FrameWorks

*A Journal of Undergraduate Research
in the Interdisciplinary Humanities*

Dedicated to
AUDREY GALE HALL

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Asked to interpret the theme "Constellation," this year's cohort of FrameWorks Fellows took to the task with customary determination. That they conceived, researched, drafted, presented, redrafted, and edited a publication-quality article amidst the demands on an undergraduate academic year is testament to their fortitude. All the more remarkable, then, is the variety of creative approaches you will find in this, the fourth issue of *FrameWorks: A Journal of Undergraduate Research in the Interdisciplinary Humanities.*

Some of writers treat constellations literally. For example, Adriana Lopez Cagijas grounds her thoughtful critique of the 2019 remake of Disney's *The Lion King* in her disappointment that Mufasa does not appear to Simba in the form of a constellation as he did in the beloved 1994 film. In grappling with the significance of the meteoric iron dagger find in Pharaoh Tutankhamun's sarcophagus, Skyler Houser looks to the place of the sky in Ancient Egyptian belief systems.

Some writers treated the theme metaphorically. For Nine Abad, the Santo Niño de Cebú serves as a north star, "a symbol to connect [Filipinos] to their heritage and worship practices both at home and in the diaspora." Isha Merchant sees a north star in the Bollywood "item song:" "a way [for the South Asian Disapora] to orient themselves towards a nostalgic idea of 'home.'"

Other writers put the idea of constellations to work as theoretical conceits, a way to give shape to the relationships between seemingly distant, tangentially connected ideas. Alivia Mayfield argues for an historiographical approach to Alexander the Great that accommodates his complexity and inconsistency. For her, aspects of his character are "like the tesserae of a mosaic, or [stars of] a constellation." For Kalena Holeman, vernacular translations of Dante's *Inferno* establish "unexpected ligatures" across time and space, orienting Ralph Ellison and Derek Walcott, as well as other writers of the Black diaspora, to each other. Adolfo Salazar characterizes the holistic treatment plans of curanderas, practitioners of Mexican folk medicine, as "constellation[s] in which the body is but one estrella." Curanderismo is different to allopathic medicine because of its integrated approach to "various other estrellas such as the patient's emotional, mental, social, and spiritual well-being."

We are proud to publish each of the ten pieces written by the 2022/2023 FrameWorks Fellows and hope you enjoy reading them. Many thanks to them for their hard work and to their mentors for their time and support.

This issue of *FrameWorks* is dedicated to the brilliant Audrey Gale Hall, an alumna of the FrameWorks program (2020/2021) and a generous advisor to the 2021/2022 cohort. Audrey passed away on February 9, 2023 at the age of 22; an incalculable loss. As a further tribute, we are republishing her incisive and urgent piece "Daughter of Breaking: Sexual Violence as Political Economy in Judge 19," this time under her chosen name.

Max Rayneard, Editor

Daughter of Breaking: Sexual Violence as Political Economy in Judges 19

By Audrey Gale Hall

      I first read the biblical book of Judges in the spring semester of third grade. That year, I'd set my sights on reading through the Hebrew Bible before summer vacation. My evangelical school's chapel meetings and Bible lessons had already taught me to revel in our scriptures' beauty and absolute truth, and so, with the encouragement of my teachers, I was determined to flip through each of the silver-lined, one-ply pages of the NIV Old Testament.[1] My copy was bound in black leather with my name embossed on the front in cursive, which I took as a personal invitation into the holy text of my parents and grandparents.

      I remember sitting at my desk at the front of the classroom when chapter 19 of Judges introduced me to sexual violence. In the first episode of its finale, the author of Judges conjures up an anonymous woman for a gruesome purpose. As the story goes, a certain "Levite's concubine" disobeys her husband and lord, a man from the tribe of Levi and town of Ephraim, and runs back to her father's house in Judah. The Levite goes to fetch her and is heartily greeted by his father-in-law. After days of eating and drinking with the concubine's father, he leaves for home with the young woman back in his possession. While overnighting at Gibeah in Benjamin, a group of men threaten the Levite with rape. He hands the concubine over to them instead. She is raped and brutalized by the mob. The Levite takes her motionless body home with him, cuts her into pieces, and distributes her parts to all the tribes of

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[1] New International Version of the Bible, a preferred translation in my natal evangelical Christian tradition. Old Testament, a traditional Christian term for the Hebrew Bible.

