-national imagination in his fiction has been addressed by several distinguished critics. However, regarding *Against the Day*, a meticulous analysis still has to be done. This essay aims at investigating how Pynchon's *Against the Day* depicts a postnational vision that questions and challenges the metanarrative of nationalism. Drawing on the works of leading experts in the field of Pynchon studies, this essay seeks to show how the alternative worlds of *Against the Day* instantiate a postnational vision which resists the rooted hegemony of nationalism in the world.

Keywords: Thomas Pynchon, *Against the Day*, Postnationalism

INTRODUCTION

In an interview with *The Guardian* on February 26, 2013, Martin Paul Eve observed that "Pynchon is continually ranked among the greatest living American novelists and to see the exponential increase in his output in recent years is definitely of interest" (2013). In 2014, Joanna Freer argued that "Pynchon is an originator of the postmodern style in literature" (2014, 1). Indeed, Pynchon has played an essential role in the establishment of the category of literary postmodernism. Even though it is not completely clear what the definition of postmodernism is, as Brian McHale suggested, without Pynchon's fiction there would have been no imperative "to develop a theory of literary postmodernism" (2012, 97). Pynchon's peculiar fiction does not lend itself to any particular genre, school, or trend, as it is all-encompassing, complex and comprehensive.

However, one reason for McHale's observation seems to be Pynchon's conceiving of alternative worlds that allow for ontological plurality. Similarly, Kathryn Hume has observed that "early in Pynchon's career, his insistence on alternate realities was part of what made him an exemplary postmodern writer" (2013, 1). This view corroborates the strict relation between the use of alternative worlds and the category of postmodernism

in literature. Nevertheless, what is most fascinating about Pynchon's fiction is the vast, variegated array of knowledge and its surprising depth, from science, technology, and physics to history, geography, literature, and so forth. To use Edward Mendelson's words, several of Pynchon's novels are "encyclopedic narratives" (1976, 1) in so far as they are dense, complex works of fiction that incorporate an extensive range of information in different areas of knowledge from specialized disciplines of science and the humanities, to the socio-cultural and religious beliefs and histories of nations. Employing the title "the maximalist novel," Stefano Ercolino has described such narratives using ten specific characteristics, including the "encyclopedic mode," that "define and structure" them "as a genre of the contemporary novel" (2012, 241-242).

In such a wide range of diverse issues and themes, Pynchon's alternative worlds have been very salient. The elusive lady V. in his debut novel *V.*, the underground Tristero system in his most canonical novel *The crying of lot 49*, the angels, the Thanatoids, and the dead in *Vineland*, and most recently the Deep Web and the software DeepArcher in his latest novel, *Bleeding Edge*, are quintessential representations of alternative worlds that allow for imaginary spaces in virtually all of his novels.

The question of alternative realities in Pynchon's fiction, and its relevance to the category of postmodernism, has been discussed by many critics from different points of view. In 2013, Hume, in what she calls "a worst-case scenario" (2013, 2), suggested that *Inherent Vice* is a novel with no final redemption, where there is "no other level of reality" to offer us "any escape or compensation or alternative or hope." She observed that the novel projects a pessimistic view on the alternative worlds, which, together with "the emphasis on the historical present" (2013, 16), makes the novel a historical, rather than a postmodern, detective story. In 2016, James Liner argued that the field of Pynchon studies has been influenced by "the increasingly questioned status of postmodernism" (2016, 5). Unlike Hume, he believes that *Inherent Vice* is signaling not the end but "a transformation of postmodernism" (2016, 1) and the novel is mobilizing a postmodern utopian alternative for "an escape from neoliberal capitalism" (2016, 10).

However, one thing the critics did not agree upon regarding these alternative worlds is whether they mobilize a postnational vision in Pynchon's fiction. In his analysis of American Studies in a transnational paradigm, Paul Giles observed that to

speak "in postnational terms may be premature, for the nation has not yet ceased to be meaningful as a category of affiliation and analysis" (2002, 20). However, concentrating on *Gravity's Rainbow* and *Mason & Dixon*, in 2010, Sascha Pöhlmann has analyzed a "postnational imagination" (2010, 7) in Pynchon's fiction. The critic takes issue with those scholars, such as Giles, who favor a transnational attitude in American Studies, dismissing a postnational perspective. Although he agrees with Giles in his assessment about the need for a "transnational, as opposed to postnational" (Giles 2002, 21) perspective in American Studies, he disagrees with such an evaluation with regard to Pynchon's fiction and Giles' suggestion that Pynchon's novels mobilize a "specifically transnational rather than postnational" imagination (Giles 2002, 237). Having suggested that *Mason & Dixon* is "characteristically a late twentieth-century novel" (Giles 2002, 246), notwithstanding "all of its eighteenth-century apparatus," Giles observes that the novel deals with "transnational crossings and the traversal of stable national boundaries." Contrary to Giles' description, Pöhlmann considers *Mason & Dixon* as a novel about "postnational flows and the creation and dismantling of unstable national boundaries and categories" (2010, 10).

Applying a "comparativist approach to the contemporary American and Mexican literary canons," Pedro García-Caro has analyzed the works of Thomas Pynchon and Carlos Fuentes as narratives that "aim to unravel and denounce" the geographic dominance of "the national map" and "its projected borders." These novels criticize "the narratives of national histories" with "the teleological discourse of modernity as an experience of national fulfillment" as their central concern. García-Caro argues that such fictions playfully aim at debasing "'holy' borders, international borders as well as the internal lines where narratives of nation are embodied and consecrated" as they begin "to contemplate the ensuing postnational constellations" (García-Caro 2014, IV).

Other critics, such as Tore Rye Andersen, hold a sort of in-between position. Andersen agrees with Pöhlmann's analysis that "Pynchon's postnational imagination denies 'nation-ness its hegemonic status'" (2016, 35) because Pynchon's work obviously "transcends the national framework." Nevertheless, he observes, since "nations are very much a part of global history," Pynchon's "globally minded novels" map "the bloody trail" that nation-states have left behind "rather than merely denying their hegemonic status" (2016, 36).

Regarding Pöhlmann's argument, although he brilliantly analyzes a postnational imagination in *Gravity's Rainbow* and *Mason & Dixon* at great length, he dedicates only a few pages to discuss the topic in *Against the Day*. An "interstice" between the two other novels, he observes that *Against the Day* is "nothing like *Mason & Dixon* or *Gravity's Rainbow* in many respects." At the same time, however, it evinces similar "postnational traits" to those in the other novels and "constitutes another part of Pynchon's postnational imagination" (2010, 361).

In the light of this brief introduction, my paper aims at investigating how Pynchon's *Against the Day* depicts a postnational vision that questions the metanarrative of "nation-ness" (Pöhlmann 2010, 7) in our life-worlds. I endeavor to show how Pynchon's alternative worlds in *Against the Day* manifest the potential of other "modes of being" (McHale 1987, 79) which instantiate transnational and postnational insights. These phenomena resist the rooted hegemony of "nation-ness" (Pöhlmann 2010, 7) as a dominating narrative that has made it difficult to imagine other possible worlds as an alternative "way of life" (McHale 1987, 79), over almost the last two hundred years.

Before delving into these issues, nevertheless, I shall provide a short theoretical framework regarding the definition of the terms "transnationalism" and "postnationalism" as I employ them in my paper, and what relation they bear to each other. Pöhlmann uses the term "nation-ness" (2010, 7) to refer to the concept of the nation as distinguished from nationality. In his use, "nation-ness" refers to the abstract idea of the nation which should not be confused with the prevalent use of the word "nation" to indicate the nationality of a person. With that in mind, postnationalism is "anything that works towards dismantling the hegemony of nation-ness as a metanarrative" (Pöhlmann 2010, 8). I would like to specify that, in this essay, the prefix "post" in the term postnationalism does not mean "after;" in other words, postnationalism does not mean after nationalism. Indeed, postnationalism, as I intend it, "is not concerned with overcoming nationalism but overcoming nation-ness" (Pöhlmann 2010, 10). To put it otherwise, it actively participates in challenging "the legitimacy of nation-ness as a metanarrative;" defined in this way, postnationalism constantly attempts to question "the hegemony of the national, its myths and

narratives, its discourses and categories, its fixed identities and its mechanisms of control" (Pöhlmann 2010, 15).

Another theoretical term that needs to be clarified is transnationalism. In general terms, it could be defined as "any phenomenon that transcends national borders" (Pöhlmann 2010, 9). As a category of analysis, transnationalism has a lot in common with the postnationalism defined above. To use Berndt Ostendorf's words, "transnationalism presupposes anti-essentialism, favors plurality, mobility, hybridity and favors margins or spaces in between" (2002, 19). In this respect, postnationalism builds on these presuppositions and "makes explicit a normative position against the hegemony of nation-ness that is mostly implicit in descriptions and analyses of the transnational" (Pöhlmann 2010, 9). Thus, criticizing the rooted ideology of "nation-ness," postnationalism can benefit from transnationalism in so far as it underscores the fact that there are other possible systems of ordering our world than "nation-ness." In this sense, transnationalism is in line with and reinforces postnationalism as it is closely related to it.

FROM NATIONALISM TO TRANSNATIONAL IMAGNIATIONS IN *AGAINST THE DAY*

The national order has been rooted in our life-worlds for nearly two centuries. It has constantly been used by the nation-state, through a rational discussion of "nation-ness," as the single possible way of organizing the world in order to maintain political power and control. "Nation-ness," not in the sense of belonging to a nation but as an ideological, theoretical concept, is very much present in the world of *Against the Day*. Indeed, it is hard for the characters in the novel to imagine its nationalized world, on the cusp of World War I, in a different framework than the national ideology. For instance, the Chums of Chance, who symbolize American national identity, hold a defensive position each time they encounter the flagship of their "Russian counterpart" (Pynchon 2006, 127). Only in the end, in the annual convention held by "the Garçons de '71" (Pynchon 2006, 1087), do they realize the limitations of their national identity and seek to work transnationally to help the Europeans during the war.

In 1996, Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny assessed, rather optimistically, the condition of "belonging to a nation" as "a kind of 'cultural recovery'" which potentially

brings about "— not a politics of blood —" but "acceptance, even celebration, of differences." They observed that "being national is the condition of our times, even as the nation is buffeted by the sub-national rise of local, regional, and ethnic claims, and the transnational threats of globalization, hegemonic American culture, migration, diasporization, and new forms of political community" (1996, 32).

Nevertheless, in today's world, nation-states and politics are no longer the only sites of sovereign power. Regarding the building of walls at the borders of nations, Wendy Brown has observed that "it is the weakening of state sovereignty, and more precisely, the detachment of sovereignty from the nation-state, that is generating much of the frenzy of nation-state wall building today" (2010, 24). She shows the "weakening" of the national ideology through a discussion of capital, "that most desacralizing of forces" (2010, 66), in the age of globalization that has turned "God-like: almighty, limitless, and uncontrollable," albeit it does not replace the nation-state or subsume its sovereignty fully. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have argued that "the concept of national sovereignty is losing its effectiveness" (2001, 307). In the competition between large transnational capitalist corporations and nation-states, the "state functions and constitutional elements" undergo a change where a "system of transnational command" assimilates nation-states and politics by surpassing their "jurisdiction and authority" (Hardt and Negri 2001, 306). However, Hardt and Negri are quick to note that "although transnational corporations and global networks of production and circulation have undermined the powers of nation-states" (2001, 307), the traditional functions of the state and its constitutional elements "have effectively been displaced to other levels and domains."

If "nation-ness" has become such an ordinary, always already accepted concept that it is almost impossible to question its status, it is, too, a condition that needs to be changed. As Stefan Berger has argued, "historical constructions of national identity appear so easily as natural" (2008, 4). As any other human construction is subject to change in the course of history, nation-states have always implemented changes to the original construction of their national identity in times of political need. A manipulated historical construction, the national identity needs to be replaced by other possible ways of conceiving of our world that would go beyond the single metanarrative of the

nation-state and leave enough space for the existence and coexistence of new ways of ordering the world.

As far as Thomas Pynchon is concerned, he has been very prominent in creating the so- called alternative worlds in his novels which challenge the dominance of the nation-state as the single form of imagining our life-worlds. These multiple worlds are imaginary spaces, imagined by Pynchon in most of his novels, that offer new ways of organizing the world. As McKenzie Wark puts it, "there are other worlds, and they are this one" (2004, 178). Wark expresses his idea of a world as having "potential" (2004, 175) rather than "necessity" (2004, 170), which is to suggest that it can mobilize other ways of existence without being forced into a dominant system of power. Marie-Laure Ryan has argued that the theory of possible worlds proposes "the concept of modality to describe and classify the various ways of existing of the objects, states, and events that make up the semantic domain" (1991, 3). In such a condition, new ways of conceiving of the world might appear which could go beyond the calcified epistemology of hegemonic, overreaching orders such as the national ideology. When these alternative modes of being materialize, an ontological plurality of worlds, "in the sense of way of life, life-experience, or *Weltanschauung*" (McHale 1987, 79) or "any mode of being between existence and nonexistence" (McHale 1987, 106), becomes possible.

Pynchon's alternative realities question, amongst other things, the hegemonic dominance of the national order. As García-Caro has argued, both Carlos Fuentes and Thomas Pynchon offer a "postnational satire" in their novels, which are works that seek to undermine the political, repressive constructs known as "nations" as well as the dominant, homogenizing ideology of nationalism that supports them. Regarding Pynchon, he advances "a theoretical framework rooted in textual commentary and cultural history, as well as archival research within which to understand Pynchon's works as a postnationalist denunciation of American imperialism and its related jingoistic practices" (2014, VI).

As we learn from Pynchon's own description of *Against the Day*, on the Amazon page for the novel, it is a narrative that spans "the period between the Chicago World's Fair of 1893 and the years just after World War I." Moving across various spatial and temporal settings, Pynchon depicts "a worldwide disaster looming just a few years ahead" at "a time of unrestrained corporate greed, false religiosity, moronic

fecklessness, and evil intent in high places." There is a "sizable cast" of historical and fictional characters that includes miners, anarchist bombers, capitalist bosses, shamans, scientists, and mathematicians. These characters "are mostly just trying to pursue their lives." However, "an era of certainty comes crashing down around their ears and an unpredictable future commences" for them. In the meantime, "strange sexual practices take place. Obscure languages are spoken, … Contrary-to-the-fact occurrences occur." Pynchon tells us that "if it is not the world, it is what the world might be with a minor adjustment or two… Let the reader decide, let the reader beware. Good luck."[1] Although this description leaves out many significant events in the novel, perhaps there is no better way to provide a synopsis than the author's own words.[2]

In this complex panorama of numerous interesting issues, *Against the Day* offers many examples where the metanarrative of "nation-ness" is challenged. The novel introduces certain transnational phenomena which connotate, and sometimes overtly depict, a postnational view. Pynchon's fiction takes us to a world where we encounter innumerable peoples, lives, lands, and real and imagined worlds. This globalizing tendency is no mystery to the Pynchon reader or anyone who has at least read his intriguing debut novel, *V.*. An indescribably original novel, *V.*'s narrative engages in various places around the world such as New York, Paris, Florence, Malta, Cairo, Alexandria, Corfu, Rotterdam, Spain, Africa, and the Middle East. In fact, on the back cover of the paperback edition of the novel, released by Penguin in 2007, the infinite list of countries and cities is summed up by the phrase "constantly moving between locations across the globe." Here, it must be noted that I am using the adjective global to refer to the encyclopedic quality of Pynchon's novels which try to demonstrate, among other things, a representation of the world, and possibly contain it. Proposing the term "world- historical or global novels" (2016, 8), Anderson observes that at least three of Pynchon's novels "stand clearly apart from the rest of his work" (2016, 24). He explains that "the remarkable unity of their vision" mobilizes a historical perspective that "maps the complexity" of significant historical transition points in the novels. This tendency keeps flowing into Pynchon's other novels as well. As I will discuss in what

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[1] See Pynchon's description of the novel, available at: https://www.amazon.it/Against-Day-Thomas-Pynchon/dp/1400103703
[2] See Menand's description of the plot here: Menand, Louis. 2006. "Do the Math." *The New Yorker,* November 27. https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2006/11/27/do-the-math.

follows, in *Against the Day*, the flow of information, technology, capital, and peoples transcends the national framework.

When Ratty expresses his idea about a "general European war" (Pynchon 2006, 942) that is about to take place, Yashmeen, the ward of a British diplomat in Inner Asia in the novel, replies, "why not let them have their war?" She explains that even if all European kings and Cæsars went to war for their nationalist ideology, "why would any self-respecting anarchist care about any of these governments?" She believes that these nation-states can fight each other as much as they wish while anarchists could lay back and not care at all. Ratty, one of professor Renfrew's favorites, observes that on the contrary, such a universal war would create the worst situation for the anarchists: "Anarchists would be the biggest losers." He explains that "today even the dimmest of capitalists can see that the centralized nation-state, so promising an idea a generation ago, has lost all credibility with the population;" anytime the old nation-state ideology has become weak, anarchism "is the idea that has seized hearts everywhere." He mentions to Kit, the youngest son of the Traverse family and a student at Yale, that if the forces supporting the national idea fail, so does capitalism. Such a condition would lead to the growth of anarchism and, consequently, the beginning of the end of nation-states.

When capitalists realize that the nation-state is no longer popular with the population, they try to revitalize the central nation-state using a different method. War, Ratty opines, is the solution: "The national idea depends on war" (2006, 942). "If a nation wants to preserve itself, what other steps can it take, but mobilize and go to war?" To preserve the national idea, thus, war needs to be created. This view reminds us of one of the three Party slogans in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: "War is Peace" (Orwell 1949, 3). Winston, the novel's protagonist, learns from Emmanuel Goldstein's book the true meanings of the Party's slogans and the concept of perpetual war which explains how the Party maintains power. As he reads the book, it becomes clear that "it does not matter whether the war is going well or badly" (Orwell 1949, 134). What is needed "is that a state of war should exist." In his 2003 foreword to Orwell's novel, Pynchon mentions that "the Ministry of Peace wages war" (2003, 3) which is to suggest the government's irresistible "addiction to power" (2003, 4). Indeed, "central governments were never designed for peace" (Pynchon 2006, 942). War is the

indispensable machine to perpetuate the national ideology and curb the growing power of the anarchists, the marginalized, and the "Preterite" (Pynchon 1973, 116). Ratty's predictions are correct inasmuch as the unimaginable disasters of World War I were followed by another world war that would do even more damage.

The above example suggests how our world has been ordered and shaped within a national framework and how our life-worlds have been suffering the consequences. "Nation-ness" has been deeply rooted in our world that it has left no space at all for other ways of understanding and organizing the world. Ratty's explanation reveals the painful fact that the narrative of the nation is not the metanarrative it claims to be; it is not an order that is based on the common good, chosen and decided by a vast host of single subjects among communities, but one that imposes its dominant ideology on societies and their singularities.

If it is true that nation-states use war to sustain the national ideology, Pynchon's novel suggests that nation-ness is no longer the single overreaching metanarrative that has kept its hegemonic order in place for so long. This scene from the novel suggests that there is also a possibility for other global systems, to define, interpret, and manage our world, which go beyond the capitalist interests and borders of nation-states. Pynchon's alternative worlds mobilize a vision free from the hegemonic limitations of a single, absolutist metanarrative where the reimagination of our world, so often enclosed by a non-negotiable order, becomes a possibility again. As Pöhlmann observes: "Pynchon's postnational imagination proves the national world to be only one among many others and postulates no necessity except the necessity to imagine these worlds in order to change this one" (2010, 361).

On this note, I would like to draw attention to another example of a transnational framework in the novel. Scarsdale Vibe explains to professor Heino Vanderjuice that Dr. Tesla, a historical figure who had an important role in the development of electrical engineering, has been trying to invent a system that would provide free access to electricity to all the people around the world. Vibe, a wicked plutocrat and a ruthless mine owner, believes that Tesla's idea of a "World System" is "the most terrible weapon the world has seen" (Pynchon 2006, 38-39). He emphasizes that, if not stopped immediately, it would weaken the "rational systems of control" over people and economy. In his opinion, Tesla's idea would send us back to anarchic ways

of "fish-market" economy where nothing is controlled systematically, as they are at present under the power of capitalism. To him, such a transnational system would mean "the end of the world" and the ruin of the very nature of the world's economy and the "blessings" of capitalism:

> If such a thing [Tesla's 'World-System'] is ever produced," Scarsdale Vibe was saying, "it will mean the end of the world, not just 'as we know it' but as anyone knows it. It is a weapon, Professor, surely you see that—the most terrible weapon the world has seen, designed to destroy not armies or matériel, but the very nature of exchange, our Economy's long struggle to evolve up out of the fish-market anarchy of all battling all to the rational systems of control whose blessings we enjoy at present. (2006, 39)

Vibe explains to the professor that Tesla "is already talking in private about something he calls a 'World-System,' for producing huge amounts of electrical power that anyone can tap in to for free, anywhere in the world" (2006, 38). However, Vibe believes that no one will finance Tesla's project because putting up money "for research into a system of free power would be to throw it away, and violate— hell, betray—the essence of everything modern history is supposed to be." He asks the professor to invent "a counter-transformer. Some piece of equipment that will detect one of these Tesla rigs in operation, and then broadcast something equal and opposite that'll nullify its effects" (2006, 39). The novel uses technology to show a transnational view where all people "anywhere in the world" (2006, 38), beyond the national borders of America, could enjoy the benefits of electricity. This can be considered as the application of the encyclopedic quality in the narrative insomuch as the use of technology, as a specialized discipline of science, instantiates a global vision in which people around the world can equally benefit from electricity. Inger Dalsgaard has observed that Tesla's idea of "the free distribution of electricity . . . may be thwarted" (2012, 164); but Pynchon uses technology "to foster local resistance to the tyranny of business mogul Scarsdale Vibe." Indeed, Vibe does not want the new system to take root and go transnational insofar as his grasp on the economy lies in control and surveillance. As he tells the professor, Tesla's system "uses the planet as an element in a gigantic resonant circuit" (Pynchon 2006, 38) which could endanger his economic status. On the other hand, Tesla's "World system" would be exactly an alternative reality where a new possibility of organizing the world economy, beyond any national boundaries and in favor of "the Preterite"

(Pynchon 1973, 116), would thrive. Such a globalizing system would jeopardize the capitalist interests of Vibe. Thus, its effects have to be nullified in order to avoid "anarchy" (Pynchon 2006, 39) in the system which could interfere with his control of the economy.

Hence, going beyond the national means going anarchic and resisting the hegemony of the present calcified world order. However, anarchism, as Ratty explains, should not blow things up but play "'more of a coevolutionary role, helping along what's already in progress'" (Pynchon 2006, 937). For instance, governments can be replaced by "'other, more practical arrangements,'" Ratty mentions, "'some in existence, others beginning to emerge, when possible working across national boundaries.'" But a transnational system benefiting the marginalized and the ordinary would threaten the fixed and secure capitalist interests. For Vibe, who is clearly a "representative" (Maragos 2014, 10) of authority, the way to prevent that from happening is to impede any alternative possibility to germinate. Therefore, he demands that Professor Vanderjuice design a "counter-transformer" (Pynchon 2006, 39) that could disable a transnational free electrical power system.

The arrival of the Chums of Chance, "a five-lad crew belonging to that celebrated aeronautics club known as the Chums of Chance" (2006, 8), at the Chicago World's Fair already depicts a transnational order in the novel:

> A Zulu theatrical company re-enacted the massacre of British troops at Isandhlwana. Pygmies sang Christian hymns in the Pygmy dialect, Jewish klezmer ensembles filled the night with unearthly clarionet solos, Brazilian Indians allowed themselves to be swallowed by giant anacondas, only to climb out again, undigested and apparently with no discomfort to the snake. Indian swamis levitated, Chinese boxers feinted, kicked, and threw one another to and fro. (2006, 27)

We also observe "Waziris from Waziristan exhibiting upon one another various techniques for waylaying travelers" and "Tarahumara Indians from northern Mexico crouched, apparently in total nakedness, inside lath-and-plaster replicas of the caves of their native Sierra Madre" (2006, 28). At their arrival, Lindsay and Miles are confronted by the spectacle of unsavory acts and exhibits on the fringe of the Fair. Nonetheless, the Fair provides the possibility for people around the world to be present at the same time and place, exchanging their arts and traditions. If we conceive of the Fair in terms of a

"trans-national plexus" (2006, 940), the novel grants a vision where the transfer of cultural traditions and knowledge transcends the borders of nations. Indeed, the Fair is a globalized city hosting an international event. When the boys "come within view of the searchlight beams sweeping the skies from the roof of the immense Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building," they visit what the narrator describes as "a miniature city, nested within the city-within-a-city which was the Fair itself" (2006, 29). In this sense, the fair is a detailed miniature of the world where the 400th anniversary of Columbus's arrival in the New World is being celebrated. They have built new canals and reproduced different settings such as a Cairene street, a Japanese tea house, a Moorish palace, and a German village; such a global representation is an ideal setting for a novel that is in itself a representation of the world.

A salient issue in *Against the Day* is World War I. However, the novel does not say as much about the war itself as it does about its implications, such as the creation of modern systems of control and order in the world. The incomprehensible disasters of the war are only depicted through their side effects. In fact, this slanted representation of the global horror takes up only a few pages of such a vast novel. As David Cowart observes, the war is mostly fought "off-page" (2011, 186). That said, no war, not even a civil war, excludes the idea of the nation. *Against the Day's* alternative worlds suggest a transnational attitude that seeks to overthrow the fixed idea of "nation-ness," albeit that transnational structure acts as a sort of undercurrent. Though in the background, most often the transnational phenomena are trying to suggest ways of dismantling the hegemony of the national. For example, through "the mysterious Q-weapon" (2006, 561), Pynchon depicts a transnational view where "Quaternioneers" and "Vectorists'" (2006, 564) interests intersect. This already shows how the inventors of the Quaternions and Vector analysis, from different nations, come together in the creation of a weapon which is bought by Piet Woevre from Edouard Gevaert in Brussels.

Such a small detail reinforces the idea that even if the weapon is concerned with destruction and the world of *Against the Day* is about to burst into World War I, it is noticeable that Pynchon tries to depict a transnational paradigm. Seen as a tool of destruction, the Q- weapon is a harmful instrument of horror serving the national ideology that would introduce "the vast population of the world's innocent to more trouble than its worth to any government" (2006, 570). At the same time, from its

creators to its users, it brings people of different nations together and can be seen as a way of crossing over national borders. Therefore, the novel seems to depict a nationalist idea and a transnational paradigm simultaneously.

TOWARD *AGAINST THE DAY*'S POSTNATIONAL VISIONS

Of all the alternative worlds of *Against the Day*, the city above the skies is the one which is most clearly postnational. Obviously, there are many other scenes where such a postnational imagination is suggested. For example, Darby explains to Chick that, during the sieges of Paris, some of the balloonists came to realize "how much the modern State depended for its survival on maintaining a condition of permanent siege" (Pynchon 2006, 19). Pöhlmann argues that the elevated viewpoint of the balloonists let them broaden their "framework of thought" (2010, 362) by way of observing the big picture of "politics and society that could not remain within the accepted national categories." Indeed, with the end of the sieges, the balloonists were set free "of the political delusions" (Pynchon 2006, 20) and, as Penny mentions, decided to fly "'far above fortress walls and national boundaries, running blockades, feeding the hungry, sheltering the sick and persecuted.'"

Although late, in the end the Chums of Chance recognize their identity, which reveals to them the limits of a self-conception based on an us-them attitude of sameness and difference. The national metanarrative that has shaped their identity and kept their story together until then loses its appeal and falls apart as they start to help and alleviate the suffering of Europeans during World War I by providing them with provisions. As Nathalie Aghoro observes, the Chums move on "from representing the national narrative to the transnational fork in the road that leads them towards cooperation in order to help a world that is threatened to resolve into fragments under the impression of World War I" (2009, 49). Their old, static, national identity becomes obsolete and another one needs to be newly constructed, which, as we shall see, would be formed within a "supranational" (Pynchon 2006, 1087) framework. In the light of their new understanding of the world, the Chums become aware of the possibility of cooperation and acting postnationally beyond the borders of nations in order to avoid the horrible fears of war and keep the world safe. Such a supra/post-national attitude is exactly what

Aghoro calls "the excluded middle that nationalist ideology cannot acknowledge in its fight for supremacy" (2009, 49).

The ending scene of the novel depicts a postnational vision where the national boundaries cease to exist. The city above the skies is a world where no single metanarrative, such as "nation- ness," is in control. This alternative possibility goes beyond the national borders and exemplifies one of the most important things that has been sought throughout the novel: "a supranational idea." When "the Garçons de '71" are holding their annual convention up above the skies in Paris, Penny explains to the Chums that "the Boys call it the supranational idea" which is "literally to transcend the old political space, the map- space of two dimensions, by climbing into the third" (Pynchon 2006, 1087). "The supranational idea" has the capability to transcend "the old political space" which is nation-states' official, hegemonic order of control and surveillance. Such spaces, with hard and fast epistemologies, oftentimes act at the service of politicians and governmental functions. Therefore, "the supranational idea" should transcend the static maps and boundaries created by the overruling dynamic of the national ideology. To go beyond such calcified epistemological ideologies, including the national, new ontological possibilities, worlds, and perhaps a plurality of them, must be set in motion; an event that would generate novel horizons of understanding and living our life-worlds.

As the novel comes to an end, Pynchon poses a serious concern. He suggests the need for an alternative world so as to interpret and organize our world in a different manner than the stagnant hegemony of nation-ness, even though its controlling order is so deeply rooted that it seems impossible to imagine a world without it. Through a comprehensive, well-crafted novel, Pynchon expresses and emphasizes the necessity for a postnational world, or what the boys call a "supranational idea" (2006, 1087). This indicates that new alternatives, such as the "third dimension," could and must materialize. Pöhlmann observes that "the worlds Pynchon creates in his novels . . . are worlds that often resist the illusory coherence of the national as their basis. They present counternarratives that unhinge the national world by opposing it to different postnational worlds" (2010, 361). *Against the Day* demands a different vision of the world that would be free from the limitations of a single dominant metanarrative. By mobilizing a postnational imagination, in the following example, we can see how

Pynchon's alternative worlds in the novel seek to counter the overarching identity formation of nation-ness.

In the city above the skies, the Chums are freed from their restrictive framework of duties and fly over the national boundaries, going wherever they wish and helping whomever they desire. This deserves the label postnational. No longer under the grasp of a world restrained by the national ideology, the Chums find a new universal order "above the City in a great though unseen gathering of skyships" (Pynchon 2006, 1087) where the national is not in control. Of course, this world is "invisible" but the boys' motto indicates that it is "there:" "There, but Invisible." Ergo, it represents an alternative possibility that transcends such dominant narratives as the national. As Ernest Renan observed in "What is a Nation?," a nation should be based on the "plebiscite of every day" (1882, 58). To make that happen, the hegemony of the national must be negotiated and replaced by other methods of organizing the world. *Against the Day's* ending scene evinces a reunion of the skyships above the city which is postnational insofar as it leaves behind any single metanarrative. Indeed, the "supranational idea" (2006, 1087) is "there," even if "invisible," and directs the Chums toward "grace" (2006, 1089). By the end of the novel, a different framework of existence is suggested. "No one aboard *Inconvenience* has yet observed any sign of this" but "they know—Miles is certain—it is there." The Chums are ready "for the glory of what is coming to part the sky. They fly toward grace."

Although World War I took place, the alternative world above the city allows the Chums of Chance to witness, even if briefly, a utopian vision of a world without repression and oppression, in which it is possible to redefine one's relation to oneself, to others, and to the state. It is as if nation-state's control had been nullified by a new world order. Such a possibility, in what seems to be a closed system, is what postnationalism, as I understand it, seeks to establish. Where no space of freedom has been left to the imagination, the boys are set free and offered a new vision that endeavors to find an opening, even if momentary and ethereal, in the calcified rule of nation-ness. In the absence of the national idea, a postnational order might be possible where other epistemological understandings of the world pave the way for the coexistence of new ontological orders without necessarily being mutually exclusive, as the national is. Notwithstanding the dawn of one of the most devastating wars in

human history, in the end the novel provides a promising imagination. Through this new vision, we are invited to reimagine the world in a different light, other than those brought to us by overreaching metanarratives such as the national idea, that would have the potential to provide a postnational space.

With that in mind, it is also true that such a vision is not ultimate. Even with the existence of a postnational paradigm, there are other orders in our world that are in control and by no means is it possible to say that nationalism is on its way to its demise. As García-Caro observes, "the North American continent is far from being 'beyond' or 'after' the nation despite the signs of tiredness of rhetorical nationalisms, despite the partial collapse of the nation-state as an economic and cultural unit" (2014, VI). On the contrary, faced with "a postnational globalization that replicates earlier asymmetrical exchanges and neocolonial relations," it is as though nationalism could still be able to recreate "both a sense of postcolonial resistance and its supplement—imperial narcissism." However, *Against the Day* opens to the reader an alternative panorama where other modes of interpreting the world, beyond the all-encompassing, hegemonic narratives of control and order, are suggested. The national is one of the strongest narratives of control in today's world and, directing attention to its hegemony and surveillance in every aspect of our social and individual lives, *Against the Day* mobilizes a postnational vision which challenges and resists its dominance in the world.

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ETHNONATIONALISM IN THE U.S., LEBANON, AND ISRAEL: A TRANSNATIONAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This paper comparatively examines three different ethnonationalist movements: the alt-right in the United States; Zionists in Israel, with a focus on right-wing Zionists; and Maronite Christian ethnonationalists in Lebanon. Scholars have put forth important analyses of the alliance between the alt-right and Zionists, yet not many have grappled with the existence of similar strands of ethnonationalist ideology in Lebanon or the history of cooperation that exists between Zionists and Maronite ethnonationalists, or even the alliance between the alt-right and right-wing Lebanese Maronites in the Arab-American diaspora. This comparative analysis strives to add to existing analyses of right-wing ethnonationalist ideologies in the Middle East and United States, and to move away from the tendency to paint the alt-right and other right-wing movements worldwide with a broad brush.

Keywords: Right-Wing Movements, Ethnonationalism, Zionism, White Nationalism, Maronite Nationalism

INTRODUCTION

While progressive parties and grassroots activists watched in horror as Donald Trump prepared to take his seat in the White House at the end of 2016, right-wing ethnonationalist parties across the world seemed to rejoice. The Trump campaign had been notoriously providing a platform for right-wing ethnonationalists, popularly known as the 'alternative right,' or the alt-right, to highlight their ideas within virtual and physical right-wing spaces. However, as this paper will show, the alliance between Trump and these right-wing ethnonationalist elements is not so clear-cut, just as the alliance between the alt-right and other elements within the global right is not as simple as many believe it to be.[1]

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[1] For example, many alt-right figures turned to Trump because they believed that he might reduce the expansionism promulgated by neoconservative and neoliberal elements in the White House over the last two decades. During campaign season, Trump's foreign policy seemed murky. However, his appointment of figures such as Jeff Sessions as Attorney General and David Friedman as the United States' ambassador to Israel should have given these alt-rightists a

The alt-right framed itself as a dissident right, one that had been working quietly since the lead-up to 9/11. Its ideological and strategic mobilization began as a response to neoconservatism following the Reagan years. While neoconservatives clamored for aggressive foreign policy, military interventionism, and a close alliance with Israel in the elite ranks of the Republican Party, the dissident right – who called themselves 'paleoconservatives' – rallied against these policies. They claimed that neoconservatives were "closet Leftists" and "usurpers" (Lyons 2017, 3). In the lead-up to the election of Donald Trump, these reactionary, ethnonationalist elements used contemporary means to embolden their base and recruit new followers. By the 2016 election, the 'alt-right' catapulted to the mainstream, uniting behind Donald Trump's divisive rhetoric on marginalized communities and his promises to "drain the swamp," meaning to rid Washington of bloat and corruption. While some alt-right figures criticized aspects of Trump's proposed policies, many believed that voting him into the White House was the right way to propel paleoconservative ideals and policies to the forefront of the political establishment.

These diversions from the Trump campaign's purported stances are crucial to note. The ideological currents that unite people under the banner of 'alt-right' are not as novel as many believe them to be. They have their roots in ideals of racial supremacy and purity, hyper-nationalism, and isolationism. Such ideals are recurrent; they are not unique to the United States, or even to North America or the West in general. Indeed, Zionist and Maronite nationalisms are fundamentally Western; both emerged either directly from the West or in collaboration with Western actors. In the case of Zionism, Theodore Herzl's call to create "an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism" (1896) follows in line with [Western] settler colonial logics that existed in his day, and follows a similar model to the settlement and colonization of lands in North America, South Africa, and Oceania. Ideologues of Maronite nationalism established connections to the Phoenicians that settled in parts of the Levant centuries ago to legitimize their claim on the land as a 'refuge' for

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stark indication that his foreign policy might prove hostile. Even so, they were just as likely to throw support behind him, for reasons that will be explored later in this paper.

Christian Lebanese. Indeed, in tracing the origin of 'Phoenicianist' discourse, El Husseini finds that the 'Phoenicianist' discourse of Lebanese identity was adopted by Christian (primarily Maronite) intellectuals at the time of the creation of Greater Lebanon. The Maronites' stated goal of *establishing a Christian refuge in the Middle East* was instrumental in convincing French authorities to designate Lebanon as a separate nation-state. The origin myth adopted by the Christian advocates involved a purportedly independent cultural legacy that was said to have existed in Lebanon since ancient times (El Husseini 2012).

Thus, Zionist ideology clearly follows in the Western tradition of colonizing and settling lands beyond the metropole, for both strategic reasons ('establishing an outpost of civilization against barbarism') and religious origin myths (Palestine is the promised land of the Jewish people). In similar fashion, Maronite nationalism traces its roots back to the establishment of a cultural origin myth (the Phoenician ties to Maronite Christians). At the same time, the establishment of this origin myth came in conjunction with their alliance with the French, who ultimately carved Lebanon out of Mandate Syria and established it as its own mandate. Both these ideologies fall in line behind North American settler ideologies of the 16th and 17th century, which also used religious and strategic justifications for the settlement of the land.[2] Contemporary Zionist and Maronite movements show similar ethnonationalist elements, with current political parties with an allegiance to these ideologies professing some form of commitment to establishing and maintaining homogeneous ethnostates.

The main tenets that unite these ideologies with alt-right ideologies transnationally are isolationism, hypernationalism, and an obsession with racial purity and demography. Where neoconservatives rally behind aggressive interventionist foreign policies, the dissident right clamor behind isolationist, exclusivist policies. Donald Trump's violence towards the marginalized attracted the alt-right based on an ideology of 'America First,' of bringing capital, resources, troops, and so forth 'back home' – an unreconstructed nativism,

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[2] Beyond the scope of this paper, but these narratives were later weaponized for nationalist purposes, much like the Zionist and Maronite nationalist iterations discussed above.

in essence. This is not a novel concept. In Israel, one of the forefathers of the right-wing Likud party, Vladimir Jabotinsky, championed an "iron wall" that would keep Palestinians out of "Jewish land" and allow the efforts of Zionist colonization to continue (Jabotinsky 1923). Today, the Likud party continues in a similar trajectory to appease the far-right elements of its base, much like the Republican Party in the US. In Lebanon, the resonances in contemporary political parties is murkier; however, the ideological conception of the country as a 'Christian refuge' by some right-wing elements that still operate today parallels the notion of Israel as a Jewish refuge (Pappe 2014), and the alt-right's conception of a decentralized United States with a hierarchy ordered according to race (Lyons 2017).

Indeed, the resonances between these notions of hypernationalism and racial purity, which are geographically removed from one another, are so great that they have been referenced in relation to each other. Richard Spencer, one of the primary figures associated with the alt-right, has constantly referred to his beliefs as a form of "white Zionism" (Abunimah 2017), claiming that ethno-states have "moral legitimacy." Further, during the Lebanese Civil War, which lasted for more than a decade, one of the many federal plans circulated by ideologues to stakeholders in the war "sold [Christian Lebanon] to the US ambassador as a second Israel with all the benefits for the US of the first, minus its inconveniences (meaning that it would be accepted by the Arab world)" (Traboulsi 2012, 218).

In this context, a comparative analysis of different right-wing ethnonationalist movements' reception of Trump's foreign policy is crucial to understanding the nuances in what has been popularly dubbed 'the alt-right.' While there is a tendency to paint the alt-right with a broad brush, we must acknowledge and understand the historical and ideological convergences and divergences embodied by different ethnonationalist parties worldwide.

In this paper, I aim to comparatively examine three different ethnonationalist movements: the alt-right in the United States; Zionists in Israel, with a focus on right-wing Zionists; and Maronite Christian ethnonationalists in Lebanon. Scholars have put forth important analyses of the alliance between the alt-right and Zionists, yet not many have

grappled with the existence of similar strands of ethnonationalist ideology in Lebanon or the history of cooperation that exists between Zionists and Maronite ethnonationalists, or even the alliance between the alt-right and right-wing Lebanese Maronites in the Arab-American diaspora. This comparative analysis strives to add to existing analyses of right-wing ethnonationalist ideologies in the Middle East and United States.

These three groups converge and diverge from each other in myriad ways. One interesting departure point, that I do not analyze in this paper, is the means of mobilization; since the parties I analyze in this paper came to prominence in different time periods, the means of mobilization and recruitment have varied accordingly. For example, the alt-right's primary means of recruitment and mobilization has been through virtual space; this space was not necessarily accessible at the height of some of the events I discuss in this paper. Although the recruitment of members and the mobilization of the alt-right has taken and is currently taking place in virtual spaces, the purpose of this article is to look at the transnational connections between alt-right, Zionist, and Maronite nationalist movements, rather than narrow in on the particular means of recruitment and mobilization utilized by each party. Indeed, this could be a potential topic for further studies in the future.

For the purposes of this paper, I aim to study these groups' reception of Trump's decision to move the United States' embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. I argue that their widely diverging stances on this issue stem from a similar, hypernationalist identitarian rationale, one that dominates the contemporary spirit of the alt-right in the United States and abroad.

This paper aims to contribute to existing analyses of right-wing, ethnonationalist groups across the globe in the context of the growing alt-right in the United States. While these groups have always existed in different iterations, there is no doubt that the election and tenure of Donald Trump have brought to light other ethnonationalist groups beyond the geographic bounds of the United States. Figures like Walid Phares, Middle East advisor to Trump during his campaign year and a former advisor to Maronite ethnonationalist parties during the Lebanese Civil War in the 1980s, are testament to the transnational nature of the alt-right. There have been analyses of the alt-right in the context of the United

States, of right-wing Zionism in the context of Israel, and of Maronite ethnonationalism in Lebanon. Some scholars have examined the relationship between Zionism and the alt-right, or Zionism and Maronite ethnonationalism; this paper aims to take their analyses a step further by putting the three geographic and historical contexts in conversation with one another, to add a new intervention to provocative and nuanced transnational analyses of right-wing ethnonationalism that already exist.

ESTABLISHING TERMINOLOGIES AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A. **On Terminology**

The alt-right is often defined as 'neo-fascist.' Indeed, the alt-right deliberately evokes Nazi symbolism in their work and reiterate similar strands of antisemitism and xenophobia that were central to the ethos of the Nazi parties that existed in the interwar period. For example, *The Daily Stormer*, a media outlet that serves as a mouthpiece for the alt-right in the US, deliberately evokes the antisemitic *Der Sturmer*, an antisemitic paper that served as a mouthpiece for the Nazi party in the 1930s. The alt-right undoubtedly is committed to the circulation of neo-fascist ideas, formulated by the European New Right (ENR) of the late 1960s (Lyons 2017, 3; Griffin 2018, 116). Griffin notes that neo-fascism had undergone a "different, more intellectually high-brow sort of virtualization . . . promulgat[ing] a 'right-wing Gramscism.'" This 'right-wing Gramscism' dictated that postwar fascists should devote themselves to a "sustained campaign of metapolitics" (Griffin 2018, 117). The 'metapolitical' strategy meant that they would operate outside the traditional realms of party politics, concentrating on "transforming political and intellectual culture as a precursor to transforming institutions and systems" (Lyons 2017, 3).

However, it is simplistic to delineate the alt-right as being simply 'neo-fascist.' The movement's 'big-tent' praxis allows it to incorporate the voices of right-wing anarchists, misogynistic anti-feminists and men's rights activists [MRAs], and others who do not fall neatly under 'neo-fascist' lines. While the movement certainly draws from fascist ideas, the movement is not itself neo-fascist. In fact, many who identify with the alt-right do not envision themselves as fascists, especially not in the traditional sense of the word, or even

as neo-fascists. Many claim that their invocation of Nazi imagery is ironic; meant to mock those that call them neo-Nazis or neo-fascists. The ENR were opposed to being defined as fascists themselves, and actively disengaged from traditional elements of fascism such as expansionism. Much like their descendants in the alt-right, they advocated federalism, claiming that a federation of ethnically homogeneous communities was preferable to a centralized state (Lyons 2017, 3). Their ideological descendants in the alt-right have also moved to actively disengage themselves from old-school fascism, with publications such as *American Renaissance* even pioneering a version of white nationalism that moved away from recognizable forms of antisemitism and even welcomed Jewish thinkers whose ideas are palatable in the alt-right sphere. This means that an apparent softening of antisemitic rhetoric has become strategically sound for the alt-right.

It is this fundamental tenet of ENR and alt-right philosophy that I aim to focus on in this paper. For this purpose, I have moved away from terms like 'fascist' and 'neo-fascist' and towards terms like 'ethnonationalism,' for it is the notion of an ethnically homogeneous nation that ties elements of the alt-right with elements of Zionism and Phalangism (Lebanese Christian nationalism). Further, collapsing the three movements under the umbrella of 'fascism' or 'neo-fascism' threatens to obfuscate the virulent antisemitism rife in the alt-right movement. Indeed, these neo-fascist elements have often masked their antisemitism as anti-Zionism and solidarity with Palestinians (Ross 2017). To avoid falling into the trap of reifying these conflations, which have been taken up by Zionists to delegitimize Palestinian solidarity, I use the narrower and more accurate term 'ethnonationalism' and 'ethnostate' to signal the forms of hypernationalism and ideas of racial supremacy that I am referring to in this paper. This is not because I do not believe that these movements incorporate elements of fascism into their organizing strategy and ideological foundations. Rather, it is because ethnonationalist is a narrower delineation of the ideologies I identify and analyze. Further, as Griffin notes in his book on fascism, "the way journalists and politicians bandy the term 'fascism' around does not help create a sober atmosphere of forensic inquiry" (Griffin 2017, 95), meaning that the term has been construed as broad enough to encompass any form of anti-left authoritarianism. While this

paper does deal with movements that are largely anti-left and authoritarian, it is not these aspects of their ideologies and platforms that I am interested in for the purpose of this paper.

These movements' ardent dedication to different ethnostates leads to the formation of seemingly unexpected strategic alliances. When Richard Spencer, a prominent ideologue of the alt-right, professes his admiration for the State of Israel, he is professing an affinity with the ethnonationalist ideology that drives most, if not all, of the Israeli government's policies. When the Israeli government aligned itself with the Phalange of Lebanon during the Lebanese Civil War in the 1980s, helping them carry out a massacre of Palestinian refugees at Sabra and Shatila, their purpose was twofold (Pappe 2006, 219). First, they were professing an affinity with the notion of another ethnocratic 'refuge' in the Middle East. Second, they were also attempting to exterminate their own Other; the 'Palestinian problem' that had taken root in Lebanon, one that was construed as an existential threat by both the Christian Lebanese Phalange and the Zionists.

For it is these ideas of hypernationalism and racial supremacy, delineated in the idea of ethnically homogeneous nations, that thread the movements I discuss in this paper together. The primary difference is the degree to which these movements managed, or are managing, a takeover of the state for the purpose of protecting identitarian interests and eliminating 'the Other.' One difference lies in their delineation of the 'Other;' different movements have different sources of existential fear. However, this fear is always projected onto a constructed 'Other.' For ethnonationalist Zionists, this Othering has always been directed towards Palestinians, who are indigenous to the land Zionists aim to settle. More recently, Jewish Ethiopians have also been subject to violent exclusion in Israel; in 2013, scandal broke when it was revealed that the Israeli government had been forcibly sterilizing African migrants, including Ethiopian Jews.

To Lebanese Christian nationalists, who believe that Lebanon should either be a juridically Christian nation or that Christians should be allowed to secede from Lebanon, the Palestinian refugee, and more recently the Syrian refugee, is the scourge to be exterminated from its society. This point is most notably shown in the platform of the

Kataeb (Phalangist) party released in March 2018. Under section C, point 13, the Phalangists commit to:

> the Arab Peace Initiative (Beirut Declaration 2002) and to the international resolutions pertaining to the Palestinian cause which is considered as righteous. Launching an international conference that would focus on the issue of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, while *making sure that talks are based on their right to return to their homeland and the rejection of their naturalization, and working on a comprehensive plan to share this burden by all friendly countries until the Palestinians return home.*[3] (Kataeb 2018)

Here, the emphasis is placed on ensuring that the Palestinians are granted the right to return to Palestine, not due to any political sense of obligation towards the Palestinian cause, but rather to ensure that Palestinians are removed from 'Lebanese land.' The platform also reveals a similar attitude towards the Syrian refugees in Lebanon, who the party claims must be "resettled to Arab countries who need [them as a labor force]." Such positions are not limited to the Phalangist party. White nationalists within the alt-right overwhelmingly view Jewish people as one of the primary Others within the white nation. Interestingly, however, tolerance of Jewish presence in 'white homelands' has increased due to what has been deemed as the 'common enemy:' "The brown, black, and yellow multitudes" (Trifkovic, quoted in Lyons 2017, 7). One alt-right thinker, M.K. Lane, even claimed that Jewish people should ally with white nationalists because "if we [whites] go down, they [Jewish people] go down" (Lane, quoted in Lyons 2017, 7). This increased tolerance has also manifested in an acceptance of Israel as a Jewish homeland, to the extent that some have cited it as an example to emulate. Richard B. Spencer[4] has repeatedly referred to himself as a 'white Zionist' and to his ideas as 'white Zionism.' The white nationalist affinity with Zionism is most notably displayed in a 2016 exchange at Texas A&M between Spencer and Rabbi Rosenberg, an audience member who challenged Spencer's

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[3] Emphasis added.

[4] Richard Bertrand Spencer is an American white supremacist. He is the president of the National Policy Institute, a white supremacist think tank, and of Washington Summit Publishers, a white nationalist publisher which publishes books on race as well as racist and racialist content supportive of white nationalism. Rejecting the label of white supremacist, Spencer defines himself a white nationalist, white identitarian, and the equivalent of a "Zionist" for white people. He created the term alt-right, a movement about white identity, and advocates white-European unity and a "peaceful ethnic cleansing" of nonwhites from America, as well as the creation of a new political order he believes would resemble the Roman Empire.

racism: "You come here with a message of radical exclusion. My tradition teaches a message of radical inclusion, as embodied by Torah," said Rosenberg, who attended the media event at the urging of one of his colleagues. "Would you sit down and study Torah with me and learn love?" Spencer shot back by comparing Israel's vision as a homeland for Jews with his own goals for a state for whites. "Do you really want radical inclusion into the State of Israel?" Spencer responded, as Rosenberg said nothing. "Jews exist precisely because you did not assimilate to the gentiles . . . I respect that about you. I want my people to have that same sense of themselves" (Solomon 2016).

Much like the Phalangist Party's delineation of the Palestinian cause as 'righteous' (see above), Spencer and other alt-right thinkers of similar stature claim that the existence of Israel as a state for the Jewish people holds "moral legitimacy," due to its self-delineation as a homogeneous ethnostate. At the same time, they claim that Jewish people are "remorseless enemies who seek [their] destruction" (Auschwitz Soccer Ref, quoted in Lyons 2017, 7) who have the power to "subvert [white] societies" (Lane, quoted in Lyons 2017, 7).

To these ethnonationalists, an investment in the notion of isolationism, to the extent where some (such as the ENR) advocate anti-imperialism rather than expansionism, is crucial to guaranteeing the sanctity of the ethnostate. What this means is that these right-wing elements advocate for 'anti-imperialism' not in a radical leftist sense, where equality or justice are defining characteristics of their opposition to imperialism, but rather to preserve capital used for expansionist purposes for the benefit of those who fit the criteria of belonging to the ethnostate. Much like the majority of Israeli citizens who protested the 1982 invasion of Beirut, and the overall Israeli involvement in the Lebanese Civil War, this 'anti-imperialism' is more concerned with "self-image" (Pappe 2006, 220) and the deaths of soldiers in the invading army than with victims in the region being invaded. This partially explains why Donald Trump's 'America First' rhetoric and promise to build a wall to keep Others out appeals so much to individuals in the alt-right. Both hold the promise of keeping resources concentrated in the ethnostate. This holds true for both Phalangists (as noted earlier) and right-wing Zionists. There is one caveat when it comes to delineating these groups' anti-expansionism: Israeli settlement-building, which has gone

on for decades now. The question of settlements is interesting because it is a form of expansionism that usually runs contrary to the 'anti-imperialist' or 'anti-expansionist' stance of the ethnonationalists I study in this paper. However, to right-wing Zionists, building settlements is not necessarily a question of expansion into foreign territory; indeed, settlements are deemed to be a reclamation of territory lost, rather than expansion into new lands, which is why it does not fall under the alt-right understanding of expansionism or imperialism, which can be defined as intervention into foreign nations' affairs (such as, for example, the invasion of Iraq, which most alt-rightists would have been opposed to on the basis that it was a neoconservative waste of resources that could be used to preserve the white ethnostate). At the same time, isolationism is not intrinsic to ethnonationalist fervor; indeed, isolationist and expansionist policies are both pursued as long as they preserve the sanctity of the ethnostate.

Finally, there is some contention surrounding the collapse of ethnicity and religion in the notion of ethnocentrism or ethnostates. In this paper, I use the term *ethno*nationalism rather than any other term that references the religious aspect of these forms of ethnonationalism (like the Christian justifications for a Christian refuge in Lebanon or a white ethnostate in North America, or the notion of Palestine being a 'promised land' for the Jewish people according to the Torah). These ethnocratic or ethnonationalist movements use religion as a smokescreen to justify the establishment of an ethnostate, but those within the ethnostate are not necessarily equally aligned by their profession to Christianity or Judaism.[5] Rather, it is ethnic or racial factors, such as the color of their skin or the language they speak, or any other element that could single them out as Others in the ethnostate.[6] We see this in the discrimination faced by Ethiopian Jews or even Mizrahi Jews in Israel, the self-professed refuge for all Jewish people across the world, or in the ethnonationalist alt-right's desire for a *white* ethnostate, that would be culturally

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[5] See the "cleansing operation" of the Christian Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon in Section 1B of this paper, "Historical Background and Contemporary 'Alliances.'"

[6] The work of scholars like Ronit Lentin and Benedict Anderson, among many others, have provided a rich backdrop for me to write within. However, this is a widely-debated subject that is beyond the scope of this paper, which is why I do not expand further on it here.

Christian i.e. exclude people with white skin who do not profess some affinity with Christian religion or culture (such as white Jewish people). Even the Phalange, who claim to desire a Christian refuge for *all* Christians in the Middle East, clearly express their affinity with Lebanism, or Lebanese exceptionalism, as seen in cases where Palestinian Christians or Syrian Christians are rejected by the Maronite Lebanese for being national 'Others.' This is not to say that ethnonationalists do not prioritize religion in any way. However, 'ethnicity' more accurately identifies the priorities of the thinkers behind the notion of ethnonationalism.

B. **Historical Background and Contemporary 'Alliances'**

On 13 April 1975, shots were fired from a car at a congregation of Phalange partisans in front of a church in 'Ayn al Rummaneh, wounding a number of people. Phalangist militiamen reacted a few hours later by machine-gunning a bus heading for the Tall al-Za'tar refugee camp, killing 21 Palestinians. Fighting broke out throughout the southeastern suburb of Beirut between the Phalange and the Palestinian resistance and their Lebanese allies. A war that was to last for 15 years had just begun. (Traboulsi 2012, 189)

Soon after the beginning of the Lebanese Civil War, a writer for *Al 'Amal*, the Phalange media mouthpiece, claimed that "the political domination of the Maronites was the only guarantee of protection for a minority condemned to oppression by a majority that was oppressive by its very nature" (Traboulsi 2012, 195). The political domination of the Maronites, in practical terms, referred to the fact that that the Lebanese parliament represented Christians to Muslims at a ratio of six to five and to the fact that the presidency could (and can, to this day) only be held by a Maronite.

In 1980, Bachir Gemayel, one of the primary figures of the right-wing Phalange, was devising a plot to "establish decisive Christian control over the [Lebanese] state" (Traboulsi 2012, 217). Several plans, set up by different advisors to Gemayel, were circulated internally. One of these plans, drafted by Karim Pakradoni and Joseph Abu Khalil, sold "Christian Lebanon . . . to the US ambassador as a second Israel with all the benefits for the US of the first, minus its inconveniences (meaning that it would be accepted by the Arab world)" (Traboulsi 2012, 218). The parallel between Lebanon and Israel in the imagination of right-

wing elements was no coincidence. Indeed, even when Lebanon was under French mandatory power, a vocal group of Christians, who formed a political front called the National Bloc, even "demanded that Lebanon be made a national home for the Christians under French protection, just as Palestine was to be made a national home for the Jews" (Salibi 1988).

The alliance between the Phalange and the Zionists extended beyond the metanarratives that existed about Lebanon and Israel as refuges of the Christians and the Jewish people. The Phalangist-Zionist alliance was a primary factor in the continuation of the civil war, especially during its second phase (1977-1982). On the 20th of March 1980, *Al 'Amal* responded to calls for peace and national unity by declaring that "there would never be Lebanese unity as long as half a million Palestinians were on Lebanese territory" (quoted in Traboulsi 2012, 217). On the Israeli side, one of the Likud's primary motivations for involvement in Lebanese affairs was the desire to eradicate the 'Palestinian problem' by force (Pappe 2006, 219). Indeed, this is where the interests of the Phalange and the Zionists collide; both shared the view that the 'Palestinian problem' was one to be eradicated by force. This coincidence of interests led the Israeli government to intervene and ensure a Phalange takeover of the Lebanese government at all costs. Traboulsi notes that Walid Jumblatt, the leader of the Progressive Socialist Party (an ally of the Palestinian resistance), referred to Gemayel as "the candidate of the Israeli tanks" (Traboulsi 2012, 222) soon after his takeover of the Lebanese government. Indeed, the Israeli invasion and occupation of Lebanon had been intended to "install a Maronite pro-Israeli government in Lebanon and destroy the PLO" (Pappe 2006, 219). Soon after his election to the presidency, Gemayel had been 'forced' to meet with Menachem Begin, the Prime Minister of Israel at the time,[7] and sign off on an agreement to normalize relations between Lebanon and Israel.

Palestinian refugees were the primary victims in the war (Pappe 2006, 220). As Edward Said notes: "Israel's war was designed to reduce Palestinian existence as much as possible. Most Israeli leaders and newspapers admitted the war's political motive. In Rafael

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[7] Begin was a leader of the Zionist militant group Irgun, which was a predecessor of the Likud Party.

Eitan's words, to destroy Palestinian nationalism and institutions in Lebanon would make it easier to destroy them on the West Bank and in Gaza: Palestinians were to be turned into drugged roaches in a bottle" (Said 1984, 29). Israel's role in the massacre of Sabra and Shatila, and the Lebanese Civil War more broadly, is undeniable. However, it is more accurate to specify that Palestinian refugees were the primary victims of the Phalange-Zionist alliance.

The Phalange had started what they called 'cleansing operations' of Palestinian refugee camps as early as 1975, starting with the al-Dhubayeh Palestinian Christian refugee camp. Interestingly, this case affirms that the Phalange were not simply interested in religious homogeneity, but rather in *ethno*religious similarity, with a prioritization of national belonging to the imagined community of Lebanon.

By 1982, following Gemayel's assassination, the Phalange had carried out an internationally condemned massacre in the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila, aided and abetted by the Israeli troops who were ostensibly present in West Beirut to preserve peace. The Israeli army's monthly journal, *Skira Hodechith*, commented that "the Christians [Phalangists] wanted thus to create a new demographic balance in Lebanon" (quoted in Traboulsi 2012, 225). Thus, in 1982, the ethnonationalist ideology of the Phalange and of the Zionists led to a strategic alliance that aimed to exterminate the Palestinian 'problem' and create a new hegemonic order in the Middle East. This new order would allow for the creation of a Lebanese ethnostate bordering Palestine, one which did not have to deal with the demographic threat posed by Palestinians any longer.

The notion of demographic threats is not new in Zionist thought; indeed, Palestinians have been framed as an "existential demographic threat" to Israel's existence as a Jewish state since its establishment (Oren 2009). Similarly, in 1980s Lebanon – and even today, as noted earlier – Palestinian refugees, Syrian refugees, and other demographics from Muslim-majority areas were seen as a demographic threat to Lebanon's existence as a supposed Christian refuge in the Middle East. This, along with ideological overlaps between the two, is what led to the alliance between the Zionists and the Christian Phalange in the 1980s. The ideological overlaps exist to this day, and indeed, I would posit

that the Christian Phalange and their allies are the most likely to be sympathetic to alt-right hypernationalism and notions of racial supremacy that permeate the current global right. While there have been no explicit policy positions expressing any form of overt alliance with the alt-right, which is a relatively new movement compared to the older Christian Phalange and their allies, ideologically there are too many similarities to deny that they would not, to some degree, ally strategically with one another.

One figure who exhibits the ideological overlap between these right-wing elements is the right-wing pundit Walid Phares, one of Trump's 2016 campaign advisors. Phares is notorious for his past as an ideologue of the Christian coalition dominated by the Phalange in the 1980s. According to Ben Lynfield of *The Jerusalem Post*, "Phares trained Lebanese militants in ideological beliefs justifying the war against Lebanon's Muslim and Druse [sic] factions . . . [he] advocated that Lebanon's Christians work toward creating a separate, independent Christian enclave" (Lynfield 2016). Phares has long advocated for ethnostates in the Middle East, which he calls "Christian enclaves" (Phares 2001). He refers to his envisioned Christian enclave in Lebanon as "Petit Liban." While his views on Christian enclaves might have changed between 2001 to today, it is clear from his time serving as a campaign advisor to Mitt Romney in 2012 as well as Donald Trump in 2016 that his stances on Islam in the region have not, and it is clear that he still holds a pro-Israel stance partially because he views them as a potential ally in the fight to establish Christian enclaves in the Middle East. He claims that Israel's support dwindled between 1985 and 2000 to appease the U.S. government; he then claims that Christians in the Middle East must attempt to reverse the dwindling Western support for Christian enclaves by presenting a "united front" in the international community and a "tragic story of [their status] as an underdog nation" to Western and U.S. audiences in order to garner support.

However, Phares' (and other Christian Lebanese pundits) commitment to the notion of Christian enclaves should not allow us to automatically assume that there is an overt alliance between the Christian Phalangists, right-wing Zionists, and the alt-right. To do so would be a far reach, especially considering the suspicion with which some figures in the alt-right approach Donald Trump and his selection of advisors, sometimes referred to

as the Alt Lite. The Alt Lite, as defined by Lyons, is a "wider circle of sympathizers and populizers" of the alt-right (2017, 13). Figures close to Donald Trump, like Steve Bannon or even Milo Yiannopoulous, are considered 'alt-lite' figures by many in the alt-right. Interestingly, *Breitbart News Network*, which is considered the paragon of alt-lite politics (Lyons 2017, 16), has hosted articles by Phares on Middle East affairs in the past. While a minority of alt-righters are suspicious of the Trump administration and those within it, Lyons notes that these figures are "squarely in the minority" (Lyons 2017, 15).

At the same time, the Trump administration and the alt-right are not one and the same; rather, their alliance is symbiotic, much like the alt-right's fraught alliance with Zionists and other hardline right-wingers. At *The Right Stuff*, another alt-right blog, 'Professor Evola-Hitler' argued that "[we] need to be taking advantage of Trump, not allow Trump to take advantage of us" (quoted in Lyons 2017, 14). In an essay about Trump's Zionism, known anti-semite Kevin MacDonald argues that "for . . . advocates of a White America, our first priorities should be domestic policy – ending the immigration onslaught first and foremost. If doing that is made easier by [allying with Trump and] supporting Israel, so be it" (MacDonald 2016). In 2016, Richard Spencer, notorious for calling himself a 'white Zionist,' tweeted: "We need a foreign policy that doesn't treat Israel as if it were America's 51st state. #AmericaFirst" (Spencer 2016).

These quotes adequately sum up the relationship between the Trump administration and the alt-right, who see Trump as a mean to an end, and who see their alliance with Zionists as a strategic one, based on similar interests, rather than a moral or ethical one. Indeed, Trump's pro-Israel policies have been a point of departure between him and many in the alt-right, who either advocate 'America First' foreign policy that involves cutting aid to Israel and investing those resources in the ethnostate, or those who are antisemitic and believe that the White House is controlled by 'the Jewish establishment.'

Regardless of these points of departure, the alt-right were willing to throw their support behind Trump in 2016, claiming that he would be a 'lesser evil' than Clinton and coming to terms with the differences that would appear once Trump was in the White

House. In a similar fashion, when the Likud took control of the Israeli government in the late 70s, it was due to a coalition of right-wing groups. These right-wing groups (National Religious Party, Agudat Israel, and Shlomotzion) did not necessarily see eye-to-eye with the Likud on several issues; however, any difference can easily be overlooked "in order to obtain the necessary amount of seats for a majority government" (Bsisu 2012, 31). Again, the strategic element of these alliances is clear; for all these parties, the expansion of settlements was a cornerstone of the alliance, as well as the 'threat' of Palestinian existence. As Bsisu notes, "nothing united the Israelis [especially those on the right] like the threat, whether real or imagined, of Palestinian aggression" (Bsisu 2012, 33).

In sum, while the figures of these different movements may eye each other (and even other individuals within their own movements) with suspicion, the ideological overlaps vis-a-vis the notion of ethnonationalism cannot be denied. The alt-right, Zionists, and Phalangists all lean to some degree towards the establishment of ethnostates. All believe, to some degree, that they belong to a persecuted ethnoreligious class in their geographical contexts, and all believe that the state should mobilize their resources not towards imperial expansion but rather towards bettering the conditions of those belonging to the ethnostate. This is a fundamental tenet of these parties' stances towards different phenomena, which I will elaborate upon in the next section.

THE EMBASSY MOVE

Trump's decision to move the U.S. embassy in Israel to Jerusalem indicated a marked shift from previous administrations' stances on the issue. Indeed, the decision has been lauded and criticized in equal measure. As mentioned previously, those in the alt-right who advocate an 'America First' foreign policy or hold the antisemitic belief that the 'Jewish establishment' controls the White House have a fraught yet strategic relationship with Zionism. On the one hand, Zionism is ideologically appealing to figures like Richard Spencer, who calls himself a 'white Zionist;' the notion of ethnoreligious enclaves, as I established above, falls in line with the alt-right's white ethnonationalism. On the other, the alt-right sees Israel as a representation of two undesirable elements in politics. First,

the strong U.S.-Israel alliance is seen primarily as the result of neoconservative interventionism and expansionism, whereby U.S. resources and capital that could be used to preserve and develop the white ethnostate are sent to Israel. Second, the anti-semites in the alt-right see the growth of Israel as a direct result of the 'Jewish establishment's' firm grip on the White House. The first view is primarily pushed by proponents of 'America First' nativism, and the second is pushed by antisemites who exaggerate the influence of Zionism on the White House. Both stem from an ethnonationalist point of view; indeed, antisemitism in the alt-right, as discussed previously, stems from an avid desire to preserve the sanctity of the white ethnostate. Jewish people have usually been represented as part of an elite dedicated to subverting and destroying 'white culture' (see section 1A of this paper, "On Terminology"). Further, the view that the U.S. should not provide Israel with any foreign aid stems from 'America First'-ism, whereby 'America' is envisioned as the ethnostate for white descendants of Europe in North America.

In Lebanon, the decision to move the U.S. embassy in Israel to Jerusalem was met with equal derision by some right-wing elements, many of whom adhere to the two-state solution in their policy stances. While the Kataeb Party has mellowed in recent years, other adherents to hypernationalist ideology, such as the Free Patriotic Movement's[8] Gebran Bassil (who is currently the foreign minister of Lebanon), condemned the decision, even claiming in an Arab League meeting that economic sanctions should be placed on the U.S. (Hayward 2017). Some may argue that this is unusual for Bassil, who recently faced backlash after remarks about having no ideological qualms with Israel and affirming "Israel's right to safety" (Bassil 2017). However, it falls in line with the ethnonationalist stance represented by the Kataeb Party and others with a similar ideological orientation. Many hard-line right-wing Christian ethnonationalists in Lebanon support Palestinians' right of return as the primary way to ensure that they would return home and leave Lebanon; thus, Trump's decision to move the U.S. embassy in Israel to Jerusalem is seen as an impediment to that

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[8] The Free Patriotic Movement is allied with Hezbollah; however, they share many similar ideological stances with the Kataeb party, such as Christian nationalism. Former allies of the Kataeb Party from the time of the civil war are part of the FPM. One prominent figure is the country's current president Michel Aoun, who was one thinker behind the many plans that mapped out Bachir Gemayel's coup in 1982; he is the founder and former leader of the FPM.

process. Like many alt-rightists who support Israel as a means to move Jewish people outside what they perceive to be their rightful "white" ethnostate homeland, many Lebanese right-wingers support the Palestinian right of return (and to some degree, the Palestinian cause for liberation) simply as a mean to move Palestinians beyond Lebanon's borders. To these people, much like alt-right figures in the U.S., the U.S.'s firm alliance with Israel is an impediment to the Lebanese state's ability to expend resources on the Libano-Christian ethnostate, since it impedes the process of removing Palestinians (always implicitly seen as "Muslim") from the "only Christian refuge in the Middle East."

Meanwhile, in Israel, the move was (unsurprisingly) lauded by many right-wing figures. As many scholars, analysts, and journalists have noted, the move consolidates the Israeli state's claim that Jerusalem is the undivided capital of Israel. Again, this firm pro-move stance stems from the same ideological ethnonationalism discussed in the case of the Lebanese right and the U.S. alt-right respectively. In this scenario, the ethnostate is seen as wrongfully contested by the international community, and the Trump administration's decision to challenge that contestation is thus an affirmation of the supposed legitimacy of the Jewish ethnostate. While these stances are wildly divergent from each other, there is no denying that they emerge from the same hypernationalist ethnoreligious dedication to the formation of a homogeneous ethnostate, whereby anyone who deviates from the majority ethnic creed or challenges the ethnostate's investment in its own people is violently ostracized and expelled.

CONCLUSION

This paper identifies the ideological overlaps between the alt-right, Zionists, and Maronite nationalists in the U.S., Israel, and Lebanon respectively, drawing attention to the historical alliance between Zionists and Maronite nationalists and the tentative alliance between alt-rightists (who draw on historically antisemitic ideology, mythology, and symbology) and Zionists. This paper attempts to prove that these three right-wing elements draw on similar notions of ethnonationalism and advocate for similar iterations of homogeneous ethnostates, albeit appealing to people of different "ethnicities." Finally, using their

reception of Trump's decision to move the U.S. embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, I establish that while their stances on the issue were different, they stemmed from similar strands of ethnonationalist ideology and thought.

The ideological overlaps and potential for strategic alliances between alt-rightists, Zionists, and Maronite nationalists will be crucial to identify and analyze in the years to come. Many of these overlaps have not led to overt alliances between alt-rightists and the Lebanese right, or even re-established overt alliances between the Lebanese Christian right and Zionists. However, the potential for strategic alliances between these right-wing elements is an imminent threat to the contexts within the geographies these movements operate in. On top of this, they represent the rightward shift of global politics, where advocating for ethnostates so overtly has become acceptable and even, in some places, representative of the status quo. In terms of American Studies, it is crucial to look at the sort of impact created by alt-right mobilizations, especially online.[9]

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[9] One shortcoming of this paper is that it does not look at the online mobilization of the alt-right. The movement conducted most of their metapolitical approach to shifting politics rightward in virtual spaces rather than physical ones.

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DARKEST ITALY REVISITED: RACE, CHARACTER AND CRIMINALITY IN THE HISTORY OF ITALIAN IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES, 1790-1924

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ABSTRACT

From Lucky Luciano to Tony Soprano, the image and idea of Italian criminality is a well- established component of American perceptions of *italianità*. Where, when, and why did this stereotype originate? And what is the relationship between American prejudices about Italian criminality and the history of Italian immigration to U.S.? This paper answers these questions by documenting how American notions of Italian criminality first emerged when American visited Italy during the period of the Early American Republic (1790-1820). The paper shows how Italian criminality was first developed and transmitted through the travel writings of American Grand Tourists, such as Thomas Jefferson's secretary William Short, the novelist Washington Irving, and the historian Theodore Dwight. This study shows how these notions of Italian criminality, originating before the Civil War (1861-1865), shaped the way Italian immigrants were received upon arrival in the U.S. during the period of their mass migration, between the 1880s and 1924. In that year, the United States introduced a system of quotas based on national origin that "closed the door" to Italians and other immigrants. Tracing the genealogy of deep-rooted American stereotypes about Italian criminality back to their 18th century origin, this paper shows the trans-national features upon which Italians were categorized within the ethno-racial hierarchies that structured late 19th and early 20th century American society.

Keywords: Transnationalism; Grand Tourism; Immigration; Criminality; Ethno-Racial Formation.

Most Americans are proud of their country's identity as a "nation of immigrants."[1] Many would also like to believe that the United States has always been an "asylum of liberty,"[2] offering refuge to the world's "tired, poor huddled masses, yearning to breathe free."[3] Yet, for most of its history, the United States has not been a particularly welcoming place for the foreign-born. According to the standards established by the Naturalization

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[1] Expressed in many ways, by many speakers and authors over the years, the idea of the United States is a "nation of nations" was, perhaps most famously, expressed by poet Walt Whitman in the preface to his 1855 volume, *Leaves of Grass.* The publication of U.S. Senator John F. Kennedy's book *A Nation of Immigrants* in 1958 ushered in an era in which the moniker has become a common reference.

[2] The idea of the United States as an "asylum of liberty" can be traced to Thomas Paine's popular tract *Common Sense* (1776), written during the American war for Independence (1775-1783).

[3] These lines are taken from Emma Lazarus, sonnet "The New Colossus" (1883). In 1903, Lazarus's iconic poem was inscribed on the inside of the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty.

Act of 1790, the first law passed by Congress under the Constitution regulating the status of foreign-born people inside the U.S., only "free, white, male aliens of good character" who had resided in the U.S. for at least two years were eligible to become American citizens. Persons who did not meet these criteria – for example, Native Americans, people of African descent, foreign-born women and all other "non-whites" – were classified either as property, dependents, or permanent aliens. Reflecting this tacit cultural consensus, as early as 1751 Benjamin Franklin defended North Americans' application of the racial category of "whiteness" exclusively to persons of Anglo-Saxon descent in his treatise *Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind*. In this tract, Franklin advised his fellow Englishmen to make every effort to exclude "all Blacks and Tawneys" from settling in North America. His list of undesirables also included "swarthy," "non-white" European groups like "the Spaniards, Italians, French, Russians and Swedes," and even most German populations as well. In his view, the only purely white populations were "the Saxons, who with the English, make the principal body of white people on the face of the earth" (Franklin 1961, 225-234). The Naturalization Act of 1790, reflecting the social and cultural hierarchies developed during the British colonial era, adopted the notions of "whiteness" and "good character" to identify qualities understood to be the unique provenance of people of Protestant "Anglo-Saxon" (e.g. British/Northern European) heritage. With only a few minor alterations, these criteria structured the relationship between race, character, immigration, and citizenship until the American Civil War (1861-1865). Until the eve of the American Civil War, Franklin's ethno-centric sense of "true whiteness" as a quality exclusive to people of Anglo-Saxon heritage set the pace for the interpretive paradigms of race, national origin and character through which U.S. immigration and naturalization policy took shape. So long as the critical mass of "free, white" people seeking to naturalize as U.S. citizens hailed from the British Isles, Saxony and other parts of "pure white" Northern Europe, the formulation contained in the 1790 law helped maintain the cultural homogeneity of the predominantly Protestant, Anglo-American population. However, during the middle decades of the 19th century, the United States' color-coded immigration system faced a crisis when a rising tide of immigration from the Catholic and Jewish parts of Europe began to arrive *en masse* in

the United States. The arrival of these new immigrant groups meant that the legal definition of what it meant to be "free and white" could no longer stand as easy proxy for people of Protestant, Anglo-Saxon descent. The first waves of non-Anglo-Saxon newcomers of European descent arrived in the 1840s and 1850s and consisted of Catholics from Ireland and the French speaking parts of Eastern Canada seeking opportunity in the rapidly industrializing sectors of the U.S. economy. By the 1870s, the largest immigrant groups to the U.S. included Italians, Greeks, Lithuanians, Poles, Czechs, and Russian Jews, among others. To many native-born citizens, the mass arrival of "swarthy" Catholic and Jewish foreigners from Southern and Eastern Europe threatened the stability and homogeneity of the Anglo-American way of life. Fearing that mass immigration would carry Old World poverty, crime, and social divisions to American shores, Anglo-Saxon Nativists mobilized a national movement for immigration restriction.[4] By 1924, the advocates for immigration restriction succeeded in redefining the criteria that determined naturalization. Overturning the 1790 Naturalization Act, the National Origins Act of 1924 (also known as the Johnson-Reed Act) restricted immigration visas to two percent of the total number of people of each nationality already in the United States as of 1890. In effect, the Reed-Johnson Act closed immigration for non-Anglo-Saxon European nationalities, as well as for all Asians. Consequently, from 1924 until the overhaul of Reed-Johnson with the Hart-Celler Immigration Act in 1965, immigration and naturalization in the United States were regulated by national origin quotas, rather than by qualifications based explicitly on race and moral character.[5] Nevertheless, in the views of many U.S. citizens and government officials these categories and qualifications remained intimately intertwined. At the root of the divisive debates that have shaped U.S. immigration policy are fundamental

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[4] Nativism is an umbrella term encompassing the waves of social and political movements aimed at protecting the interests of native-born Anglo-Saxons above those of immigrants who did not hail from Northern Europe or the British Isles. As the Harvard-trained lawyer Prescott Hall, co-founder of the Immigration Restriction League, quipped in 1897, "Do we want this country to be peopled by British, German and Scandinavian stock—historically free, energetic, progressive, or by Slav, Latin, and Asiatic races—historically downtrodden, atavistic and stagnant?" (Hall 1897, 395). See also Higham, 2004.

[5] Specifically, the Johnson-Reed Act granted people immigrating from countries of Northern and Western Europe more than 140,000 visas each year; by contrast, Southern and Eastern European countries received just 20,000 visas and all the countries of Asia and Africa combined were given 3,000. The law did not apply to persons emigrating from other nations in the Western Hemisphere, such as Mexico and other parts of Latin America and the Caribbean.

questions about citizenship and national belonging: Who and what is an American? Who is qualified to become an American? To date, much of the scholarly literature examining this topic has focused on how variable constructions of race and ethnicity have been applied to successive waves of foreign groups, and how these various ethno-racial formations have shaped immigrants' prospects for full participation in American life. Inspired by critical perspectives developed by scholars such as David Roediger and other contributors to the interdisciplinary field of "Whiteness Studies," in the 1990s and early 2000s a new generation of immigration historians took up the task of uncovering what Matthew Frye Jacobson describes in *Whiteness of a Different Color* (1999) as the relationship between "European immigrants and the alchemy of race." Demonstrating the fluidity of late 19th and 20th century racial categories, Jacobson's influential study demonstrates that many of the people Americans now widely regard as belonging to white ethnic groups were previously perceived as racial "Others" understood to be "less than fully white." As evidence, Jacobson reported that, during the late 19th and 20th centuries, self-identified American Anglo-Saxons classified immigrants from the Catholic and Jewish parts of Europe, such as Irish and Italians, as belonging to inferior "Celtic," "Latin" or "Mediterranean" races. Jacobson convincingly argues that these inter-European racial differences reached their political apex with the 1924 Immigration Act and the U.S. decision to close the door to overseas immigration. He contends that during the inter-war years, Europe's racial Others began the slow movement toward "becoming fully white" (and thus "fully American") through a process of civic assimilation finally completed by the end of World War II. Thus, Jacobson concludes, in the Post-War period, Europe's "racial" Others were transformed into members of a new, broad-based "Caucasian" racial group able to enjoy the full privileges of American whiteness (1999). In conversation with Jacobson's thesis, other scholars have attempted to decode the racial construction of various European immigrant groups at the time of their enter upon American soil. Beginning with Noel Ignatiev's *How the Irish Became White* (1995) and Karen Brodkin's *How Jews Became White Folks & What that Says about Race in America* (1998), more recent contributions to this topic include: Thomas A. Guglielmo's *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color and Power in*

Chicago, 1890-1945 (2003), Jennifer Guglielmo and Salvatore Salerno's edited volume *Are Italians White? How Race is Made in America* (2003), and David Roediger's *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White: The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (2005). Together, this body of work introduced the next generation of American Studies scholars to the power and complexity of the contingent racial formations that structured the ruling hierarchies of American social and political life and shaped national debate on immigration through the 1924 National Origins Act and beyond. While these studies are extremely valuable, the patterns identified by Jacobson and others overlook the extent to which, by the 1870s, Anglo-Americans had already developed a distinctive corpus of ideas connecting the national origin, racial identity, and moral character of various Southern and Eastern European groups. In fact, as this paper demonstrates, the stereotypes American Nativists applied to European immigrant "Others" in the late Gilded Age and Progressive Era (1865-1920) were prefigured in American travel writings and works of fiction produced during the Early National and Antebellum periods (1780-1861). Accordingly, I argue that Anglo-American reactions to immigration at the turn of the 20th century cannot be properly understood without reference to American ideas about race, character, and national origin established during the earlier periods of trans-Atlantic political and cultural history. Most notable is the fact that until the 1870s, prevailing American notions about the racial and moral character of various European populations were formed by U.S. travelers, journalists, businessmen and diplomats operating overseas. To illustrate how ideas about race and national character formed abroad before the Civil War affected national discourse and policy decisions on immigration and citizenship after 1865, this paper focuses on a specific group of immigrants to the United States between 19th and 20th century: Italians. Anglo-American ideas about Italian "national character" originated *prior* to the great waves of migration that began after Italian Unification in 1871 and contributed to the classification of Italians among Southern and European immigrants. Demonstrating how stereotypes about Italians first emerged at the time of Thomas Jefferson's office (1776-1820), this paper shows how opinions about the "Italian character" preceding the Civil War established a legacy behind the reception of

Italians during the peak years of their migration to the United States (1880-1924). More specifically, I will show the genealogy of the longest American stereotype about the Italian character: their alleged criminality. The story begins in Naples.

VEDI NAPOLI E POI MUORI[6]

Despite the remarkable achievement of a victory over the greatest military force on the planet during their War of Independence (thanks to French support), and an equally astounding record of economic growth and territorial expansion throughout the decades prior to the Civil War, Americans remained deeply insecure about their intellectual and cultural achievements as a nation. Above all, late 18th and early 19th century Americans feared the judgement of European aristocrats about their artistic and scientific achievements. Compensating for their abiding sense of post-colonial inferiority, citizens in the Early Republic attempted to live up to European (in particular English) standards of taste and sensibility by adopting a range of imitative cultural practices. One of the principal rituals of refinement that American citizens appropriated from their former mother country was the British tradition of taking a Grand Tour of Italy (Baker 1964, Prezzolini 1971). The template that inspired Americans to travel to the peninsula in the years prior to Italian Unification had its origins in the late 17th century, when fashionable young aristocrats from England concluded their classical educations by setting off in a private carriage accompanied by a tutor and perhaps by a few servants on an extended sojourn to learn about the politics, culture, art, and architecture of neighboring lands. The itinerary of what became known as the Grand Tour varied according to fashion but typically included destinations in France, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and above all the Italian peninsula and its islands.[7] With Roman ruins, ancient monuments, lavish palaces, rich collections of Renaissance paintings, and picturesque natural beauty, Italy was regarded as

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[6] Literally: "See Naples and then die," it means that one must see the beauty of Naples before dying but it also offers warning about the dangers associated with visiting Naples. The origins of this famous and repeatedly cited expression remain a topic of debate. Appearing perhaps most notably in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's Italian Journey: 1786-1788 (1816), the phrase is a nearly ubiquitous utterance in connection with travel writing about Southern Italy.

[7] For an overview of the origins, practices, and itinerary of the Grand Tour see Black 2003.

the *non plus ultra* of an enlightened gentleman's education. By 1776, the year the United States declared their independence, Italian travel had grown so fashionable among well-heeled Britons that Samuel Johnson sardonically gibed: "A man who has not been in Italy is always conscious of an inferiority, from his not having seen what it is expected a man should see. The grand object of travelling is to see the shores of the Mediterranean" (Boswell 1791, 61). The culmination of the Italian Grand Tour was a visit to the Southern Italian Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Comprising the vast domains of mainland Italy south of Rome as well as the island of Sicily, the Bourbon Kingdom and its capital city Naples captured the imagination of foreign visitors from throughout late 18th and early 19th century Europe. This sentiment was epitomized by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's admonishment that to live fully one must first go "see Naples and then die" (Boswell 1791). Across the Atlantic Ocean, many citizens of the rising American Republic, from Thomas Jefferson to Herman Melville, shared Goethe's interest in Naples and Southern Italy (Reinhold 1985). The exchange that developed between the U.S. and Naples prior to the invasion of Garibaldi's *Mille* is remarkable given the contrasts between the two countries. The United States was a republic, born in revolution, out of a British colonial past. The Two Sicilies was instead a Catholic Monarchy, with roots in antiquity, formed from the union of Sicily and Naples in the 15th century and ruled by a Bourbon dynasty since 1734.[8] At a time when Italians were governed by a half-dozen rival states, American tourists travelling abroad saw the Southern Kingdom as a critical symbol of Italian Otherness. Some American travelers pictured Naples as a benighted land defined by indolence, criminality and backwards superstitions; others saw it as a romantic refuge; a third contingent regarded Southern Italy as an emerging market inhabited by people with interests in increasing trade and national standing, but who remained mired in poverty as a result of a tyrannical government. In place of the theories of difference based on genetics that emerged by the early 20th century, late 18th and early 19th century Grand Tourists attributed the poverty and

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[8] From 1734 through 1815, the two constitutionally separate kingdoms of Naples and Sicily were ruled as a "personal union" under the control of the Bourbon monarchy. During the two periods of French invasion in Southern Italy (1799 and 1806-1815), the Bourbons maintained control of Sicily but lost power in Naples. After the restoration of the monarchy at the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815, the two hitherto separate (yet united) crowns were merged as a united realm called the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies which lasted until the unification of Italy in 1861.

underdevelopment they perceived in Southern Italy to a combination of geographical and climatic determinism, atavistic social practices, and the influence of the Roman Catholic faith. Following the lead of Protestant tourists from England, Americans ascribed Southern Italy's social conditions to the impact of the Catholic Church, an institution they derided as an engine of tyranny and ignorance (Franchot 1994). When combined, these geographic and cultural factors crystallized into a distinctive set of American ideas about Southern Italian national character, a short-hand term for perceived cultural differences that chauvinistically celebrated American industry and pragmatism as compared to the stereotypical Southern Italians' stereotypical preference for *il dolce far niente* (sweet doing nothing) and indulging their passions (Brand 1957). In keeping with the conventions of British Grand Tourism, American travelers kept journals of their trips; if travel was a mode of cosmopolitan education, the travel journal was the school in which the lessons were preserved. The range and tenor of American ideas about Southern Italians that developed on the Grand Tour can be observed through a brief, comparative survey of writings by three representative Anglo-Americans: William Short (1759-1849), who was Thomas Jefferson's personal secretary; the novelist Washington Irving (1783-1859); and the historian Theodore Dwight (1796-1866). Drawing upon first hand encounters with Italians in all parts of the peninsula, each of these writers contributed to American interpretations of national character, morality and politics in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.