Israel. "How has this evil been?" the Israelites ask at the beginning of the next chapter (20.3), before accepting the Levite's account as the scandalous pretext for a war of vengeance against the tribe of Benjamin: a self-destructive war on Israel's part, but one endorsed by YHWH.[2]

At school, we had learned about conquest, crucifixion, and enslavement, but rape was not in the curriculum. I remember leaving my glossy ribbon bookmark at the end of the story, walking to Mrs. Merrill's desk, and asking, "What does r-a-p-e mean?" Her response, of course, was a combination of euphemism and feigned ignorance. Back then, I got the impression that she didn't know either. And so, Merriam-Webster had to be my teacher.

Dictionary definitions offer no consolation nor resolution for narrative horror on this scale. Neither does academic scholarship. When I eventually dove into the body of research on Judges 19-21, its overwhelming violence nearly dissuaded me from looking any further, lest my hands get too bloody in the search for meaning. I am not alone in this experience. Biblical scholar Renita Weems writes that Judges 19-21 could compel someone to "stop reading the Bible altogether" (125). The passage is known in feminist biblical scholarship as one of many "texts of terror" which confront characters and readers with visceral stories of bodily trauma, sexual abuse, and patriarchal violence (Trible 28).

Such stories are not confined to scripture. Thirteen years after my first encounter with the Levite's concubine, I have become acquainted with sexual trauma. I see and hear sexual trauma by the roadside, on the news, and in the stories of my chosen family. My people are, on the whole, transgender and nonbinary. Nearly half of all trans people in the United States have experienced sexual assault, which more heavily impacts trans people who are Black or indigenous, who are sex workers, and who experience houselessness (*NSVRC*). This trauma is compounded by state-by-state legislative efforts to limit or outright ban transgender and reproductive health care, policies avidly pursued by evangelical lobbyists and faith leaders. Biblical texts, in other words, don't just offer (contested) moral teaching to those who hold them sacred. They affect the structural, material, and embodied circumstances of vulnerable people regardless of their faith.

What, then, do I do with my sexually violent Bible – hide in its glittery silver linings? I am no more inclined to do so than to look past the traumas to which too many of my community members are subject. My intention is to read Judges 19 from the standpoint of its nameless, voiceless concubine, who

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[2] YHWH, or the tetragrammaton, is the Hebrew acronym for a divine name, often translated in English as "the Lord," and pronounced by some as "Jehovah" or "Yahweh." Another divine name, El or Elohim, is typically translated as "God."

refuses to submit to patriarchal violence and dies for it. My approach is, in part, a reflection of what Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza calls a "hermeneutic[3] of remembrance" (19). She proposes this interpretive methodology as an alternative to "abandoning the memory of our [biblical] foresisters' suffering and hopes" (19). A hermeneutic of remembrance is profoundly subversive in that it reserves the right to challenge the perspectives of biblical authors themselves. It thus "moves against the androcentric[4] text toward the lived history of the woman it buries" (19).

A reader of Judges may join the Israelite chorus as they gather to demand an explanation for the dismembered body parts left on their doorsteps. They address the Levite, who sent the bloody parcels, and demand an account: "Speak! How has this evil been?"[5] (20.3). Within the story itself, answers vary based on the perspectives of the speakers. The Levite tells his version on a national stage – he fortunately remains alive to testify. By changing details to exonerate himself of his concubine's death, he successfully channels Israel's rage against the men of Gibeah, to whom he hand-delivered his concubine to be "known."[6] The unknown biblical narrator has his version, too; he indicts wicked men like the Levite for upsetting a moral order and inciting national conflict. Nowhere in Judges 19 does the narrator give the Levite's concubine a chance to answer – or a name, a mother, a word of dialogue, or a burial.

How can I, a reader of Judges, respond to the question posed by the Israelite chorus? Instead of averting my gaze from the concubine's experience, I will read between the lines of Judges 19 for glimpses of her, for echoes of her voice. In doing so, I aim to reframe a text which, embedded in my spiritual tradition, evinces the economies of power that underpin sexual and state violence. To begin to do so, I must meet the Levite's concubine where she is. So, I call her by name. She is *Beth-sheber*. I use this name in affirmation of Mieke Bal and Cheryl Exum's previous work on Judges 19. Beth-sheber is named for the home (Hebrew *beth*) to which she longed to return as well as for being the daughter (*bath*) of breaking (*sheber*), "as in the breaking of pottery into pieces" or "as in the phrase, 'breaking of a dream'" (Exum 176-177).

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[3] Interpretive framework. Hermeneutics is the field of biblical studies where readers make meaning of a text.

[4] Revolving around men.

[5] This and all following biblical quotations, unless marked otherwise, come from the *Literal Standard Version* (*LSV*), which I prefer for its disorienting and present-tense narration. Other English translations tend to smooth out the Masoretic Text's Hebrew for the sake of literary readability. As its name suggests, the *LSV* is more or less direct. It conveys the chaos and disjointedness of the narrative at hand. It, along with every other translation, contains the contested translation "concubine," which I reduce to the original Hebrew word, piylegesh.

[6] Biblical euphemism for sexual penetration, or "carnal knowledge," by a man, often with undertones of force.

This essay attempts to illuminate the biblical narrator's omissions by reframing Judges 19 from the perspective of women who, like Beth-sheber, were taken as concubines (*piylegeshim*). Literary-historical criticism contextualizes Beth-sheber's story, whether mythical or biographical, in the patriarchal economy of Iron Age Israel.[7] The first two verses of Judges 19 offer a fragmented glimpse into the beginning of the end of her life: She is "taken" as a *piylegesh*; then in the next biblical phrase, leaves her husband to return to her father's house in Judah. Yet, she is not treated as a protagonist, and indeed, has no dialogue in her own story. Regardless of Beth-sheber's historical personhood, young women in her setting served as commodities promising domestic and agricultural labor, fertility, sexual availability, and virgin purity. This "evil" is rooted in the political economy of Israel, operating behind the scenes and branching through individual men's sexually violent behavior. Judges is less interested in confronting systems and patterns of sexual violence than in justifying centralized, monarchical state power. And so, Judges 19 begins with statecraft on its mind.

No King

Judges 19.1a And it comes to pass in those days, when there is no king in Israel, that there is a man …

The first task in critically reframing Judges 19 is to account for its monarchist political perspective. The later chapters of Judges are sprinkled with repetitive reminders that "in those days there was no king" (17.6, 18.1, 19.1, 21.25). Israel was not yet united under a centralized state, Judges notes, so people were left to their own wicked devices. They lacked the strong arm of a theocratic national ruler to enforce moral norms. The "no king" refrain suggests that wickedness emerged from individual moral dysfunction: "each does that which is right in his own eyes" (17.6, 21.25). Beth-sheber's rape is described as "that which is good in [the mob's] eyes" (19.24). The biblical narrator places blame on a certain few "heartless individuals" for their decisions but fails to apply the same standard of accountability to their broader society's practice of trading virgin daughters (Yee 157).

Such an individualizing analysis of violence relies on personal morality to explain acts of violence, too often at the expense of a critical engagement

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[7] Whether Beth-sheber's story is myth or biography is unrelated to Israel's question in the text. I am ambivalent toward this distinction and do not have a dog in the fight between postmodern and fundamentalist readings. Whether fictional characters or a historical community, the Israelite chorus articulates the question already in my heart.

with underlying social and economic patterns. In the words of prison abolitionist Ruth Wilson Gilmore, this kind of approach relies on "individualizing [social] disorder into singular instances of criminality" (176). In it, individual attacks are met with additional force, not healing or resolution. In the case of Judges, it bolsters state and societal reactions from "a punishment mindset and a war footing," where the bad men are stamped out and their victim left in pieces (Kaba).

By contrast, historical materialist analyses understand personal morality to reflect the underlying social environment of a person. Marx describes this primary tenet of historical materialism when he writes, "Society does not consist of individuals, but expresses the sum of interrelations, the relations within which these individuals stand" (193). In the context of this biblical analysis, materialism asks, "What social and economic relationships gave rise to this situation?" In other words, *What made this evil happen?*" A materialist analysis of Judges 19 must contend with an economy in which men form political and economic relations using virgin daughters as object commodities. If, in such a society, a patriarch did not seek a wife for his son or a price for his daughter, it would be an exceptional act of resistance, and an economic sacrifice with social consequences. A historical materialist reading thus subverts the perspective of Judges' narrator when he chalks the story's brutality up to individual "sons of worthlessness" (19.22).

When the united tribes of Israel ask "How has this evil been?" it is not to question the sexual violence that pervades in their social and economic structures, but a reaction to a particularly egregious instance in which cruelty was made manifest and undeniable. The Levite's response is notable for the way it externalizes "the evil." He offers a chopped-up version of the story in which he deflects all personal responsibility for her death and casts himself as a distraught husband (*ish*, 19.3) and lord (*adon*, 19.26) looking for justice. He points the finger at Gibeah and concludes with "behold, you are all sons of Israel; give for yourselves a word and counsel here" (20.7).