UN PARADISO ABITATO DA DIAVOLI?[9]

William Short was the man whom Jefferson would one day refer to as his adoptive son and who would later serve as the future President's eyes and ears in the Kingdom of Naples. He was born to William Short (the Fifth) and Elizabeth Skipwith at Spring Garden in Surry County, Virginia, in 1759 (Cullen 1994, 564-565). Short came of age closely connected to Jefferson and his family. The mentor-mentee dynamic that would define their life-long bond began during Short's tenure as a law student under Jefferson's former tutor, George

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[9] Literally, "A paradise inhabited by devils." Delivered as a description of Naples and Southern Italy, this phrase is attributed to the Neapolitan philosopher Benedetto Croce.

Wyeth, at the College of William and Mary (Cullen 564-565). Sufficiently impressed by Short's "peculiar talent for prying into facts," Jefferson hired the young man in the wake of his diplomatic appointment as U.S. Minister to France (Jefferson 1783). Once abroad, Jefferson encouraged his protégé to visit Italy, which he did in the fall of 1788. Through Short's letters – the first extensive travel letters written by an American in Southern Italy – Jefferson enjoyed a vicarious encounter with the conditions of life on the peninsula, all the way into the heart of Bourbon Naples. After passing through Northern Italy, Short set forth from Rome for the Kingdom of Naples on January 15, 1789. Like dozens of subsequent other American tourists, Short's tour of Naples was modeled on the British travel plan and included stops at Pompeii, Herculaneum, Campi Flegrei, Virgil's Tomb, the Sibyl's Cave, and an ascent of Mt. Vesuvius (Short 1789). In Naples, social conditions captured Short's attention first. Along the way from Terracina to Naples, Short observed that despite the region's natural marvels, everywhere there were "numberless objects of poverty and distress." "There must be a cruel defect somewhere," Short concluded; "Most certainly it is not either in the soil or climate" (Short 1789). The fault, he implied, layd in the kingdom's social institutions. Arriving in the capital on 16 January, Short spent seventeen days exploring the sites around the Bay of Naples (Short 1789). On 17 February 1788 Short wrote a second letter to Jefferson detailing his journey: he began with a description of his entrance into Naples. He was astonished by the size and poverty of "the immense crowds of people which are constantly in the streets:" the human spectacle of the *lazzaroni* had an unsettling effect on him.[10] "Many people are pleased with this circumstance and extol the vast population of Naples," he noted, but "I confess it produced a different effect on me. These crowds are composed only of people of the lowest and poorest order. They remain there because they have no other place to go to. They are ill clad dirty and have the marks of evident and pressing poverty upon them" (Short 1789). Naples, in his eyes, was a city of the homeless. For Short, the misery of the urban poor was all the more striking in contrast with the wealth and finery of the upper classes: "The middle of these streets . . . are filled with

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[10] The lazzaroni were a class of people often described as street people living under a chief and were frequently depicted as beggars despite the fact that many subsisted as day laborers. In contrast to the Parisian sans-culottes, the Neapolitan lazzaroni were conservative monarchists fiercely loyal to the Bourbon government, especially to king Ferdinand IV.

as much brilliancy and show as are the sides with wretchedness and poverty. The most superb carriages, and fine horses with elegant trappings, are in a kind of constant procession here" (Short 1789, 571-575). By May 1789 William Short was back at his post in Paris (Jefferson 1789). The observations he gathered on his tour of Campania conveyed to Jefferson an image of the Bourbon capital and its famous bay as a region marked by venerable ruins, fertile soil, and an economy in need of the liberating force of free trade. In Naples, Short discerned the weight of feudal oppression and monarchical despotism.

Sixteen years later, a twenty-two-year-old writer from New York named Washington Irving followed in Short's footsteps and made his own pilgrimage to the Italian *Mezzogiorno*. Like Short, Irving found that few aspects of Southern Italian society stood in greater contrast to life in the United States then the gap between the luxury of its upper classes and the deprivation of the poor. In addition to praising the scenery and lamenting the Kingdom's divisions of wealth, Irving characterized Naples as a land of *banditi* (criminals). When the young writer set out northward on the overland journey from Syracuse to Catania, he carried his fears of Southern Italian brigands with him at every turn in the road. As a precaution, Irving travelled with a company of eleven mounted American marines, stationed in Sicily as a part of the U.S. war against Tripoli, then underway. At first, the presence of a military guard gave Irving some comfort but travelling through the Sicilian countryside aroused his dread: "The first day we passed through several solitary places where the mountains abounded in vast gloomy caverns that seemed the very haunts of robbery and assassination" (Irving 1863, 114). By the end of March 1805, Irving was ready to leave the Southern Italian kingdom: he admired Naples's romantic scenery and artistic treasures, but he found the contrast between the opulent few and the impoverished many dispiriting and his fears of criminal attack exhausting. Travelling North through the rural parts of Campania on route to the Papal States, he remained anxious about *banditi*. Passing the night at an inn in Terracina, he was awakened by a mysterious sound at the door; convinced that bandits were about to assault him, he cried out for help and rushed at the door armed with a pistol, discovering that it was only a dog begging for food (Irving 1863, 63). In May 1805 Irving arrived at the Lateran Gate unscathed. To his relief, the Kingdom

of Naples proved to be a country of peaceful, if oppressed and impoverished, people. The ubiquitous *lazzaroni* were irksome, but unthreatening; and despite his fears he had avoided the unwanted encounters with brigands. The real scourge of the South, the New Yorker concluded, was its tyrannical elites and corrupt government officials. This was a thesis he later developed in fiction (Wright 1965). Two decades after his visit to Sicily and Naples, Irving indeed wrote "The Italian Banditti," a series of Southern Italy-based short stories included in his popular *Tales of A Traveller by Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* (1824). Surprisingly, rather than the marauding fiends who haunted Irving's travels in 1805, the Southern Italian *banditi* he depicts in his fiction are hardworking peasants driven to brigandage by poverty and corrupt Bourbon officials. In the cycle's opening tale, "The Inn at Terracina," Irving's narrator explains the bandit's heroic place in Southern Italian society:

> [The banditti] secure . . . the good-will of the inhabitants of those wild regions, a poor and semi-barbarous race, whom they never disturb and often enrich. Indeed, they are considered a sort of illegitimate heroes among the mountain villages, and in certain frontier towns where they dispose their plunder . . . It is true that they are now and then hunted and shot down like beast of prey by the *gens- d'armes* their heads put in iron cages and stuck upon posts by the road-side . . . but these ghastly spectacles only serve to make some dreary pass of the road still more dreary, and to dismay the traveler, without deterring the bandit. (Wright 1965, 193-4)

The Italian counterparts to Robin Hood, Irving's brigands are what the 20th century historian Eric Hobsbawm would dub "primitive rebels or social bandits, a peasant rebelling against landlords, usurpers and other representatives of . . . the conspiracy of the rich" (Hobsbawm 1959). Irving would have agreed. For all their fearsome reputations and occasional violence, his *briganti* are courageous, freedom-loving rebels aspiring to a better life. They are depicted as an organized militia at war against the Bourbon authorities: donning "a kind of uniform, or rather costume that designates their profession . . . to give themselves a kind of military air in the eyes of the common people," they attack symbols of Bourbon power and avenge the abuses of the king's police (Irving 1850, 263-264-327). In this telling, the Italian *banditi* were nascent republicans looking to the United States for their ideals and the promise of a better life. For example, at the end of "The Story of the

Young Robber," the final tale in Irving's cycle, a French painter temporarily held captive by a troop of sympathetic *banditi* recounts their captain's desire for re-birth in the land of liberty: "He told me he was weary of his hazardous profession; that he had acquired sufficient property, and was anxious to return to the world and lead a peaceful life in the bosom of his family. He wished to know whether it was not in my power to procure him a passport for the United States of America." Confident that the young bandit would find a propitious future in the rising Republic across the sea, Irving's narrator declares: "I applauded his good intentions, and promised to do everything in my power to promote its success" (Irving 1850, 351). Washington Irving was not the only writer to suggest that discontented Southern Italians looked to the United States as the model for their political future. The trend gained momentum in the 1820s in response to the early stirrings of the *Risorgimento* in the *Mezzogiorno* and elsewhere across the Italian peninsula. Four years before the publication of *Tales of a Traveller* (1824), tens of thousands of ordinary Sicilians and Neapolitans mobilized to demand that the Bourbon government adopt a program of liberal reform. Led by the *Carbonari* (charcoal burners), the secret revolutionary societies founded in Naples and other parts of Italy in the early 19th century for the purpose of defining the rights of common people against absolutism, the revolutionary coalition cultivated widespread popular support throughout the kingdom's provinces as well as in the capital city. Under the command of the celebrated Generals Guglielmo Pepe, Pietro Colletta, and Luigi Minichini, the revolutionary movement succeeded in forcing the Bourbon government to agree to a constitution on 2 July 1820. The changes were bold: the government's adoption of the radical Spanish constitution of 1812 provided for democratic governments at all levels, with voting rights granted to all males over twenty-one regardless of literacy (Davis 2006, 295). Sadly, the Neapolitan attempts to establish liberal, constitutional rule did not last: in May 1821, backed by Austrian support, King Ferdinand reentered Naples, revoked the constitution and immediately launched a policy of repression and retribution (Davis 2006, 304). After the failure of the 1820 *Carbonari* revolution, American tourists wondered whether or not the poor, huddled masses of the *Mezzogiorno* were cut out for self-rule. On this topic, American opinion was divided. Even

Washington Irving seemed torn, as his fiction showed. The ennobling vision of poor, Southern Italians turning to crime and brigandage as a means of rebellion against Bourbon misrule that Irving represents in his "Tales of the Banditti" reflects the author's nascent support for the early stirrings of the Italian *Risorgimento*. But his faith in Southern Italian capacity for American-style democracy was only partial. Despite the optimism he expressed about the Southern Italian character in the "Tales of the Banditti," Irving harbored suspicions that the people of the *Mezzogiorno* were ruled by violent passions and volcanic tempers that disqualified them from republican life. For instance, in other of his Italian-based short stories, Southerners are depicted as people with in-born violent tempers that drown out reason and the love of liberty. Irving's "Story of the Young Italian," also published in *Tales of a Traveller by Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* (1824), recounts the tale of Ottavio, a young Neapolitan painter driven to commit murder after a lifetime of victimization by corrupt laws and dishonest authorities. Tragically, Ottavio's unwitting act of retributive violence turns him into a fugitive, exiling him from his true love, Bianca, and destroying his future as an artist. Mid-way through Irving's story Ottavio warns his readers: "You who are born in a more temperate climate and under a cooler key, have little idea of the violence of passion in our southern bosoms" (Irving 1850, 448). The fact that a crime of passion transforms Irving's protagonist from the would-be hero of a new social order into a criminal brigand offered Irving's readers a cautionary tale that later 19th century American Nativists recycled in the name of restricting immigration from Southern Europe: if Southern Italians were to succeed as a self-governing people they must first overcome the irrationality of their inborn tempers and control their violent passions.

Unlike the ambivalence expressed by Washington Irving in his fiction, other American travel writers pondered the nature of Southern Italian national character and reached damning conclusions. In the eyes of historian Theodore Dwight, it was clear that Sicilians and Neapolitans did not possess the rational temperament that was a prerequisite for citizenship in a democratic Republic. Rather, in Dwight's prejudicial view, Southern Italians were inveterate criminals whose poverty and ignorance stemmed from laziness and inability to control their passions. Arriving in Naples in December 1820, Dwight (1796-

1866), a twenty-five-year-old Yale graduate and scion of a prominent New England family, visited the Two Sicilies just six months after the *Carbonari* led revolution in July and spent five weeks in Naples during the Kingdom's nine-month experiment in constitutional government (1820/21). In 1824, the same year as Irving's *Tales of a Traveller,* the future American biographer of Giuseppe Garibaldi and author of a popular history of the Roman Republic of 1849 published his first book on an Italian subject, *A Journal of a Tour in Italy in the Year 1821 with a Description of Gibraltar* (1824). Compared to the ambiguous depiction of Southern Italians presented by Irving, Dwight's *Journal* depicts Neapolitans as a servile and ignorant people, congenitally incapable of bringing about their own liberation from the twin manacles of the Bourbon Monarchy and the Catholic Church. Though sympathetic to the cause of liberty, Dwight could find in the Southern Italian character no seeds of independence and no hints of a successful revolution to come (Dwight 1824, 73). Throughout his *Journal*, Dwight's pessimistic claims about Southern Italians are supported by the testimony of his principal native informant Signore Mattia, a Neapolitan man he befriended on the voyage from Gibraltar to Naples. On route Mattia warns the American that all Neapolitans are "great thieves," and he volunteers to escort Dwight around the city, lest he "should be cheated, robbed and perhaps murdered" (Dwight 1824, 41). It is not clear whether Mattia was a real person or a literary device to reinforce national stereotypes. At times he comes across as a hustler exaggerating the dangers of Naples for the sake of free dinners and a tip: "Many of those extravagances which seemed to stamp him as a madman, are now converted into national peculiarities. He is not, as I can see, a whit more irascible than his countrymen. They all fly into fits of passion as hastily." In the *Journal* Mattia plays a puckish Virgil to Dwight's American Dante as the two men tour Naples infernal streets. Heeding Mattia's warning to "take care of your pockets," and "keep your mouth shut – or they will steal your teeth," Dwight declares: "I never would condemn a nation in the gross; but I think a traveller can hardly visit Naples without being struck with the disposition to cheat him manifested by almost every person with whom he has any concern" (Dwight 1824, 9). If conditions were miserable inside the capital city, the rural provinces were even worse. Reporting on news of the kidnapping of two English gentlemen on the main carriage

road North of Rome, Dwight emphasized the omnipresent danger of the kingdom's *banditi:* "There is very little pleasure in travelling that road, I assure you. You hardly see a man in all that tract of country who does not look as if he were half an assassin" (Dwight 1824, 159). In contrast to the bleak scenes he encountered in Naples, Northern Italy – and Turin in particular – presented an encouraging prospect. There he could confidently look for the spread of liberal institutions in the hands of rational men. Writing from Florence several weeks after he left the South, Dwight drew a sharp line between Northern and Southern Italy: "It is going back to past centuries to land at Naples: and travelling north is to move along with time and the gradual progress of society." In contrast to Naples, where *lazzaroni* lived in the streets and bandits infested the countryside, the people in Turin appeared ready for self-rule: "The houses are good and built with much regularity, and the principal streets are as straight and broad as those of Philadelphia . . . These things argued at once a superior taste for what we consider many of the necessaries and comforts of life, and the dress and comportment of the citizens proved that they had advanced an important grade in civilization" (Dwight 1824, 465). In the decades ahead, Dwight's opinion, that Italy's future as a modern constitutional state depended upon the rule of the purportedly more rational, orderly Northern Italians, led by the Savoy Monarchy, over the indolent, quick-tempered criminals who lived in the South, predicted U.S. policies. Indeed, throughout the peak years of the Italian *Risorgimento* and into the period of mass migration of Southern Italians into the United States, Dwight's bi-furcated assessment of Italy's "two halves" and the perceived differences between their respective populations came to define prevailing American notions about Italy and Italians. Back home, Dwight played a central role in translating these ideas into political action. After his tour of Naples and Italy in 1821, he returned to the United States and became a leading architect of what historian Howard R. Marraro would later call the American view of the *Risorgimento* "as a religious problem" (Marraro 1956). By 1842 Dwight was publicly promoting the idea that Italy's future would be best developed under the Piedmontese monarchy through the American Philo-Italian Society, an organization based in New York. Along with painter and inventor Samuel F.B. Morse (1791-1872), educator Henry Philip Tappan (1805-1881), and others, Dwight framed the

movement for Italian Unification as a struggle between Protestant Enlightenment and Catholic darkness. His organization's mission was "to unite Protestant Christendom in this holy war" ("The Christian Examiner and Religious Miscellany" 1845, 286). Where could such "Protestant" leadership be found? Dwight looked to the Italian provinces North of Rome. After 1848 Dwight was a vocal supporter of the movement led by the Northern Italian born Giuseppe Garibaldi, whom he called "the George Washington of his people." Throughout the decade before the Civil War, Dwight promoted these views alongside other prominent American supporters of the *Risorgimento,* most of whom were fellow alumni of the Italian Grand Tour (D'Agostino 2004, 33).

DARKEST ITALY COMES TO THE UNITED STATES

The negative stereotypes about Southern Italians generated by American travelers like William Short, Washington Irving, and Theodore Dwight prior to 1861 took on a special resonance in the aftermath of Italian Unification when, between 1880 and 1924, more than four million Italians crossed the Atlantic Ocean to seek opportunities and build new lives in the United States (Bodnar 1985, Handlin 2002). While some Americans greeted Italian immigrants as a welcome addition to the growing foreign-born industrial work force, many others did not. In fact, to large numbers of native-born Anglo-Saxon Americans, Italians appeared as unwanted aliens – a people at once exotic and strange, possessed of in-born traits and cultural habits that rendered them less than "fit" to become self-governing citizens of the American Republic.[11] The negative qualities that late 19th and early 20th century Anglo-Americans perceived in Southern Italians were composed of a litany of slurs and "one-size-fits-all" generalizations consistent with an earlier generation of stereotypes about people from the former domains of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Inflected through the lens of "scientific racism" and the burgeoning field of eugenics, by the early 20th century Southern Italians were profiled as possessing a distinctive set of physical, moral, and cultural traits that were at odds with Anglo-American values. Echoing tropes

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[11] For overviews of this history see: Deconde 1971; Gabaccia 2000; Carnevale 2009; Orsi 2002.

expressed in the writings of Short, Irving, and Dwight decades earlier, the undesirable traits Americans attached to Southern Italians included their Roman Catholic faith, peasant roots, inability to speak English, swarthy skin tones, and reputations for violent Mediterranean tempers. Above all, between 1880 and 1924 Nativists charged that Italians were predisposed to criminality and criminal behaviors, including a predisposition to commit crimes of passion and participate in organized criminal conspiracies. As a result of these widely circulating prejudices and stereotypes, Italian immigrants to the United States faced frequent harassment, discrimination, and persecution by American citizens and U.S. officials alike (Connell and Gardaphé 2010). The prejudices that early 20th century Anglo-Americans held about Italian racial and moral character are epitomized in the language and findings of the official reports prepared by the U.S. Immigration Commission (the so-called Dillingham Commission), a Congressional body composed of U.S. senators, representatives, and social scientists appointed by President Roosevelt in 1907 to investigate the effects of foreigners on American life.[12] In 1911 the Dillingham Commission published a 41 volumes report on all aspects of American immigration. Drawing upon the corpus of preexisting ideas about the racial and moral character attributed to Italians by earlier American writers, government officials recycled antebellum stereotypes that perpetuated the long-standing notion that people from Southern Italy constituted an inferior race predisposed to criminality. For example, the authors of Commission Report Volume 36, investigating connections between Immigration and Crime, declared that "Italian criminals are largest in numbers and create the most alarm by the violent character of their offenses in this country" (Immigration Commission 1911 vol. 36, 286). Expounding upon this claim, a report published in Volume 4 (The Emigration of the Criminal Classes) announced:

> An alarming feature of the Italian immigration movement to the United States is the fact that it admittedly includes many individuals belonging to the criminal classes, particularly

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[12] Named in honor of Republican Senator William P. Dillingham (VT), the Commission reports offered a range of perspectives identifying both the positive and negative impact of immigration on American life. Proponents of immigration restriction mobilized those findings that supported the Nativist agenda culminating in new restrictions on immigration in 1917 (instituting a literacy test) and 1921(instituting quotas), on route to the landmark National Origins Act of 1924.

of southern Italy and Sicily . . . (and by) the not unfounded belief that certain kinds of criminality are inherent in the Italian race. In the popular mind, crimes of personal violence, robbery, blackmail and extortion are peculiar to the people of Italy, and it cannot be denied that the number of such offenses committed among Italians in this country warrants the prevalence of such a belief. (Immigration Commission 1911 vol. 4, 209)

Consistent with antebellum theories of Italian identity, the Dillingham Reports divided the Italian race into two separate and unequal groups. In Volume 4, U.S. Officials declared: "Ethnologically there are two distinct branches of the Italian race – the North and the South Italian . . . It may be briefly said, however, that the North Italians have a large admixture of Celtic and Teutonic blood, while the South Italians are largely a mixed type in which Greek, Spanish, Saracen and other blood is more or less prominent" (Immigration Commission 1911 vol. 4, 177-8). The fact that American immigration officials classified Italian nationals into two different racial groups was unique. Specifically, Southern Italians (or South Italians as they were also labeled) were believed to belong to the Latin or Mediterranean ethno-racial group, whereas Northern Italians were a branch of the allegedly superior Alpine, Nordic, or Teutonic racial group also claimed by the predominantly Protestant, Anglo-Saxon people. Regarding phenotypic differences between Northern and Southern Italians, U.S. Officials explained:

> Physically, the Italians are anything but a homogeneous race . . . The Apennine chain of mountains forms a geographical line which corresponds to the boundary between two distinct ethnic groups. The region north of this line . . . is inhabited by a very broad headed (Alpine) and tallish race, the North Italian . . . All Italy South of the Apennines and all of the adjacent islands are occupied by a long-headed, dark "Mediterranean" race of short stature . . . The Bureau of Immigration places the North Italian in the "Keltic" division and the South Italian in the "Iberic." (Immigration Commission 1911 vol. 5, 82)

Elaborating on these distinctions, the Commissioners observed that Sicilians in particular were "vivid in imagination, affable, benevolent but excitable, superstitious and revengeful" (Immigration Commission 1911 vol. 5, 127). To support these findings, U.S. officials drew upon a vast literature on the racial identities of Italians and other Europeans authored by European scientists. Remarkably, works by leading Italian scientists and government officials, including Pasquale Villari, Giustino Fortunato, Sidney Sonnino,

Leopoldo Franchetti, and Francesco Saverio Nitti, played a fundamental role in establishing the ethno-racial taxonomies used by U.S. officials to classify Italians immigrants: this literature reflected political and sociological divisions taking place within Italy after its Unification, in 1861 (Moe 2002). Since at least 1871, ethnographers employed by the victorious Piedmontese army reinforced the long-standing notion that the newly unified Italian nation was made up of two separate and unequal parts: an affluent, modern, industrial North and an impoverished, backward, agricultural South. In line with this formulation, the vexed relationship between Italy's "two halves" defined the central dilemma of the country's political, social, and cultural history as a unified nation-state according to a debate as old as Giuseppe Garibaldi (Petrusewicz 1998). In the wake of the *Risorgimento* and the creation of the modern Italian state, the first generation of *Meridionalisti* (Southern experts), sent into the former Bourbon domains by the reigning authorities based in Turin, blamed the *questione meridionale* (problem of the South) on the people of the *Mezzogiorno*. In the racialist thinking of the day, the Southerners were considered an inferior stock to the superior inhabitants of the Northern Italian provinces (Lumley 1997, Moe 1998, and Dickie 1999). Across the Atlantic, American Nativists picked up on these pseudo-scientific distinctions and applied them to their own preexisting prejudices when Italian immigrants – the great majority of whom originated in the South – began to arrive massively on American shores in the 1880s. In one striking example, the authors of the Dillingham Commission's *Dictionary of Races or Peoples* (1911) drew upon the typologies developed by the influential Italian sociologist Alfredo Niceforo to organize the racial classifications used by U.S. immigration officials to identify the psychic character of Northern versus Southern Italians.

> An Italian sociologist, Niceforo, has pointed out that these two ethnic groups differ as radically in psychic characters as they do in physical. He describes the South Italian as excitable, impulsive, highly imaginative, impracticable; as an individualist having little adaptability to highly organized society. The North Italian, on the other hand, is pictured as cool, deliberate, patient, practical and as capable of great progress in the political and social organization of modern civilization . . . Niceforo shows from Italian statistics that all crimes, especially violent crimes are more numerous among the South than the North Italians. (Immigration Commission 1911 vol. 5, 82-3)

In addition to relying on this scientific evidence of congenital criminality amongst Southern Italian immigrants, the Dillingham Commission observed that Southern Italians were also prone to poverty and illiteracy. These qualities were especially alarming to U.S. immigration officials because, as the Commission cautioned:

> To the student of Italian immigration to the United States the South Italian movement numerically and otherwise is of by far the greatest importance . . . The numerical preponderance of the former race adds vastly to its relative importance, but in popular opinion at least, it is the *character* rather than the number of South Italians which constitutes the real problem. It is generally accepted that the North Italians . . . are more easily assimilated than their southern countrymen, who, because of their ignorance, low standards of living and the supposedly great criminal tendencies among them are regarded by many as racially undesirable. (Immigration Commission 1911 vol. 4, 177-8)

The racialized notions of Southern Italian criminality expressed in the 1911 Dillingham Commission reports are fundamental to understanding the history of Italian immigration to the United States. Among them is the fact that the Commission reports resonated with perceptions and conceptions about *italianità* that had been a pervasive component of Anglo-American culture since the days of Thomas Jefferson and Washington Irving. Since the period of the Early Republic, Southern Italians had been depicted by American writers as stiletto-wielding "dagoes"[13] prone to criminal violence and "Vesuvian" fits of rage, or as *banditi* affiliated with organized criminal conspiracies such as the Mafia, Camorra, and the dreaded society of the Black Hand (Mano Nera). As this paper details, during the period of mass Italian immigration to the United States that took place between 1880 and 1924, these negative stereotypes had a determinative impact on how Italians were treated on American soil. From the lynching of eleven Sicilians in New Orleans on suspicion of criminal conspiracy in 1891 to the 1927 execution of Sacco and Vanzetti for murder charges connected to their involvement with anarchist politics in 1920, the notion that Italians, especially Southerners, constituted an inferior race with an in-born propensity for

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[13] An alteration of Diego, a common Spanish name, "dago" was a derogatory term applied by Anglo-Americans to "Latins" of Italian, Spanish, or Portuguese descents during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

violence and criminality was commonly accepted, and encouraged discrimination against Italian immigrants and their descendants in myriad ways (Botein 1979).

While these extreme episodes of anti-Italianism are well-known, what is less known is when and how the stereotypes of Italian criminality first took root in American culture. Equally opaque are the mechanisms through which these notions influenced national debate about U.S. immigration policy in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This paper demonstrates that these historical developments are intimately linked. Prior to 1865, Americans who travelled, did business, and practiced diplomacy overseas gathered ethnographic information about the character of particular foreign groups, including Italians, and transmitted their observations to Americans back home through a stream of published and unpublished travel writing, journalism, and fiction. Through this process of trans-national cultural reportage, American merchants, diplomats, and travelers compiled and spread a catalogue of prejudices and stereotypes about various ethnic and racialized national groups in Europe, which defined and influenced the perception of these same groups upon their arrivals to the United States during the period of mass immigration (1880s-1924). The specter of Southern Italian criminality originated out of this particular trans-national context of encounter. The biological-based constructions of race and racial difference that emerged during the late 19th century can be traced back to the period before the Civil War: the stereotypes about Southern Italy and Southern Italians transmitted by the first American travelers turned into a corpus of prejudices that Anglo-American Nativists later applied to Southern Italians and Italians in general upon their arrival. By explaining when, how, and why Americans constructed and transmitted their negative ideas about the Italian character from the 18th century onward, this paper marks an essential step toward the comprehension of how these deep-rooted stereotypes about race, character, and criminality have shaped the experiences of Italians in the U.S. Moreover, analyzing the historical relationships that developed between Americans and Italians prior to the era of mass migration through Ellis Island helps us to better understand the debates surrounding U.S. immigration policy that led up to 1924, the year the United States introduced a system of national-origin-based quotas that effectively "closed the door"

to Italians and other non-white, non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants seeking freedom and opportunity in the land of liberty.

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"TO WORK BLACK MAGIC:" RICHARD BRUCE NUGENT'S QUEER TRANSNATIONAL INSURRECTION

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ABSTRACT

Richard Bruce Nugent's (1906-1987) refusal to give up homoerotic decadence in his literature and visual artwork posed critical problems for the "New Negro" Renaissance's project of creating urgently needed representations of black masculinity that could be viewed as emancipatory and powerful. Nugent's little-known short story from 1937, "Pope Pius the Only," is no exception. As a response to Italy's invasion of the sovereign African kingdom of Ethiopia in 1935, as well as to the ongoing lynching crisis in Jim Crow America, Nugent's psychedelic story telescopes the global and historical scale of white supremacy, while insisting that a desire for "Latin" men and Roman culture can be part of the labor of black liberation. Drawing on contemporary debates in queer theory, this paper argues that Nugent's attempt "to work black magic" can be understood as a politics of national and racial disidentification that alternates between relational and antirelational modes of resistance.

Keywords: Richard Bruce Nugent, Decadence, New Negro Renaissance, Ethiopianism, Italian Fascism, Queer Theory

HOW DO YOU SOLVE A PROBLEM LIKE RICHARD BRUCE NUGENT?

> True, he had indeed found Haarlem and Amsterdam captivating...
> Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Against Nature*

Richard Bruce Nugent (1906-1987) was a problem. During the 1920s and 30s, the heyday of the cultural flourishing that was known as the New Negro (or "Harlem") Renaissance, he was criticized by friends and cultural leaders alike for his bohemian tendencies and his willingness to inscribe homoeroticism and Wildean aestheticism into the nascent body of New Negro writing. While he was, indeed, captivated by Harlem's cultural efflorescence, Nugent also felt somewhat captive, or constrained, by the sometimes conservative social attitudes that Harlem patricians could hold in relation to self and artistic expression. As scholars of Nugent's racial and sexual politics have argued, Nugent's personal and artistic embodiment of bohemianism and dandyism was sometimes viewed as a betrayal of the duty of race loyalty that circulated within the African-American literary milieu of the Renaissance (Cobb 2000, Glick 2009, Miller 2009).

Such sentiments have been voiced as recently as 1997, when Arnold Rampersad, in his introduction to the reissue of Alain Locke's *The New Negro*, wrote somewhat notoriously that Nugent "was far more concerned with his gay identity than with his race or ethnicity" (Rampersad 1997, xxi). While Rampersad has since revised his position, his earlier comment suggests that the view that homoeroticism and African-American racial solidarity are mutually exclusive has outlived the timeframe of the Renaissance.[1] Without simply defending Nugent, I argue in this essay that Nugent's commitment to decadence and aestheticism was not necessarily at odds with the Renaissance's project of constructing models of black male national identity that could be considered emancipatory and powerful. Nugent did, however, refuse to submit to a dogma that was circulating within the discourse of the New Negro: that one could be loyal to the black national community, or one could be decadent—but one could never be both.

Nugent's interest in decadence should be understood, however, in relation to his lifelong appreciation of Roman culture, and a related desire for, and identification with, "Latins," a term Nugent used to refer to men of both Italian and Spanish decent. Scholar Thomas Wirth, in his biographical writing on Nugent, stresses more than once that Nugent was "fascinated by Italian men" (Wirth 2002, 37 and 191). This homoerotic sexual preference for "Latins" is inscribed throughout Nugent's life and work. The male object of affection in Nugent's most well-known short story, "Smoke, Lilies, and Jade" (1926), is Adrian (or "Beauty"), who is marked as ethnically "Spanish" by the narrative. But the illustration that Nugent created to accompany the story presents a light-skinned male bust whose black hair, smoky eyes, and crimson lips could just as easily be taken for markers of Italianness. In his novel, *Gentleman Jigger* (published posthumously in 2008), there are several extended, romantic—and occasionally violent—interludes between Stuartt, the light-skinned African-American semi-autobiographical protagonist, and a number of Italian-American men, including "Orini," a mafia Don from Chicago. Most remarkably, Nugent's personal archive is populated with numerous correspondences between himself and Italian-American men with whom he served in the United States military during World War II—a war in which he would have been

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[1] Rampersad, who was a friend of Nugent's, offers a warm-hearted re-reading of Nugent's black queer politics in his forward to *Gentlemen Jigger* (2008). See Nugent, in references.

asked to explicitly identify himself as an enemy of Italy. As a central figure of the Harlem Renaissance's project of racial uplift, Nugent's homoerotic desire for "Latins" ran up against efforts of New Negro leaders to define black male American identity in opposition to whiteness, and to the growing threat that Italy posed, as a newly fascist nation, to the only remaining indigenous sovereign African state: Ethiopia. In a sense, Italy's turn to fascism in the 1930s made Nugent's fascination with "Latins" more problematic than ever. This paper, then, takes Nugent's homoerotically charged desire for and identification with Latinness as a fulcrum for thinking through a broader set of questions regarding the socially transformative potentials of homosexual and black identity, as they intersect with each other and with discourses of national and international belonging.
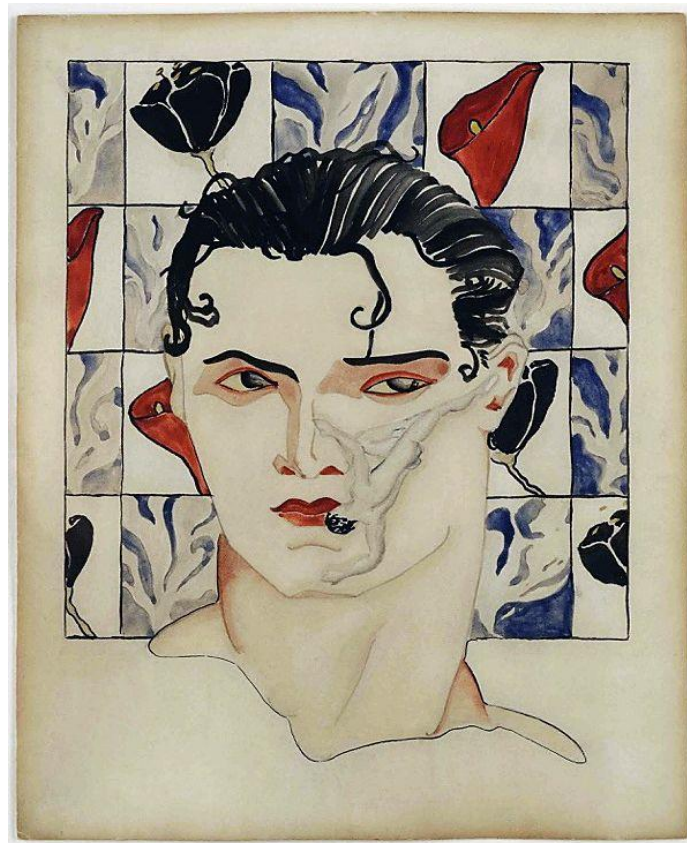
Figure 1 Pen and ink design for "Smoke, Lilies, and Jade" (1926) Richard Bruce Nugent.

My interest in the transformative powers of blackness and male homoeroticism in Nugent's work is influenced by the wealth of scholarship that has recently emerged to reevaluate Nugent's status as a central figure of the Harlem Renaissance and African American literature. In the last two decades, scholarly work by Michael L. Cobb (2000), Darryl Dickson-Carr (2015), Brian Glavey (2016), Elisa Glick (2009), Kristin Mahoney

(2017), Monica L. Miller (2009), and A. B. Krista Schwarz (2003) has helped overturn some of the longstanding misconceptions about Nugent's racial politics. In one way or another, all of these scholars argue that Nugent's embrace of aestheticism and dandyism enabled him to arrive at modalities of speech and embodiment that could, in Cobb's formulation, "accommodate the often-overlapping qualities of *both* race and queer sexuality" (Cobb 2000, 342; emphasis in the original). My work here is indebted to and follows this interpretation of Nugent's life and work.

At the same time, the questions I ask in this essay are influenced by the queer theoretical work organized around what is sometimes referred to as "the antisocial thesis in queer theory," or the series of debates surrounding definitions of queerness that occurred in the early 2000s. These debates tended to cast white gay male scholars like Lee Edelman (2004) and Leo Bersani (1995), as defenders of antirelational queerness (or "queer negativity") against, almost exclusively, José Esteban Muñoz, who offered the most vocal, if highly nuanced, critique of antirelationality in *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (2009).[2] The crux of this disagreement is centered on whether queerness should be thought of as an inherently anti-social, negative rejection of all categories of personhood defined by a heteronormative social order, or as a future-oriented affective longing for a queer community that would be organized around non-coercive supports between queers differently positioned by various social hierarchies. For Bersani and Edelman, a psychoanalytic approach to queerness becomes the ground for a radical critique of the very categories of personhood that structure social legibility around the compulsoriness of heterosexual identification and consumer capitalism. In this view, the deconstruction of the ego through the pursuit of homoerotic pleasure, what Bersani sometimes calls "self-shattering," might lead to a wholesale rejection of social categorization as such, thus opening up radically free modes of queer being in the world. But for Muñoz, anti-social queerness and "self-shattering" is only part of the

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[2] For a primer on this debate, see the post-mortem from the 2005 MLA panel that brought these disagreements to the fore; Robert L. Caserio, et al., "The Antisocial Thesis in Queer Theory" (2006), in references. While Tim Dean was paired with Muñoz on the side of queer relationality in the 2005 MLA panel, his psychoanalytic approach to thinking of queer identity prior to social categories of identity would not square with Muñoz's centering of race (see Dean's "Homosexuality and Otherness" and "Paring His Fingernails," in references). Likewise, the MLA panel aligns Jack Halberstam with Edelman against Muñoz and Dean, but Halberstam's work in *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011) emphasizes the importance of thinking of queer failure as an opportunity for collective struggle (see Halberstam, in references). In this way, Muñoz emerges, in my view, as the queer theorist most consistently identified with relationality.

story. While Muñoz sees a kernel of negative, relational refusal in queerness, he also understands that refusal to be implicitly tied to a desire for a queer, collective future. At his most insistent, Muñoz will argue that the antirelational position, in its attempt to do away with all conventions of social categorization, including race, is more popular with white gay male theorists because of their privileged position as white people. In a 2005 MLA panel, Muñoz provocatively called the queer theoretical investment in relational abstraction "the gay white man's last stance" (Muñoz in Caserio, et al 2006). For Muñoz, queers of color, having been disproportionately disenfranchised, have the most to lose in antirelational queerness, and the most to gain by orienting queerness toward a collective, communal future.

I will to a certain extent side with Mari Ruti's admirable attempt, in *The Ethics of Opting Out: Queer Theory's Defiant Subjects*, to "soften the division between the antirelational and relational orientations of queer theory" (Ruti 2017, 92). Ruti claims that "the diversification of the rhetoric of negativity in recent queer theory has begun to erode the split between the antirelational and relational schools," and she turns to a reevaluation of Jacques Lacan's work on radical desire to further blur this division (Ruti 2017, 6). To this I would add that the division between these "schools," from the outset, was not all that tenable to begin with. It is clear to me that both Edelman and Bersani imagine antirelationality as possessing a radical political (or anti-political) potential for restructuring social relations to achieve what Bersani calls "an anticommunal mode of connectedness" (Bersani 1995, 10). This view follows from—at least, from a Bersanian perspective—Michel Foucault's contention that homosexuality represents "a historic occasion to reopen affective and relational virtualities, not so much through the intrinsic qualities of the homosexual but because the 'slantwise' position of the latter, as it were, the diagonal lines he can lay out in the social fabric allow these virtualities to come to light" (Foucault 1997, 138).[3] In other words, a renewed sense of social alliance is precisely what will follow from homosexually-grounded antirelational strategies of resistance. At the end of the day, one might say, an anti-social relation is still a relation.

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[3] Mari Ruti is perhaps right to place Bersani and Edelman on opposing sides of a Foucault/Lacanian division in queer theory. But Edelman's Lacanian queer theory of the death drive similarly aims at new understandings and forms of queer sociality. Hence, his frequent use of the first-person plural pronouns "us" and "we," as well as his call for queers to "acknowledge our kinship" with antisocial queer figures of literary and cinematic history (Edelman 2004, 49). For Bersani's detailed discussion of Foucault's homosexual politics, see *Homos* (1995), in references.

I also wish to push back against the uncritical acceptance of the view, suggested by Muñoz, and seconded by Ruti, that antirelationality has little to offer queers of color (Ruti, 125-126). A perusal of literature written by black queer male writers will turn up numerous examples of anti-social affect. Richard Bruce Nugent's close friend Wallace Thurman wrote and published two novels, *The Blacker the Berry* (1929) and *Infants of the Spring* (1932), each of which charts rejections of certain forms of black sociality. James Baldwin's suicidal Rufus Scott from *Another Country* (1962), and the near erasure of blackness in *Giovanni's Room* (1956), could each be read as literary manifestations of Baldwin's antirelational sensibility. And the erotic erasures of black selfhood recounted in Gary Fisher's posthumous *Gary In Your Pocket* (1996) are surely examples of black and queer antirelational expression.[4] I situate Richard Bruce Nugent within this field of queer male African-American literature, and I hope to show how Nugent's specific embrace of literary decadence allows him to straddle the line between relational and antirelational modalities of being in the world. Instead of thinking of relationality and antirelationality as mutually exclusive positions—with white queers on one side, and queers of color on the other—Nugent helps us think of these positions as having a supplemental, rather than oppositional, structure, depending on the desires and struggles of the queer(s) in question.