The eleven present tribes of Israel, too, deflect responsibility. They accept the Levite's pointed accusation as evidence that a select few are guilty and turn their collective rage upon the entire tribe of Benjamin, who neglected to attend the assembly or to surrender their Gibeathite kinsmen. A hastily scrambled intertribal army annihilates every last Benjaminite civilian, slaughters their livestock, and sends "all the cities which are found into the fire" (20.48).

The chaos and massacres underscore the anarchy of pre-monarchic Israel. Koala Jones-Warsaw argues that the "entire story functions within the Deuteronomistic History to justify the establishment of kingship" (29). Certainly, the narrator's repetition of "no king" indicates that the concluding chapters of Judges convey a message about the Israelite politics of monarchy. Gale Yee argues that chapters 20 and 21 frame Israel's military response as a "symbolic resolution of real social contradictions," where a divinely anointed

king symbolizes the restoration of order (144). In her reading, the author of Judges has Gibeah and Benjamin criminally threaten (the contradiction) the moral order, which is ultimately restored by Israel's punitive action (the resolution). And so, when the text's narrative structure associates violence and anarchy with the olden days, it would encourage the Israelite populace to look favorably, by contrast, on their contemporary monarchs and courtly elites.

But instead of the resolution Judges seems to proffer, the moral and criminal contradictions escalate up until its twenty-first and final chapter. Eventually, Israel seeks to pacify Benjamin's six hundred surviving soldiers by gifting them six hundred virgins. They pillage four hundred of these young women from the destroyed town of Jabesh-Gilead as punishment for opting out of the war effort. The other two hundred are "seized" as they dance in a festival of YHWH, in the northern town of Shiloh (21.12, 23). War meets sexual violence meets sacrilege. And Israel does not stay united. Every man goes home with his human and nonhuman spoils, "each to his tribe" (21.24). Clearly, the reason for Israel's furious and collective moral indignation – the mistreatment of Beth-sheber – has been forgotten in the exhilaration of ethnocide. The final verse of Judges reiterates the absence of a king in those days and that people did what was right in their eyes. Without the guiding hand and disciplinary presence of a monarch, the reader is asked to infer, the Israelites would return to their anarchic individual ways.

Yee argues that Judges was written (author is unknown) within the context of King Josiah's political and religious reforms, which centralized state and cultic authority in Jerusalem. Josiah (c. 640-610 BCE) is credited with eliminating the worship of all Israel's gods beside YHWH, and restoring its monarchic righteousness after a series of wayward kings (2 Kings 23–25).[8] Scholars dispute the textual dating of Judges, but, if correct, Yee's interpretation offers a convincing explanation of Judges narrator's investment in moral idealism and the necessity of the monarchy. If Judges 19–21 was in fact composed at royal court during a period of the de facto state's consolidation, it makes sense that centralized and punitive state power would be represented as the ultimate resolution for moral and criminal contradictions.

We now turn to the text itself for a close reading of its first three verses. An examination of the economic position of virgin girls in Israelite society will situate Beth-sheber in her time and place and shed light on her story.

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[8] Other Israelite deities named in the Bible include El (pl. Elohim), Ba'al, and Asherah.

Taken

> Judges 19.1b … there is a man, a Levite, a sojourner in the sides of the hill-country of Ephraim, and he takes a wife for himself, a *piylegesh*, out of Beth-Lehem-Judah …

Beth-sheber's story takes on a new coherence when read in conversation with the lives of her historical contemporaries, i.e., "taken" women. After setting the scene, Judges 19.1b provides a casual example of the coercive sexual politics of ancient Israel: the Levite "takes" Beth-sheber as his *piylegesh*. The text does not portray her as an active participant in the marriage process. She is passively "taken" in marriage in the same way the Levite later "takes" hold of her to push her outside (19.25), "takes" her unresponsive body home on a donkey (19.28), and "takes" his knife to dismember her body (19.29). The verb for "taken" (*l-q-ḥ*) is a common transitive verb in the Hebrew Bible, used for people and objects alike. The book of Genesis, for instance, includes no fewer than 41 instances of women being "taken," typically in marriage, rape, or concubinage.

While "concubine" is the predominant rendering of the word *piylegesh*, womanist scholars insist on a more nuanced translation, which opens the door for a historical examination of Beth-sheber's circumstance. Wil Gafney points out that concubinage did not technically exist in ancient Israel, where an isshah (woman/wife) would be a "primary woman" in a man's household and a piylegesh would be a "woman of secondary status" (2017, 34).