It is worth re-reading Muñoz's introduction to *Cruising Utopia,* since that is where he emphasizes his appreciation for Edelman's polemic. Muñoz represents his critique of Edelman's death-driven battle cry—"Fuck the social order" (Edelman 2004, 29)—not as an outright rejection of antirelationality, but, as a "powerful counterweight" to it (Muñoz 2009, 17). It is, in fact, Muñoz's explicit investment in the decadent literary and aesthetic tradition that leads to a strong current of antirelational argument in his work. The entire project of *Cruising Utopia* is, after all, introduced under the banner of Oscar Wilde's highly individualistic queer socialist utopianism. The opening epigraph of *Cruising Utopia*—"A map of the world that doesn't include utopia is not worth even glancing at."—is taken from Wilde's socialist tract, "The Soul of Man Under Socialism" (1891), and evokes the arch criticism of the dandy's aesthetic judgment. And Muñoz's

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[4] Robert Reid-Pharr's essay on Gary Fisher in *Black Gay Man*, in which Reid-Pharr casts doubt on the possibility of rescuing any positive value of blackness untainted by the reality of historical violence, can also be read as an affirmation of an antirelation black gay politics (See Reid-Pharr 2001, in references).

use of "cruising" and "taking ecstasy," as metaphors for queer sociality, evokes both flâneurism and recreational drug use, both longstanding tropes of decadent solipsism.

Furthermore, in his chapter, "Just Like Heaven: Queer Utopian Art and the Aesthetic Dimension," Muñoz turns to Herbert Marcuse to think of queerness as a "queer refusal" of the "here and now." Focusing on what Marcuse calls, "the performance principal," which Muñoz glosses as "the way in which a repressive social order is set in place by limiting the forms and quantity of pleasure that the human is allowed," Muñoz argues that a refusal to give up queer desires is central to anti-capitalist queer utopianism (ibid., 134). According to Muñoz, a queer refusal of the pleasure-limiting performance principal would present "an interruption in the mandates to labor, toil, and sacrifice that the performance principle inscribes" (ibid., 137). In discussions of both white artists and artists of color, Muñoz argues that Narcissus—a major figure in the decadent imaginary—provides a model for a salutary agency of "refusal" with the power to restructure social relationality around queer forms of labor. Because of this stress on narcissistic refusal, Muñoz's work in *Cruising Utopia* should be thought of alongside the thinking of Leo Bersani, Lee Edelman, and Tim Dean, all of whom, albeit from different perspectives, dedicate numerous pages in their work to the complex relationship between narcissism and queer desire.[5] In short, reading the full breadth of Muñoz's argument in *Cruising Utopia* is precisely what comes to undermine any strict, indivisible line between the antirelational and relational divide.

Recent theoretical work on queer temporalities has continued to think of queerness as a force that disrupts the affective organization of time around heterosexual procreation and the binary division between public and private labor, or, to borrow Elizabeth Freeman's coinage, "chrononormativity" (Freeman 2010). In her book, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, Freeman defines chrononormativity as "the interlocking temporal schemes necessary for genealogies of descent and for the mundane workings of domestic life" (xxii). In contrast, queer affects and relationships denaturalize heterosexuality, calling into question its privileged position in the organization of social temporality, which includes its conceptual monopoly on the

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[5] Muñoz also pushes back against David Harvey's Marxist-oriented dismissal of racial and sexual minoritarian struggles as "narcissistic [leitmotifs] of bourgeois urban culture" (Harvey in Muñoz 2009, 30). In this way, Muñoz presents his defense of these struggles as a kind of decadent anti-anti-narcissism.

future. Thinking of the work of queer temporalities in relation to the debate between antirelation and relational queer theory, which implicitly and explicitly revolved around the question of time, will help shed light on Richard Bruce Nugent's complex relationships with homosexuality and blackness, both of which function to create diagonal, lasting social alliances that cut across some of modernity's most belligerent hierarchies, including white supremacy, patriarchy, heteronormativity, class, and nationalism. My aim in this essay is to grapple with the many interpretive demands of Nugent's life and work; in particular, his black and queer re-mapping of affective and historical networks via (to some) a stubborn allegiance to decadent aestheticism.

In what follows, I will provide a close reading of the short story, "Pope Pius the Only" (1937), Nugent's lyrically decadent yet critically overlooked response to domestic and international forms of anti-black violence. I will place this story alongside some of Nugent's other literary and visual work, tracing the contours of his racial and sexual politics across his corpus. Before that, however, I will offer a brief outline of the discursive and historical context into which "Pope Pius the Only" was born; a context in which the political utility of decadent aesthetics was consistently being called into question.

"SATISFIED TO WOO DECADENCE"

> ...there's the bizarre fact that queerness reads,
> even to some black gay men themselves, as a kind of whiteness
> Hilton Als, *White Girls*

Prior to, and during, the Harlem Renaissance, images of black men produced by white-owned popular media were by and large based on harmful racist stereotypes that presented polarized images of black male sexuality as either bestial and violent, or comic and therefore nonexistent. The literary and political climate of the Renaissance, in which Richard Bruce Nugent's "Pope Pius the Only" was written and published, was crisscrossed with debates about the role African-American literature should play in the almost non-negotiable project of overturning these distorted views. Within the very narrow parameters in which New Negro writers had an opportunity to construct images

of black masculinity that would be flush with American national ideals, "decadence" became a watchword for literature that was seen as compromising this effort. A general ambiance of anti-decadence, then, emerged as a guiding force in New Negro representations of black male sexuality.

I define "anti-decadence" as a phobic, culturally Western European nationalist discourse on the body that began in the late 18th century and continues up to the present. The rhetoric of anti-decadence tends to rely on exaggerated claims of cultural decay—often through racist, misogynistic, homophobic, and xenophobic tropes—to stir up populist sentiment for new projects of nation and empire building. In this sense, far from befalling a nation after it has been established, anti-decadence often *precedes* the founding of something new—i.e. a new order of political power. Racialized from the outset, anti-decadence arose as a cultural and political revolutionary force within Western European imperialist powers that had already institutionalized white supremacy through the trans-Atlantic slave trade and various forms of political disenfranchisement, racial segregation, and settler-colonialism. By the end of the nineteenth century, then, when French Symbolists were attacked with the epithet "decadent," the phrase would have had the potential to evoke anxieties about the specific decay of white national identity (Mosse 1988). At the same time, however, decadence in the Western European cultural imagination became indelibly linked to the relatively new concept of male homosexuality, in part because of the highly publicized trials of Oscar Wilde (Mosse 1988, 44; Sedgwick 1990, 128; Somerville 2000, 2). Thus, by the turn of the twentieth century, the "decadent" epithet could have signified as a decay of the national body through the loss of either racial or heterosexual integrity—or both.

Yet the charge of decadence did not properly belong to any one ideological faction. In *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick draws attention to the incoherence of decadence attribution by pointing out that the Western discourse against decadence was protean, elastic, and could be adapted to a number of "modern" political projects, including "Marxist, Nazi, and liberal capitalist ideologies" (Sedgwick 1990, 128). Anti-decadence during the New Negro Renaissance, therefore, should be read as a particular manifestation of the elasticity of decadence attribution within the broad trend in Western nationalism. During the New Negro Renaissance, anti-

decadence was additionally risky because of the movement's name. The New Negro Renaissance explicitly invited a comparison with its Italian predecessor (*the* Renaissance), thus risking an idealization of Western and Latin culture that it would continually have to work against. New Negro investments in American cultural nationalism, therefore, appear to have imported the white European critique of decadence—with one major modification. While the critique of decadence retained its evocation of homophobic anxiety, its racial dimension had inverted, and could now be used by New Negro Renaissance critics as a coded reference for whiteness.

This new association between decadence and "a kind of whiteness" (*pace* Hilton Als) was closely linked to a homophobic maintenance of black masculinity and a strong call for responsibility toward the labor of racial uplift. Such calls fell hard on the artists and writers associated with "Niggeratti Manor," the Harlem boarding house where Nugent lived with Wallace Thurman, Zora Neale Hurston, Dorothy West, and a number of younger Renaissance figures. In his 1932 satire of the New Negro milieu, *Infants of the Spring*, in which the phobic accusation of decadence runs literally from the first to the last page, Wallace Thurman lampoons some of the public criticisms that the younger generation received in the Black Press:

> Instead of pursuing their work, [these younger artists] were spending their time drinking and carousing with a low class of whites from downtown. Racial integrity they had none. They were satisfied to woo decadence, satisfied to dedicate their life to a routine of drunkenness and degeneracy with cheap white people, rather than mingle with the respectable elements of their own race. This showed, of course in their work, which was, almost without exception, a glorification of the lowest strata of Negro life. (Thurman 1932, 121)

The emphasis on "work" in this passage highlights the way that anti-decadence within the New Negro movement linked racial truancy to a dangerously irresponsible attitude toward the project of racial uplift, which, to understate the severity of the task, required (and still requires) a daunting amount of cultural and political labor. It also required correcting a long and fraught history of black labor in the United States, one that encompassed both the brutality of forced and unpaid labor under chattel slavery and the distorted and prejudicial view among white Americans that Negroes were inherently lazy. The "New Negro" movement also tried to expand the kinds of work that black

Americans were allowed to do. Much of the paternalistic anti-decadent criticism that came out of the Renaissance was therefore limned with the normalizing overtones of "seriousness," and sought to promote a politics of respectability that required black Americans to demonstrate their capacity to participate in the national labor force. Writers like Thurman and Nugent were thus writing under an intense pressure to devote their literary labor to uplifting the race through representations of respectable black masculinity that could be held up as powerful models of "New Negro" national identity.

Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 reinvigorated the urgency of creating images of masculine, black nationalist integrity, while also stoking ethnic tensions between African-American and Italian-American communities (Shankman 1978, 31-43). African-American cultural identification with Ethiopia—or "Ethiopianism"—was not, in 1935, new, nor was it limited geographically to Harlem. According to historian John Cullen Greusser, "Ethiopianism" was widespread and had been circulating in American culture since the mass Christianization of slaves at the end of 18th century (Greusser 2015, 98). When Ethiopia successfully defended itself in 1896 in the first Italo-Abyssinian conflict—effectively putting an end to the European "scramble for Africa"—the victory was experienced by many black American communities as a deeply personal one (Greusser 2015, 10).[6] Three decades later, the coronation of Haile Selassie as the Emperor of Ethiopia in 1930 "generated new interest in Ethiopia among African Americans" (ibid. 98). Consequently, when Italy again invaded Ethiopia in 1935, African-American communities were outraged; in part because the invasion was rightly construed as yet another European assault on black African sovereignty, and in part because many African-Americans regarded fascism as a mirror image of Jim Crow and other forms of de facto racial segregation at home (Greusser 2015, Putnam 2012, Reid-Pharr 2016, Scott 1978, Wilson 2010). In response to this transnational, double front of white supremacy, a sometimes militarized image of an impenetrable, hard-working and hard-bodied, black American male seems to have become increasingly appealing to African-American intellectual and cultural leaders.[7]

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[6] Aric Putnam points out that the flourishing of African-American churches with names like "Abyssinian" and "Ethiopian" began soon after the Ethiopian victory at Adowa in 1896. See Putnam, in references.

[7] See, for instance, Melvin Tolson's poem, "New Negro," from *Dark Symphony* (1941). Writing at the tail-end of the Renaissance, Tolson draws a Whitmanesque, superhuman portrait of the New Negro as a heroic defender of

Dorothy West's literary journal *Challenge*, published between 1934-37, became another battleground for the conflict between decadence and blackness in African American literature. In the "Forward" to the very first issue, James Weldon Johnson expresses regret about the failure of some of the Renaissance's young writers (whom he does not name) to establish professional careers for themselves. Attributing this failure to a "lack" of "persistent and intelligent industry," Johnson issues an avuncular warning that "younger" Negro writers "must not be mere dilettantes; they have serious work to do" (*Challenge*, March 1934, 2). Johnson's stress on the link between hard work and racial uplift is reminiscent of anti-decadence anxieties about laziness and political apathy that I have already mentioned. If there is a sexually repressive "performance principle" at work here, it seems to be invested in channeling the creative energies of the Harlem Renaissance toward the liberation of black Americans from racist tyranny. This might lead us rightly to conclude that not all "performance principles" are equally bad, or repressive in the same ways. Nevertheless, writers like Nugent, Wallace Thurman, and Langston Hughes found the "propagandistic" approach to New Negro writing unnecessarily burdensome and threatening to artistic and sexual expression.[8]

This inaugural strain of anti-decadent sentiment in *Challenge* rises to something of a fever pitch in the transition between Spring and Fall 1937 issues of the journal, two years into the Italian occupation of Ethiopia. The Spring 1937 issue of *Challenge*, in which Richard Bruce Nugent's "Pope Pius the Only" was published, was—significantly— the last issue of that magazine before its rebranding as *New Challenge* under the editorial leadership of Richard Wright and the "Chicago group" of writers who infused a vehemently pro-Marxist and anti-fascist point of view into African-American literary criticism at the tail end of the Renaissance. *New Challenge*'s emphasis on black social consciousness, the "realistic depiction of negro life" in literature, and its explicit self-positioning as an antifascist journal—"We do ask," the opening editorial announces, "that the bigot and potential fascist keep away from our door" (West, Fall 1937, 4)—was tethered to a heightened rhetoric of anti-decadence. Along with Wright's "Blueprint for

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national integrity: "His giant hands fling murals upon high chambers, / His voice thunders the Brotherhood of Labor, / Hard-muscled, fascist-hating, Democracy-ensouled, / Strides in seven-league boots / Along the highway of Today / Toward the Promised Land of Tomorrow!" (Tolson 1999, 40).

[8] See in particular Darryl Dickson-Carr's discussion of the tensions between artistic freedom and racial uplift in the Harlem Renaissance in *Spoofing the Modern: Satire in the Harlem Renaissance*, in references.

Negro Writing," one of the most important pieces of black literary criticism written during the first part of the twentieth century, contributions by Eugene C. Holmes and Alain Locke sound the alarm of the decadent descent of the New Negro.

New Challenge seems to arrive, then, as an attempt to put a final, closing word on the debate over decadence in New Negro writing. It is a sad irony that the "new" challenges posed within its pages brought a swift and unfortunate end to the entire *Challenge* enterprise.[9] This failure seems all the more unnecessary when one reflects that "Pope Pius the Only" was published in the issue prior to *New Challenge*. As we will see, Nugent's turn to decadent aestheticism in order to address many of the pressing issues facing black Americans in the 1930s, and to map a global historical black literary and cultural network, anticipates *and* repudiates the theory that decadence was inherently opposed to New Negro racial consciousness. In diving deep into the narcissistic waters of literary decadence, Richard Bruce Nugent is able to draw diagonal lines across racial and sexual binaries while staging a political critique of fascism and white supremacy. Rather than re-tracing the figure of a hardened, impenetrable black masculinity, Nugent's decadent revolution will be figured as a homoerotic desire for blackness and Latinness via a disseminating, "flaccid" penetration of the fascist (Italian) other.

"A MAD TALE"

> All this whiteness burns me to a cinder.
> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*

"It was decidedly uncomfortable." Thus begins "Pope Pius the Only," Nugent's little-known contribution to anti-lynching and antifascist African-American fiction.[10] This "mad tale" (as Dorothy West had called it) is Nugent's most politically explicit work of fiction, and likewise, one of his most compelling enactments of the political utility of decadence and aestheticism (West 1937, 43). While taking up just five small pages, "Pope Pius the Only" traverses a stunning panorama of geopolitical history while tracing the

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[9] Thomas Wirth and George Hutchinson both suggest that Dorothy West closed the magazine in part because of Richard Wright's takeover.

[10] Aside from Thomas Wirth's brief comments on this story, the only other commentary I have found is from Craig Gable in his introduction to the anthology of short fiction from the Harlem Renaissance, *Ebony Rising* (2004).

violent exchange of trans-Mediterranean military conquests that have transpired between North Africa and the Italian peninsula, from ancient to modern times. By deploying stream of consciousness, collage, free-indirect discourse, poetic wordplay, mixing vernacular and formal languages, and assuming an emotionally detached high ironic tone, Nugent stages a dense articulation of queer and black cultural politics that nevertheless remains nebulously aloof from the prevailing rhetorical protocols and visual strategies that organized African-American responses to the twin crises facing black communities in 1935: the ongoing lynching crisis, and the crisis that occurred when fascist Italy invaded the sovereign kingdom of Ethiopia.

The narrative of "Pope Pius the Only" follows the wanderings of a character named "Algy;" although, "a character," here, may not be particularly apt. Via an incessant movement of depersonalization, Algy shape-shifts indifferently from human to hybrid, from black to white, from past to present—and back again—sometimes *becoming* the mythological and historical figures and places he encounters. The radical instability of Algy's identity appears to be the result of him getting high and hallucinating from smoking marijuana, and—somewhat shockingly—from inhaling smoke that is emanating from his own body because he is being burned alive by a white lynch mob. The superimposition between the decadent descent into narcosis (from smoking "marijuana," "reefers," or "griefers") and the lyrical portrayal of lynching is certainly one of the story's most innovative and provocative aspects. The narrative tension is drawn between these two irreducible events, which, to borrow a phrase from the literary critic Jacqueline Goldsby, form a joint and disjointed "locus of narrative sensation and thematic unity within the text" (2006, 167). As Algy "strolls," "trucks," "stomps," sits, swims, dances, stands, sleeps, "and burns," he drifts narcotically through space and time: from the Southern United States and Russia in the 19th century, to ancient Rome and north Africa, to Revolutionary Haiti and Boston, to Harlem and Addis Ababa of the 1930s.

One is confronted by the narrator's high ironic tone, which evokes the blithe manner of an English dandy. That the phrase "It was decidedly uncomfortable." refers simultaneously to the ecstatic experiences of getting high on marijuana *and* of being burned alive is probably Nugent's most scandalous contribution to Renaissance-era race-conscious fiction. The arch understatement sounds less like an account of extreme

racial violence than it does one middle-class English dandy informing another about a weekend train ride to the suburbs. Nugent's "Algy"—likely a reference to Oscar Wilde's "Algy," or Algernon Moncrief from the play *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895)—is at times blasé, curious, indifferent, campy, and makes value judgments about his surroundings; not through conventionally moral and political critique, but through the lens of aesthetic taste. He is also a "poof"—a puff of smoke, but also a *poof* or *poofter*, an idiomatically English epithet for a homosexual.[11] Yet Algy will also be marked as ethnically black via Nugent's use of phenotypic descriptors, black vernacular speech, his deployment of Harlem as an important site of the story's *mise-en-scène*, and for the fact that he is a victim of a "lynching." His brief turn as Hannibal, the ancient North African military leader who famously invaded the Italian peninsula from the north (with elephants), links Algy's blackness to the continent of Africa and the millennia-old history of militarized, trans-Mediterranean conflict. Thus, from the outset of Algy's psychedelic journey, ancient Rome, Africa, Englishness, blackness, and homosexuality each manifest in the highly unstable image of the decadent *poof*—the *cinder*—or the *flaming faggot*.[12] It is worth returning to the beginning of the story:

> It was decidedly uncomfortable. But then Rome had burned, so who was he? Algy sniffed his smoke and burned. The fire around his feet was beginning. Slowly and hotly they burned and then—poof—the acrid trail singed clean his legs, and—poof—his crotch—poof-poof—his eyebrows. (Nugent 2002, 244)

As Andrew Hewitt notes in *Political Inversions: Homosexuality, Fascism, and the Modernist Imaginary*, "the problem of self-knowledge" lies at the root of the narcissistic problematic opened up by the decadent imaginary (Hewitt 1996, 240). By asking, *Who is Algy?*, Nugent foregrounds this problematic, syncretizing black, homosexual and nationalist identifications in the incoherent spectacle of Algy's flamboyant body. If the title of "Pope Pius the Only" is at all meant to refer to Algy, then Nugent early on conflates Roman, English and African ethnic identifications, evoking the shared histories of ancient Rome and modern England as historically imperialist economic and political formations that built their empires to a significant degree on trafficking in

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[11] Nugent traveled to England in 1929, and would likely have encountered the homosexual epithet "poof" while there (Wirth 2008, 15-17).
[12] For more on the origins of "fag" and "faggot" in New York's queer culture of the 1920s and 30s see Chauncey, in references.

African slaves. And as a stand-in for burning Rome, Algy's immolation flaccidly embodies the racial and sexual decay that the hard-bodied "New Negro" was supposed to be able to fight back against. At the same time, though, this image draws a direct parallel between the Roman state in its period of decline and the threat that blackness poses to an American national body founded on the principle of white supremacy. On these counts, Nugent offers a political critique of white supremacy that black decadent writers supposedly were neither able nor concerned to produce.

Algy's vacillation between black and white cultural and historical markers seems to be motivated by the ontological paradox at the heart of the decadent aesthetic.[13] In fact, the forward motion of the narrative is plagued at every step by an almost nonstop stream of descriptive contradictions. Algy is fast and slow, awake and asleep, alive and dead. The opening fire burns so hot that it is cold, and Algy transforms into a piece of "dry ice," which continues to burn and smoke even under the currents of cooling waters. "Algy floated along," the narrative continues, "and turned over on his back, his little gills fanning. And he knew he was no longer a cinder with black face and hands, because the noise of the waters had washed him clean, washed him in the blood of the lamb" (ibid.). In what appears to be an intertext with Charles Kingsley's casually racist Victorian-era children's story *Water Babies* (1863), which depicts the adventures of a young English chimney sweep, blackened from soot, whose whiteness is restored when he falls into a magical water world—Algy is both blackening (because of the fire) and whitening (because of the *white noise* of Christian redemption). The undecidability implicit in Nugent's deployment of the white/black binary is vertiginous, and sets tremors across a range of categorical distinctions. For instance, the transition from fire to water allows us to hear Algy's name as *algae*—a form of plant life that grows in subaquatic colonies. Alg(ae)y, who we may remember is smoking "reefers" with "gills fanning," is also described as a "water baby," and his waterboundness will bring him into contact with a merman, and later, the "carcass of a sea anemone," poetically evoking what modernist poet Marianne Moore (a contemporary of Nugent) has called "mythology's wish to be interchangeably man and fish" (Moore 1967, 23).[14] As algae, Algy's subaquatic ontology

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[13] In his important study on Catholicism and decadence, Ellis Hanson defines decadence as an "aesthetic of paradox" (Hanson 1997, 7).

[14] For Moore's poetry, see "The Plumet Basilisk" in Moore, Marianne. *Complete Poems*. New York: Penguin Books, 1994.

evokes the specter of a queer and liberatory counter-colonization that will bear out in the story's final moments.

Nugent's superimposition of black, queer, English, American, African, and Roman identities—as well as human and non-human markers of difference—is representative of the broader challenge to categorization presented by Nugent's promiscuous approach to genre. When it was first published in *Challenge,* Dorothy West placed the story under the category "Special Articles," sandwiched between Marion Minus's essay "Present Trends in Negro Literature" and an anthropological study of "The Spider in Jamaica Folklore" by Louis G. Sutherford (West 1937, Spring, 1). While I have treated "Pope Pius the Only" as a short story, it nevertheless partakes of a wide range of genres and literary species. Algy floats through the nursery rhyme and fable, the 19th century revenge plot, the American lynching narrative, the Rousseauean reverie, the Joycean mythical method, the symbolist poem, the Steinian tender button, and the American minstrel show, without the slightest urgency to draw borders between them.

The literary gregariousness of "Pope Pius the Only" is mirrored by the social world that the story depicts. As Algy continues to drift, like a time traveling social butterfly, he encounters a trans-historical pageant of literary and cultural personalities, such as Phillis Wheatley, Toussaint Louverture, Crispus Attucks, Ira Aldridge, and John Brown; all icons of black American cultural and political history. Algy's experiences of self-erasure (or to use one of Leo Bersani's antirelational concepts: "self-shattering") paradoxically open up radical potentials for black and queer relational encounters that normative temporal and spatial configurations of narration would foreclose. By lifting the barriers between normatively organized dimensions, Nugent constructs what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick might have called a *nonce taxonomy* of black and homosexual global history. For Sedgwick, nonce taxonomy names the value of gossip in helping queer (or maybe just disenfranchised) people to understand what's going on, who we are, and who other people are in relation to ourselves.[15] Cruising global history is a way for Algy to navigate a path toward self-becoming via a decadent catalogue of the "who's who" of

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[15] For more on queer practices of "nonce taxonomy," see Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. 1990. *Epistemology of the Closet.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Western black and gay male culture. This is, I think, also an example of the kind of "politicized cruising" that José Esteban Muñoz envisions in *Cruising Utopia* (Muñoz 2009, 18). Algy's perambulatory encounters have the wistful, almost catty air of high-society (or bathhouse) gossip—"He bowed pleasantly to Phillis Wheatley as he passed, for she had passed on" (Nugent 2008, 246). The affective, utopian map drawn by Algy's social contacts highlights the close link between racial and sexual epistemology and self-understanding in the American national context.

Yet for all of Algy's social fluidity, a strong current of affective solipsism runs through the narrative. It feels important, here, to remark that "Pope Pius the Only" is not the only time Nugent limned the representation of anti-black violence with the solipsistic aesthetics of decadence. Early in his career, Nugent created a powerful black and white illustration on the subject of lynching in a style clearly influenced by Aubrey Beardsley's illustrations for Oscar Wilde's *Salome*. The image depicts a lone black figure hanging in a sinuous S-shape from a tree branch dripping with Spanish moss. The head of the figure is outlined in knots, suggesting ethnically sub-Saharan black hair, while the moss indicates a Southern locale. The figure is suspended above what may be a stream of water fringed by tufts of grass. Behind the figure are outlines of hills between which a sun or moon is either rising or setting. The temporal undecidability evokes a similar sense of transcendent timelessness as the one depicted in "Pope Pius the Only." The drooping head of the figure is echoed by the silhouettes of two poppies that sprout up languidly along the far side of the stream, suggesting the Greco-Roman scene of Ovid's "Echo and Narcissus."

Figure 2 Nugent's pen and ink drawing accompanying William V. Kelly's "Black Gum,"

This image was published alongside William V. Kelly's short story "Black Gum" in the January 1928 issue of *Opportunity*. While there are differences between Kelly's story and Nugent's illustration (this may indicate that Nugent was independently inspired to create the image), Nugent's deployment of decadent aesthetic strategies turns out to be highly resonant with Kelly's story. The intense charge of isolation that motivates the decadent imaginary finds a home in the literary trope of the lynching victim as a singular, exquisite sufferer, left dead (or left to die) in remote locations. In this way, Nugent is able to adhere a decadent ethics of individualism and isolated suffering to the pathos of the tragic lynching victim. Nugent's illustration also shows us the common ground between aestheticism's gothic, post-Poe interest in finding the grotesque beautiful, and the strained task that faced creative writers who wanted to draw attention to the lynching crisis by representing it in literature.

Returning to "Pope Pius the Only," Algy's racialized and homoerotic isolation is marked by a retrospective focus on Rome, and the Roman Catholic Church, consistent with the decadent tradition's almost constitutive preoccupation with Roman Catholicism (Hanson 1997, *passim*).[16] Algy is given the title of "Pope," the supreme and

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[16] It is worth remembering that Joris-Karl Huysmans's foundational decadent text, *À rebours*, was originally titled *Seul*, or, *Alone.* See Nicholas White's Introduction to Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Against Nature*. Trans. Margaret Mauldon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

singular sovereign of the church. He is also named "Pius," which is the name assumed by both of the Popes who reigned during Italy's fascist period.[17] Yet he neither precedes nor follows any of the other Pope Piuses. Algy is "the Only" Pope Pius. The most pious Pius. In the manuscript of the story, the word "Only" is underlined, presumably by Nugent (Nugent circa 1935, manuscript). The appearance of the papal epithet "the Only," and Nugent's underscoring of it, push the decadent predilection for solitariness into overdrive as Algy's antirelational, omniscient *onlyness* is dangerously dispersed across his fractured experience of embodied identity. Going further, when Algy is literally cut up into pieces by French colonial authorities—"they cut him to pieces, and that was confusing—cut him into one Herndon and nine Scottsboro pieces of eight" (Nugent 2002, 247)—Nugent draws together the reliquary tradition of the Catholic Church (the practice of saving and preserving body parts of Saints and martyrs) and one of the worst horrors of America's lynching crisis: the mutilation and dismemberment of the victim from which white Americans would frequently take home souvenirs. In Nugent's decadent reliquary, Algy embodies both saintly and abject corporeal disintegration while indexing the persistence of American racial injustice toward black Americans.[18]

We might also think of Algy's fragmented experience of being and time in terms of Elizabeth Freeman's notions of "temporal drag" and "damaged time." For Freeman, "temporal drag" names queer affect's heightened orientation toward the past, and toward "outmoded" embodiments that help queers move differently through the world. Temporal drag can also be thought of as a "politics of deconstruction" in which "an antirepresentational privileging of delay, detour, and deferral" enables queers "to arrive at a different modality for living historically" (Freeman 2010, xvi). Turning to psychoanalytic models of subject-formation, Freeman regards temporal drag as the result of "damaged time," whereby past traumas restructure the subject's experience of present time. "[Touches] that are both painful and pleasurable," Freeman argues, "break open the past, slicing it into asynchronous, discontinuous pieces of time" (ibid., xii).

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[17] Pius XI and Pius XII were the last two Piuses, reigning successively, between 1922 and 1958, as the first two sovereigns of the newly founded Vatican City.

[18] The "Scottsboro Boys" were a group of nine black teenagers who were falsely accused of raping two white women in Alabama in 1931. Eight of the nine young men were sentenced to death by an all-white all-male jury, hence Nugent's phrase "nine Scottsboro pieces of eight."

While Freeman, importantly, regards the queer experience of damaged time as "the signature" of the decadent literary culture of the 1890s, Freeman's notion could also be useful for thinking of the diasporic African-American experience in America (ibid., 7). Nugent's own commitment to decadent affect could then be understood as a strategy for articulating the intersection of black and homosexual identity through an intensified relationship with a past (or pasts) that have consistently been erased for black and queer Americans.

In "Pope Pius the Only," experiences of pleasure (getting high) and pain (being burned alive) have literally broken the past into pieces. Reassembled in Algy's languid imaginings, the painful and pleasurable affective eruptions open up new ways of "living historically." Algy lolls haphazardly through space and time, drowsily, yet attentively, his head marking the hours away without ever gathering them into a normative chronological progression:

> But it had been of greatest importance that he drop his head, first forward, then back, and let it loll . . . Then space would converge, and thoughts and time; dimensions would become distorted and correct; he would become aware and super aware and aware of awareness and on and on in a chain of dovetailings and separate importances. Everything would have its correct perspectives—time, thought, deed and the physical surrounding him and surrounding that and—first first dimension, second dimension, third, fourth and fifth dimension—no need to stop there—the incredible dimension of the pin point, the worm, the man—at one and the same time blending yet separate. Not only did he have to imagine the fourth side of things now, he could see it. See all sides— top, bottom, four sides, outside *and* inside. (Nugent 2002, 245)

For Algy, the experience of damaged time breaks through the frontiers of both sexual and racial chrononormativity, producing a "omnipotent" sovereignty that reorders space and time so that they become both "distorted and correct," thus enabling a radical experience of black and homosexual belonging.

Yet despite the narrative's radicalization of space and time, the year 1935 serves as a sort of temporal anchor; a paradoxical drag that the present-day enacts on Algy's trans-historical *flâneurism.* "Nineteen thirty-five, summer and fall" (ibid.). This sentence fragment appears mid-way through the narrative, marking the year fascist Italy drew on its own mythological relationship with ancient Rome to violate international treaties and invade Ethiopia as retribution for its defeat in 1896 (Putnam 2012, 100). But 1935 also gives context to a number of significant events of domestic national

importance that emerge and recede in the narrative, including: the American lynching crisis; the retrials of the Scottsboro Boys; Major New Deal programs, including the Federal Writer's Project (WPA) and the National Recovery Act (NRA); the overturned conviction of black activist and communist organizer Angelo Herndon; the assassination of Huey P. Long, Governor of Louisiana and a rare white Southern progressive leader; and a Harlem race riot that targeted mostly white-owned businesses. That all of these events are accounted for in Nugent's dreamlike narrative is surely a rebuke to criticisms that decadence and aestheticism could not meet the demands of addressing contemporary problems. Contra Wright, Nugent's *unrealistic* depiction of Negro life in "Pope Pius the Only" evinces a remarkable capacity for representing black social consciousness.

The anchor of the present day also pulls the narrative eastward toward Ethiopia, where the crisis of the Italian occupation is unfolding. In the penultimate moments of the narrative, Nugent imagines the liberation of Ethiopia as a stealthy penetration of Mussolini's military enabled by Algy's magical ability to pass for Italian. While dancing "the gri-gri" and "Charleston" down Harlem's 7ᵗʰ Avenue, Algy pauses to take a drag on the "reefer," which clears his mind of thoughts, and again allows for a *temporal drag* to open up the dimensions of space-time:

> Algy drew deep on the 'reefer' and knew how great it was that he did not think. That no thought of Haile Selassie frowned on him. He couldn't think and that was well, for who wants time and space and physical fact—deed and thought contort distraught. Viva la Mussolini and cock-a-doodle-doo—until time to sleep. (Nugent 2002, 247)

The evocation of the Emperor of Ethiopia and the Italian fascist dictator performs a geographic shift to the Mediterranean and the Horn of Africa. The two military leaders are drawn into parallel here: Mussolini, with his own fantasy of Rome's mythological past, and Haile Selassie (or Ras Tafari)—whose reign as the emperor of Ethiopia was also predicated on myth or belief—as a descendent of King Solomon and the living incarnation of Christ on earth. Algy, however, slips between these figures, paying them little mind, oversleeping the alarm of the allegorical cock's crow sounded by Mussolini's invasion. Instead, Algy wends his way toward what I read as an orgiastic, homoerotic counter-occupation of the invading Italian forces via the strategy of racial passing:

> [Algy] slightly swam down the Nile, the Blue Nile, and the Nile, the White Nile, and joined the Italian army. But only to work black magic, for he conjured—
> "Abrac-Adowa" and lo it fell, crashing mightily from 1896, and Algy entered Addis Ababa with forty thieves. They were looking for peace—pieces of eight—which were Africa and others through Africa. So Algy thought, "how simple," and Adigrat fell regained. (ibid., 247-48)

There is much to parse in this brief passage, which is densely packed with black cultural signifiers, pan-Africanist perspective, global historical events, trans-cultural literary references (such as the middle-eastern epic *One Hundred and One Nights*), and homoeroticism. I will tease out only a few important threads of significance. All of the "A"s that jut out into the text strike me as a graphic replication of the capital A in Algy's name: Abrac-Adowa, Algy, Addis Ababa, Africa, Adigrat. The A's seem to rise like African pyramids among the horizontal lines of text, gathering with them all of the "A"s that Algy has encountered and become: Angelo Herndon, Ira Aldridge, Crispus Attucks, and a trio of "Alexanders"—Alexander the Great, Alexander Pushkin, and Alexandre Dumas. The "A"s proliferate like the forty thieves who are, perhaps, forty more Algies— a decolonizing penal colony of Algies that anticipates Jean Genet's association of homosexuality and theft.[19] "A" is also a letter that begins the names of several other of Nugent's literary characters, like Alex and Adrian from "Smoke, Lilies, and Jade," Angel from "Lunatique," and Aeon Brennan, a character, modeled on Nugent's friend and fellow writer Jean Toomer, who appears in both *Gentleman Jigger* and Nugent's unpublished novel *Half-High*.[20] This might all be read as part of a system of naming organized around the decadent ethos of "Art for Art's Sake;" or, in the words of *Gentleman Jigger*'s protagonist Stuartt, whose name is literally occupied by the word "art"—"Art with a capital 'A'" (Nugent 2008, 176).

"Conjuring" certainly evokes a major motif of magic in African-American life and literature.[21] The dash and the line break provoke a moment of suspense, a rupture in

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[19] Thanks to Wayne Koestenbaum for hearing that the Ethiopian princess "Aida," from Italian composer Giuseppe Verdi's 1871 opera, might be waiting in the wings of Nugent's story. Perhaps the nearby colonized North African nation "Algiers" can also be heard in Algy's name. For more on Genet, homosexuality and the ethics of thievery, see Bersani's *Homos*, in references.

[20] "Lunatique" is an excerpt from another of Nugent's unpublished novels. See (Nugent 2002, 248 and 261).

[21] See, for instance, Charles W. Chestnut's *The Conjure Woman* (1899) and Rudolph Fisher's *The Conjure Man Dies* (1932). The popularity of the online hashtag #blackgirlmagic suggests the continuing relevance of an African-

space and time that anticipates the arrival of an event. This event turns out to be the liberatory, performative force of a black magical conjuring—"Abrac-Adawa." This magical conjunction recalls the northern Ethiopian city of Adowa, the geographical site of Ethiopia's 1896 victory over invading Italian forces. Joined with the nonsensical command "Abracadabra," "Abrac-Adawa" summons a past victory as a precedent and motivating force for a new one. This magical command brings down the Italian occupation and allows Algy, who is racially passing as a member of the Italian army, to pass with forty thieves, Ali Baba-like, into the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa. The new "fall" of the Ethiopian capital is, paradoxically, a regaining of independence and sovereignty. Algy's "black magic," therefore, represents a disseminating force of conjugal penetration that turns the fascist occupation of Ethiopia against itself in an autoimmune, deescalating insurrection.[22]

"Joining" resonates, here, not only as central component of the erotics of Algy's covert operation, but also as an imperative of real-life strategies of African-American resistance to European fascism. In addition to the numerous Harlem-based aid organizations that mobilized financial and political support for Ethiopia, several African-Americans attempted to join the Ethiopian army in order to fight with Ethiopia in opposition to Italy. While their efforts were mostly thwarted by the United States government, African-Americans were eventually able to join the fight against fascism during the Spanish Civil War.[23] Nugent, who "joined" the U.S. army in its fight against the "Axis" powers, proposes here another strategy of alliance; a non-oppositional modality of opposition, or, in Lee Edelman's antirelational terminology, "an impossible project of queer oppositionality that would oppose itself to the structural determinants of politics as such" (Edelman 2004, 4). One could also think of Nugent's representation of strategic passing in terms of what José Esteban Muñoz calls "disidentification" (Muñoz 1999). Writing about the relationship between passing and "drag," Muñoz

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American cultural identification with magic, which might also include the recent publication of the poet Morgan Parker's book of poetry *Magical Negro* (2019).

[22] My use of "autoimmunity" here is drawn from Jacques Derrida's work on the self-deconstructing structure of the Western concept of sovereignty. For more on autoimmunity, see Derrida, in references.

[23] Ivy Wilson notes that the United States government denied requests by African-American men to fight in the Ethiopian army. Whereas, during the Spanish Civil War, numerous African Americans were permitted to fight on the side of the Spanish republicans (Wilson 2010, 276). For more on African-American involvement in anti-fascist struggles in Europe, see John Cullen Gruesser (2016), Robert Reid-Pharr (2017), William R. Scott (1978), and Ivy Wilson (2010), in references.

argues that racial passing "is often not about a bold-faced opposition to a dominant paradigm or a wholesale selling out to that form. Like disidentification itself, passing can be a third modality where a dominant structure is co-opted, work on and against. The subject who passes can be simultaneously identifying with and rejecting a dominant form" (ibid., 108).[24] Nugent does not represent the battle for Ethiopian independence as a full-frontal assault by a clearly defined oppositional force. Rather, Nugent invests in the fantasy of a homoerotic conjugal alliance, between both the liberator and the oppressor, that is enabled by the self-effacing disidentificatory strategy of racial passing. Not unlike Homer Plessy, who in 1892 conspired to bring down the Jim Crow-era "One Drop" rule by drawing attention to the incoherence of a system of racial order founded upon the legibility of one's skin, Nugent harnesses racial passing in order to deconstruct white supremacy from within.

While the only times passing is directly mentioned in "Pope Pius the Only" occur when Algy "passed" Phillis Wheatley, it seems fair to say that Algy has been passing this entire time; passing for white, black, human, fish, hero, hetero, truant—"so who was he?" In the passage where Algy racially passes to join the Italian army, the motif of passing subliminally evokes *passing* and *passage* as a major motif of anti-fascist history. *¡No pasarán!* ("They shall not pass!") became a popular anti-fascist slogan during the Spanish Civil War, which took place while Nugent was working on "Pope Pius the Only." Algy's conjuring initiates a homoerotic force of dissemination that folds *¡No pasarán!* back in on itself. The fascists shall not pass because the anti-fascists are racially passing and dismantling the Italian occupation in an act of penetrative sabotage. In short, the "black magic" that Algy conjures initiates a surreptitious chain of fucking that queers the Italian occupation by fucking white supremacy (over). This is a flagrant departure from the tenor of hyper-masculinity that, as Ivy Wilson points out, attended many of the African-American literary responses to the Ethiopian crisis (Wilson 2010, 266). The fantasy of the disseminating force of a white-passing homoerotic counter-occupation narrates a queer desire for the restoration of black sovereignty, and for the demilitarization of affective bonds between the north of Africa and the Italian peninsula. Algy and his "forty thieves" were, after all, "looking for peace" across the

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[24] Monica Miller also uses José Esteban Muñoz's concept of disidentification to think about the complex self-fashioning of the "black dandy." See Miller, in references.

damaged time of global racial and ethnic conflict. In looking for "Africa and others through Africa," Algy inverts and displaces the history of the European colonization of Africa so that Africa and African America (the Scottsboro Boys—"pieces of eight") could be reassembled and drawn back into a black and queer social world.

In light of Nugent's profession of a lifelong sexual taste for "Latins," the representation of conjugal, pacifistic passing in "Pope Pius the Only" should be read as an inscription of Nugent's racially inflected, disidentificatory homosexuality. Nugent was known to have occasionally passed, and when he did, he sometimes adopted a Latin-American persona—Ricardo Nugenti de Dosceta (Wirth 2002, 11). The conjugation of his own name into a Latinate cognate embodies the queer work around race, identity, desire, and wordplay that I have been tracking throughout this essay. In interviews, Nugent describes his experiences of racial passing as fun, playful forays across a color line he saw as presenting an unnecessary barrier between himself and the things that he valued and desired. The constitutive incoherence of the color line is reworked here as a reciprocal incoherence of racial passing that the color line paradoxically enables. *Gentleman Jigger*'s Stuartt, who spends most of the latter portion of the novel passing for white, articulates the queer agency of incoherence that Nugent proposes in "Pope Pius the Only." "You know," Stuartt confesses at a dinner party, "I can never be coherent about things that are really important to me" (Nugent 2008, 110). Nugent's own refusal to be racially coherent manifests, in "Pope Pius the Only," as a form of black magical power that does not renounce the desire for Latinness or literary decadence, both of which were important objects of Nugent's erotic and aesthetic life.