In order to understand Beth-sheber's position as a subordinate, lower-class wife, one must look no further than the "familial mode of production" in prestate Israel (Yee 144). Friedrich Engels defines "mode of production" as "the social organization under which the people of a particular historical epoch and a particular country live" (25). The epoch of Judges 19 is the Iron Age (c. 1200–1020 BCE), when the Near East saw the generation of early agricultural surpluses, thanks to new technologies ranging from hand tools to enslavement (Lerner 54). In this context, Ancient Israel's mode of production gave rise to a political economy organized by kinship. Clan or tribal patriarchs – definitely not *piylegeshim* – maintained livestock, farmland, and households. Patriarchs in this context knew each other and entered into transactions because they were related by blood or marriage. They used kinship to form and mutually define social and military relationships (Rubin 170). Men passed wealth to each other through patrilineage and through the trade in virgin daughters. Prospective grooms would negotiate a bride-price with fathers in their familial, geographic, and social networks. These patriarchs were "under an obligation to dispose of their family members in marriage … to maximize family fortunes and keep up or improve family status" (Lerner 107-113).

Thus, the gift-transaction of marriage would have established an economic relationship between Beth-sheber's father and her new husband, the Levite.

So, after reaching a satisfactory agreement with her father, the Levite would have been able to "take" Beth-sheber in marriage (19.1). If the Levite's family lacked the resources to purchase their son a wife, they could have raised funds by selling other children into slavery, or giving up a virgin daughter into a "degraded marriage" (Lerner 112). The Levite's hypothetical sister, like Beth-sheber, could be taken to perform household and sexual labor, with no ability to consent or refuse. This form of marriage, to quote Lerner, "amounted to domestic enslavement" (112).

While Beth-sheber's acquisition is unvoiced at the beginning of her story, the edicts of ancient Israelite society meant certain women were the property of men. In keeping with contemporary developments in nearby Mesopotamian enslavement, biblical law began to define norms for the relations between slaves and masters, right alongside those between women and men (Lerner 48). The Torah[9] admonishes men not to covet "anything that belongs to your neighbor," including wives, handmaids, and menservants (Exod. 20.17, Deut. 5.21). Men could legally serve their women writs of divorce but not the other way around (Deut. 24). Most enslaved Hebrew people were to be "sent away free" every seventh year, not so for virgin daughters (Deut. 15.12–17). And if two enslaved people had children, only the man would be set free; the woman and her children would remain in bondage (Exod. 21.4). A man could sell his daughter into slavery at will, under which condition she would be permanently enslaved (Exod. 21.7-11).

It is unclear under what circumstances the Levite acquired Beth-sheber, so a literary reading cannot unequivocally declare her to have been held in bondage. Although Beth-sheber is not mentioned as having been enslaved previously, she could have been given in marriage or bondage before the Levite acquired her in Bethlehem. The Torah passages above clearly attest to the ubiquity of such a scenario. Depending on her family's economic class, a virgin daughter would experience marriage under utterly different circumstances. Marriages by contract often occurred between families with relative wealth and resulted in primary marriages, defined by a limited degree of legal rights for the primary wife. Any wife, regardless of status, legally owed her husband fidelity and sexual availability, but only the primary wife was entitled support from her husband and could control property, including other women (Gafney "Speak!"). If unable to conceive, primary wives could transform their

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[9] Literary unit also known as the Pentateuch or the Law of Moses. Consists of the first five texts in the Hebrew Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Followed by Joshua and Judges, then Samuel, where the first Israelite kings appear

enslaved women into piylegeshim, secondary or lower-class wives, for their husbands to use sexually (Lerner 91–92). If there were no enslaved women in the household to choose from, a lower-class woman could simply be bought from her family of origin and used as a piylegesh for sexual gratification or procreation. Yee refers to this as the piylegesh's "double subordination" to the primary wife, who was already inherently subordinate to her husband (152).

Whereas the biblical slavery statutes could very well apply to Beth-sheber, the author of Judges does not offer any clarification. He doesn't specify her family's socioeconomic situation, nor the presence of any mother or siblings. Similarly, the Levite gets no genealogy, and no primary wife is mentioned as Beth-sheber's superior. It is unclear how he even met Beth-sheber's father, given that they lived in different tribal territories. Absent any real clarity about Beth-sheber besides her piylegesh title, suggests the subordinate status of a cheap bridal commodity. And yet she asserts her freedom.

Whoredom

> Judges 19.2 … and his piylegesh commits whoredom against him, and she goes from him to the house of her father, to Beth-Lehem-Judah, and is there four months of days.