On February 16, 1936, around the time Nugent would have been working on "Pope Pius the Only," he sat for a series of portraits with his friend, and fellow aesthete, Carl Van Vechten. Two of the portraits show Nugent sitting in front of a curtain, underneath a white bust of Antinous (another A), the male favorite of the Roman emperor Hadrian. There is a highly formal quality to these portraits. By several accounts, Nugent rarely wore a tie, and often appeared in public looking like an irreverent bohemian. But here, he is smartly dressed in a jacket, vest, collared shirt, and tie, and his hair is cropped short. In one of the photographs, Nugent is looking pensively away from the bust. In the other, Nugent has turned his face upward toward it. Nugent's head, in both photos, seems to fill the negative space carved out by Antinous's hair, cheek,

and neck, casting a black shadow against the curtain. These photos seem to capture all of the ambiguities and paradoxes of Nugent's relationship with is own racial and sexual identities, and his lifelong devotion toward Latin men, Latin culture, and the decadent tradition. Simultaneously antirelational and relational, Nugent's queer refusal to give up his bad romance with Rome explains, for me, why the desire for the restoration of Ethiopia's national sovereignty coincides with, and is inextricable from, a desire to "join" the army of "Latins."
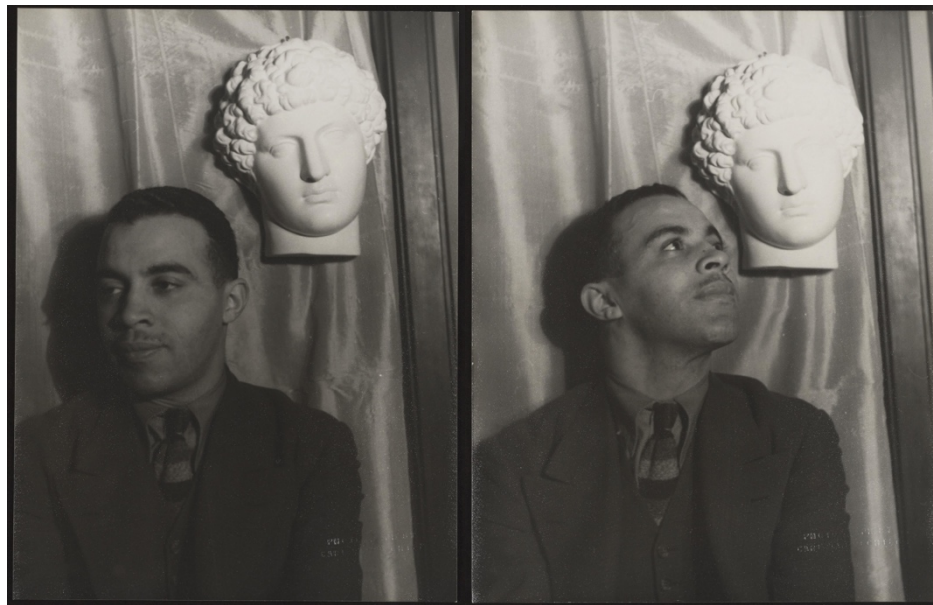
Figures 3 and 4 Portraits of Richard Bruce Nugent by Carl Van Vechten, February 16, 1936.

The closing moments of "Pope Pius the Only" drive home the irreducible tension between the antirelational and relational forces that structure the narrative. After having restored Ethiopia to its sovereignty by orgiastically disarming the Italian military with "black magic," Algy's work is done, and we are drawn precipitously back to the scene of lynching—and, or—getting high:

> And it burned—the chains on his wrists were white hot now, and Algy thought, 'How needlessly painful. How annoying,' and turned over to sleep through the lynching. But his lips were parched. Not that he liked it, but there he was—he'd no idea that being the fly in the ointment could be so sticky. (Nugent 2002, 248)

The final moment is wry and haunting, and is written against nearly every rhetorical convention of anti-lynching narratives of the late nineteenth and early twentieth

centuries.[25] Algy seems to turn a drowsy, almost bored shoulder to the tiresomeness of racial violence, succumbing to the pleasures of sleep and withdrawal after having come to Ethiopia's rescue, only to return home to the stinging reminder of the realities of white supremacy in America. In Nugent's decadent imaginary, queerness and blackness do not have to choose between relational or antirelational modes, any more than they have to choose between solipsistic decadence and loyalty to collective struggles.

I have been reading Nugent's work, and "Pope Pius the Only," in terms of queer theoretical work on the socially transformative power of antirelational and relational homoerotic alliances. In this view, a structurally antirelational homosexuality allowed Nugent to develop lasting, life-long attachments to "Latin" men; homoerotic attachments that cut slantwise through the cultural hierarchies and prejudices of American white supremacy. Nugent's antirelational sensibility also cut through the counter discourse of the New Negro that placed blackness on one side, and homosexuality, whiteness, decadence, and "Latins" on the other. If there is a utopian impulse in Nugent's vision, it is perhaps that our desire to fuck each other might enable an anti-violent politics of queer futurity that would support the particularity of the other's life, because without them, the future of coming together would be lost. In "Pope Pius the Only," and elsewhere in Richard Bruce Nugent's work, we see Nugent depersonalize racial, ethnic, and erotic relations between Italian, African and American national and cultural identities, so that they might be experienced as durable and loving; relations that cut slantwise through the interdiction that black and queer life has no claim to the future, and no right to a future together.

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[25] While race apathy may have been represented in lynching narratives, it would have been used to shock in order to incite racial solidarity and political mobilization, as in James Weldon Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912), also an important intertext for this story. For more on literary conventions of anti-lynching narratives, see Jacqueline Denise Goldsby and Karlos K. Hill, in references.

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THE STATE AS THE INTRUDER: CULTURAL HEGEMONY AND SELF-REPRESSION IN *THE BOYS IN THE BAND*

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ABSTRACT

When white straight lawyer Alan enters the all-gay birthday party that his long-time acquaintance Michael organized at his place for his friend Harold, he steps into a place where homosexuality is allowed and protected and masculinity parodied. He discovers an heterotopia situated in the city of New York in the late 60's, out of its norms and far from the police raids against gay people. This article discusses the intrusion of Alan in Michael's home, in Mart Crowley's play *The Boys in the Band*, as an understanding of the dynamics of control and intimidation perpetuated by the State against gay men at that time. It considers the reactions of the gay members of the party, as consequence of the intrusion, under the critical lenses of Michel Foucault's biopolitical theory together with the concepts concerning hegemonic masculinity from Queer Studies literature.

Keywords: Queer Studies, Crowley, Cultural Hegemony, Gay Representation and Power Relations

INTRODUCTION

The Stonewall Riots were only few months away when Mart Crowley's *The Boys in the Band* was first produced on the New York stage by Richard Barr and Charles Woodward on the 14th of April 1968 at Theatre Four, Off-Broadway, after it was first performed in the January of the same year at the Playwrights' Unit. Only ten days had passed since the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., but the necessity of advancing human rights had already been fermenting throughout the decade in the United States. The deaths of the two political icons, Malcom X and John Fitzgerald Kennedy, were still resonating in the minds of a younger national conscience striving for a more inclusive society (Kaiser 1988, 18). The economic prosperity and safety of the 1960s allowed the younger generations to focus on the fight for civil rights (Kaiser 1988, 15). A new impulse toward visibility and (self-)acceptance started to catalyze the wills of minorities to push against marginalization and harassment. Racial minorities, women and homosexual men, likely the most neglected categories of the "land of the free," started to gain a voice inside the national debate through the intensification and development of the already

existing movement of the civil rights. Those were the years when the streets and the squares became the stage for public reclamation, as historically neglected bodies gathered in public spaces across the country (Kaiser 1988, 372). The events that led to Blood Sunday in Selma, 1965, and in general the energy conveyed by black anger, set the pace for the other minorities' – such as gay people and women - political claims (Kaiser 1988, 230).

This paper explores the representation made by Mart Crowley of the relation between the men as part of the gay community and the State, through the analysis of the bonds and the attitudes of the characters in *The Boys in the Band* (1968). In light of the historical context in which the play is set and produced, I will consider Alan's intrusion in the all-gay birthday party as a projection of the governmental actions to control and suppress homosexuality in the Sixties. Therefore, I intend to demonstrate that Alan, the straight character, will prompt gay men to expose themselves and their *consciousnesses*, by threatening the already fragile balance that defines their bonds. To develop my investigation, I will borrow the theoretical lenses offered by Michel Foucault as regards the issues of power and space, and the literature on male bonding and the hegemonic masculinity offered by Queer Studies scholars as Eve K. Sedgwick (1985, 1990, passim) or Robert Connell (1995, passim). The concepts of *hegemonic masculinity* and *male bonding* will be crucial for the development of my analysis, since I will exclusively take into consideration the relationship between the State, represented by a heterosexual man, and the rest of the characters of the play, a group of gay men.

In the first section of this paper, I will pinpoint the stages that led to the formation of an organized homophile movement from the '50s to the Stonewall riots (1969), paying specific attention to measures adopted by the government towards gay people and the reaction of the Mattachine Society. In the second section, I will analyze the opening pages of *The Boys in the Band,* where I will introduce the concept of double consciousness by W. E. B. Du Bois used to explore the characters' interior struggles. In the third part, I will focus on the central part of the play, when Alan eventually enters the *closet*. In this part, I will analyze the space where the action happens, regarding it as a *heterotopia* (Foucault 2011, passim) in contrast with values of domesticity and heteronormativity. I will then make use of Queer Studies literature to analyze how patriarchal masculinity deploys the dynamics of bonding to confirm heteronormative

power. In the fourth and concluding section, I will engage Foucault's theories on biopower and panopticism to demonstrate Alan's unrequited presence as a projection of the State. There, I will give specific importance to the construction of a visual field into a captivating space as strategy to confirm privilege and subjugate the other.

FROM '50s TO '60s: THE MATTACHINE SOCIETY AND THE NEED FOR MORE VOICES

The 28th of June 1969 represents the moment when an obstacle to the systematic homophobia that had forced LGBT people into shame and compulsory secrecy received some real political and social attention (D'Emilio 1983, 55).

The social status of gay people in the sixties was likely affected by the political and cultural environment of the two previous decades. Indeed, as John D'Emilio reports in his *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, "The matrix of religious beliefs, laws, medical theories, and popular attitudes that devalued and punished lesbians and homosexuals [in the '40s] remained intact [in the '50s]" (1983, 53). Government bodies and scientific perspectives provided heteronormative US society with damaging evaluations of homosexuality, referring to it as a condition akin to criminality and sexual depravity (1983, 66). Therefore, the Fifties were the years when "the danger posed by 'sexual perverts' became a staple of partisan rhetoric" (1983, 54). As reported by the *New York Times* in 1950, American politicians were some of the main spokespeople of the fight against the 'perverts.'[1]

As D'Emilio always reports, "the homosexual menace continued as a theme of American political culture throughout the McCarthy era. [...] Homosexuality became an epidemic infecting the nation, actively spread by communists to sap the strength of the next generation" (1983, 55-56). This widespread attitude towards homosexuals laid the basis for a multitude of arrests and raids against them. As D'Emilio continues: "[s]ystematized oppression during the 1950s exerted contradictory influences on gays. In repeatedly condemning the phenomenon, antigay polemicists broke the silence that surrounded the topic of homosexuality." Nonetheless, "[t]he condemnations that did occur burdened homosexuals and lesbians with a corrosive self-image" (1983, 69-70).

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[1] See "Perverts called Government peril," New York Times, April 19, 1950.

This kind of instruction provided by professionals to American citizens also threatened, and often harmed, the lives and the carriers of all of those homosexuals, most likely gay men, who worked as teachers or educators. There is indeed several literary evidence that developed and confirmed a narrative of "contagious homosexuality," or that of "potentially pedophile gay men." Cohen describes how "educational discourse echoed medical discourse. … Sociologist Willard Waller considered homosexuality to be contagious, asserting in *The Sociology of Teaching* (first published in 1932) that the homosexual was liable to develop 'an indelicate soppiness in his relations with his favorites'" (2008, 11-12). Therefore, the essay cited by Cohen provides the reader, likely to be a head teacher, or another superior, with the necessary information to identify and eventually fire – or decide not to hire – a supposedly gay teacher (2008, 12). This particular side of multifaced stigmatization will be relevant in my analysis, especially linked to one of the characters of the *The Boys in the Band*, Hank, who is a schoolteacher with another man as a lover.

The founding of the Mattachine Society in 1951, marks the beginning of gay and lesbian organized reaction in the US, introducing the concept of gay people as an oppressed minority and challenging the common image of the 'ill homosexual' (Cohen 14, 2008). Nevertheless, in addition to the external restrictions, the Society "struggled to find ways to develop in its members a strong group consciousness free of the negative attitudes that gay men and women typically internalized." The founder of the society, Harry Hay, introduced in the organization various concepts and mechanisms that he had learned in his past in the Communist Party. Indeed, as Michael Bronski also reports, "using Marxist cultural theory, Hay understood homosexuals to be a distinct and oppressed class of people able to combat ignorance with education and organize against the prejudice of the dominant culture" (2011, 264). One of the aims of the organization was to allow gay people to be able to create a "highly ethical homosexual culture" and "lead well-adjusted, wholesome, and socially productive lives."[2]

Nevertheless, ten years later, the Society and consequent homophile movement remained marginal without noteworthy improvement of the gay social condition (D'Emilio 1983, 140). The only way they found to cope with such a heteronormative

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[2] Mattachine Society, "Missions and Purposes," April 1951.

audience, to create a sort of tolerance, was to bend to the majoritarian perspective. Thus, attempts were made by the movement to find a cure for homosexuality, or condemned the practice of cruising (D'Emilio 1983, 140-42).

This kind of tendency actually reflected the lives of homosexuals from that time. Indeed, the majority of them "… led a double life. They constantly moved between at least two worlds: a straight world in which they were assumed to be straight and a gay world in which they were known as gay" (Chauncey 1994, 518).

However, the Sixties and its countercultural movements hosted new voices and perspectives, and a multifaceted view of homosexuality gradually substituted for the silence that characterized the activism of the Mattachine Society. Instances of gay life multiplied in literature and media, so that an increasing number of people saw homosexuals as a community and no longer as alienated and disgusting people (D'Emilio 1983, 145-46). Moreover, law, psychiatry and social sciences, participated in the creation of a more open understanding of a reality that slowly started to grow out of the narrow parameters of the Fifties (D'Emilio 1983, 156-61). This shift of perspective drew attention to the violent daily treatment by the police of sexual "perverts," and the decriminalization of sodomy started gaining ground toward consensus (D'Emilio 1983, 163-64).

During the Sixties, new names and approaches entered the scene of the movement, next to the veterans of the Mattachine Society. Frank Kameny, a spokesman for these new ways of thinking, became president of the Society in 1961, and implemented a more radical and explicit strategy for the defense of gay people and the recognition for rights, following the example of the civil rights movement (Stein 2012, 66). Considering Kameny's *Message to the Members of the Mattachine Society of Washington from the President of the Society on the State of the Society* (1964), where he claimed that "We should have a clear, explicit, consistent viewpoint and we should not be timid in presenting it," he openly distances himself from the "genteel, debating society approach" of the previous Mattachine (Kameny 1964). Kameny deliberately decided to challenge the old straight-pleasing silence and, as he claimed during a speech in New York (1964), took "the stand that not only is homosexuality . . . not immoral, but that homosexual acts engaged in by consenting adults are moral, in a positive and real sense, and are right, good, and desirable, both for the individual participants and for the

society in which they live" (1964). Through these words, Kameny explicitly rejected the negative stereotypes used to label homosexuality by proposing a positive - but not accommodating - image of gay people, encouraging a healthy coexistence between the oppressed minority and the State. By doing so, he "... launched the first systematic challenge to the government's exclusion of gays and lesbians, attacking the Cold War era notion that gay men and lesbians posed a risk to national security (Bullough 2002, 209)."

This new kind of militancy caught on throughout the country and a new activist force lead by Kameny started to fight animatedly for the liberation of gay people, openly in contrast with the old path walked by their predecessors. On the one hand, the older members of the Society used to try to satisfy the "healing culture" provided by doctors and lawyers while being careful to show only the 'decent' face of homosexual reality. On the other hand, Kameny and the other new minds of the movement would distance themselves from professionals' opinions and intended to show every aspect of the lives of gay people. If the early fighters wanted the gays to adapt to society, the latter fought for the contrary, for a society that would get rid of the stereotypes of sickness and criminality to become inclusive (D'Emilio 1983, 177-83). Kameny's standpoint awakened the worries and the doubts of his predecessors. Indeed, considering the different cultural frame that characterized the lives of elders and youngsters, it may be reasonable to regard '50s members' reluctance to embrace the new attitude as the consequence of the traumas they experienced in the McCarthy era.

The homophile movement spread, and the number of organizations throughout the nation grew. Kameny was fully aware of the revolutionary wave that was sweeping the country and "with an eye on the black civil rights movement, [he] set about recasting homosexuality — traditionally considered a moral or a mental health problem — into a civil liberties issue" (Bullough 2002, 212). In fact, as Bronski reports, "Kameny's use of the phrase 'Gay Is Good' in a 1968 speech was clearly resonant of 'Black Is Beautiful'" (2011, 317). The younger generations – who constituted a noteworthy percentage of the members of the new homophile movement – could not be indifferent to the revolutionary wave that was flooding the country (D'Emilio 1983, 247). Actually, "along with the battle for civil rights, other changes were happening in America, most clearly seen in highly politicized youth counterculture. The teen culture of the 1950s had by the

early 1960s transformed itself into a new, vibrant national youth culture that was politically aware, responsive to social issues, and understanding of personal experience in a larger context" (Bronski 2011, 296). This revolutionary wave was what led to the final explosion in Stonewall, in late June 1969, by the hands and fists of gay, lesbians and transgender people, both white and black, as a result of the clash between an increasing involvement of the victims in battle for their own liberation, and a political attitude of repression and intimidation.

In the following paragraphs, I will analyze some of the issues arising from the historical struggle between gay individuals and the hegemony of heteronormativity in the US on the verge of the Stonewall Riots. Specifically, I will explore the psychological consequences of the intrusion of a heteronormative character in a safe space appositely created for gay people to behave freely and naturally. Such consequences, like the emerging of a double consciousness inside the gay identities or the phenomenon of self-repression in the presence of a straight man, are indeed necessarily connected to the historical background that the play *The Boys in The Band* is set in.

GAY IDENTITY AND DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS
In this section, I intend to explore the phenomenon of the "internalization of the La'" as a feature of the existence of many identities in the Sixties, through the notion of cultural hegemony. As conceptualized by Antonio Gramsci (Gramsci 1948-1951, passim), the State exerts its supremacy by imposing morals and knowledge through a consistent and subtle distribution, until said norms are completely absorbed by the oppressed groups. This condition of interiorization may lead to a double identity, to a double consciousness that relies on belonging both to the State and to the oppressed minority. DuBois describes it as it follows: "It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings…" (2007, 8). Seeing the historical and cultural similarities in the second half of the 20th century between ethnic minorities and the LGBT community, I would draw a parallel between the two cases of oppression in order to analyze the literary products

and to investigate the internal contrasts that reside in the minds of the gay characters of the play I am analyzing.

A gay man who grew up between the Fifties and Sixties might have an akin doubleness, a split yet merged individuality, as an American and a "pervert." According to public opinion, to political thought, and to professional ideas, he could be identified as an invisible threat or as a traitor, since he was betraying his own country, corrupting his American flesh with his sickness. Gay adults, like the older members of the Mattachine, who lived through the McCarthy era were likely to internalize the terminology they were named after (criminals, perverts, threats, animals, etc.). Therefore, one might ask what kind of will animated their consciousness. As I would argue, symmetrically in relation to their eventual doubleness, some gay people – especially those who had firsthand experience of repression and the fear of losing their jobs – may have had two contrasting needs, that of complying with society and that of being fully accepted as a homosexual.

What the State did was deprive the homosexual community of any form of socialization. In consideration of the several measures taken by the State to control and limit homosexuals' behavior throughout the country, one may wonder if those were part of a strategy to alienate the gays, to prevent them from socializing. I refer to the Senate's purge of the gays out of the government, the police raids in cruising places, and the prohibition on serving alcoholic beverages to gay people (Carter 2004, 22). Hence, any social practice seemed to be thoroughly discouraged by the government itself, and the only viable option at their disposal to embrace – at least partially – their identity, was made illegal, forcing them into a clandestine state of being.

In such an electric historical moment Mart Crowley puts on stage a gay reunion set on the occasion of a birthday. It is a picture painted with tragicomic colors, which I consider representative of a portion of the gay individuals living in New York right before the Stonewall riots. On average, the characters are in their late twenties and early thirties, an age range that suggests they have become adults between the Fifties and the Sixties, crucial years in the movement for gay rights (Crowley 1968, 4). As regards the social background of the characters, the group is actually characterized by a certain diversity. Even though they all seem to have a general artistic literacy – some more than others – they have very different standards of living. Emory, Hank, and Larry seem to

be the wealthiest, or at least those with a decent lifestyle, thanks to their careers as an interior decorator, school teacher, and commercial artist. As for the others, very little information is given about their careers, except for some details that hint at uneven lives, like Donald, who lives out of New York scrubbing floors since he finished college, or like Michael, a failed screenplay writer who spends his life travelling and running up (and from) debts. Bernard, the only African-American man in the play is characterized by his very humble origins as well, as the son of a maid. As for the man of the hour, Harold, the only information that is given is his obsession for his appearance and his past as ice skater.

The Boys in the Band is entirely set in Michael's home, the birthday boy and a friend of Harold's. A succession of uncensored slang expressions, pop-cultural references, and exchanges of insults performed as a form of gay art, marks the rhythm of the play. The places, the idols, the struggles and the consequences of repression, they all seem to find a definite place in the dialogue between the characters, without any filter, showing them both in their individuality and as members of a community to be. However, among the events of the play, one of the factors that undoubtedly moves the action is the intrusion of a straight character.

Alan progressively and subtly enters the play. First, he appears in Michael's words at the beginning of the first act during the preparations for the party. While Michael and Donald are getting ready, Alan enters the scene via a telephone call that will vex the secure shelter that the house and the celebration were supposed to be. An actual intrusion starts to be envisioned and the potential presence of this straight normative gaze casts its shadow onto the stability built by Michael.

> ... The TELEPHONE rings on an empty Stage. Momentarily, MICHAEL returns. ... (A beat.) Alan? Alan! My God, I don't believe it. How are you? Where are you? In town! Great! When'd you get in? ... No, I'm tied-up tonight. No, tonight's no good for me. — You mean, now? ... Well, Alan, ole boy, it's a friend's birthday and I'm having a few people. — No, you wouldn't exactly call it a birthday party ... I'm sorry I can't ask you to join us—but—well, kiddo, it just wouldn't work out. ... It's just that—well, I'd hate to just see you for ten minutes and . . . Okay. Yeah. Same old address. Yeah. Bye. (1968, 14)

Michael takes the information of Alan's presence in New York and his visit with initial confusion. While explaining the reasons why they could not arrange a meeting that night he struggles to hide the nature of the party or the guests. The shift from the

previous conversations with Donald to the telephone call is abrupt. Just few seconds before, they were shamelessly impersonating Hollywood divas, talking freely about their being gay men and cracking gay jokes (Harris 1997). Now, Michael is forcing himself to give Alan a different image of his life and his friends, or at least he does his best to avoid any compromising detail. As part of Michael's past of repression, Alan brings with him the same underlying anxiety of being discovered. "MICHAEL. … Listen, asshole, what am I going to do? He's *straight.* … I mean he's rally vury proper. Auffully good family. … I mean his family looks down on people in the theatre—so whatta you think he'll feel about the freak show we've got booked for dinner?" (1968, 15)

While sharing his struggle with Donald, Michael's mood changes, together with his attitude towards the future guests. Indeed, the way he deals with homosexuality and male femininity is not humoristic anymore (queens, sissies, etc.) since the words he uses to describe the forthcoming party are sharp and anguished. In truth, these can be regarded as some emerging symptoms of the double consciousness identifiable in a number of the personalities depicted in the play. Suddenly, the lens through which Michael sees, seems to be *straightened*. Michael's eyes do not see a house that is the shelter of his existence, but he precisely describes the birthday party that he is about to throw and *in extenso* his life and nature – as a 'freak show.' The possibility that a straight longtime acquaintance may re-evaluate Michael's persona, labelling him as gay – or as a sexual pervert – triggers Michael's paranoia.

Donald bitterly remarks on this change and points out how suddenly Michael looks to be ashamed of his life and his friends (1968, 16). Despite Michael decidedly denying the validity of Donald's doubts, he continues recounting how he got acquainted with Alan, back when he still "didn't go around *announcing* that [he] was a faggot" (1968, 16), when they were students at the same college. The underlying shame of these words seems to demonstrate reluctance and fear.

Given the two opposite attitudes that Michael has toward his and others' gayness, I argue that he is a man whose doubleness generates an interior fight. He is indeed paranoid about his image inside the public sphere, an image that he inexplicably tries to create according to the standards of heteronormativity: "MICHAEL: I was super careful when I was in college and I still am whenever I see him. I don't know why, but I am"

(1968, 22). At the same time, though, he alternates this straight anxiety with moments of camp-flamboyant performance.

His character is the common thread that unites the gay world of a private all-gay party and the outer world, to which Alan belongs. I regard Michael as swaying between the desire for privilege and the need for self-expression, a reflection of the divided coeval homophile movement. Indeed, in the moment when everybody will be present at the party, I will place him on a sort of middle area in a spectrum that goes from the unapologetic femininity and extravagance embodied in Emory to Alan's "proper" sanctioned masculinity.

THE CLOSET AS HETEROTOPIA AND THE INSTRUSION OF THE STATE

If analyzed from a Foucauldian point of view, in *The Boys in the Band*, the issues of spatiality and visibility are prominent. Michael's flat is the safe place where a group of homosexual men can separate themselves from their everyday frustration. It is a home that denies the values of domesticity, a free zone outside society but still immersed in the streets of New York City. It can be regarded as a closet-like space, an unrestrained dimension isolated and protected that exists because it is needed (Sedgwick 1990, 68). What is supposed to happen there, at the birthday party, is a narrow parenthesis in the frustrating lives of some gay New Yorkers. I regard it as a ritualistic, sacred place of purge and removal where the free flow of those otherwise neglected aspects of gay culture, from activities (stereotypical or not) to the exchange of emotional traffic is allowed, if not encouraged (Harris 1997).

I identify Michael's home not as a fixed closet, but a one-night-only celebrative closet, as *another space*, different from a home and from a club, reflecting and denying both at the same time. It is also *another time*, a place that has a definite ceremonial duration. Heterotopias, as Foucault defines them and their functions, are places that are needed "a sort of simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live" (2011, 25). Heterotopias embed and embody necessary situations, which are sometimes transitional, like ritual places, and sometimes perpetual, like cemeteries (2011, 27). Thus, the relationship that connects heterotopias to those who inhabit them coincides with their aim: heterotopias are originated to carry out the needs of those

people who are denied the right to behave in certain ways inside society. Heterotopias work as mirrors, since they depict people and objects while denying their existence (2011, 25-30). Michael's home exists in New York but at the same time, as a heterotopia, it denies what New York used to stand for: a place where gay identities and behaviors were punished and suffocated by law.

The social values belonging to the physical places where heterotopias are built, are rejected and overturned by both the place and its inhabitants. In the piece, indeed, the immoral, indecently queer birthday party ejects – while ridiculing – the morals of the domestic space. The house is the social vehicle that conveys the quiet models of heteronormativity and gender expectations (Farrell 1999,102). The image of "home" that appears in the mind of the American citizens in the Sixties is bound to the semantic spheres of parenthood, productivity, futurity and – unavoidably – heterosexuality (Farrell 1999, 25). Consequently, privileges and hierarchies, which are unconsciously perceived as "natural" conditions, are erected and strengthened by said models, from which the set of expectations that are projected onto those who dwell inside such spaces also derive (Farrell 1999, 105-06). The householder in this case – Michael – has little to share with said values, as a gay, sterile, and an unsuccessful screenplay writer. Given this contrast between domesticity and homosexuality, Crowley's heterotopia is the negative picture of the ideal domestic space: the rejection of its values and models is at the same time a reflection – maybe a rethinking – of them. This heterotopia of compensation can offer a place where the purging of the guests is allowed and in which is protected (Foucault 2011, 30). Indeed, the moment the shelter is threatened by the intrusion of a character who is intrinsically in contrast with the nature of this *other* space, the heterotopia itself trembles.

In the first part of Act I, the feelings of the Boys are generally positive, except for the initial worries generated by Alan's phone call. Indeed, the dialogues are animated by frequent references to Hollywood divas while fierce punchlines close the sentences. The characters call one another with the feminine version of their names and the party livens up with punctual choreographies far from the codes of masculinity. The way these men relate and bond with each other is quite distant from the dynamics that were supposed to regulate male relations. The mutual competition for women or the attention to physical sturdiness are absent in the partiers' conversations, just like any

references – with a comparative aim – to their marriages or to their offspring (Connell 1995, 46). In other words, the pursuit of a place on the pyramid of hegemonic masculinity is avoided (Connell 1995, 76). Triviality, obscene sex references and willing demasculinization are the most visible aspects of their sociability.

Alan's uninvited arrival happens in one of the peaks of perceivable gayness and cultural sharing between the friends. In fact, they put on stage a shared reminiscence of the moves they used to show off while dancing in Fire Island (Trebay 2013; Weems 2008, 175).

> No one, it seems, has heard it [the buzzer] but HANK. He goes to the door, opens it wide to reveal ALAN. He is dressed in black-tie. The Dancers continue, turning and slapping their knees and heels and laughing with abandon as ALAN goes to Right end of coffee table. Suddenly, MICHAEL looks up, stops dead. HANK goes to the RECORD PLAYER, turns it off abruptly. (Crowley 1968, 32)

Michael experiences Alan's entrance as a sort of trauma (Bracken 2002, 46). What Alan interrupts with his intrusion is not just a mere friendly dance session, but a ritualistic moment of collective re-experiencing, assisted through music and dance moves, aimed at invoking a dimension of harmony and acceptance profoundly in contrast with the reality of '60s New York (Reed 1996, 521). The fracture that divides the moments of innocent and pure abandonment of the choreography and the seconds that follow Alan's presence is evident. His being there, witnessing the forbidden enjoyment of a group of gay men of which Michael, long-standing acquaintance, is part, may be interpreted as a break in the heterotopic safety of the apartment/closet. Considering the exclusivity that Foucault uses to define heterotopias, one may wonder what happens in cases of an intrusion of the heterotopic space.

> MICHAEL. I thought you said you weren't coming.
> …
> ALAN. I… well, I'm sorry…
> MICHAEL. (*Forced lightly.*) We were just acting - silly… Emory was just showing us this… silly dance. (Crowley 1968, 32)

Michael's emotional balance looks lost. The carefreeness characterizing his – and his friends' – state of mind vanishes to be substituted by shame and vulnerability. The sense of safety that the heterotopia was supposed to convey suffers from the contamination of heterosexuality. Prior to the appearance of the heterosexual visitor,

they all felt comfortable enough to act un-straight without the pressures deriving from a judging social gaze.

The enjoyment seems to give way to denial, since Michael immediately diminishes the performance that Alan was unrightfully witness to, degrading it to just a "silly dance," depriving it of every possible value. This moment of Michael's frailty can be seen as the moment when his double consciousness emerges and the contrast between his gay and his American identity sharpens. As regards Alan, he seems to act as if he has interrupted something not only clandestine, but obnoxious and immoral, showing a mixture of embarrassment and concealed disapproval.

The first moment of uneasy mutual acknowledgment is followed by some equally uneasy introductions to the rest of the members of the party.

> MICHAEL. This is Emory. (EMORY *curtsies and sits on steps between* BERNARD's *legs.* MICHAEL *glares at him.* ...) Everybody, this is Alan McCarthy. Counterclockwise, Alan: Larry, Emory, Bernard, Donald and Hank.
> (ALL *mumble "Hello," "Hi," ...*)
> HANK. Nice to meet you.
> ALAN. Good to meet you. (*Shaking hands with* HANK.) (Crowley 1968, 32-33)

Considering Michael's change of attitude, he perceives his friends' behavior as a threat to his public safety. His reaction to Emory's feminine behavior in front of Alan may demonstrate how the very emotional bonds that were woven in a different, closeted context are made fragile by his anxiety of being unveiled as gay in the eyes of someone who is not gay. Michael indeed would rather put at stake his friendship with Emory than risk getting his image ruined by being associated with his femininity. He interrupts him, tries to hide him from the straight eyes, doing his best to please the heteronormative sensibility.

As for Alan's manners and behavior throughout the play, I regard them as expressions of an affinity toward those who comply with gender models. By doing so, and by being at the same time the only socially privileged character, he seems to project onto the stage an ordering of powers that evokes the rules of heteronormativity. Thus, when Alan decides to interact with Hank rather than Emory, he actually structures a system of respectability and dignity that may have influence on the behavior of the bystanders. The man he chooses to familiarize with is Hank, a straight-acting Math teacher wearing a wedding band.

HANK. Are you in the government?
ALAN. No. I'm a lawyer. What… what do you do?
HANK. I teach school.
ALAN. Oh. I would have taken you for an athlete of some sort. You look like you might
    play sports… of some sort.
HANK. Well, I'm no professional but I was on basketball team in college and I play quite
    a bit of tennis.
ALAN. I play tennis too.
HANK. Great game.
…
ALAN. What… do you teach?
HANK. Math. (Crowley 1968, 34)

Probably taking Hank for a straight man, Alan engages with him in a 'masculine' routine, that is to say, a conversation that takes place on the safe – decent – ground of sports and career (Kroeger 2003).[3] Indeed, acknowledging that Hank has healthy hobbies and a proper job, Alan feels comfortable in talking with him, without considering him dangerous or inappropriate company. This hetero-friendly perception that Alan shows towards Hank, makes it possible to articulate a precise behavior for the development of *male bonding.* In choosing Hank as a potential friend, Alan chooses ineluctably somebody to whom he considers himself akin, somebody who will not challenge the features of his masculine identity. What is being put onstage is the representation of male heterosexual social dynamics, in their task of serving the patriarchal goal, that is, to reproduce a universal masculinity, invisible to the critical gaze, but surveying and repressing subaltern forms of male identities (Wiegman 2002, 41-42). The bonding between the two supposedly similar masculinities goes on to involve a third party, the feminine one, presented as the wife:

ALAN. (*To* HANK.) You're married? … (*He points to* HANK's *wedding band.*)
… MICHAEL. Yes. Hank's married.
ALAN. You have any kids?
HANK. Yes. Two. A boy nine, and a girl seven.
… ALAN. (*To* HANK.) I have two kids too. Both girls.
HANK. Great.
… ALAN. Nine years. … You live in the city?
LARRY. Yes, we do. (LARRY *comes over to couch next to* HANK.)
ALAN. Oh.
HANK. I'm in the process of getting a divorce. Larry and I are – roommates.
(Crowley 1968, 35)

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[3] Kindle Edition. Position 1401.

This passage displays the parallel conditions of a heterosexual man involved in the consolidation of hegemonic masculinity (to which he adheres) and that of a homosexual man dragged into those dynamics of bonding. To safeguard himself, Hank chooses to omit that information about his sexuality that would jeopardize the relationship and his social safety (Kroeger 2003).[4]

The inclusion of the topics of marriage and offspring is another important feature of male bonding. Indeed, as Sedgwick affirms in her interpretation of Rubin's thought on patriarchal heterosexuality, "it is the use of women as exchangeable, perhaps symbolic, property for the primary purpose of cementing the bonds of men with men" (1990, 25-26). In fact, the exploitation of the female figure for the purpose of oiling the wheels of the patriarchal factory is a fundamental factor in a successful male bond (Sedgwick 1990, 25). Hence, the involvement of children and wives are, in the first place, elements of comparison in the process of masculine reinforcement, and secondly, they are confirming the image of an even masculinity connected to the ideas of possession and dominance of the woman – and also the children – considering her a commodity or as a trophy that enriches their male persona.

However, it may be relevant to take into account the opening question asked by Hank as a symptom of the underlying sense of discomfort and constant alert by which he is synecdochally affected. Asking "Are you in the government?" echoes an ever-hovering paranoia on the part of gay people in the 60s: the fear of being detected and then prosecuted for his sexual nature and activities. With that phrase, Alan is being explicitly identified as a projection of the majoritarian – state – forces, together with their executive approaches, through police raids and the invasion of private/secret gay spaces. This state of diffidence and agitation translates into a tendency to censor themselves and their own friends' behavior, exposing their emotional link and their sense of belonging to the gay cultural background (Kroeger 2003).[5] Hank's worries of being identified as gay by Alan are intensified by his job as schoolteacher. If on the one hand it was a respectable occupation, on the other hand the education sector had been a minefield for homosexuals over those years. Indeed, since homosexuality in the

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[4] Kindle Edition. Position 1406-1407.
[5] Kindle Edition. Position 1397-1398.

education system was easily associated to a potential of contagion or even pedophilia, teachers were frequently scrutinized by their superiors with an ever-pending threat of unemployment.

Another case is that of Michael's attitude toward Emory, the flamboyant gay man whom he perceives as a potential danger, due to his undeniable and unapologetic femininity.

> EMORY. [referring to Hank's job as a Math teacher.] Kinda makes you want to rush out and buy a slide rule, doesn't it?
> MICHAEL. (*Pulling* EMORY *to his feet.*) Emory. I'm going to need some help with dinner and you're elected. ... (*Glaring: phony smile.*) RIGHT THIS WAY, EMORY! (MICHAEL *pushes* EMORY *and* BERNARD *to kitchen. They exit and he follows. The muffled sound of* MICHAEL'*s voice can be heard.*) You son-of-a-bitch! (Crowley 1968, 34)

The harmony that kept Michael and Emory together only few pages before has been substituted by a toxic proclivity to limit those expressivities that stray too visibly from the codes of heteronormative decency. I regard Michael's repressive behavior as a survival instinct that he feels necessary to avoid the social punishment consequent to a potential *outing* at the hands of Emory, by being associated with him.

In the following paragraph, I will develop a further analysis of how the heterotopic space of the closet results in a dimension of domination and control that can relate to Bentham's Panopticon. Therefore, I will also investigate the role that the already mentioned dynamics of male bonding has in the construction of a hierarchical structure and how this practice affects and eventually deteriorates those who are forced to it – in this case, gay men forced to male bond with a heterosexual man through the behaviors and the topics demanded by heteronormativity.

PANOPTICISM AND THE CAPTIVE BOYS

A dimension that recalls the structure of Bentham's Panopticon is delineated through this shift of the power balances. The gaze, especially the privileged gaze, is of a crucial importance in the construction of a visual field that leads the characters to a strict self-control that will result in a dull repression of the self (Foucault 2014, 233). To analyze the dynamics and the identities inside Michael's home, it will be useful to borrow Foucault's theory of panopticism and biopolitics.

Biopolitics is a term through which Foucault describes those dynamics of power that aim at the total control of life through the body, conveyed through institutions like family, education, army, and public administration (2013, 298-302). The idea of authority is perceived differently, since the traditional singular source of power dissolves into indefiniteness and absence. The meaning of the term *power* itself changes in Foucault's theoretical approach. In *History of Sexuality* (1978) he describes power as something that cannot be acquired, destroyed, or shared, but something that is used and produced in infinite sites, through moving and shifting relations (2013, 196-98). In a reality where the exact sources of power cannot be detected everyone can control and be controlled at the same time (Foucault 2013, 199). The condition of exercising control over other people is assisted by the force of the gaze, the fundamental factor in the Panopticon's function. The project of Bentham's prison is indeed based on the relationship between onlooker and observed (Foucault 2014, 226). It is a building with a circular base on whose center stands a windowed tower looking inside the walls. Along the perimeter are the cells, lighted from outside but also with a window looking at the central tower. Every prisoner's shadow is projected on the tower making them constantly visible even if they are not directly observed, but most important, they can all be controlled by one person at the same time. In this condition of ever-visibility the inmates tend to observe the rules of the prison and to avoid riots, since they do not know whether and when they are under control, to safeguard themselves from punishment (Foucault 2014, 218-21).

Under an analytical lens provided by Foucauldian thought, the situation envisioned in *The Boys in the Band* after the arrival of Alan resembles the panoptical controller-controlled relationship. In said relationship, Alan embodies the role of the potential guard, strengthened by the doubtful perception that Michael and his friends have of him, of his being part of the government or not. Inside this inescapable visual field, the only way to hide – or survive – is to dissimulate one's own sexual orientation and to regulate others' behavior in front of the intruder.

This kind of approach to the expression of sexual orientation, by omitting uncomfortable details about it, or by censoring certain relational information, affects the same relationships that are concealed. It is the case of the loving relationship between Hank and Larry: Larry indeed intervenes in the conversation between Hank

and Alan in the moment when they are visibly bonding on the common ground of "marital lives," to claim his link to Hank after the subtle offence of being kept hidden. The aftermath of his intervention is, in the first place, Hank's lying openly about their being together as *roommates* instead of lovers, and in the second place, the weakening of their relationship, expressed through an increasing mutual jealousy (Crowley 1968, 38). The jealousy between Larry and Hank will better explained in the latter part of the play, since it will be shown how Larry is inclined to a sort of promiscuity, rejecting the monogamy that is sought by Hank. Larry's jealousy can be seen as both a feeling towards Hank as his lover, but also a feeling of a proud gay men towards another gay man who is acting straight, betraying him but also the homosexual cause.

However, if at the beginning Alan shows some interpersonal preferences based on how straight-pleasing are the aesthetics and the lives of the characters, after a few pages, during a face-to-face conversation with Michael, he explicitly voices his evaluations of Michael's friends.

> ALAN. [Referring to Hank] We have a lot in common. What's his roommate's name? ... I like Donald too. The only one I didn't care too much for was – what's his name – Emory?
> MICHAEL. Yes. Emory.
> ALAN. (*Puts drink on Upstage table.*) I just can't stand that kind of talk. It just grates on me.
> MICHAEL. What kind of talk, Alan?
> ALAN. (*Crosses to* MICHAEL.) Oh, you know. His brand of humor, I guess. ... He just seems like such a goddamn little pansy. ... He's like a... a butterfly in heat! I mean there's no wonder he was trying to teach you all a dance. He *probably* wanted to dance *with* you! (Crowley 1968, 39-40)

Alan's attitude towards Emory – metonymy of the image of gay identity – are based on all of those stereotypes and assumptions that find their origins in the postwar period, with the consolidation of mainstream information and mass-culture. Emory fits the image of the gay man conveyed by Hollywood and theater, of the man who has lost his masculine nature by being infected by a troubling femininity (Russo 1987).

I find it interesting that the deliberate attack of a straight character to an openly – in words and acts – homosexual man happens on a stage. Theater itself can be regarded as "a place where gay men could safely congregate and where they could enact their desires for flamboyance and a certain stylishness" (Clum 1999). However, the stereotype

of the show queen is generated and perpetrated by the popular-culture representations of the gay men passionate about musicals (Clum, 1999). On the one hand, this image challenges the heteronormative sensibility, and on the other hand, it freezes the common idea of homosexuality, impeding it from evolving.

Alan's perception of Emory is framed in those conventional limits, and before he actually alludes to his sexual orientation, he defines him as a "pansy," using the term as an insult referring to his behavior instead of his actual homosexuality. He continues his attack by denouncing his inclination to dance as an attempt to sexually approach – or molest – other men.

The fact that this moment of discrimination happens in a conversation between a straight man and a gay man, whose homosexuality is still not acknowledged by the other, illustrates another case of attempted male bonding. In this case the third party that is involved in the dynamic is the homosexual man, through his humiliation. One of the pillars on which patriarchal male culture is raised is homophobia. It cements and privileges hegemonic masculinity as a political claim that sets the superiority of virile comportments and the heterosexual existence (Sedgwick 1985, 3-4).

The symbolic value of Alan's presence in *The Boys in the Band* as a projection of the State reaches its climax at the end of Act I.

> EMORY. ... I have such problem with pronouns.
> ALAN. (*Quick, to* EMORY.) How many esses are there in the word pronoun?
> EMORY. How'd you like to kiss my ass – that's got two or more *essessss* in it!
> ALAN. How'd you like to blow me!
> EMORY. What's the matter with your *wife*, she's got lock-jaw?
> ALAN. (*Lashes out.*) Faggot, Fairy, pansy... (*Lunges at* EMORY, *grabs him, pulls him off stool to floor and attacks him fiercely.*) queer, cocksucker! I'll kill you, you goddamn little mincing, swish! You goddamn freak! FREAK! FREAK!
>   (1968, 45)

The ending words shouted by Alan suggest a reference to the Hollywood motion picture *Freaks* (1932).[6] This possible intertextual connection would lead to another

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[6] Freaks, by Tod Browning, recounts the story of Cleopatra, a trapeze artist in a carnival sideshow who works together with other "freaks." Cleopatra seduces and marries Hans, a midget who has just inherited a large fortune, with the plan to poison him with the help of her lover, Hercules. To fulfill her plan, she acts as a friendly woman together with all of the other carnival performers that she internally despises. Nonetheless, when Cleopatra is asked to drink from the same cup as the freaks, as a sign of belonging, she violently refuses, insulting them.

dimension inside the heterotopic space of Michael's house. What I previously defined as a closet-like space, such as a gay bar, is now also a freak-show circus – as anticipated by Michael himself at the beginning of the play (Crowley 1968, 15). Alan, like Cleopatra, is an outsider belonging to the normative world, introduced into the minoritarian reality of a group of gay men, who in their turn stand for the freaks. The consistency of the parallels between *Freaks* and *The Boys in the Band* relies on the relationship between the normative, that the State recognizes as dignified, and the abnormal, the nonhuman – or more precisely, the dehumanized (Thomas 1964, 59-61). The former, as a privileged entity, appears to influence both directly and indirectly the lives of the latter, controlling them to exploit them, as in the case of Cleopatra, or to limit them.

Alan's ruthless explosion of homophobia may hint at the recurring police raids that saturated the state of mind of the pre-Stonewall gay community. This event indeed would confirm his being a projection of the State whose aim is to seep inside the private spaces of the gays, to search their closets and to eventually straighten them.

Moreover, his presence fractures not only the relationships of the boys in the band, but also their *consciousnesses.* At the beginning, Michael, after envisioning Alan potentially being at the party, vacillates on his identity. As the plot goes on, the double consciousness that silently characterizes the psychological reality of the gay characters becomes increasingly clear and distinguishable, noticeable in the polarization of masculinities and the intensification of the partiers' discomfort. Hank plays the part, until cornered, of the straight man while Michael is torn between his need to not live undercover and his will to be straight in the eyes of Alan. Two polar opposites are the femininities of Harold and Emory, who are apparently careless of the straight gaze and seem to rely only on one consciousness, and Alan, the embodiment of hegemonic masculinity, the norm. Considering the particular struggles (self-repression, unasked male bonding) that Hank and Michael have to cope with during the play, those who find themselves in the abyss of doubleness, fighting between the two drives to emulate the Other and fulfill their Self, appear to engage in self-destructive processes. Hank would rather *pass* as straight than claim his homosexual love bonds, putting them at risk, and Michael mistreats his lifelong friends. Michael is torn between his desire to claim himself as gay and the desire to comply with societal expectations and eventually,

after Harold's harsh words, he schizophrenically collapses under the sense of guilt and fear.

> HAROLD. ... You are a sad and pathetic man. You're a homosexual and you don't want to be. But there is nothing you can do to change it. ... Always, Michael. Always. Until the day you die. ...
> MICHAEL. (*In desperate panic.* ... [he] *is now white with fear and tears are bursting from his eyes.*) ... if we... if we could just... learn not to hate ourselves so much. (Crowley 1968, 99-102)

This is the moment when Michael's double consciousness emerges. Michael acknowledges it, and it becomes unbearable. He finally recognizes his being a gay man, to paraphrase Franz Fanon's words, who is sealed in his gayness, wants to be straight, who is sealed in his straightness, as a result of an internalized inferiority complex (1986, 11-13). Lastly, he faces the impossibility of being happy as a homosexual whose tendency is to comply with the rules of straight-privileging society.

Considering the historical context that motivated and backgrounded the play, it may also be possible to identify a sort of microcosm-macrocosm relation between the history of the American homophile movement and the characters of *The Boys in the Band*. Indeed, seeing behaviors, standpoints, and relationships, one may detect an affinity of some of the characters with the members – especially the founders – of the Mattachine Society. That would be the case for Michael and Hank, who faked their sexuality in the past, as when Michael passed for straight during college or when Hank got married, as a result of the exposure to the repressing environment of their early youth, from which norms and perspectives were eventually absorbed and internalized. As the first members of the Mattachine would accept the compromise to "act straight" in order to gain respectability and safety while safeguarding themselves and their public image, Michael and Hank prioritize their public life instead of their private. Other members, like Emory, Larry, and Harold himself, may be likened to the more transgressive and riotous spirit that exploded in the Stonewall events in 1969. These characters wear their gay clothes unapologetically, far from the standards of heteronormativity, embracing their identity, sometimes also provocatively. Emory with his extreme and flashing femininity takes Alan's punch, like the drags and the gays during the night of Stonewall, while Larry refuses the patriarchal model of monogamy,

and Harold humiliates Alan and Michael's tendency to adhere to heterosexual standards.

Mart Crowley's *The Boys in The Band* provides a picture of the effects of the heteronormative Law and homophobia legitimated and encouraged by the State. On the surface, these norms are transmitted through laws, like the Sodomy Laws, concretized through police raids upon gay and transgender people or imprisonment. However, at the very roots stand the concepts of morality, acceptability, and respectability, modeled on the patriarchal totem of the white, straight (and manly), middle-class man. The need for and desire of acceptance is a feature that also marks the characters of the play, fighting between their identity as non-normative gay men and the tendency to act straight in order to gain a certain level of social privilege and safety, as in the case of Hank and Michael. This pressure to comply with heteronormative standards thus may be translated as the outcome of a social minority living inside a biopolitical society, in this case the '50s and '60s US, that leads the individual to an interiorization of hegemonic thought.

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"MESSAGE QUEENS": AIDS PROTEST LITERATURE, THE GAY COMMUNITY AND WRITING AS A POLITICAL ACT

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ABSTRACT

The explosion of the AIDS epidemic in the early Eighties, and the subsequent position in which the gay community had found itself, brought the need for writers to become politically engaged. The protest took different forms and activism was interpreted differently by different authors. Larry Kramer became very politically engaged and criticized both the government and the gay community; David Feinberg was aggressive but preferred humor as a weapon to protest; Sarah Schulman described the protests alongside the process of gentrification in the Village area. All their texts, and many more, have contributed to saving and shaping both gay culture and the gay community.

Keywords: AIDS literature, protest, gay literature, humor

INTRODUCTION

When the AIDS epidemic exploded in the early 1980s, the American gay community was hit the hardest, especially at first. In the beginning, the disease manifested itself through a variety of uncommon symptoms, and the nature of both the illness and the means of contagion was a medical mystery. The fact that, at first, the epidemic seemed to be only affecting the gay community pushed both the American government and the mainstream press to *de facto* ignore it for a long time. Hence, the history of AIDS has become inextricably tied to the history of the American gay community. This connection is apparent in the works produced by many gay artists during the AIDS age. Here I will look at how writers during the Eighties and Nineties reacted to the epidemic, using their work as a tool for protest and representation. The analysis will include different literary genres, and I will be focusing on the voices that better embody the different nuances of the protest during this time.

Especially during the early years, the absence of a cure and the mystery of how the disease was transmitted made information (along with medical research) the crucial element in the fight against AIDS. The silence kept by the institutions, then, was considered to be as lethal as the illness itself, because "until a cure … is developed, *only*

information and mobilization can save lives" (Crimp 1987, 12). For most of the Eighties, the gay community saw a world the rest of society did not – author Sarah Schulman opens her novel *People in Trouble* stating: "it was the beginning of the end of the world but not everyone noticed right away. Some people were dying. Some people were busy" (1990, 1). Since no one else was paying attention, the gay community needed to raise its voice, and many of those who chose to speak up and speak out were writers. In the Eighties, in particular, the line of distinction between author and activist became blurred, and the two figures often ended up overlapping. This situation brought significant consequences not just for the fight against the disease, but for the history of the gay community. It might also be one of the reasons why, when HIV/AIDS became a manageable condition after the discovery of protease inhibitors, AIDS literature as a genre, as well as most academic writing on it, ended in the late 1990s. AIDS literature, then, is connected at its core to its function of protest. Monica Pearl, one of the few scholars to deal with AIDS in recent years, stated that "print has been one of the primary media for AIDS representation" (2013, 3). Through print, Pearl argued, and through "an increasing sense of reliance on literature among a growing and changing gay population … [,] a gay community coalesced and redefined itself and spread word about ways to protect oneself and others from illness and take care of oneself if one became ill" (2013, 3). The situation pushed writers to employ different literary genres: mainly fiction and drama, sometimes poetry. However, since most AIDS literature authors belonged to the gay community, what they wrote was greatly influenced by autobiographical experiences. Therefore, the line between fiction and non-fiction was often blurred as well, and this reinforced "the postmodernist conviction that just as there can be no separation between private and public, so also there can be no separation between art and politics" (Pastore 1993, 16). Hence, essays and memoirs were a big part of AIDS literary production, and autobiographical fiction could be considered the main AIDS literature subgenre: gay writers told their own stories in order to survive.

The fact that the inspiration was significantly autobiographical, and the resulting social and political role of literature in representing the experience of the gay community, gave a new meaning to the act of writing itself. AIDS authors wrote with a sense of urgency rarely employed in other genres: as playwright and activist Larry Kramer put it, "it's not often that writers are so placed on the front line of history in the making,

and I felt an obligation as well as the desire [to speak out]" (1989, 65). Works of literature had the double responsibility to protest and spread information about the disease across the gay community. One of the most recurring examples of the latter is the list of symptoms. During the early years of the epidemic, in particular, when little was known about the disease, many AIDS texts presented a list of the most common symptoms: Kaposi's sarcoma lesions, night sweats, pneumocystis pneumonia, swollen lymph nodes, and so on. Such specific details both expressed the human reality of the disease and informed as many people as possible about the first signs of contagion. Expedients like these made AIDS literary texts an "underground" source of information, and were so widely used that, in 1993, scholar Sharon Oard Warner argued, "what I know about AIDS – about living with it and dying from it – I have learned from literature" (1993, 491).

This use of information is also a sign of another important feature in AIDS and, more broadly, gay literature: the relationship with the audience. Gay literature, up to this point, had assumed the presence of a generally straight audience to whom the very existence of gay experience had to be explained or justified. Now, gay texts explicitly assumed "the existence of a more or less sympathetic gay audience" (Stambolian 1986, 6). Furthermore, one of the main AIDS literature publishers was Stonewall Inn Editions, an explicitly gay line founded by St. Martin's Press in 1987. Warner argues that "as one might predict, most of the writing about AIDS is being done by gay writers, but readers may not realize that most of this writing is published in collections marketed primarily to gay readers. ... I begin to realize just how segregated that market is. ... Because few people outside the gay community are exposed to these stories, few are reading them. And we all need to be reading them" (1993, 495). These texts were often popular within the LGBTQ community, especially in big centers like New York or San Francisco. It took the Nineties, though, with authors like Michael Cunningham and Tony Kushner, for AIDS literature to reach a wider audience.

Besides protest and information, the political use of AIDS literature also had the intent of testimony. The gay community was living in a parallel world as it pertained to AIDS, and gays were being turned "into walking time-bombs" (Whitmore 1988, 205) by the disease. Therefore, writing became a way for gay authors to shine a light on stories that nobody would have otherwise told. Author George Whitmore defined the situation as if "along what looked like a losing hand, I'd just been dealt the assignment of a

lifetime" (1988, 206). The fact that, along with spreading information and protesting, AIDS literature was depicting the everyday human struggles PWAs (people with AIDS) went through while being ignored by the rest of society, gives this genre a peculiar position in the literary landscape.

During the years, several authors and critics (many of them Jewish) put forward a challenging comparison between AIDS literature and Holocaust literature. Although running the risk of sounding hasty (the Reagan administration obviously did not exterminate gay people in concentration camps), this comparison makes sense when we consider that a significant number of citizens, many of them belonging to a group that did not encounter the support or the interest of the government, were dying with no one paying attention. Furthermore, we can observe an overlap of gay and Jewish themes, for example with the recurring description of the Village as a "ghetto." Besides housing the biggest gay community in the United States, New York is the center of American Judaism, and the use of the word "ghetto" indicates that here Jews and gays often occupied "the same social, as well as geographic, space" (Bachmann 2008, 91). In *People in Trouble*, the idea of ghetto evolves into the image of New York as a death camp: "our city is so stratified that people can occupy the same physical space and never confront one another. New York is a death camp for thousands of people, but they don't have to be contained for us to avoid them. The same streets I have fun on are someone else's hell" (Schulman 1990, 113). The fact that most people are leading normal lives, while others are dying horrible deaths, is crucial to understand AIDS literature in general and the Jewish metaphors in particular. These are defining years for the gay community, so much so that "the AIDS epidemic was to become the central fact of its history... as elemental an event for this fledgling community as the Holocaust was for Jews" (Denneny 1993, 38).

The main difference between AIDS and Holocaust literature, however, resides in the former's element of protest. AIDS authors depicted the tragic circumstances the gay community was in as socially not dissimilar to the marginalization the Jewish community had experienced in the 1930s in Europe. AIDS authors, on the other hand, were not survivors: they were describing an ongoing situation, they were writing "reports from the combat zone" (Denneny 1993, 46). Furthermore, AIDS writers found themselves in a peculiar position: many of them were already sick and were writing against the clock, while others were writing about a sick friend or lover but knew that in just a few months

it could be their turn to get infected. All of these elements entail that "AIDS writing is urgent; it is engaged and activist writing; it is writing in response to a present threat; it is in it, of it, and aims to affect it" (Denneny 1993, 46). The sense of urgency in AIDS literature also has to do with words being, at some point, the only effective tool to fight death. In a context where many authors were already sick, and others lived in fear of contracting the virus, writing had a "talismanic power to ward off death. The Scheherazadian gesture in AIDS literature is one toward sustaining life" (Pearl 2013, 117). The act of writing, then, becomes lifesaving in and of itself.

The sense of urgency is, in this respect, one of the fundamental trademarks of AIDS writing. This urgency is also reflected in a significant authorial choice: many great AIDS novels notwithstanding, the generally preferred literary genres are the short story and the play. This choice happened, mainly, for practical reasons: there was a need to get the word out, and these two genres took less time to write and could provide more immediate effects. During the early Eighties, in particular, the most important texts produced were either short stories or plays. In 1985, two of the earliest pieces of AIDS writing came out within a few weeks of each other, and both of them were plays: William Hoffman's *As Is* and Larry Kramer's *The Normal Heart*.

Aside from the variety of genres, a significant element to emerge in analyzing AIDS literature is its stylistic diversity. Despite being one genre, produced by one community, mainly based in one city, during a specific time, the ways to describe the experience of the epidemic vary dramatically. While some authors thought fitting to depict the fight against AIDS using war language and metaphors, others considered it inappropriate; some preferred to describe the reality of the illness without naming it explicitly and others made it a point to mention every detail specifically; some chose to express the tragic realities of AIDS through the lens of humor, others considered it out of place. The result is, in the words of scholar Emmanuel Nelson, "a diverse body of literature that documents, disrupts, testifies, protests, and even celebrates" (1992, 3). This diversity also makes AIDS protest literature a rich tapestry of literary voices. Here I will analyze the works of three authors who interpreted the concept of protest in different ways, representative of the varied role protest has in AIDS literature. Some of them, like Kramer, are present in most AIDS-literature critical texts, others (Feinberg in particular) are maybe less known but not less relevant. The analysis will approach each

of these authors by focusing on what makes their interpretation of protest significant in AIDS literature and gay culture at large.

THE POLITICAL PROTEST OF LARRY KRAMER

From a protest literature point of view, the most prominent figure in the AIDS context is playwright Larry Kramer, who, by his own admission, "uses words as fighting tools" (1989, 145). In 1982, Kramer co-founded Gay Men's Health Crisis, the activist organization that during the early years would take care of PWAs and spread information about the disease. Kramer was also one of the first people to write about AIDS, and his 1985 play *The Normal Heart* is still one of the most important works about the epidemic, so much so that in 2014 Ryan Murphy adapted it into a movie for HBO, for which Kramer himself wrote the screenplay. The play recounts the early times of the epidemic, and the beginning of GMHC up to Ned's (Kramer's alter ego) ousting by the rest of the board because of his aggressive ways of protesting, especially New York City Democratic Mayor Ed Koch. While it is a well-known fact that the Reagan administration fundamentally ignored the epidemic for years because it considered it to only affect the gay community, it is probably less known that Koch acted (or refused to act) in a similar way – both figures electing "silence as the most effective means of gay repression" (Denneny 1993, 38). The involvement of writers in politics and the explicit protests directed at Koch are present in several AIDS texts to the point that, along with Reagan, Koch is arguably the main political figure against which AIDS protest writing developed. Housing the biggest gay community in the United States, during the epidemic New York also housed the biggest number of contagions. Activists compared Koch's decision to ignore AIDS to the situation in San Francisco, where authorities treated the gay community with greater attention. In his novel *Eighty-Sixed*, author David Feinberg draws a comparison between how New York and San Francisco dealt with the epidemic, until one of the characters concludes: "Remind me to move to the West Coast when I get symptoms" (1989, 214). For a good half of Kramer's play, the characters, members of GMHC, are desperately trying to get a meeting with the mayor and keep getting ignored.

Kramer's activism has the peculiar characteristic of being critical and adversarial both with the institutions and the gay community. While attacking the president and

the mayor for not paying attention to AIDS, Kramer also heavily criticizes a community that, in the early Eighties, was still widely in the closet. The sexual liberation of the 1970s had brought a new life for the gay community, one in which people could live their sexuality more freely. This freedom, though, was experienced in an isolated way. Gay men *de facto* lived in a ghetto – they conducted a very free sex life in certain spaces, such as Fire Island, Provincetown, or the Village, and in many cases were still closeted at work or with their family. They lived in a sort of parallel dimension, in which at the time they were in many ways autonomous. After the explosion of the epidemic, the situation changed and the gay community needed attention. In this context, Kramer considered visibility as gay men crucial in the fight to be recognized by the institutions. This approach was met with hostility and fear by other GMHC members, who did not want to be publicly identified as gay and felt that attacking the institutions so openly would be counterproductive. When told they had to stay out of political statements, Ned says that "it's going to be impossible to pass along any information or recommendation that isn't going to be considered political by somebody" (Kramer 1985, 32). The differences on how to structure the protest widened the rift within GMHC: the majority of the board wanted institutional support for those who were sick, Kramer wanted visibility to prevent others from getting infected.

The other division Kramer brought within the gay community had to do with sex and abstinence. In 1978, before the epidemic, Kramer had written *Faggots*, a novel in which he heavily criticized the sexual excesses brought by the liberation. When AIDS exploded, in 1981, the ways of contagion were unknown, but sexual transmission was among the suspects from the beginning. In this context, Kramer very quickly started advocating for gay men to stop having sex until the crisis was over. The gay community met this request with outrage for different reasons, the main one being that, after enjoying a few years of freedom, they were afraid of going back into hiding. Singling sex out carried, in the eyes of many, a component of blame and shame for gay sex life, particularly since the issue was raised by someone who had already condemned casual sex in the past. This discussion is also at the center of *The Normal Heart*, and Kramer's relationship with sex, in general, has been the subject of a few of his writings. Kramer's position, of course, started to be read differently when medical research discovered that he was right, and unprotected anal intercourse was the main mode of contagion.

However, even after the discovery of how AIDS was transmitted (and the consequent possibility of safe sex), Kramer continued to hold extreme positions on this subject, which would suggest a complicated relationship with sex independently from the epidemic. The fact that he had been right about the contagion, though, along with the fact that he had been the first to sound the alarm, had earned him the nickname of "Cassandra" (Feinberg 1994, 15).

Kramer's poetics are based heavily on oppositions: love and sex, gay and straight, and so on. One of the most compelling oppositions within the gay community at the time, though, was the one between dead and alive. For a long time, during the Eighties, an AIDS diagnosis meant certain death. Often, this entailed being considered as one of the dead while still being alive. Kramer wanted to speak to and for the gay community, and for years refused to take the HIV test, suggesting one just had to act as if he was positive. Poet and critic David Bergman sees a very interesting motivation for this, "based not so much on his fears that the test would exclude him from the 'living', but on his desire to keep open the prospect that he is one of the dead" (1991, 134). This position is crucial to the dynamics of protest: Kramer has to feel a sense of belonging that legitimates him to speak out in the name of the gay community, with which he already had a controversial relationship. In this context, to depict the entire gay community as a group of potentially dead people makes the protest imagery more powerful.

Kramer's situation during the first years of the epidemic has much to do with the evolution of the social position of the gay community since the late 1970s. The ghetto-like situation during the period of sexual liberation, criticized by Kramer in *Faggots* and celebrated by other authors like Andrew Holleran in *Dancer from the Dance*, changed the dynamic within the gay community. The social activities of gay men revolved primarily around sex and their relationship with the lesbian community was not so close: the community lived in an autonomous world, despite lacking social clout. The epidemic broke this balance: gay men needed to be helped by the institutions, and PWAs needed assistance. In *People in Trouble* Molly, the leading lesbian character, says that "when AIDS happened men needed more friends" (Schulman 1990, 76), describing the social change occurred in the gay community in the early Eighties. Bergman formulates this concept more precisely: "AIDS broke the spell of gay self-sufficiency. Suddenly, gay men needed government services and family support. However, their experience of

independence led gay men to demand help as fully enfranchised citizens and fully accepted sons. Such changes have, in turn, altered gay political thinking and rhetoric" (1991, 136).

This problematic relationship with the heritage of the Seventies sets the basis both for Kramer's activism and the backlash he received from the gay community. In *The Normal Heart*, Mickey's character had participated in the protests for civil rights, and in the first act of the play states that "the battle against the police at Stonewall was won by transvestites. We all fought like hell;" and he moves on to criticize the gays he calls the "Brooks Brothers guys" – the ones who preferred to blend in the general society (1985, 25). In Act Two, though, Mickey becomes the spokesperson for the position opposite to Kramer's regarding sex, defending the victories of the Seventies:

> I can't take any more theories... The Great Plague of London was caused by polluted drinking water from a pump nobody noticed. Maybe it's a genetic predisposition... What if it's monogamy? ... I don't know what to tell anybody. ... How can we tell people to stop when it might turn out to be caused by – I don't know! ... I've spent fifteen years of my life fighting for our right to be free and make love whenever, wherever... And you're telling me that all those years of what being gay stood for is wrong... and I'm a murderer. We have been so oppressed! Don't you remember how it was? Can't you see how important it is for us to love openly, without hiding and without guilt? (61-62)

It can be argued, though, that Kramer himself had an idea of "what being gay stood for," rooted in a different reclaiming of gay identity. He translated his complicated relationship with sex into the affirmation that there is more to gay culture than sexual relationships. He expressed this idea in several ways in his work, but the main example is probably Ned's monologue in the last part of *The Normal Heart* (1985), delivered just after he has been kicked out of GMHC:

> I belong to a culture that includes Proust, Henry James, Tchaikovsky, Cole Porter, Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, Alexander the Great, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Christopher Marlowe, Walt Whitman, Herman Melville, Tennessee Williams, Byron, E.M. Forster, Lorca, Auden, Francis Bacon, James Baldwin, Harry Stack Sullivan, John Maynard Keynes, Dag Hammarskjöld... These are not invisible men. ... did you know that an openly gay Englishman was as responsible as any man for winning the Second World War? His name was Alan Turing and he cracked the Germans' Enigma code so the Allies knew in advance what the Nazis were going to do – and when the war was over he committed suicide he was so hounded for being gay. Why don't they teach any of this in the schools? ... The only way we'll have real pride is when we demand recognition of a culture that isn't just sexual. It's all there – all through history we've been there; but we have to claim it,

and identify who was in it, and articulate what's in our minds and hearts and all our creative contributions to this earth. ... That's how I want to be defined: as one of the men who fought the war. Being defined by our cocks is literally killing us. Must we all be reduced to becoming our own murderers? Why couldn't you and I ... have been leaders in creating a new definition of what it means to be gay? (70-71)

FEINBERG AND THE POWER OF HUMOR IN GAY CULTURE

Ned's monologue could be considered the first step in AIDS literature towards the reclaiming of an identity and a culture that were a lot more complex than people thought before the epidemic. After this, though, Kramer did not go much further in this direction, sticking more to the political protest side of his literary production. The reclaiming of gay identity, though, became a crucial topic in the development of AIDS literature and was employed as a theme in different ways. David B. Feinberg also used anger as a powerful literary tool to protest. Although he published a small production of writings before dying of AIDS in 1994, he is one of the best examples of a defiant reclaiming of a queer identity during the epidemic. One of the main elements that separate him from Kramer is his idea about the use of humor. While Kramer asserted his positions with inexhaustible seriousness, Feinberg, despite a vigorous commitment to protest, elected humor not only as a way to maintain sanity during the epidemic but as a more effective weapon to attack the Republican establishment.

As already mentioned, the use of humor in dealing with the epidemic was controversial within the gay community. In 1987, author Edmund White wrote a harsh critique on the use of humor in AIDS literature, and his opinion gained quite a following. In his essay "Esthetics and Loss," White (1994b) advises to

> avoid humor, because humor seems grotesquely inappropriate to the occasion. A sniggering or wise cracking humor puts the public (indifferent when not uneasy) on cozy terms with what is an unspeakable scandal: death. Humor domesticates terror, lays to rest misgivings that should be intensified. Humor suggests that AIDS is just another calamity to befall mother camp, whereas in truth AIDS is not one more item in a sequence, but a rupture in meaning itself. Humor, like melodrama, is an assertion of bourgeois values; it falsely suggests that AIDS is all in the family. ... Only a dire gallows humor is acceptable. (216)

Much of the use of humor in AIDS literature would prove itself to be opposed to White's view on the matter, except for that last line: AIDS-literature authors, as a matter of fact,

are not interested in employing humor to make their writings more palatable to a straight audience. Quite the contrary: they are addressing their community and are often attacking the authorities. This environment pushes them to use humor, and black humor in particular, to be even more explicit in their depiction of AIDS and their protest against the president, or the New York mayor. Humor, then, becomes a lens through which gay people can look at AIDS with resilience, and a way of expressing themselves in a much more outrageous manner. Feinberg is a perfect example of this idea.

During his short life, Feinberg published two heavily autobiographical novels, *Eighty-Sixed* and *Spontaneous Combustion*. The third book, *Queer and Loathing*, a collection of non-fiction writings, was published shortly after his death. The latter probably gives us the best insight into his poetics. About his use of humor, Feinberg argues that "in an absurd world, humor may be the only appropriate response. … Humor is a survival tactic, a defense mechanism, a way of lessening the horror. I would probably literally go mad if I tried to deal with AIDS at face value, without the filter of humor. Once you joke about something, you appropriate it, you attain a certain amount of control over it" (1994, 87). Feinberg's take on humor evokes a literary genre that did something very similar: the literature about the Holocaust. As mentioned earlier, AIDS literature and Holocaust literature have a few features in common: one could argue that the dynamic of black humor when dealing with tragedy and death is the most interesting one. The first element worth mentioning is that both the comparison to the Holocaust and the use of black humor in AIDS literature are mostly put forward by Jewish authors, so a portion of shared heritage is undoubtedly present, and the approach to these two tragic events becomes similar. Scholar Sarah Blacher Cohen argued that, for Jews, humor has been "a source of salvation. By laughing at their dire circumstances, Jews have been able to liberate themselves from them. Their humor has been a balance to counter external adversity and internal sadness" (1987, 4). This dynamic is very similar to the one occurring in AIDS literature. The main difference is that Holocaust literature developed in the aftermath of the Second World War, looking at the past, while AIDS literature arose during the emergency of the epidemic, so humor became a literary tool for protest: there is very little looking back at a tragic past.

Since AIDS literature was mainly addressing a gay readership, the use of humor gained a function in this context as well. The presence of humor in a gay text usually

involved references and an attitude close to gay culture. Humor thus became a critical element in the literary process of reclaiming gay identity. In this context, a crucial role was played, especially in Feinberg's works, by the concept of "camp."

Camp has the peculiarity of having a role in gay culture – in "Notes on Camp," Susan Sontag argued that gays "constitute the vanguard – and the most articulate audience – of camp" (1994, 290) – and of combining it with a humorous lens through which one could confront a world full of pain. If we observe how Sontag theorized camp in 1964, and how AIDS writers employed it, one may notice a specific evolution in how this concept is used and intended. Sontag identifies a few crucial characteristics that can be considered, at least until now, universally valid. For example, she describes camp as being "something of a private code, a badge of identity even, among small urban cliques" (1964, 275), having the "power to transform experience" (277), incarnating "a victory of … 'aesthetics' over 'morality', of irony over tragedy" (287). The concept theorized by Sontag, though, was also "disengaged, depoliticized – or at least apolitical" (277), with "a comic vision of the world. But not bitter political comedy" (288). This point is crucial in our analysis: like much belonging to gay culture in the AIDS years, the concept of camp underwent an evolution into a more engaged and political feature in gay literature, becoming "politically respectable" (Bergman 1993, 9) while expressing "an empathy with typical gay experiences" (Babuscio 1993, 28). An example of AIDS camp could be found in Tony Kushner's masterpiece *Angels in America*, in which the main character, who has AIDS, looks in the mirror and says: "I look like a corpse. A corpsette. Oh my queen; you know you've hit rock-bottom when even drag is a drag" (1995, 37). Camp allows AIDS writers to look at their reality differently and, moreover, to express it differently.

The guilt associated with sexual promiscuity present in Kramer's work becomes, in Feinberg, a defiant declaration of war. When, during the George H.W. Bush presidency, the epidemic had spread so much to the general population that it could no longer be ignored, the national political discourse started to differentiate between innocent victims, like children born with AIDS, and the implied guilty victims, in particular gays and heroin addicts, who had contracted the disease through some kind of "immoral behavior." To a certain extent, then, the assimilation to a community is independent of the individual's choice. Especially during the Eighties, an AIDS diagnosis would immediately be interpreted by the general society as an admission of

homosexuality. In her essay *AIDS and Its Metaphors*, Sontag argues that "to get AIDS is precisely to be revealed, in the majority of cases so far, as a member of a certain 'risk group,' a community of pariahs. The illness flushes out an identity that might have remained hidden from neighbors, jobmates, family, friends. It also confirms an identity and, among the risk group in the United States most severely affected in the beginning, homosexual men, has been a creator of community as well as an experience that isolates the ill and exposes them to harassment and persecution" (1989, 24-25). This concept resonates in the famous passage in *Angels in America* in which Roy Cohn gets diagnosed, and refuses, as a prominent figure in America's political conservative landscape, to be reduced, in his mind, to gay identity:

> labels ... tell you one thing and one thing only: where does an individual so identified fit in the food chain, in the pecking order? Not ideology, or sexual taste, but something simpler: clout. [...] Now to someone who does not understand this, homosexual is what I am because I have sex with men. But really this is wrong. Homosexuals are not men who sleep with other men. Homosexuals are men who in fifteen years of trying cannot get a pissant antidiscrimination bill through City Council. Homosexuals are men who know nobody and who nobody knows. Who have zero clout. Does this sound like me... ? (Kushner 1995, 51)

In this speech guilt is completely absent, and while Kushner arguably had fun giving Cohn a line protesting gay people's social situation, the negative take on being perceived as gay remains. On the other hand, in his last book, Feinberg reclaims the label of pariah. In an angry tirade, he writes: "I'm sick and tired of all this talk about innocent victims. *I plead guilty*. I'm guilty of crimes against nature. I have done truly abominable things according to Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and the collected works of Jackie Collins. I'm the Jew that poisoned the wells; I'm the pinko that passed the atomic spy plans to the Russkies; I'm the Toon that framed Roger Rabbit. I'm the one *my own parents* warned me against" (1994, 15). This attitude combines protest with a defiant reclamation of gay men's dignity as gay men, despite the innuendos pushed by the Republican establishment. Humor, already theorized by Freud as "an assertion of ... invulnerability", a refusal "to be distressed by the provocations of reality", something "rebellious" (1927, 162-163), in Feinberg blends with anger, sarcasm and a few cultural references to reach an over-the-top, sometimes even grotesque tone that can be identified as a new mode of AIDS camp, one with political relevance. AIDS-literary works combine political

engagement while, for the first time, reclaiming gay culture: for example, using quotes from divas in movies, often in black and white, usually starring Bette Davis; by quoting certain works of literature; by exalting androgyny and drag queens. All the while using a humorous tone. In this context, camp can be considered, like Sontag stated, a "private code." Much of this attitude, and of its often being composed of these old, sophisticated, often obscure quotes and references, makes this a language that helps define the identity of the community. The urban element is also relevant: most of AIDS fiction is set in New York, which provides a rich and specific context, even language-wise. The "characteristic tone" in New York writing is identifiable with "skeptical humor, sardonic wit, disenchanted realism. A famously *hard* environment, New York inspires both stoic pride and chagrin" (Lopate 1998, XVIII). These features are not foreign to a "view of the world" through the camp lens.

If we analyze the landscape of minorities, it is impossible not to notice that the gay community occupies a somewhat peculiar position. As White has observed, "gay men are brought up by heterosexuals to be straight," they are "not ethnic but a minority, not a polis but political, not a nationality but possessed of a costume, customs, and a patois. [...] A sterile nation without descendants but with a long, misty regress of ancestors, without an articulated self-definition but with a venerable history" (1994, 158). This history is what is summoned, by several AIDS authors, to unite the gay community in a time of crisis by giving it a common language, and to reaffirm its presence and legitimacy in American society.

SCHULMAN AND NEW YORK'S GENTRIFICATION

The New York environment, along with political involvement, is substantially present in the works of Sarah Schulman, one of the few women to write about the epidemic. Schulman filled her novels not just with details about AIDS, but also with some of the other practical and political implications of the epidemic, especially for what concerns New York City. The fact that the gay community was concentrated in Lower Manhattan made it possible to set many AIDS pieces in the same neighborhoods, creating a sort of recurring common literary space. The Village is an additional character in most AIDS writing, and AIDS texts often feature specific historical events in the neighborhood

throughout the Eighties and Nineties. When dealing with AIDS literature, and with New York AIDS literature in particular, politics become inseparable from fiction, and the urban environment becomes inseparable from the text: "specific stories are the product of specific spaces" – without the Village, AIDS literature would maybe not be impossible, but certainly very different (Moretti 1998, 100).

The Village landscape changed a lot as a result of AIDS. During the epidemic, Downtown Manhattan was subject to a harsh real-estate development following the precepts of Reagan's FIRE economy. This operation, paired with the high number of AIDS deaths, changed the neighborhood immensely in just a few years. Many sick people were evicted; many apartments left empty by either evictions or deaths were occupied by straight, white, rich yuppies (Strausbaugh 2013, 933-46). The victims of the "social and economic trajectory" of Reaganomics were "creativity and unorthodox relationships" (Bachmann 2008, 88): this, obviously, did not make the lives of gay New Yorkers any easier, and several texts tackle this aspect, most notably Schulman's *People in Trouble*. This novel gained some new-found fame recently, after the *New Yorker* published an article underlining how the ruthless real-estate entrepreneur depicted in the book is a not-too-hidden caricature of Donald Trump. Depicting a love triangle between a married couple and a young lesbian activist during the epidemic, this book is also considered to have been a non-declared inspiration for Jonathan Larson's Pulitzer-winning musical *Rent*, an adaptation from Puccini's *La Bohème* in the AIDS age. Schulman's novel represented the Lower East Side from the "trenches of resistance against gentrification, eviction, squalor, homelessness" (Neculai 2014, 62) during the epidemic.

The specific issue of protest against gentrification and real-estate speculations in the Village area is at the core of the book. The bohemian atmosphere and the sexual liberation in the Seventies made the Village a mythical place in gay American culture. During the epidemic, though, real-estate speculation and gentrification further destroyed what remained of the community. In her novel, Schulman fights and protests against this (the real-estate developer is the ultimate bad guy in the book), but also pays homage to the gay spots in the Village that are starting to disappear.

The identification of a specific urban area as a sort of "homeland" helps to consolidate the idea of community, giving it an actual physical space of belonging that was already put in jeopardy by AIDS. This overlap is another reason why it is difficult to trace a line

of demarcation between literature and activism when it comes to AIDS. As already mentioned, many AIDS texts blend fiction with historical facts: for example, *People in Trouble* depicts the 1989 St. Patrick's Cathedral ACT UP protest. Other texts, like *The Normal Heart*, are intended to be read as historical documents: in the 2011 Broadway revival of the play, the audience left the theater with this note: "Please know that everything in *The Normal Heart* happened. These were and are real people who lived and spoke and died" (Kramer 1985, 78).

From the standpoint of literature consolidating the gay community, *People in Trouble* is also relevant when it comes to depicting the change of social dynamics within the community: from the bohemian life of sexual liberation to the formation of post-nuclear families to take care of PWAs. Many of those who got sick were already alienated from their families of origin because of their sexual orientation, and therefore had no hope of having a family member taking care of them after becoming infected. The frequent abandonments brought people together in the gay community, from lovers to friends to, often, simple acquaintances, to take care of each other, managing medications, hospital stays, funerals. During the plague, the gay community in the Village becomes a "whirlwind" where "everybody's connected. It's a human chain" (Feinberg 1989, 228-230). In Schulman's novel, when confronted by her lover about having no insurance in case she got sick, Molly replies, "I don't know … I have a lot of friends" (1990, 113). In AIDS literature, words and relationships become the only defense against the epidemic, because "doing nothing is a position" (1990, 113).

CONCLUSION

Throughout the epidemic, literature told the stories of people who were being ignored by mainstream society. The identity of the American gay community, which was greatly consolidated by the tragedy of AIDS, was defined in large part by artistic productions. The idea that the emergency cemented gay culture and the gay community is put forward in several texts. Most notably, in his non-fiction book *Someone Was Here*, George Whitmore reflects about the shift in the gay community from the Seventies to the Eighties: "was it a lifestyle – which implied, of course, that gay identity could be taken up and sluffed off as easily as a pair of jeans – a culture, a community? Clearly, it was a potent

subculture that made vital contributions on many levels, especially through fashion and the fine and performing arts, to the life of New York and the nation. Until the historical accident that signaled the advent of AIDS, however, it couldn't be called a community" (1988, 9).

The concept of protest to gain a legitimate place in the social discourse, however, culminated in the closing monologue of *Angels in America*. Throughout the play, Kushner masterfully walks on a thin line between activism and art. Political references recur often in the play, but the focus is not so directly political as in Kramer's or Schulman's work. The final monologue, though, is one of the most political speeches in AIDS literature: "we are not going away. We won't die secret deaths anymore. ... We will be citizens. The time has come" (1995, 280). The intention is, then, to claim a place for the now-consolidated gay community in American society and, by directly addressing the audience, Kushner "recruits others to carry on that work" (McRuer 1997, 173-174).

In a landscape in which literature represents and consolidates the community, camp has become a dialect representing "the voice of survival and continuity of a community that needs to be reminded that it possesses both" (Bergman 1993b, 107), and through which writers "put speech where there had been cultural silence. ... This writing lays before us an example of a living culture, culture as a spontaneous act, for culture is a complex social event that creates the public space in which a community comes into being through participation" (Denneny 1993, 43). Through testimony, political engagement and activism, then, AIDS literature ensures the survival not only of gay culture, but of the gay community. Nothing more than AIDS writers' engagement in the fight against the disease fully expresses the meaning of the slogan of Larry Kramer's second activist organization, ACT UP: "Silence = Death."

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LAYING CLAIM TO A CHRISTIAN AMERICA: THE RHETORICAL STRATEGIES OF THE *LIGHT AND THE GLORY* TRILOGY

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ABSTRACT

This essay examines *The Light and the Glory*, *From Sea to Shining Sea*, and *Sounding Forth the Trumpet*—a trilogy of historical narratives written by Peter Marshall and David Manuel—to elucidate their rhetorical structures. Special attention is given to the way the narratives adhere to the structure of the American jeremiad as defined by Sacvan Bercovitch and how they are informed by what Nicholas Guyatt calls "apocalyptic providentialism." Revealing the narrative structures allows us to see how the authors merge God's salvation history with the secular history of the United States and, thereby, treat American history as sacred. By understanding historical narratives such as the ones constructed by Marshall and Manuel, we can better understand how a large portion of the United States population understands themselves and their nation's role in history.

Keywords: American Exceptionalism, Christian America, Christian Right

INTRODUCTION

The question of American exceptionalism has been a part of American discourse since at least 1782 when J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur famously asked, "What is an American?" and suggested that somehow arriving within the borders of the new nation transformed the newcomer into a new person. The idea of American exceptionalism appears in many guises. It fueled official government policies such as Manifest Destiny and American relations with the Philippines. As historian David Noble in *The End of American History* (1985) has demonstrated, the claim controlled the narratives of some of the nation's most distinguished historians in the nineteenth and more than half of the twentieth century. And in some form or another, the discourse of America's exceptional identity can be found in the speeches of presidents as otherwise diverse as John Kennedy, Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush, and Barak Obama. The political implications of the discourse continue to be analyzed by historians, sociologists, and political scientists and while the discourse seems to be fading at times, it always seems to reemerge.

American Protestants have been especially drawn to the discourse and have added a particular theological dimension to the conversation. The conviction that the American nation-state has a particular relationship with the God of Abraham, the God who raised Jesus from the dead, was a staple of the public culture of the United States in the nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries. Historian Mark Noll calls Christians who engaged in the rhetoric "proprietary Protestants"— "those groups who saw themselves as the protectors of an American Christian heritage and the builders of a distinctly Protestant society" (1992, 287). The decline of Protestant cultural influence and political engagement in the twentieth century led David Moberg, in his landmark study *The Great Reversal: Evangelism and Social Concern* (1977), to document the growing political disengagement of evangelical Christians in the light of their emphasis on personal evangelism. Even as scholars were absorbing Moberg's analysis, evangelical Christians were reversing course again, and re-engaging with American politics, albeit with a different agenda than their predecessors. That political engagement, begun in the late seventies, shows no signs of waning.

Theologically informed claims of American exceptionalism have been central to the work of these politically engaged evangelical Christians—commonly called the Christian Right—who are motivated by a belief that America is in some way a Christian nation that has lost its way and must be called back to its Christian identity if it is to thrive and play the role in history God has given it. Central to the task of motivating Christians for political engagement was a telling of American history as the history of a Christian nation.

"The American Bicentennial," John Fea has written, "offered an ideal moment for the Christian Right to put forward a revisionist narrative of the founding of the United States that placed God at the center" (2011, 55). One of the most enduring narratives begun in the wake of the Bicentennial is contained in a trilogy by Peter Marshall and David Manuel. Starting in 1977, Marshall and Manuel began what few other American evangelicals have attempted—an extended providential narrative arguing that American history is best understood as a part of God's providential history, that (as they so often assert in the three volumes) God has a plan for America. *The Light and the Glory* (1977), *From Sea to Shining Sea* (1986), and *Sounding Forth the Trumpet* (1997) can be seen as representative examples

of providential American history: they share a set of common assumptions with other texts in the genre,[1] draw on typical historical source material, and have remained incredibly popular—writing in 2011, Fea reports that the first book in the trilogy "has sold close to one million copies, and for many evangelicals it is the only history book they have ever read. Though it was first published over thirty years ago, *The Light and the Glory* continues to be a fixture on the bookshelves of American evangelicals" (2011, 58). Indeed, in recent years new, revised, and repackaged editions have been released.