This second verse speaks to Beth-sheber's single recorded act of autonomy: opting out of sexual obedience. The author seems to imply that her action (she "goes from him") is related to a prior transgression, described by a verb phrase translated "commits whoredom against him." The narrator offers no clear explanation for her departure, except for "whoredom," a nonspecific accusation of sexual impropriety. While a materialist understanding of Judges 19.1 may add context, the text itself is puzzling and provides none of the particular circumstances or events that would compel a woman like Beth-sheber to "go from" her husband with zero legal or social authority to do so.

Beth-sheber's return to her father's house implies that she felt her prospects there were better than they were under the Levite's roof. And yet it is important to recognize that she looks to "escape" to the site of her initial commodification. Lyrae van Clief-Stefanon spins Beth-sheber's missing perspective into poetry in "The Daughter and the Concubine from the Nineteenth Chapter of Judges Consider and Speak Their Minds." Here, Beth-sheber reflects on her experience as an expendable family asset on the day her father first hands her over:

> And I was a gift once
> And I was Daddy's to give
> And Daddy was joy and sorrow
> And Daddy was Oh

> my baby gal done got big
> And Daddy was Lord
> she done grown and gone. (22)

Note the enjambment in the final two lines: Van Clief-Stefanon juxtaposes the father's interjection ("Lord / she done grown and gone") with his *de jure* status as Beth-sheber's paternal master ("And Daddy was Lord"). His economic position as a patriarch entailed supreme authority over his daughter's body and the ability to exchange her for dowry or for a legally assessed penalty. For instance, if a virgin daughter were sexually assaulted, biblical law called for her father to be paid fifty shekels (Deut. 22.28-29) and for her immediate marriage to her attacker. Judges gives no reason to discount or affirm this possibility for Beth-sheber but does affirm that her new husband has assumed her father's former role as master, or lord (19.29).

Gafney and Lerner each point out that Israelite laws (and their Assyrian, Babylonian, and Hittite counterparts) about enslaved women were deemed "necessary because these practices exist[ed] in the community" (Gafney, *Womanist Midrash* 120). The variety of scenarios addressed in the Torah speak to the multiple and overlapping determinants of the freedom or subjugation a woman might experience. It is useful to remember, for example, that primary wives and enslaved women occupied two ends of a spectrum, with *piylegeshim* like Beth-sheber occupying an "intermediate position" (Lerner 112).

Here, Kimberlé Crenshaw's notion of intersectionality can account for differing experiences of power between women based on such factors as class, fertility, marital status, nation, and sexual availability in the eyes of patriarchal law. Crenshaw posits intersectionality as a challenge to feminist and antiracist theory and politics which have tended to oversimplify power relationships into binaries of black-white, man-woman, and criminal-victim (140). Specifically, "intersectional experience" describes the overlapping variables at play in the lived experiences of Black women, which are rendered two-dimensional when accounted for solely in terms of Blackness or womanhood. Generally, the concept of intersectionality encourages an investigative look at the interplay between identity categories, social forces, political systems, and so on, to provide a more holistic picture than binary identity politics are capable of producing.

Wil Gafney, Koala Jones-Warsaw, and Mitzi J. Smith take up Crenshaw's challenge as they consider the political and economic dimensions of Beth-sheber's story through lenses of womanism, the Black feminist[10] mode

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[10] It is important to note that the terms Black feminism and womanism mean different things to different people. Both were first formally articulated to indicate the distance between dominant white feminism and the experiences, analyses, and organized movements of Black women in the United States.

of analysis coined by Alice Walker. Gafney characterizes womanism as an integration of "the radical egalitarianism of feminism, the emancipatory ethic and reverence for black physical and cultural aesthetics of the black liberation movement, and the transformational trajectories of both movements" (*Womanist Midrash* 6). By centering on Black women's experiences and analyses, womanist biblical interpretations hold "didactic value for other readers" and engender a "commit[ment] to the wholeness and flourishing of the entire community" (7). That is to say, the implications of womanist insight ought not be dismissed by non-Black or non-woman readers and can move to uncover harmful power dynamics obscured by binary analyses.

Take, for example, Smith's reading of Judges 19. In "Reading the Story of the Levite's Concubine Through the Lens of Modern-day Sex Trafficking," she points out that Black women and children are disproportionately more likely to experience the types of violence to which Beth-sheber is subjected (18). She argues that the Levite uses distance to isolate his victim, just like contemporary traffickers. Smith refers to Beth-sheber's transition from daughter to *piyleges*h as the first of five spatial journeys in Judges 19, reminiscent of contemporary predators taking their victims "permanently or temporarily from her normal geographical surroundings" (17). Her journey to the Levite's household in Ephraim, unnarrated yet necessary for the plot to begin, constitutes "implicit transportation of human property across geographical boundaries" – in other words, human trafficking (17).