The political activity of the Christian Right has been studied extensively in books such as *Redeeming America: Piety and Politics in the New Christian Right* by Michael Lienesch (1993). Rather than duplicating that work, this essay examines the rhetorical forms used in the trilogy written by Marshall and Manuel that have provided a rationale for the political involvement of evangelical Christians through the twists and turns of the American political scene since the late seventies. Their close adherence to the rhetorical structure identified as the American jeremiad provides them with the form needed for a narrative in the long tradition of theologically informed American exceptionalism. They imagine a national identity formed, not by historical circumstances, but by the promises of God, promises so certain that no historical developments can alter them. In addition, the apocalyptic providentialism that informs their narrative allows them to condone and at times even embrace tremendous violence without feeling a responsibility for that violence.

An elucidation of two rhetorical forms—the jeremiad as defined by Sacvan Bercovitch in his influential *American Jeremiad* (1978) and what Nicholas Guyatt calls apocalyptical providentialism in *Providence and the Invention of the United States, 1607-1876* (2007)—can help explain both why the works reached their original audience and why they have remained popular and influential among millions of evangelical Christians in America.

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[1] See, for example, the work of David Barton and his Wallbuilders.com website, Rus Walton. One Nation Under God. 1975. Washington: Third Century, and Richard G. Lee, ed. The American Patriot's Bible. 2009. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

THE RHETORICAL FORM OF THE JEREMIAD

Numerous studies of the various forms of American exceptionalism have relied upon the groundbreaking scholarship of Sacvan Bercovitch. For those making the argument that the United States is an exceptional nation, the jeremiad seems an inescapable form; scholars, therefore, have looked for evidence of the rhetorical structure in narratives of exceptionalism. Like others before them, Marshall and Manuel employ the rhetorical structure throughout their trilogy.

Bercovitch, studying Puritan election day sermons, found a three-part rhetorical structure. The minister would proclaim the promise by reminding the people they were chosen by God for a covenantal relationship and did not act merely by their own volition. The declaration of the promise was followed by the articulation of declension, of a moral falling away from the life they should be living as a community in covenant with God. In this section of the sermons, the preacher provided examples of the society's moral failures. The jeremiad concluded with a prophecy assuring the people that they were not abandoned by God, that if they would change their behavior, they would once again embody the promises of God. Bercovitch argues that the articulation of the promise is so strong that no articulation of declension leads to the questioning of the covenant. In this sense, the structure is liminal—in its beginning, we find its ending.

According to Bercovitch, the self-understanding evident in the jeremiad helped establish social discipline and justify the expansion of the colony. With a mission to fulfill, the people could be called to task for behaviors seen as falling short of God's expectations for them. The jeremiad also supported a progressive ideology that built a self-understanding of the people as moving toward a telos, toward the fulfillment of history.

Bercovitch also argues that the Puritan jeremiad eventually became a national, American jeremiad. National leaders modified the nature of the promise by redefining the qualities of the "city upon a hill" but maintained the jeremiad's basic rhetorical structure. Where John Winthrop and the early Puritans saw themselves as providing an example of a truly Christian community for the Church of England to follow, later Americans would claim that political liberty and free enterprise were the key elements of the "city" and that

the witness was meant for other nations to observe. David Noble has argued that the form of the jeremiad, built on the promise that the United States is an exceptional nation whose history is distinct from the history of other bourgeois nation-states, controlled the writing of American academic historians throughout the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth (1985). Each generation altered the definition of the promise but maintained the jeremiad's rhetorical structure.

THE TRILOGY AS AN AMERICAN JEREMIAD

Fea has noted that writers of providential history such as Marshall and Manuel adopt a prophetic self-understanding, believing the historian "is not unlike the Old Testament prophets who reminded Israel of God's history of faithfulness to them in the hopes that the people might turn to God and repent of their sins in the present and the future." Such writers "fuse the stories they tell about the American past with this kind of prophetic insight" (2011, 62). One way to accomplish this is to borrow the rhetorical structure the Puritans adapted from the Hebrew prophets, a practice in evidence throughout the trilogy. Before writing about various historical figures, they cast their own work in the form of a jeremiad.

Marshall and Manuel begin their first volume by reminding their readers of their understanding of the promise of America. Until the early Sixties, they claim, America was viewed by people all over the world as a model society, that the name "America" "by itself would evoke a feeling of warmth" and that "the response of the majority of people on earth was deeply positive." They claim that, "Abroad, we were the free world's policeman; an encouraging older brother to those young nations struggling to achieve democracy; and the hope of all people still in bondage." By echoing the words of Winthrop's "Model of Christian Charity," they provide an example of how a Puritan jeremiad can be adapted for the nation. Winthrop wrote that the eyes of the entire world were on the Puritans of New England. Marshall and Manuel argue that until the mid-fifties, this was true not for a small community of Puritans but for the American nation-state itself. The post-World War II economic prosperity that fostered the expansion of suburban life and promoted the nuclear

family as an ideal is presented as the fulfillment of the American Dream and the promise of America. "In a word, *optimism* summed up America. The American Dream was about to come true" (1977, 13). Writing from the mid-seventies, Marshall and Manuel see declension all around them threatening the promise of the American Dream on the brink of its fulfillment. They write, "And then, with a suddenness that is still bewildering, everything went out of balance" (1977, 13).

In spite of what they see as more than a decade of chaos, Marshall and Manuel hold to a basic assumption about American life. As they did their research, their "basic presupposition—that God had a definite and extremely demanding plan for America—was confirmed, albeit in a number of surprising ways." The declension they see in American society has not altered their belief in the promises of God for America. Their overarching American exceptionalism echoes Cotton Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana*: "In truth, this book is not intended to be a history textbook, but rather a search for the hand of God in the different periods of our nation's beginnings" (1977, 22).

In order to both fully articulate God's promise to America and emphasize what is at stake if America does not return to its Christian roots, Marshall and Manuel identify four "veins" of America's identity all reflecting an aspect of God's promise to the nation. "*First, God had put a specific 'call' on this country and the people who were to inhabit it*" (1977, 22; emphasis in original unless noted). God influenced the decisions made by people all over the world to immigrate, not only during the colonial period, but all through the history of the nation. God's involvement was, and presumably continues to be crucial because "God was making His most significant attempt since ancient Israel to create a new Israel" (1977, 22-3).

The second aspect of the call of God on America illustrates Bercovitch's claim that the jeremiad can be used as a tool for social control—the promise requires obedience. Marshall and Manuel echo this insight: "*Second, this call was to be worked out in terms of the settlers' covenant with God, and with each other*" (1977, 23). A covenantal tradition is central to American social life and, therefore, an absolute marker of identity. Faltering

social relations between Americans threaten to bring the judgment of God down on the nation as a whole.

"God did keep His end of the bargain (which is the third major theme), and He did so on both an individual and a corporate basis" (1977, 24). This third theme carries with it two intriguing elements. Firstly, although Marshall and Manuel do not address other nations, their implied theology would suggest that God deals with other nations corporately as well. Other evangelical Christian works, both before and after *The Light and the Glory* (especially prophecy belief narratives such as those of Hal Lindsey) explicitly identify a national role for other nations. Secondly, Marshall and Manuel seem to place the nation-state in the position of the Christian church. The existing corporate covenant is with the American nation-state rather than (or perhaps in addition to) with the Christian church. This theme will be developed more fully when we turn to the use of apocalyptic providentialism in the trilogy.

As they conclude their statement of God's promise to America, they proclaim, "And so, this was the final major theme we found: that when a group of people, no matter how small or ordinary, was willing to die out to their selfish desires, *the life which came out of that death was immeasurable, and continued to affect lives far into the future*" (1977, 26). Because the promise is secure and permanent, the declension, no matter how severe, is not the last word.

Exemplifying how the jeremiad structure can be adapted to national rhetoric, Marshall and Manuel open their third volume, *Sounding Forth the Trumpet*, by arguing that the sense of promise articulated by the early Puritans was still in place for the signers of the Declaration of Independence: "They sensed that He had a plan for this country, just as He has a plan for each individual's life, and that He had shown them how to construct a free, representative Government that would enable them to preserve and maintain a moral society with liberty and justice for all" (1997, 11). The language of "liberty and justice for all," would, of course, be wholly foreign to the Puritans' sense of God's promise. For Marshall and Manuel, however, the new language is a different expression of the same promise of an

exceptional, even sacred, America set apart for a chosen people called to fulfill a sacred destiny.

Generations of Christian America proponents have cited the influence of the Puritans on an American identity. Marshall and Manuel, as noted by Lienesch, do the same (1993, 142); however, they also offer a significant variation on the jeremiad by pushing God's promise to America all the way back to Columbus, a key character in their narrative. Repeatedly reminding their readers that "Christopher" means "Christ bearer" and drawing on Columbus's study of biblical prophecy later in his life, Marshall and Manuel claim for the explorer divine inspiration: "He had long been convinced that God had given him a special, almost mystical mission: to carry the Light of Christ into the darkness of undiscovered heathen lands, and to bring the inhabitants of those lands to the holy faith of Christianity" (1977, 31). This rhetorical move allows their largely evangelical Christian readers to claim as their own the Catholic tradition embodied in some of the earliest European explorers. By pushing the idea of a Promised Land back into the fifteenth century, Marshall and Manuel create a remarkable sense of continuity between the Catholic explorers and the later English settlers. Regardless of their differences, both were used by God to "raise the curtain" and establish American space and American time as sacred because it is a crucial part of God's providential, saving work in the world. By radically reimagining the work of Columbus, their narrative moves close to what Annette Kolodny calls a fiction of American prehistory (2003).

But to make their grand claim about the promise of America, Marshall and Manuel must account for the gap between Columbus and seventeenth-century Pilgrims and Puritans. As they put it, "Here we were faced with one of our first real dilemmas. If God had truly been working His purpose out for America to be what the first Puritans would call the New Israel, then how could He have let everything in the New World go to seed so badly for a whole century?" (1977, 67). In a move that would surely have shocked the Puritans, the authors celebrate the work of the Catholic missionaries of the sixteenth century. In the conflict between the savage indigenous people and the money-loving conquistadors, only the Catholic missionaries were working to further the "true" work of

Columbus to introduce the Gospel to the "New World" and prepare the way for the Pilgrims and Puritans.

Pushing the promise back to the time of Columbus and the Catholic missionaries leads them to see evidence of declension in the era of exploration as well. No evidence of declension is too strong to shake Marshall and Manuel's sense of God's divine call on the life of Columbus. Any failures on Columbus's part—and they acknowledge many—can be seen as tests sent by God to strengthen his resolve and faithfulness. The lure of riches provides one of the earliest temptations. Satan is said to rule over the western hemisphere unchallenged prior to the arrival of Columbus, but the "Light of Christ" had established a "beachhead." In response Satan "chose the one instrument which almost never failed: the love of money" (1977, 42).[2]

In this episode we see a paradox that runs through the trilogy: The abundance of natural resources in the Western Hemisphere is evidence of God's blessing and providential plans. Yet the lure of greed and the desire for wealth constitutes a major temptation for God's Chosen People. Indeed, present in the earliest "discovery" of the Promised Land, greed becomes the foundational temptation.

In their final comment on the career of Columbus, Marshall and Manuel imagine another scene. Having established Columbus as the "Christ-bearer" charged with lifting the veil from the Promised Land, they cannot allow him to die a failure. Consequently, Marshall and Manuel imagine a death scene for the explorer during which he confesses his failure—admits he allowed other interests to corrupt his holy task of opening the Promised Land and bringing the Gospel to the Native Americans—is absolved by God and dies. Following the jeremiad structure, the failures of Columbus' life are not the last word. He too receives the prophetic promise that his work has not been in vain. God's promises will be fulfilled.

Having established the basic rhetorical structure of the trilogy, Marshall and Manuel repeat the pattern as they examine later historic events. Their demonstration of the

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[2] The corruption of greed will play a crucial role in another exceptionalist narrative of American prehistory, The Book of Mormon.

transition between an earlier Puritan jeremiad and a national jeremiad is of particular interest.

Marshall and Manuel see the Great Awakening as central to the drive for independence and the self-understanding of people in the American nation-state. The Great Awakening is viewed as a political as well as a religious revival: "Through the almost universal, almost simultaneous experience of the Great Awakening, we became aware of ourselves as a *nation*, a body of believers which had a national identity as a people chosen by God for a specific purpose: to be not just 'a city upon a hill,' but a veritable citadel of Light in a darkened world" (1977, 251). In the Great Awakening, they see the vehicle by which Winthrop's vision of a covenantal community of Christians became the vision for the founding of a nation-state. While Bercovitch would posit the transition as a move from a Christian vision to a secular, national vision, Marshall and Manuel see a continuance of the vision from a small Christian community to a Christian nation. The American jeremiad is characterized as a continuation of the Puritan jeremiad rather than a break with it.

In their treatment of the Great Awakening, Marshall and Manuel place evangelical Christians at the center of the culture. If the culture of the mid-twentieth century, with which Marshall and Manuel are at odds, does not recognize the centrality of evangelical Christians, it is because that culture has strayed from truly American ideals, the most important of which is what they call "the Covenant Way of life." Straying from this ideal will become a major expression of the declension threatening the promise of America.

Because a desire for the Covenant Way of life is part of the promise of God, its absence signals declension; however, the promise cannot be finally lost. "It is a hunger so deeply engrained in the American national psyche that it can never die, although it can go fast asleep and lie dormant for years. God reawakened that desire in the 1740s—and what He has awakened once, He can reawaken again" (Marshall and Manuel 1977, 240). The call for reform completes the jeremiad structure. If the declension is addressed, the nation will finally achieve its destiny. Thus, the providential history includes a prophetic call to renewed faithfulness.

Predictably, the major cultural crisis Marshall and Manuel deal with after the founding of the nation is the problem of slavery. Pulling back from the broad sweep of *The Light and the Glory*, each of their following volumes deals with a much more limited time span. *From Sea to Shining Sea* deals with the years 1787-1837, while *Sounding Forth the Trumpet* deals with 1837-1860. The shorter time frames disincline them from indulging the grand rhetorical flourishes that mark their first volume. What they retain is a conviction of America's exceptional status, a belief in the overwhelming activity of God in historical events, and a focus on the centrality of religious revivals in American historical developments. These themes can be found as they turn their attention to the doctrine of Manifest Destiny and the build-up to the Civil War.

The existence of slavery presents the major declension in the history of the United States. "How could things have come to such a pass?" Marshall and Manuel ask. Unwilling to accept a form of the Southern rationale for slavery that defended the institution by claiming Africans were being introduced to civilization and Christian faith, Marshall and Manuel are equally unwilling to allow the acceptance of slavery to uproot their entrenched American exceptionalism. So the troubling question remains: "If God did have a plan for America, if He had brought the First Comers [the Puritans] here and set before them a table in the wilderness, if He had lifted them up as a city on a hill for the whole world to see— how had the weed of slavery become so deep-rooted?" (1997, 296-7). They find the cause of the declension in national disobedience checked only by another wave of religious revivals.

In addition, the declension of slavery is seen as offset by an ever-expanding freedom and liberty made possible by Western expansion and informed by the doctrine of Manifest Destiny. While writing about the opening of California to American settlers, they reveal the theology behind their historical interpretation and display a continuing inclination to hallow American space. "Before God," western settlers "had an obligation to keep the portion of North America that He intended them to have free from foreign entanglements." If they failed, "the hundreds of thousands of immigrants who would come thirsting for freedom in perhaps the only land left on earth where true freedom could be found" would find no home (1997, 163). Illustrating the rhetorical power of the jeremiad, Marshall and

Manuel lay claim to California—especially in the name of protecting the land from the corruption of the Old World represented by European and Russian colonial interests. The land had to come into the Union as land free from slavery in order to make the United States what it was meant to be. As a land of liberty, it could welcome immigrants from the Old World in the confidence that they could be socialized into a life of freedom and American values. Finally, the jeremiad structure allows for Marshall and Manuel to embrace American history as a history moving towards a telos. The telos is both temporal (a land of ever-increasing liberty and freedom) and eternal (a land available for God to work out his providential plans for worldwide evangelization). The exceptional status of the United States is obvious for Marshall and Manuel when they contrast the United States with Mexico and consider what might have happened to California.

Marshall and Manuel begin their section on Mexico and its relation to the United States by reflecting on the providence of God and the discovery of gold. The Gold Rush is cast as part of God's promise to America. "When one considers the discovery of gold in California in terms of God's timetable for America, one is struck once again by His incredible timing. Had the discovery come three years earlier, when California was still the property of Mexico and there was no war to indicate the situation might ever change, it would have drawn a preponderance of Mexicans north, rather than Americans west" (1997, 255). This would have undercut God's plan for America, for the Mexican nation-state, while it may have had some democratic elements, was not a democracy based on "Judeo-Christian faith." Catholic missionaries may have had a role to play in the sixteenth century exploration of what was to become the United States, but Catholic Christianity apparently could not provide the basis for a vibrant Christian nation. While the Mexican nation might have positive attributes, it is not a nation of promise. "For unlike young America, young Mexico did not have a strong, dynamic Christianity at its core, and perhaps the greatest lesson of history is that, without a durable Judeo-Christian faith to establish, nurture, and regenerate corporate moral standards, no democracy can last" (Marshall and Manuel 1986, 257). All historical analysis flows from the promise of a chosen land at the heart of the jeremiad structure.

The rhetorical structure of the American jeremiad precedes and undergirds the analysis of Marshall and Manuel. The failures of Columbus and the Puritans are read as a temporary declension among God's people who will eventually reawaken to the promises of God and return to their covenantal relationship. No failure is too great to lead the authors to question the promise of God. What holds true for the Puritans holds true for the trilogy's readers. Regardless of the chaos present in American society in the late twentieth century, God's promise is certain: If the chosen American people will return to God, they will again inhabit the promises of God in a chosen land. American readers of the trilogy can take comfort in knowing their nation has not been abandoned by God (for the promise is still in place) and receive a call to action (for their nation must be called back to righteousness if the promises of God are to be fulfilled).

THE RHETORICAL FORM OF APOCALYPTIC PROVIDENTIALISM

Marshall and Manuel's trilogy employs a second rhetorical form, apocalyptic providentialism, as the term is used by Nicholas Guyatt. In the introduction to his study of providential historical thought in Britain and its American colonies, Guyatt distinguishes between three types of national providentialism. While proponents of "judicial providentialism" argue that God judges nations according to their actions in this world with no implications for the age to come, advocates of "historical providentialism" believe that God prepares particular nations to complete a role in history. Advocates of the third strand, "apocalyptic providentialism," claim that God prepares nations for their roles and that Christian scripture holds the key to understanding the roles various nations are destined to play (2007, 85). While Marshall and Manuel rarely dwell on matters of biblical interpretation, their sense of a providential destiny for the United States infuses their work from start to finish with apocalyptic providentialism.

The trilogy exhibits three aspects of apocalyptic providentialism worthy of closer examination. The first envisions history as part of a cosmic battle between good and evil, in this case between God and Satan. The second understands the actions of a righteous nation as foreordained by God. This leads to the third aspect: violence done in a righteous

cause is finally beyond question because it is part of the inscrutable will of God leading to what Robert Jewett has termed "cool zealotry."

THE TRILOGY AS A WORK OF APOCALYPTIC PROVIDENTIALISM

History as cosmic battle is best illustrated when the trilogy addresses the Salem Witchcraft trials, an episode Marshall and Manuel claim is central to the history of the United States even though it occurred decades before the nation's founding. "The Bible makes it clear," they write, "that there are only two sources of supernatural power: God and Satan. And in the spiritual realm, as in geopolitics, there is no such thing as a power vacuum: where Light reigns, darkness is banished. But when Light dims, the shades of night gather in the wings, waiting" (1977, 235). At Salem, "Satan would lose a concentrated attack of demonic spirits which in virulence has never been equaled in American history, before or since" (1977, 234-5). Given the relatively small number of deaths associated with the trials compared to events such as labor riots or anti-war protests (not to mention the Civil War), Marshall and Manuel's claim about the demonic aspect of the trials seems strange; it does, however, make sense as a prime example of history as a cosmic battlefield.

The treatment of the Revolutionary War, while conveyed in less intense prose, also displays their vision of history as a cosmic battle. Citing the social disruptions of the Sixties and early Seventies as evidence of a moral decline in the United States, Marshall and Manuel demonstrate a high regard for social order. Consequently, the American Revolution poses a dilemma. Should not the colonists have honored the King of England and submitted to his authority? As they begin to examine the Revolutionary War, they claim divine authority for their interpretation. They write: "[T]he Holy Spirit went on to show us why America *had* to resist—why, for them to do anything less would have been the gravest disobedience. This part of the revelation began with a verse of Scripture coming to Peter [Marshall]'s mind, which when he looked it up, was Galatians 5:1, and which proved to be the key to all that followed: 'For freedom, Christ has set us free; stand fast, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery'" (1977, 254). Stopping short of identifying England

as an agent of Satan, they place the rebellious colonists as agents of God acting in history in their rebellion against England.

Marshall and Manuel buttress their belief that American independence was the absolute will of God by citing evidence of God's intervention on behalf of the colonists: "And yet, if it *was* God's will for America to break forcibly with her mother country, then there should be ample evidence of His not only having supported her endeavors, but also His having directly intervened on her behalf—as dramatically and conclusively as He did in the days of the Old Testament" (1977, 270). Having embraced the promise of American freedom as a promise given from God, they predictably find the evidence to confirm their beliefs.

Marshall and Manuel even claim that God repeatedly altered the weather to further the cause of the colonists. When Henry Knox needed to bring artillery from Ticonderoga to Cambridge, he decided to use sleds. "And Divine Providence provided the necessary snow." And when George Washington was moving troops from Brooklyn to Manhattan by boat, God sent a thick fog to hide the soldiers from the British. Marshall and Manuel even find the providence of God at work when nothing happens. "But the greatest evidence of how much the grace of God was involved was the fact that nothing went wrong. No chance slip of the tongue, no wandering Tory passerby, no lowing ox or breaking cart spoiled the perfect surprise" (1977, 298, 315, 299). These examples are evidence of the extreme view advocated by Marshall and Manuel regarding God's intervention in the events of American history. As Fea has noted, in passages such as this in providential histories, "The lesson learned from this event was an obvious one: God had intervened on behalf of the American army. Washington may have suffered a defeat at Long Island, but God, through the storm, had saved the Continental Army" (2011, 66). In the cosmic battle between the only two sources of power in the universe, the United States is unquestionably aligned with the righteous actions of God.

Fea summarizes histories written in the vein of apocalyptic providentialism well: "The specific study of American history illuminates best God's true plan for the ages. The history of the United States is more important than any other era or region on the globe,

save that of ancient Israel." For those embracing this providential view, God, having chosen America as the home of a new Israel, "has ever since reserved for it a special place in his design for his creation. The growth of the United States as a twentieth-century superpower and the world's great defender of democracy and freedom confirm this assertion" (2011, 60-61). Events in American history are foreordained, linked as they are to the nation's role in God's providential work. The nations of Europe were places of corruption, befouled by fallen human institutions; the western hemisphere was not. Thus, according to Marshall and Manuel, America became "obviously the right place—virginal, wild, as yet untainted by the godless corruption that had befouled the known world and peopled with savage heathen who had never heard the Gospel and whose hearts therefore were not hardened to it." This is, on the one hand, a call to evangelize Native Americans. But they also must be conquered. "To be sure, this heathen would be used by Satan; the New World had yet to be won from him;" "But if God was with them," Marshall and Manuel write of the Puritans, "all the powers of hell could not prevail against them" (1977, 153).

Because the United States is characterized as a righteous nation whose thriving is foreordained, its actions, by definition, are righteous. But this creates an interpretive problem: How are we to understand and even condone violent actions? The displacement of Native Americans provides one of the great challenges to the trilogy's interpretation of history. While Marshall and Manuel never celebrate the harsh treatment of the native population, they consistently present it as necessary for God's ultimate plan.

Fusing the violence done by agents of the nation-state with the providence of God controls how the authors present that violence. They begin by claiming that Americans of European descent did not bring violence to the world of Native Americans but merely replaced one expression of it with another. "The lives of these Indians," they write, "were an unending tableau of fear and hatred of other tribes, and a dawn-to-dusk struggle for survival" (Marshall and Manuel 1977, 76).

The trilogy's narrative can be compared to others written by what Australian scholar Alan Lawson calls "settler cultures", such as the dominant culture of Australia where the conquerors now exist side by side with members of a supplanted indigenous population.

Lawson finds that, in Australian culture, narratives persist that argue the violence of the invading culture "is a minor part of a longer history of violent dispossession founded by indigenous peoples themselves" (2000, 20). Taken together with its apocalyptic providentialism, the trilogy's settler culture perspective helps explain the claims of pre-existing violence among the indigenous population.

Even when the violence is seen as pre-dating European settlement, Native Americans pose a greater rhetorical problem than nearly anything else in the history Marshall and Manuel strive to relate. For the treatment of Native Americans creates a theological problem. If the Europeans were called to convert indigenous people to Christian faith, why were so many confrontations violent? Exhibiting the third aspect of apocalyptic providentialism, the trilogy downplays the violence as necessary in the accomplishment of God's greater good.

Marshall and Manuel ask the rhetorical question, "Did God want the Indians pushed off their hunting grounds and herded into reservations?" Considering the suffering resulting from the displacement, the obvious answer would seem to be no, but Marshall and Manuel cannot embrace this perspective without acknowledging moral failure by the righteous nation-state. Consequently, they back away from the confidence they exhibit elsewhere regarding God's plan for America: "These were not easy questions to answer, and only an arrogant fool would claim to be sure of knowing God's complete plan and intent." Nevertheless, they do assert confidence in knowing that God wishes all to be saved thereby suggesting that the reservation system may have been part of God's long-range plan to bring salvation to the indigenous population. They close the discussion of the treatment of Native Americans by reminding readers of God's sovereignty. "In America the system was not working for the black man, and it was not working for the red man, either. But one day it would; God was on His throne. It might take far longer than it should have and far longer than some would like, but one day His will would prevail" (1997, 169). Their embrace of apocalyptic providentialism forbids them from calling the actions of God's agent in history into question, yet they are uncomfortable fully justifying the violence. Thus, they fall back to the inscrutable will of God.

The scholarship of Robert Jewett, especially his concept of cool zealotry, can help explain the position taken by the trilogy regarding violence and elucidate why the approach resonates with evangelical Christian readers. "Cool zeal," according to Jewett, suggests "that faithfulness to the righteous cause provides the sole model for responsibility" (1984, 179). Seen through the lens of cool zealotry, the founders of the American nation-state had only two choices. They could either disobey God and not fight a war with England, or they could obey God. Naturally, if they chose to obey God, God and not the colonists was ultimately responsible for the violence both of the war itself and the eventual expansion of the American nation made possible by independence. This basic stance toward violence pervades the trilogy. Time after time, violence is condoned as essential to the accomplishment of God's ultimate plan for America.

CONCLUSION

In their long narrative of the history of America from Columbus to the eve of the Civil War, Marshall and Manuel embrace a narrative of national promise, declension, and the repentance that repeatedly renews the promise. Along the way, the violence done by the righteous nation is presented as part of God's great plan for salvation. But, from the very beginning of their first volume, they present a message to their contemporaries. Believing God's promise of a national covenant with the United States is still intact—yet seeing evidence of declension everywhere they look—they strive to call their readers to the kind of revival they believe will renew the covenantal relationship with God and avoid national catastrophe. Nowhere is their commitment to the structure of an American jeremiad more in evidence than when they are addressing their contemporary audience with the peril they perceive.

Despite all of the evidence of declension they see around them, Marshall and Manuel, late in the first volume, reaffirm that the United States is a land of promise. In the midst of writing their book, they have found "that despite the spiritual decline, God made certain that those same covenant promises which He made to our forefathers when He brought them here, would always be a viable possibility in the United States of America."

Writing on behalf of their fellow citizens they assert, "we Americans would still be able to avail ourselves of those promises, and re-enter a covenant relationship with Him *as a nation*" (1977, 336). The promise has been affirmed, but evidence of declension remains. After reviewing the revivals of 1858 in their history of the coming of the Civil War, Marshall and Manuel write, "One thing more: It has been said that if we don't learn from our history, we will be condemned to repeat it. In spirit America in 1998 is so like America in 1858 that the overtones are chilling." In the eyes of the Supreme Court in 1858, they report, slaves had no rights. They draw the parallel to the denial of rights to the unborn in legalized abortion: "But abortion is no more a part of God's plan for America than slavery was, and those who favor it today are as deliberately blind to evil as those who favored slavery in 1858" (1997, 12). In spite of the declension, voices of renewal are present in the culture. Marshall and Manuel heard the voices in 1986 but surely would also find them in 1997 and today. "Today prophetic voices can again be heard, warning of personal and social evils, which if left unrepented of, will bring a fresh judgment of God upon our beloved land" (1986, 404). At the end of their third volume, they give full voice to the evidence of the declension they perceive:

> Now, as the century draws to a close, men and women of vision are again seeing signs and wonders, indicating that God's judgment, so long deferred, is close at hand. In the twelve years since we penned *From Sea to Shining Sea*, the moral standards of our society have deteriorated precipitously. The litany is all too familiar—soaring illegitimacy, divorce, and drug abuse. A blight of pornography has seeped into every corner of society. And the monstrous slaughter of the innocent unborn continues unabashed. (1997, 521)

Just as serious for Marshall and Manuel, Christians in America tolerate these evils. "In the face of such callous indifference," they write, "God could not bless us indefinitely and now the grace has begun to lift" (1977, 354). What they sensed in 1977 persisted throughout the trilogy.

True to the structure of the jeremiad, in spite of the great declension they see around them, Marshall and Manuel declare it is not too late to renew the national covenant. "Once again," Marshall and Manuel write late in their second volume, "America stands, like Nineveh, at the crossroads of mercy and judgment. If we Christians will hear and heed in

time, God's plan for America will yet be fulfilled. And He will crown her good with brotherhood, from sea to shining sea" (1986, 406). In this rhetorical formation of the prophetic call of a renewed covenant, Marshall and Manuel once again place evangelical Christians at the center of the culture and the destiny of the United States. Although the language of the volume is nationalistic from start to finish, the nation can only be renewed by those Christians who both recognize the nation's destiny and are willing to intervene. In Marshall and Manuel's construction, the land can only be healed if its true center, a modern incarnation of "proprietary Protestants," will recognize its identity and call their fellow citizens to fulfill its calling. If the evangelical Christians at the center of American culture will recognize their position, overcome their malaise, and repent on behalf of the nation-state, a crisis may be averted. "Hopefully it will reverse our downward slide into a new Dark Age. Even if it does not, it will prepare us for what we must go through" (Marshall and Manuel 1997, 12).

The trilogy attempts to do prodigious rhetorical work. To call the nation back to its true center, they must call Christians to recognize and embrace their identity as the unacknowledged leaders of the nation-state. The narratives that result from this call are part nostalgia—an earlier, more pristine culture is celebrated—and part combative—a crusade is needed for Christians to once again assume their rightful place in the culture. Throughout, the most crucial modes of identity are those of the individual believer obedient to Christ and the Christian citizen upon whose faithfulness the health of the nation-state rests. The level of violence needed to achieve God's plan is undetermined, but that violence can always be condoned, can always be seen as necessary, if it functions to achieve God's purposes in history.

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THE ROUTLEDGE INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POSTMODERNISM

Linda Wagner-Martin (author)
London: Routledge, 2018, pp.170, ISBN 978-1-138-74665-7
Reviewed by Sarah Brandi

Over the past decades, there has been an increasing interest in postmodernism. Many critics have attempted to explain what the term postmodern means and clarify the essence of this broad cultural movement, developed in the late 20th century and encompassing several fields, such as architecture, philosophy, and the arts.

The Routledge Introduction to American Postmodernism aims to contribute to the growing literature on this issue. In particular, the author Linda Wagner-Martin, a Professor of English and Comparative Literature, intends to offer an account of how postmodernism has evolved in the context of American literature since its commencement up to the present. In the eight chapters that make up the book, Wagner- Martin analyses several genres of postmodern writing dealing with both renowned and less popular writers.

The book lacks a proper introduction, where the writer could have explained its aim and which aspects of American postmodernism it focuses on. Instead, the volume starts with the first chapter where the author attempts to detect the origins of postmodernism. Wagner-Martin illustrates the early uses of the term postmodern, emphasizing their aesthetic dimension. She also states that it is difficult to deal exclusively with American postmodernism, considering the global basis of the movement. Moreover, it is explained that there is a large debate on what genres, works and movements can be labelled as postmodern. Wagner-Martin reports several critical points of view according to which the key expression of literary postmodernism is American experimental fiction. In order to clarify how to place the movement within the United States' literary panorama, she also traces and examines the first definitions of postmodernism. In these definitions, this term is often related to other terms, such as self-reflexive fiction, neorealism, anti-realist fiction,

metafiction and post-contemporary fiction. In particular, these terms are characterized by an unexpected dimension of political awareness which – as noticed by several scholars, such as Gerhard Hoffmann and Joseph Dewey – is also rooted in the postmodern movement in America. In order to fully comprehend how postmodernism originated, the author examines the poetics of John Barth, William Gass and Donald Barthelme. Through the analyses of some of their works and statements, she clarifies the source of some of the most important forms and writing techniques of postmodernism. Other prominent postmodern masterpieces are analyzed in the second chapter of *The Routledge Introduction to American Postmodernism*. Through the examination of works by Robert Coover, Thomas Pynchon, Don DeLillo and David Foster Wallace, Wagner-Martin attempts to explain how postmodern writers deal with some issues, such as the concept of History. In particular, what emerges is that History is, for the postmodernists, a blurred and unstable notion. The analyses of the novels written by these authors also allows the identification of some essential characteristics of postmodern writing, such as the use of humour and its different meanings.

The volume deals not only with authors that are usually labelled as postmodernists, but also with those who are not generally included in this category. Particularly, chapter three discusses a catalogue of writers that begun their careers in the 1960s and 1970s. They are divided in two big categories: the Jewish and the Southern. Writers such as Saul Bellow, Philip Roth and Norman Mailer are labelled as Jewish, whereas Joyce Carol Oates, Thadious M. Davis, Truman Capote, Cormac McCarthy and others are classified as Southern. The author pinpoints that in the past critics did not categorize these novelists as postmodernists. However, Wagner-Martin disagrees with this critical point of view, since a detailed examination of their works and poetics shows that they use some postmodern literary devices. Particularly, Mailer's fusion of genres and Oates' experimentations bring them close to postmodernism. For this reason, several Jewish and Southern writers can be considered members of the heterogeneous group of postmodernists.

In chapters 4 and 5 Wagner-Martin describes the method used by David Coowart in his book The Tribe of Pyn to classify postmodern writers. In his book Coowart groups

postmodernists according to their birth date. Specifically, he divides postmodern writers into three generations: the first generation includes authors born in the 1920s and 1930s, the second and third generation consist of authors born in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. Wagner-Martin illustrates Coowart's idea, according to which an examination of these authors' works makes it possible to understand how and to what extent earlier postmodern authors influence those of the second and third generation. Cowart's approach is an inclusive one, as he encompasses several works with different characteristics. This inclusivity results from the fact that he writes about authors who belong to minorities, such as women, Native Americans, and African-Americans. Against the background of Coowart's theory, Wagner-Martin has the chance to better explore postmodernism and to create a new postmodern canon, where marginalized writers and less popular genres are included.

Chapter 6, entitled "The Fusion of Genres," dwells on postmodern genres and their features, and it deals with the blurred boundaries between genres typical of this aesthetic. In the first part of the chapter, poetry is analyzed: postmodern poetry seems to have its origins in Beat Poetry and to be identified with writing that has become known as L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E. Postmodern poesy does not have a well-defined form: its structure may change and it does not use only the typical devices of language in verses, but it also adopts some strategies used in prose. Having analysed the new language of postmodern poetry, the author also analyses the intersection of genres in prose. She presents some examples of hybrid genres. Particularly, she focuses on novel, autobiography, memoir, and New Journalism. Wagner- Martin's purpose is to explain how these forms became popular during the same years as postmodernism. Wagner-Martin stresses the fact that one of the main features of postmodern writing is the synthesis of different genres to create something unusual.

Also aware of the shock produced by the events of 9/11, Wagner-Martin includes a reflection on writers who have decided to deal with this occurrence. She dwells on the dynamics through which writing may be understood as a way to elaborate the trauma caused by the terrorist attacks. It is noticed that in a number of narratives describing that tragic day, writers employ different images, such as that of the falling man, in order to fully

portray what people saw. After the Twin Towers were destroyed and thousands of people died, writers felt the need to give an account of what happened. At the beginning, they only expressed the sorrow and the loss through poetry and short prose. However, after some years they felt the necessity to question the events and describe what they saw through novels and memoirs. The urgency to cope with the grief caused by 9/11 and inscribe that day in American history thus provoked the rise of a new genre called the 9/11 novel or post-9/11 novel. Wagner-Martin tries to identify the features of these novels and explains that, according to the critic Marni Gauthier, they cannot be considered postmodern works. However, it is not clear if she agrees or disagrees with Gauthier's statement in *Amnesia and Redress in Contemporary American Literature* (2011).

In the last chapter the author tries to understand the meaning of the term postmodernism in the twenty-first century and if this word is still useable. To understand what remains of postmodernism today, Wagner-Martin analyses the works written in the twenty-first century by some of the most prominent postmodern writers, trying to understand if in them some of the typical postmodern structures and techniques continue to be used.

The Routledge Introduction to American Postmodernism traces the origins of the postmodern movement in the US, analyses a good number of genres, writers, and features related to it. Nevertheless, it has some drawbacks, as Linda Wagner-Martin lingers excessively on the description of the works of the authors she considers to be postmodernist: she fully narrates their plots, but she does not give a complete account of the reasons why they can be labelled as postmodern. Moreover, the book lacks useful information about the cultural, political, and historical background against which the movement developed. Even if *The Routledge Introduction to American Postmodernism* is a book that scholars of postmodernism should certainly read to improve their knowledge of the issue, it is not suitable for people who have never approached postmodernism before, since its understanding implies that its readers already know some fundamental information about the movement.

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RUPAUL'S DRAG RACE AND THE SHIFTING VISIBILITY OF DRAG CULTURE

Niall Brennan and David Gudelunas (editors)
London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017, pp. 309, ISBN 978-3-319-84444-2

Reviewed by Armando Ferrara

Since its beginning in 2009 on Logo TV – a US-based channel with contents oriented toward an LGBTQ audience – *RuPaul's Drag Race* (RPDR) changed the perception of the drag queens, at first in the US and later worldwide. The aim of the show is to elect "America's Next Drag Superstar" by way of reality/competition-based challenges and the critiques of well-known judges and guest judges.

RuPaul Charles (actor, producer, singer and self-proclaimed drag "supermodel of the world") is the host, the mentor and the confidant of its aspiring contestants, appearing in every episode of the series both in and out of drag. RPDR has immensely influenced popular culture by giving a new life to what one may call "drag discourse", that is to say words, catchphrases and gestures that were typical of the drag scenes. Some examples may include catchphrases such as "Condragulations," "Sashay," "Shantay," "Werk," and a specific language such as "cooking" (in referring to the make-up which has to warm until it reaches body temperature so it can be better applied), "read" (the act of taunting or mocking someone in a humorous way), "shade" (the act of giving a light comment with slight disrespect towards someone), and so on.

The main goal and ultimate effect of the series is one of queer-friendly fierceness fused with a sense of queer community. The show regularly confronts homo- and transphobia, as well as several forms of bigotry and oppression. At the same time, it incorporates the milestones of American LGBTQ social, cultural, and political history. Finally, the show helped drag culture rise from the obscurity of the gay bar in which it was hidden, transforming the view of drag as a subculture into drag as an art expression and established profession.

Although RPDR may be perceived as an unusual subject for a collection of scholarly

essays, Niall Brennan and David Gudelunas, the authors of the book *RuPaul's Drag Race and the Shifting Visibility of Drag Culture* (2017), think that the program is now at a crucial point were its social, cultural, and political implications can no longer be ignored. Niall Brennan's research focuses on discourses of representation, identity, and belonging in Brazilian, US, British, and Australian television programming, while David Gudelunas researches and teaches in the areas of emerging media, critical and cultural studies, gender, sexuality and communication, media history, and communication industries.

The book is divided into three parts, each one concerning and focusing on different aspects of the relationship between drag culture and its representation in reality television. The book is not intended for a lay audience. In fact, its language is not reader-friendly, due to its jargon which may be of difficult understanding for readers who are not familiar with the academic discussion related to Communication and Media. Maybe the use of explanatory footnotes could have avoided this problem, allowing readers to better enjoy this work and its contents.

The first part of the book explores the tensions between RPDR and its representation of femininity, often perceived as misogynistic and for that severely critiqued. The issue, for many feminists, relates to the fact that those who are deciding on and playing with the notion of femininity are still biological men. Through a Foucauldian lens of representation and power (a form of discourse analysis which focuses on power relationships in society expressed through language and practices), Julia Yudelman analyses how two contestants of two different seasons of RPDR embody transformation into subjectification; the use of references to the show made this chapter of easy understanding for one who has seen it.

Brennan explores contradictions that can be noted between the dimensions of drag culture in RPDR, taking into account Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) in which are discussed frameworks of gender performativity regarding men performing femininity through the art of drag. The author also analyses competition and consumption as main narrative aspects of RPDR and interrogates the boundaries between drag as fantasy and the growing presence of queer culture on reality TV.

While Dieter Brusselaers examines how inclusivity and marginalization occur in the show and how drag queens can be perceived as illiterate in the "fine arts" while being literate only in bar/club culture, Joanna McIntyre and Damien W. Riggs' essay, instead,

focuses its attention on the presence of Puerto Rican drag queens and their struggles with understanding and speaking English as their second language. The essay also explores how Puerto Rican queens are stuck in stereotypes and unable to perform anything else other than the "sexy, sassy and crazy" Latinas, an important reflection on questions such as interiorised racism.

As an extension of the previous topic, Sarah Tucker Jenkins explores the impossibility of having to be at once connected to and separated from one's cultural heritage, as it happens with Puerto Rican queens or with the winner of season one, Bebe Zahara Benet, where her Cameroonian identity eclipses any other aspect of her drag persona.

Due to the presence of the so-called "big girls" in RPDR, Amy L. Darnell and Ahoo Tabatabai interrogate how the show depicts body size through seasons and episodes. In a space where aspects such as queerness, ethnicity, and aesthetics are celebrated, body size and in particular "fatness" fall short of celebration. Ami Pomerantz takes into account the presence of fat drag queens in RPDR, taking into analysis their performances across the different seasons.

The second part of the collection provides first-hand, interpretive perspectives taken from viewing, learning from, and performing drag. The salient aspect of this section is the cohesive sense of community that arises from varied participation in RPDR. Rob Rosiello traces the unexpected and explosive growth of the first RPDR behind the television screens. We learn that drag culture as conveyed through RPDR is not simply about gowns, wigs, and make-up, but also merchandise, sponsorships, and tours. Rosiello reveals how queens, promoters, sponsors, and fans all come together as a community to portray RPDR as we see it today.

Colin Whitworth analyses RPDR's potential not as a promotional tool, rather as a queer pedagogical one. Rather than observing the queens and their portrayed lives from distance, Whitworth employs a self-ethnographic method of analysis. He reminds us of the potentialities and responsibilities of RPDR in serving as a queer pedagogical platform. This is a very important essay, which could be further developed in a variety of studies. It is important to have such programs, because they can help closeted persons to accept themselves and find out that out in the world there are several communities ready

to be supportive towards everyone; no one is alone in this world.

In an interesting way, Anna Antonia Ferrante explores the implications of the concept of families and community in drag culture as represented in the show. With links to the well-known 1990 documentary *Paris is Burning*, RPDR is compared to the film's portrayals of drag houses, parents, and families, giving the reader detailed background on the drag culture.

RPDR's influence reached even Brazil LGBTQ community. Although Brazilian fans, drag queens and followers have made RPDR part of their culture, the authors Mayka Castellano and Heitor Leal Machado question the extent to which the force of the show can be seen in Brazilian queer culture that fights everyday with an homophobic government. Garza Villarreal, Valdez García and Rodríguez Fernández, instead, explores how RPDR is perceived in Mexico, where the portrayal of drag queen and queer culture struggles with the *machismo* typical of the country and its difficulties in becoming part of the Mexican queer culture.

Despina Chronaki's question regards how the Greek audience perceives RPDR. The author finds that her Greek viewers have a sophisticated understanding of drag culture and other non-normative gender and sexual identities, particularly developed thanks to RPDR. Kate O'Halloran, on the other hand, given the popularity of RPDR outside the USA, argues that instead of building a global community, the show creates and frames divisions between contestants that reveal disparities, showing that the LGBTQ community is far from united.

The third and last part of the volume considers how the new television environment and social media spaces help in constructing global participation in RPDR. From here, the chapters start to become more technical, and the reading a bit difficult because of the issues discussed above regarding the use of a specialised discourse. Gudelunas looks at how RPDR is a TV show produced by and for the new media environment. The author also argues that the success of RPDR should be judged by how the program is shared, perceived and transformed by its fans in these new spaces. RPDR's fans gather in bars, tour locations, and conventions around the globe to interact with each other and see their favourite drag queens. As Alexander analyses, in Perth, Australia, the Australian drag scene is highly disconnected from the traditional family structure, where a drag "mother" serves as a mentor for her drag "daughter" in passing through the

art; instead, Australian drag queens look at the transformational aspects of RPDR to achieve their goal of becoming professional entertainers.

Even though RPDR is distributed globally, its values are not shared in the whole world. In her essay, Chelsea Daggett uncovers the unexpected link between the neoliberal agenda and the promotion of family, self-love and community. Back to Brazil, Henn, Viero Kolinski Machado and Gonzatti take a theoretical approach in evaluating the implications of RPDR for Brazil's online queer spaces.

The authors of the book end their work with the hope that the volume will provide a basis and an inspiration for further explorations of the importance of alternative modes of expressions and identities. The book is a fine critique of RPDR and its representation of queer culture, with various authors that face their issues with passion and competence; it surely faces problems that are still present in the LGBT* community (such as racism, fat-shaming, internal homo- and transphobia, etc.) and this is of great importance. Yet when it comes to the part of the book concerning mostly the show's representation in the Media, it becomes difficult to read, due to the technicality of the language used. Except for this little issue, however, the book did not show any weaknesses or negative aspects in its contents; for what concerns us, this is an essential book for anyone interested in queer culture and/or queer studies, a must have in everyone's libraries.

Armando Ferrara holds a master's degree from the University of Naples "Federico II" in Modern European Languages and Literature, with a specialisation in English Literature. Among his main research interests are the history and literature of the Victorian Era. His master's dissertation focused on the literature created for the working-class (in particular on the penny-issue fiction) and its impact on the society of the time. Ferrara's other research interest is related to Queer Studies and Lavender Linguistics.

THE AMERICAN SHORT STORY CYCLE

Jennifer J. Smith (author)
Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018, pp. 192, ISBN 9781474423946
Reviewed by Leonardo Nolé

When *A Visit from the Goon Squad* came out in 2010, critics and reviewers struggled to find a good definition for Jennifer Egan's book. Is it a collection of closely intertwined stories or just a novel characterized by a highly fragmented narrative? Almost seventy years before, William Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses* met the same fate. Despite the author's complaint, the publishers at Random House added "and other stories" to the title, trying to specify the ambiguous nature of the text. More examples could be added, from Ernest Hemingway's *In Our Time* and John Steinbeck's *The Pastures of Heaven* to Gloria Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place* and Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine*. All of them bear witness to the uninterrupted and often ignored presence in modern and contemporary American literature of a hybrid literary genre – the short story cycle – halfway between the novel and the collection of short stories. The definition comes mostly from Forrest L. Ingram's seminal *Representative Short Story Cycle of the Twentieth Century*, the first of a small body of works that have been trying to bring to light the genre's innovative characteristics and distinctive "Americanness" since the Seventies. *The American Short Story Cycle* by Jennifer J. Smith is the most recent work to follow in this tradition. Building on the former studies, this book opens new critical perspectives on the genre and puts it in dialogue with more urgent theoretical questions. Compared to Smith's previous articles on the same topic, where she also advocates for the value of the cycle in the teaching of American literature, this longer work offers an updated commentary and numerous close readings of a variety of examples. By broadening the scope of both the genre and the critical discussion, Smith underlines from the beginning two of the main outcomes the cycle accomplishes through its journey. On the one hand, it helps to redefine the mimetic ability

of literature in a modern and contemporary world that denies any totalizing description. On the other, it becomes a fertile, welcoming field for various marginalized voices, eager to express themselves and deconstruct established narratives.

The first of Smith's achievements in the opening chapters is to walk the reader through the modern evolution of the short story cycle, gradually exposing the dialogue between the genre and the most influential American literary movements. Following some earlier studies, Smith dates the rise of the proper cycle to the very beginning of the twentieth century. But of course, the previous success of the short story in popular American magazines and the emergence of other peculiar forms of short narratives led the way to the shaping of the genre. *The Sketch Book* by Washington Irving and *Twice-Told Tales* by Nathaniel Hawthorne are often acknowledged among the precursors to the cycle, and in Smith's argument they become proof of its focus on regional and defined spaces. It is exactly through the notion of "limited locality" that Smith discusses a first group of short story cycles, headed by Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*. In the pages devoted to this masterpiece, she explains how the formal innovations of the text allow the author to both expose the isolation of the individual and criticize the processes of industrialization and modernization. Her reading, in fact, addresses the problematic connection between the limitedness and elusiveness of the village and the feeling of alienation the grotesque inhabitants of Winesburg all share. Haunted by their loneliness, obsessed with their memories, these characters show a nostalgic desire for communication that makes them tell the stories we read in the cycle. Anderson notoriously worked as a model for many modernist writers, but Smith proves that his influence extends to more contemporary authors, such as Russell Banks, Cathy Day or Rebecca Berry. Their cycles – *Trailerpark*, *The Circus in Winter*, and *Later, at the Bar* – exploit the resources of this literary genre to address in new historical and social contexts the same questions of loneliness, nostalgia, and desire for connection.

A second organizing principle Smith recognizes in the history of the short story cycle is the use of unconventional temporalities. In her words, "short story cycles' deployment of temporal metaphors shows how subjective and objective times coexist and

how such metaphors bridge the perceived divide between personal and public times" (2018, 61). Here the main reference is to Ray Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles* and Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine*. Thanks to its use of ellipses and simultaneity, Smith sees Bradbury's text as reflecting the concerns of the Cold War period, as well as depicting in its structure the division of time under capitalism and industrialization. In her reading, the peculiar structure of the cycle implies a critique of the way systems of power use a linear concept of time to foster the myth of progress and the practice of exploitation. Similarly, Smith writes, Erdrich's book addresses the destructive force of linear time through the specific history of Native Americans, challenging the more traditional role of causality and individual point of view in the narrative.

The family is the third topos chosen by Smith to keep exploring the potential of the cycle, through a comparative reading of Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*, Julia Alvarez's *How the García Girls Lost Their Accent*, and Jumpa Lahiri's *Unaccustomed Earth*. She notes that ethnicity, gender, and kinship are central elements to these cycles' representation of the life of minorities in the United States, especially for female characters that end up "negotiat[ing] gender and sexual roles in plural environments, treating identity as multiple, and contingent" (2018, 89). The disjointed structure of the cycle works particularly well to depict these developing identities, as well as an idea of kinship as something to be chosen and built, not just inherited. The model Smith provides for these family-centered cycles is William Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses*. Focused on various members of the McCaslin family, Faulkner's book deploys all the elements discussed so far. Ike, the most recurrent character, is in fact involved in an identity-building process against his family's dubious practices, and Faulkner's fragmented and disordered narrative complicates the questions of time, place, and belonging.

Finally, Smith's last chapter is devoted to *A Visit from the Goon Squad* by Jennifer Egan, presented as an example of the so-called "atomic character" of the short story cycle. Made of fragments that – according to Smith – resist unity, shaped and animated by the powerful tension between the stories, Egan's book highlights once again how non-linear

narratives work against a fixed idea of time and identity, even more so when depicting contemporary society.

The American Short Story Cycle is an engaging book that traces an alternative path in the study of American literature and underlines the relevance of this genre to the present critical debate. Its strength comes from Smith's effort in updating the body of works discussed, moving from the well-known Modernist masterpieces to new and diverse examples. At the same time, the numerous close readings occasionally affect the linearity of the argument, which doesn't always provide the general framework needed to understand the working mechanisms of this complex form. For instance, I see the lack of consistency among the three main elements Smith chooses to examine – place and time, which refer to the narrative, and family, which is just one of the topics cycles address – as a problematic choice that raises questions about the nature of the genre and its relationship to other literary forms. The book's general argument, together with the insistence on the cycle's rejection of resolution and totality, seems in fact to underestimate the difference between the cycle and the collection of short stories. But other scholars – like Maggie Dunn and Ann Morris in their The Composite Novel – rightly note that the cycle's individual stories also work similarly to the chapters of a novel, since they progressively build the meaning of the whole text. It is precisely the liminal space occupied by the cycle that makes its definition still unclear, questioning its difference from other literary forms that emerge from similar needs and the fictional possibilities it opens to present and future writers. Despite – or because of – the cycle's refusal of totality and resolution, there is more theoretical work to be done to comprehend it in its entirety.

Leonardo Nolé is a doctoral student in Comparative Literature at The Graduate Center – City University of New York. His research focuses on the modern and contemporary outcomes of the novel form in the Anglo-American context. Among his latest publications: "La cronaca della terra e degli sfruttamenti in *Go Down, Moses* di W. Faulkner" (2018); "Il romanzo di racconti. La letteratura americana e la costruzione di comunità: il caso di *In Our Time* di E. Hemingway" (2017); "Lingua e identità in formazione in *Americanah* di C.N. Adichie" (2017). More information: https://gc-cuny.academia.edu/LeonardoNolé.

BEYONCÉ IN FORMATION: REMIXING BLACK FEMINISM

Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley (author)
University of Texas Press, 2018, pp. 218, ISBN 1477317708
Reviewed by Giuseppe Polise

In her innovative study, Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley writes about Beyoncé as a femme-inist. Describing herself, Tinsley offers a definition of the word: "for over twenty years I've lived my life as a lipsticked, high heeled, glittering black femme, a queer gender marked by a highly stylized and aestheticized femininity" (2018, 8). Drawing on Sydney Lewis's attempt to define a black femme-inist criticism, Tinsley intends to explore the co-constitution of self-identified straight and queer femininities, showing that Beyoncé does not need to be labelled as "queer" to be profoundly related to the black femme experience. As a major contemporary black culture signifier, in fact, Beyoncé effectively opposes white heteropatriarchal constructions of black women's race, gender and sexuality, and unapologetically affirms subjectivity.

Before focusing on the main body of the work, the author engages the issue of femmephobia, too often internalized. In a society where the fear of women has slowly, but steadily turned into the fear of the feminine as synonym for weak, even homosocial contexts tend to replicate heteropatriachal structures of dominance and take eroticism, sensuality and "girliness" as matters of insufficient interest, and much less do they bother taking seriously those who do. Fiercely claiming her black femme-inist identity, Tinsley urges to collectively recognize desire as a means of challenging critical regimes that demand separation of body and mind for intellectual credibility.

At this point, the reader is enabled to access "Beyoncé in Formation: Remixing Black Feminism" in its intricacy. As partly a memoir, the book follows the example of many post-Black Lives Matter publications that bear witness to the fragility and hardships faced by real black bodies on a daily basis, while nourishing pro-black sentiments. In this specific case, the book sidesteps linear narratives and brings forth personal anecdotes, thoughts on other singers, TV celebrities, and people that have a

place in the life of the author as well as in her growth as a black scholar. All this is skilfully put in conversation with a well-developed cultural analysis of key songs from Beyoncé's Lemonade album (2016). However, as deep and rich as the analysis may be, it is not envisioned as the primary goal of the book. "Beyoncé," Tinsley maintains, "is not my target audience. [Rather, this is] a textual mixtape for all the women and femmes" (2018, 14) who know Beyoncé, look up to her and grow in a culture where her (admittedly flawed) contributions to black feminism through popular production can be the beginning of fruitful conversations. What she calls a "Femme-inist mixtape" consists of intertwined pieces of analysis of black women's sexuality and gender, an analysis where the private life of the scholar and the public persona that Beyoncé shows in Lemonade smoothly flow into each other. Shedding light on what it means to be femme and how it can be the opposite of weak is indeed at the heart of the book.

Section One is titled "Family Album: Making Lemonade out of Marriage, Motherhood and Southern Tradition." In it, Tinsley proposes a reading of Beyoncé's rock song "Don't Hurt Yourself" in its association to the blues of Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holliday. The themes of self-sufficiency, man-shaming, extra-marital sex as a form of revenge, in fact, sustain a parallel between Beyoncé's struggle for agency and that of the great blues women of the 1920s and 1930s. Moreover, the sampling of the rock record "When the Levee Breaks" by Led Zeppelin, which in turn was constructed around an old blue classic by Memphis Minnie, hints at the possibility of a re-appropriation of the blue classic itself. In this light, the song would then take a broader cultural meaning, Tinsley maintains: "If she was singing with and to Jack White (producer of Don't Hurt Yourself) as the representative of contemporary blues/rock that builds on black women's legacies without giving them acknowledgment and appreciation [...] the revengeful tones would become another kind of black feminist artistic protest" (2018, 36).

Included in the same section, the song "Daddy Lessons" provides the possibility to focus on black feminist models of Southern motherhood that defy stereotyping. As the many memories of her paternal grandmother fill the pages of the section, they also intercept autobiographies of white country-music women who perpetuate the narrative of the Southern sentimental mother. In opposition to such a pious, enduring, and unrealistically sweet model, the type of mother Tinsley concludes Beyoncé aims at portraying in "Daddy Lessons" is not at all fictionalized. Differently from the unreachable

model of the (white) Southern mother, the black mama is flawed, yet her existence is tangible. She is not an invisible shadow in her children's life, she is not waiting, hoping and praying like the sentimental mother; mothering for her means fighting: it means protecting herself and her children by any means necessary. In the idealized plantation villa where the video has been shot, Beyoncé as the narrator is heard saying "you go to the bathroom to apply your mother's lipstick [...] You must wear it like she wears disappointment on her face." As much as she wants to be like her mother, Tinsley concludes, she induces the viewer to the realization that she cannot be anything like her: "Teach me how to make him beg. Let me make up for the years he made you wait" she chants. The love and admiration for her mother do not leave her short-sighted. For her, succumbing to the man, to be put on a revered yet dusty pedestal is not an option. Acknowledge the complexity of "black mamas" lives and feelings is what she aspires to.

Section Two is titled "Most Bomb Pussy: Towards a Black Feminist Pleasure Politics," and it quickly moves from the maternal scenarios that characterize section One to explore the black femme-inist use of sexual politics in the "6 Inch" music video as they coincide with the scholar's strong rebuke of respectability politics. While dispensing several anecdotes about the harsh criticism and praise that her wardrobe choices on university campus have drawn to her over the years, Tinsley resorts to Beyoncé's conjuring of many entities from an Afrocentric tradition to urge an end to respectability and its toxic by-products. The most relevant of these images is the 'mulatta prostitute of New Orleans', which in turn intrinsically evokes other mythical entities like Yoruba goddesses Oshun and Pompa Gira, divine reflections of lust and promiscuity. Because of their explicit articulation of sexuality and authority, Tinsley comes to understanding Beyoncé's engagement with such images as constitutive of a genealogy of powerful black women that stands unbothered with the manipulative forces that have belittled them through the centuries. By incarnating them, Beyoncé provides black women with an opportunity to access the "ratchetness" and promiscuity inside of them and "use it for a divine purpose: supporting other black women's lives and bodies" (70) who have been simultaneously de-sexualized and hypersexualized by the male gaze.

Section Three first looks at the "Freedom" video in relation to black women's difficulties to mother their children in contemporary times. Here, the long table laid by the plantation villa and the dozens of women who are having a feast symbolize an

appropriation of historical markers of black subjugation. To the scholar, those images particularly symbolize an attempt to envision black women who successfully raise their offspring despite the systematic withdrawal of all the basic principles of reproductive justice. As the author reports, "African American children spend more time in foster care, are less likely to go home to their parents, and wait longer for adoption" (115). In portraying all those women, many of whom are the mourning mothers of the Black Lives Matter Movement, the will to show how they can enjoy their time together with younger generations of black girls is fundamental. Through such an idealistic picture, Beyoncé embodies a call for comprehensive black justice, demanding not only individual reproductive health but also the health and security of the communities where black women choose to bear children.

Tinsley's vision for the book comes full circle at the end of Section Three, where she skilfully construes the "Formation" video as the clearest expression of black femme-inist pride of the entire project. To this end, the scholar inscribes the cameo of New Orleans queer queen of bounce Big Freedia in a broader message of female communion, while she also elaborates on the symbiotic relationship between cis-gender women and transgender women as enacted by the common signifier of the Southern hair store. A place where wigs, extensions and other styling products are bought, hair shops' appearance in the visual represent a safe space for women of color to perform the cultural and conceptual labour of working through womanhood. Whether it is assigned at birth, reassigned, or just temporarily performed as in drag, femininity finds power and self-expression in such material spaces of Southern matrilineal tradition. In the author's words, these are "touchstones for black Southern women, a place where trans-feminine and cis-feminine folk come together to create beauty," where "cis- and trans women work together to coproduce womanhood" (133). In this sense, the aestheticized vision of black femininity that bell hooks has harshly labelled a "fashion plate fantasy" upon watching Lemonade, claims back its legitimacy through Tinsley's work. This book ultimately suggests that black women's cultivation of beauty on their own terms does not represent a liability and is indeed much more than frivolous adornment. It is an extension of the self of the black woman and, as such, should always be celebrated with pride.

Giuseppe Polise holds a Master's degree in Language and Comparative Literature from the University of Naples "L'Orientale" where he is currently a second year Ph.D. student in the Department of Literary, Linguistic and Comparative Studies. His scientific interests in the broad field of American Studies include Black Feminist Theory, the Studies of Performance applied to the representation of black diasporic cultural identity. As participant of the 2018 OASIS Summer School, he has published an article titled "Black Women Matter: The Black Lives Matter Movement, Black Female Singers, and Intersectional Feminism." He took part in the September 2018 AISNA Graduate Conference with a paper on "The Choreography of Marching: From the 1960s Black Political Protest to Contemporary Popular Music" and to the University of Naples "L'Orientale" Graduate Conference where he presented the poster "My Gods Are Not Your Gods, or Are They? The Counter-Hegemonic Aesthetics of Beyoncé's Live Performances." His Ph.D. research aims at extending the critical interpretation of the conjure woman, a powerful archetype of folk tradition, and analyzes the presence of such figure found across the African Diaspora in traditional and contemporary forms of popular culture such as the novel and the visual album. In so doing, the project cross-pollinates Black Feminism and the Black Protest tradition in the visual/sonic representation of the cultural background that informs any reading of the conjure woman as a viable representative of black womanhood.

DICTÉE

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (author)
Los Angeles: University of California Press; Second Edition (2009), pp. 182,
ISBN: 9780520261297
Reviewed by Caterina Stamou

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha was born in Pusan, South Korea, in 1952. Because of the Korean War, her family had to move several times until 1962, when they finally migrated to the United States. Here, she received her BA and MA in comparative literature and Fine Arts at the University of California, Berkeley, and continued her postgraduate studies in film-making and semiology in Paris in 1976. Her varied educational background shaped her subsequent versatile artistic practice consisting of film, mixed media performances, and written works, and thematically focused on the experience of expatriation and its link with memory and language. Her most famous work, *Dictée*, was published in 1982, a week before she was murdered by serial rapist Joey Sanza in New York. It was not until 1994 that the book started to gain critical attention after Elaine H. Kim's publication "Writing Self, Writing Nation: A Collection of Essays on *Dictée*," published by Third Women Press. Since then, *Dictée* has often been part of the syllabi of experimental literature classes around the world and is considered an emblematic work for Postcolonial Studies, Third Wave Feminism, and Asian-American Literature.

The 1980s was a decade when postcolonial theory and multiracial feminism opened an interdisciplinary dialogue within the humanities. Postmodernism gave birth to some of its more representative works at that time, whereas an emerging need to reflect on indigenous cultures marked the transnational turn of American Literature (Azim 1993). Cha's best-known work seems to be somewhere between these tendencies since it encompasses a poststructuralist vision of the text, intertwined with inquiries about myth and history, revealing autobiographical experiences of suffering after colonization and diaspora. The intersection of race, class and womanhood that permeates the nine chapters of the book, named after the nine muses, illuminates a well-

formed composition of chronicles about the experience of the 'other' emphasized by the hybrid narrative and the stylistic experimentations of the text.

The book focuses on the lives of six women: Cha's mother, Cha herself, Demeter, Persephone, Joan of Arc and Yu Guan Soon, a Korean revolutionary. The narrative is inconsistent, fragmented and circular, sometimes making it difficult to distinguish the differences among the lives of the heroines, in such a way that each story ramifies through the others. Its polymorphic body, consisting of prose, poems in English and French, sparse words, photographs, a handwritten memo, Chinese calligraphy, diagrams and a movie still from Carl Dreyer's film 'Joan of Arc', makes the work unclassifiable in terms of monolingual identity and art form. In this respect, *Dictée* portrays the cultural logic of geographic displacement resisting the Eurocentric narrative of history, language and memory, and challenging traditional storytelling through its figurative diction and avant-guard structure.

Dictée's poetic configuration serves as a metaphor for loss and marginalization. Within the heterogeneity of the hybrid text, language and self are interrelated in an attempt to subvert culturally and nationally narrowed narratives: the multilingual elements are accompanied by French language exercises on success and labor ("Ecrivez en francais: ... 9. Be industrious: the more one works, the better one succeeds" [Cha 2001, 8]), descriptions of the act of speaking, emphasis on small sounds and utterance, and transgression of the syntactical rules through missing punctuation. Migration's physical effects are embodied within the text in such a manner that the reader becomes aware of the process of writing itself: the language of the "diseuse" [*sic*], the female speaker that comes "from afar" (1) conducts the book's motif through a writing that personifies the materiality of the narrator's fragmented emotions and reality:

> She mimics the speaking. That might resemble speech. (Anything at all). Bared noise, groan, bits, torn from words. [...] Let the one who is diseuse. Diseuse de bonne aventure. Let her call forth. Let her break open the spell cast upon time upon time again and again. [...] It murmurs inside. It murmurs. Inside is the pain of speech the pain to say. (3)

The 'pain of speech' that is distinctly portrayed in *Dictée* is denoted through the ban on Cha's family speaking their native language after the annexation of Korea by Japan and their subsequent emigration to the United States. Those experiences underline the major themes of the book, which are the separation from the mother tongue and motherland,

two traumatic experiences depicted through the lives of Cha's mother and the revolutionary Yu Guan Soon, and poetically represented through the myth of Demeter and Persephone. In her unconventional portrayal of historical downfalls, it is likely that Cha uses the male cruelty of Ades that separated a mother from her daughter as a metaphor for the relentlessness of colonization, for imperialism is the evil aspect of the "history of phallocentrism, history of appropriation: [...] that of man's becoming recognized by the other (son or woman) reminding him that, as Hegel says, death is his master" (Cixous 1991, 79).

Words in *Dictée* become the subject of a deeper consideration of the historical and political circumstances that shape the life of the individual. Linking this function with the development of a feminist narrative within the work through the presence of female figures, the reader witnesses an unconventional "rewriting of the masculinist canon" (Ruthven 1990, 36) which is typical of feminist discourse, and it penetrates culture, ethnography, and history. Cha's narrative about Korea is not about "founding fathers" and glorious victories, but rather it focuses on "mothers and daughters struggling through history's in-between moments" (Joyce). Her concentration on the communal traumas which individuals come across after their countries' occupation encourages her to treat history the same way she treats language: from the revisionist perspective of the oppressed. Thus, even if the mother tongue was colonized by patriarchal brutality, there is memory to reconstruct her telling:

> Dead words. Dead tongue. From disuse. Buried in Time's memory. Unemployed. Unspoken. History. Past. Let the one who is diseuse, one who is mother who waits nine days and nine nights be found. Restore memory. Let the one who is diseuse, one who is daughter restore spring with her each appearance from beneath the earth. The ink spills thickest before it runs dry before it stops writing at all. (Cha 2001, 133)

The presence of mixed media poetics within the written text plays an important role in the work's subversion of literary and historiographical traditions, beyond its content. In order to comprehend their purpose, we should bear in mind that in the context of textuality, visual elements operate a type of narration which is different from the reception of semantics; they involve a larger level of abstraction because they are much more open to multiple interpretations. The juxtaposition of visuality within a written text transforms the experience of reading regarding linearity, and the complementary

relationship amid words and images presupposes an approach to language which presumably questions its authoritative dimension (Heusser et al. 1999, 47). Visual features in *Dictée* vary: a movie still, use of film vocabulary, a photograph of three Korean peasants being crucified, portraits of women, an image of abandoned ancient scenery, montage of documents and newspaper reports. Apparently, the book's aesthetics request an optical responsiveness and susceptibility for the creative process of its reading. Similarly, the juxtaposition of Western numbers with Chinese calligraphy that is found in the pages of *Dictée,* and the visual cohesion of cross-cultural concepts, are articulated as an attempt to embrace the multiethnic reality of Cha's experience.

Another point concerning Cha's usage of documents and visual material to accompany her written text relates to her historic interest. According to literary scholar Stephen Joyce, Cha seems to initiate "a debate about the relationship between narrative and historiography" by structuring her work through metahistorical methods that denounce traditional historical structure. Joyce points out that history in *Dictée* "creates meanings out of the raw facts and these meanings can change based on the form of the narrative" (Joyce). Considering the variety of elements that are used and the parts of history that are highlighted, Cha relocates the interest from his-tory to her-story by creating a rather genuine work.

Dictée's artistic thickness illustrates a profound contemplation of language, identity, culture, history, mythology, ethnicity, and narrative in a way that succeeds in employing writing in a wider political scheme. Abolishing the limits between written text and visual art, *Dictée* is in constant search of a border-crossing self. Its polyphonic feminism, associated with multiple cultural, social and racial issues, enables a dialogue with contemporary issues upon the question of intersectionality. Deeply personal and poetic within the disposition of poststructuralism and postcolonial thought, it transgresses singular definitions of writing and subject and provides us with multiple possibilities for the literary text and the emotional relevance of reading.

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Daisy Atterbury

RELIEF ROUTE

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The Kármán Line
(excerpt)

I would like to write about the commercial
space industry but I find myself smoking
instead.

Spaceport America, SpaceX, Virgin
Galactic, Intergalactic.

*For ay thurst I, the more that ich
it drynke.*[1]

I think of Petrarch, book in my hand. What if
Petrarch were speaking to the land itself instead
of his beloved? (*For the more I thirst, the more I
drink.*)

I'm reading in the waiting room to pass the
time. I've seen the cancer posters on the wall.
They make cancer look almost friendly. I know
the tropes.

Who needs a realist waiting
room!

○

I conjure my vision of Petrarch and his
unquenchable thirst for Laura. There she is on a
poster: a woman in a French shirt. A child with
a golden dog.

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[1] Francesco Petrarch, "If no love is, O God, what fele I so?" (trans. Geoffrey Chaucer), *Il
Canzoniere* .

Let's say I fell in love at first
sight.

Let's say I found her already married, turning
down my advances on the banks of the Rhône
and refusing my stakeout.

Here you are, sick. *Allas! what is this wondre
maladie?*

Have you visited @Land_of_Enchantment?
Y/N Have you practiced
@Lifestyle_Evangelism? Y/N

 "If we fail to heal what Karl Marx called 'our
metabolic rift with nature,' it will just go on
without us."[2]

<div align="center">◦</div>

Two Westerns:

> dawn must always
> recur
>
> four guns to the
> border

<div align="center">◦</div>

I recall my aunt's news that the La Fonda
hotel has just renovated its tile bathroom—
the bathroom you could use if you knew what
you were doing downtown.

You'd go down a hall, past the restaurant, past
the lobby, past women with white hair and
silver jewelry.

---

[2] Lucy Lippard, *Undermining*.

Pretend you're not, that you have nothing to
do with the women with white hair and silver
jewelry.

> thank god I'm
> not

> running into
> you

Now the bathroom is white and grey and
spotless.

<div align="center">°</div>

    Because of my interest in space as opposed
to say literature or self-defense I attend a
panel at the Santa Fe Institute.

"Intergalactic": a presentation organized by
the creators of Batman on space as the next
frontier.

Someone at the panel jokes that the driving
impetus for going to space is testosterone.

I could escape my body right now if I only
could.

Except I do every
day.

> dystopia
> (medical)

> an abnormal position, as of an organ
> or a body part

> also called
> malposition

°

"To be sure, the man-made satellite was no moon or star, no heavenly body which could follow its circling path for a time span that to us mortals, bound by earthly time, lasts from eternity to eternity. Yet, for a time it managed to stay in the skies; it dwelt and moved in the proximity of the heavenly bodies as though it had been admitted tentatively to their sublime company."[3]

Calling all lovers of chaos, dynamic systems and all things nonlinear!

What will be my intro to Chaos?

Is it "out there" or "in here"?

What are Nonlinear dynamical systems, what is a "chaos teaser"?

°

Hannah Arendt points out that an event like the 1957 launch of the satellite Sputnik might have been met with universal celebration if it were not for the

...uncomfortable military and political circumstances attending to it.[4]

I imagine the sense of relief (eerie collective relief) at the signs of man's first attempt to escape his entrapment on this earth—his "imprisonment," as she sees in the papers.

---

[3] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition.*
[4] Ibid.

o

Laura died at age thirty-eight on April 6,
1348, twenty-one years after Petrarch
first saw her.

Scholars believe she died of black
plague or tuberculosis after giving birth
to 11 children.

The silent tree against the stucco. To
breathe the pollution and soot of other
people's waste.

> i'm more than
> bifurcated
>
> i could hold your
> head

o

Many years later, the French poet Maurice
Scèves visited Avignon and opened Laura's
unmarked tomb.

The story goes, Scèves unearthed a lead box
in the dead muse's tomb.

I've looked out over a mountain range and
unceremoniously caught my breath. I've
followed my step by stop instructions.

> faced off with an
> enemy
>
> stopped up your
> spill
>
> killed terra
> nullius

○

In the box Maurice Scéves found a medallion.
Etched into the medallion was a woman
clawing at her own heart.

Laura Henriksen

Every curse and every wish came true
just like you said they would. I tried
to go, but here I am. I thought I was
on a road until I looked down. In my
heaven, all feelings are met and matched
with equal intensity, and all the angels
either play guitar really well or not
at all. And they're always with you,
nodding their heads in encouragement,
like, Go on. It was in the name of love, it was
in the name of art. It was then I saw
I was crossing a bridge, all things
unfixed. I listened to the same song
over and over again, testing my love,
ready for all pleasure to buckle under
need. I could sit on this hill and watch
the trucks go by forever, all day. They say
it'll be worth it, but what even is it? Home
is where the flower patterns blur
into faces mouthing *No future* as you
try to fall asleep. What was it
you said? Destiny is what happened.
Well it didn't have to. All that singing
for what.

Laura Henriksen

Hélène and I are at the mall, drinking sodas
and chewing the straws by the center fountain,
waiting for night to fall, for nothing in particular,
for a love so great all suffering and joy become
limitless. After the mall we'll go home and
watch *Hellbound: Hellraiser II*, our favorite
movie, and speak again as we do every night
about Julia, the evil stepmother, who from her
trembling murderous vacuum of desire in
the first installment emerges into the sequel
skinless, triumphant for a time, getting blood
on an Armani suit in the all white living room
of her new occult doctor lover who's so full
1980's cocaine at midnight cocaine at noon.
Hélène and I love Julia, the chasm of what
she would do for love or fun, and as we take turns
walking to the fridge and back we declare her
again our monarch, the queen of hell. Or we'll go
to the grocery store, hover over the tiny
floral department, take pictures of the bouquets
pose with them as brides. Hélène, I'll ask,
where do feelings go once felt?
And she'll say they stay right here
admiring the carnations, state flower
of Ohio, the tulips, likely the cause
of the first economic crash, and the lilies
common symbols of innocence after death.

Nadia Misir

Carnations and Cellophane: Notes on Intimacy and Christ's Flowers

"The carnation is probably native to the Mediterranean region but its exact range is unknown due to extensive cultivation for the last two millennium."—[New World Encyclopedia](#)

i.
Carnations get something of a bad rap on *Sex and the City*. On an episode that aired during season six, Charlotte escapes from her dinner date at a Chinese restaurant to Carrie and her boyfriend Jack Burger's table. She complains to both of them that she knew it would be a bad first date. Why? Because he gave her a bouquet of carnations. "They're filler flowers," she laments.

But what Charlotte dismissed as a filler flower has become my focal point for understanding love, lust, and faith. Carnations are one of those childhood markers that litter my memory, they are something of a constant: not good, not bad, but an important vessel for meaning-making.
I have had to dislocate my faith, and how I imagined I was allowed to love and lust from patriarchal spaces like the mandirs I grew up attending on Sunday mornings—spaces where worshippers prayed with carnations and other flowers. I have grappled with these questions while watching television shows like *Sex and the City*—a show that I knew even as a high school student was problematic, was not about my New York, that did not reflect what I, or the women around me, looked like, or sounded like, but that still sparked moments of alternative imaginings of how and who I could love.

My commute each day from Lefferts Boulevard on the A train in deep Queens, in roti-shop-and-Guyanese-Chinese-restaurant-bar Queens, to my high school located near Broadway-Nassau, the financial hub of the city, taught me that. My New York, my journey with faith and love is a series of culturally dissonant moments. And they all seem to hang off the delicate jagged petals of the carnation.

My job when my family holds a jhandi is to string together seven red carnations with a needle and thread to create a mala.

ii.
Carnations have long been vessels for meaning-making by all sorts of people: poets, lovers, children, parents, royalty, florists, mourners, worshippers, bodega owners, Hallmark card creators. I am no expert, but carnations do have a better reputation than Charlotte led me to believe all those years ago. In thirty-eight words Oxford Reference online sums up the flower as being "slender-stemmed," and possessing "narrow leaves," "swollen stem joints" and "several dense blooms with serrated petals"—a definition that reads like poetry. It is of the family Caryophyllaceae and the species Dianthus caryophyllus.
Gjertrud Schnackenberg has used the carnation as a motif of grief in the haunting elegies she has written about her father. "The Latin blossom," she calls it, invoking the Latin meaning of carnatio: *flesh*. Schackenberg too locates faith in the flower. The speaker of "Supernatural Love" identifies carnations as "The flowers I called Christ's when I was four," and describes their clove-like scent as "Christ's fragrance through the room." Here, carnations become a symbol of Christ's crucifixion and recall the belief that carnations grew where Mary's tears fell.

iii.
I cannot reconcile how I choose to love and lust with the faith that is taught in the spaces I was told to pray in growing up and that is okay. My faith lives in my mother's hands before she prays at her altar. I make the ritual of watching her prepare carnations for prayer my religion.
On some Sunday mornings she lifts bouquets of carnations bunch by bunch out of white buckets filled with water lining Liberty Avenue. She inspects each head, looks for wilted petals and debris. Sometimes, if I'm home, it's my job to unwrap them, detach the flowers

from the green stems, gently wash each with cold water and fill a metal tari with the blooms.

The stems remind me of a crane with green legs. Sometimes my mom prays with these carnations. Each bloom is a prayer I turn into a sin. My religion is not praying at the altar in a language I cannot understand. My religion is washing each carnation head, feeling the water catch between the petals like parted lips. My religion is reveling in reaching a point in my relationship with my mother where I can be transparent about who and how I love, and she does not shame me for it.

I hoard a friend's purple carnations at dinner and pretend they are mine.

The shame I have internalized comes from my community, from what they teach us about how to be a Good Indian Girl, from Bollywood movies that glorify the Good Indian Girl, from conversations where girls are shamed for "wilin' demself out," from conversations where girls are shamed for "not knowin dem limit," from conversations where girls are forbidden from dating Black men and women, from the pandit who told me it is forbidden for a woman to attend mandir or perform pooja while on her period because it is unclean. I wanted to say what you describe as unclean allowed for your waste of a birth.

A male relative of mine was a pandit—a man I was not close to, someone who I never saw smile, always in a fedora hat, always, it seemed, mildly annoyed, a man I thought of as being the embodiment of patriarchy. I asked him when I was 7 or 8 about why all pandits I knew were men. "Can't I be a pandit if I really wanted to?" I remember asking. Memory is often cruel. I remember the emotions and what I might have said, less often than I remember the other party's words.

A space for prayer during a jhandi is set up with flowers and other material objects.

I internalized that it was a sin for me to feel pleasure at the hands of another person. I internalized that it was a sin for me to feel pleasure at my own hands. Shame makes its home in the most unexpected places and carnations, for a long time, signaled that. I have cobbled together a patchwork kind of faith rooted in mundane material objects and motions of the hand, in feeling pleasure. Let my God, if there is one, be a fairly compensated gardener and flower cutter, a wielder of sharp shears, a being who can grow, but also cut down.

iv.
When I think of carnations I think bodega, I think of those Sunday mornings when we double parked outside of a West Indian grocery store to buy bunches of carnations to take to mandir as offerings, I think of the statistics that illuminate unfair labor practices in the countries the United States sources its fresh cut flowers from: Colombia and Ecuador. I think of these headlines: "Where Do Bodega Flowers Come From?" and "There's a 1 in 12 Chance Your V-Day Flowers Were Cut by Child Laborers."

I think of the history of cultivation, the imperial nature of gardening, of cultivating a garden and how unnatural it is unless it all runs wild and the insects are allowed to eat holes into leaves. When I think of carnations I think of my Chinese-American aunt's horrified facial expression when my grandmother brought a bouquet of carnations to the party hall on Atlantic Avenue for her wedding reception—carnations were reserved for funerals in her family.
I think dyed petals: electric blue and Gatorade green. I think petals that resemble crumpled up tissue paper and jagged edges that look sharp but feel soft. I think of all the ways that it is both outlandish and not to dye flowers colors that do not occur in nature.

When I think of carnations I think of the woman who sold them with two young children under the tracks of the 7 train in Jackson Heights. Laid out on the concrete were individual carnations, cellophane, wrapping paper and rubber bands. Prune, bunch, wrap, repeat—a labor we do not see, but that exists in every white plastic bucket outside of every bodega and flower shop.

A worker sells flowers and carnations in Kadıköy.

v.

But what does it mean to turn to metaphor? To explore questions of the body and pleasure figuratively? Am I hiding behind the what ifs that wrap similes and metaphors and idioms in a confectioner's sugar instead of saying explicitly *I am not a virgin, I enjoy sex, I take birth control, I am not married, I have no interest in being a Good Indian Girl*? I write about intimacy and personal experiences in a very specific way: shrouded behind lofty imagery and lyrical lines. I am afraid of writing simple sentences using concrete language to describe how I love, how I hurt, how I have been loved and been hurt, how I am vulnerable. I cannot write how I have transgressed, so I lean on metaphor, on images like wet carnations between my mother's hands. What does it mean to turn an image of patriarchy into an image of resistance?

A corner store in Jackson Heights sells carnations and other flowers.

vi.

By the end of that season six episode, Carrie Bradshaw's boyfriend Burger breaks up with her on a post-it note. After waking up next to an empty spot on her bed, she gets up and flings the vase of pink carnations he brought for her. It is a spectacular act of rage. For everything else that is problematic about that show, that scene, devoid of all sound except for the water of the vase running off the table and dripping down to the floor, and the lone carnation hanging haphazardly by its head from the table, is something I carry between my ribs.

Filler flowers only, please.

Mirko Mondillo

November night.

This deep dark, black
by bitumen,
regional road, - just one
light
glows just
right in front of you
and in the somber lump of its traversed
stretches: stray dogs, their barking,
(unglued and bleached) ads,
invocations to the saints, some *God's here* -,
this one: which seems having
on its sides, - if you think
at that as an huge face,
if (here) a singular vision
could make itself universal
(here) the personal vision-,
which seems having on its sides
the horses' sight-sewer,
that clenches the sight
on the road,
right in front of itself...
In the cruise time
riding the bus,
- badly backseated
on the seatback,
as a square
into a circle,
on my side: a woman:
too much eau, on her,
and too much stifling,
when I wasn't on the break
(a dark-full body)
and he wasn't on the telephone,
the driver: "... I'm good, I...
are the kids asleep?"-,
I tried to take some rest
on my humerus, on my wrist.
Why then?, because
[...]
...going house-to-house

offering Gas and Energy
when at home those books of mine
drip my father's,
blood,
and his chill, suffered in December,
and his resting,
lost at the marketplace.

Stefano Morello

Queen Anne Serenade

the Samoan Dean Moriarty
never wasn't going to stop
— he's guessing yellow
is her favorite color,
seafoam green
in-between junctions,
blue stop signs
in Hawaii.

what did you see in her?
astounding metabolism
and all the unconcealed.
a blind taste test
— pick wisely!

swipe left,
swap middle names,
hands clapping.

they're all dancing, on tv.

Stefano Morello

read loved you name it

quietly -
we happen at night,
like other unrealities of life,
we wait
in vain
to grow out of
this state of trance,
this feeling of if,
this impression that,
possibly, we exist
only when read
by someone,
which is not often,
not for long,
not by very many

Suzanne Goldenberg

CAME
AGOG
MONO
EGOS

CORE
OPEN
PEND
ENDS

GAPE
AMID
PINE
EDEN

ROPE
OVEN
PEND
ENDS

PAGE
AWAY
GAZE
EYED

FATE
AIRY
TRUE
EYES

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Suzanne Goldenberg is obsessed with bodies of water, language, the transformation of waste and dismantling carceral states. She has exhibited her work widely and published poems in the collection *Anguish Language, Writing and Crisis* (Anagram Books, London 2017), Leaf Litter, U.S. (vol. 5&6) and her chapbook HELP WANTED. She curates The CRUSH Reading series at the Woodbine Collective in Ridgewood, NY.

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