With or without a bridal contract, Beth-sheber would have been taken from Judah to Ephraim, across tribal borders, as part of a status transformation from a virgin daughter to a secondary wife, "exchang[ing] one master for another" (Smith 17). Although today "we regard it as unthinkable that an otherwise upstanding citizen might be a slaveholder" (27), the economic underpinnings of Israelite kinship relationships code Beth-sheber as property to be taken. The mode of production itself produces violence. According to custom and law, her consent is not required for the Levite to shuttle her across the landscape of Israel to a new life as his wife of secondary status. Her initial journey and transformation flies under the radar of the text, perhaps because of how commonplace a trip like this would have been for Israelite girls and women.

Less common, perhaps, was Beth-sheber's choice to leave and travel again, crossing back through the territories of Ephraim and Benjamin into Judah. This second journey is Beth-sheber's sole assertion of agency in a text that generally confines her to a silent object. She takes her body, the Levite's legal property, and in doing so, transforms her status from piylegesh to run away. Indeed, the text holds off on referring to her again as a piylegesh until the Levite recaptures her and heads toward Ephraim. For the next scene, she is merely called "the young woman," visiting home without permission (19.3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9).

Gafney rightly identifies the language of "slut-shaming" ("Speak!") in the accusation found in Judges 19:2 that states Beth-sheber "commits whoredom" (Hebrew *z-n-h*).[11] Arguably, the accusation is made to characterize her departure, rather than to explain it (as though she was attempting to avoid just consequences for sexual impropriety). Other prominent translations of *z-n-h* in this verse read, "is unfaithful to him" (ESV), "plays the whore against him" (KJV), "plays the harlot against him" (JPS), and "prostitutes herself against him" (NRSV). The Hebrew verb does not have a clear English counterpart but occurs in instances where feminine sexual subversion meets idolatry. Sometimes the Torah uses *z-n-h* to describe Israel's repeated collective "whoring" after gods other than YHWH (Exod. 34.15; Lev. 17.7; Num. 15.39; Deut. 31.16); at others it is used in connection to intermarriage with non-Israelite women (Exod. 34.16; Num. 25.1). Perhaps, then, the narrator does not accuse Beth-sheber of literal adultery or sex work *while* at the Levite's house, *after* which "she goes from him." Earlier in Judges, the narrator says Israel commits whoredom against YHWH by breaking their covenant with Him (Judges 2.17, 8.27). Hence, the narrator may be imputing whoredom onto Beth-sheber's departure from her lord. In this reading, she commits whoredom against the Levite *because* she goes from him.

Whether she is accused of literal adultery or of breaking the marriage contract, Jones-Warsaw suggests that the narrator's diction reflects the perspective of the Levite (20). His accusation of whoredom could carry the penalty of death for Beth-sheber because, according to the law, infidelity was punishable by execution (Lev. 20.10). Even if the Levite's charge of literal adultery was false, she must have known the flight would imply guilt. If the charge was levelled *post hoc*, something clearly compelled Beth-sheber to break the marriage contract by running from him. Thus Jones-Warsaw incisively reads Beth-sheber's self-emancipation as an "act of survival" (Jones-Warsaw 21).

To Bring Her Back

Judges 19.3a And her husband rises and goes after her, to speak to her heart, to bring her back. … 19.28 and he says to her, "Rise, and we go"; but there is no answering, and he takes her on the donkey, and the man rises and goes to his place, 19.29 and comes into his house, and takes the knife, and lays hold on his concubine, and cuts her in pieces to her bones.

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[11] I use the three-consonant stem z-n-h here, because it appears in scripture in different grammatical forms.

In the context of her political economy, Beth-sheber's personal horror story takes on new meaning. So far, this analysis has only dealt with the first two verses of Judges 19, as the narrative setup to a text of terror. Read through a materialist lens, that brief prologue illuminates the rest of the chapter. Holding onto that frame of reference, the critical reader bears witness to the Levite's pursuit of Beth-sheber, and the grisly scene of her subsequent death. No longer can Judges 19 be read simply as an illustration of cruelty enacted by a deviant few.

The Levite's decision to follow Beth-sheber is puzzling (19.3). If he believed his piylegesh committed whoredom, like the narrator says, she could no longer be his wife of any rank. Adultery — defined as any sexual contact between a man and another man's daughter, wife, or enslaved woman — was punishable by death (Lev. 20.10). The Levite also would have been bound by the strict rules governing marriage as a member of his priestly tribe/class. Levites were prohibited from "taking" a "woman of harlotry," a divorcee, a widow, or any woman otherwise "defiled" (Lev. 21.1-15). His decision to pursue her, and indeed her father's decision to shelter her for four months, would at the very least imply scandal, given their place and time.

Considering how scandalous this situation would seem to the men involved, and how high-stakes it would be for Beth-sheber's survival, her father's joy upon recognizing the Levite seems, at face value, inexplicable. He "keeps hold" on his son-in-law, and "presses" him to stay longer and longer (19.4,7). The chummy atmosphere becomes more confusing when later, during the episode at Gibeah, the Levite reveals that the whole time he has been prepared to feast, with bread, and wine, and straw for his human and donkey entourage —"no lack of anything" (19.19). The Levite did not *need* the food, drink, and rest proffered by his father-in-law. Why, then, the dramatic show of camaraderie?

Viewed through a materialist lens, the father's demonstration of extreme, and somewhat coercive, hospitality is rendered more coherent. Phyllis Trible calls the feast an "exercise in male bonding" that takes place even as Beth-sheber, their reason for meeting, "fades from the scene" (82). It is true that Beth-sheber does not speak a word, but "male bonding" hardly accounts for the absurdity in Bethlehem. Jones-Warsaw describes Beth-sheber's Judaean father as "forceful and manipulative, but polite" (19.21). He insists for three days that the Levite stick around and "support [his] heart" with food and drink (19.4-5, 8). The Levite may be legally entitled to reclaim Beth-sheber, but under her father's roof, he can be stalled. Eventually, however, the Levite asserts his right and takes Beth-sheber from her father's house.

Later that night, the Levite and his party find themselves stranded in Gibeah, in "a broad place of the city," somewhere with open air and nowhere to stay (19.14-15). When an old man serendipitously shows up to offer lodging, the Levite reiterates that he is headed to his home, that no one has yet

extended hospitality, and that he is from the hill country of Ephraim (19.18). After all, the old man is from the hill country as well (19.16) and is proximal to the Levite because of shared geography and familiar lineage. Articulating their mutual "stranger status" (Niditch 367), the Levite ingratiates himself to his new host. He makes a point to tell the Ephraimite that he has enough straw for his donkeys, enough provisions for himself and his manservant, and for the Ephraimite's servants and the "handmaid" too (19.19). Here Beth-sheber is referred to by a new title, one which does not specify any marital relationship to the Levite. The old man responds, "Peace to you; only, all your lack is on me, but do not lodge in the broad place" (19.20). His hospitality is touching, and apparently responsive to a perceived degree of familiarity between the two men.

At this point in her reading, Smith intervenes, remarking that the text "reeks of the images and language of familiarity" (15). She points out that modern sex traffickers leverage personal relationships with and proximity to their victims, even as familiarity and proximity bring men together in fraternity with one another. The Levite and the old man realize that they're from the same region. They are thus linked by the bonds of fraternity, which Smith identifies as a condition allowing for "male enjoyment and self-gratification to the exclusion of female well-being" (22). It is natural that after arriving home, they take their sandals off, wash their feet, and imbibe together, "making their heart glad" (19.21-22). There is no mention of Beth-sheber or anyone else taking up space in the house, although the text assures us that the donkeys get fed (19.21). Any subordinate humans fade into the background, including the Levite's "young man." Beth-sheber, we are left to assume, is welcomed as a material extension of the Levite, her lodging contingent upon him. Enjoyment, here as in Bethlehem, is the prerogative and privilege of the patriarchs who identify with each other against the inhospitable and alien setting of Gibeah.

All of a sudden, a mob of unknown quantity, who are identified as "sons of worthlessness," disrupt the men's dinner (19.22). From the very introduction, the narrator has made his verdict. They surround the Ephraimite's house and "beat on the door," demanding to rape his guest (19.22). Jones-Warsaw observes that although he is the "master of the house" (19.23) the Ephraimite's power is limited. He is described as an alien, an elder, and a manual laborer, suggesting a lack of economic and social resources (Jones-Warsaw 23). Shrewdly, then, he employs a threefold strategy of persuasion. First, he appeals to a fraternal sense of propriety: "No, my brothers, please" (19.23). The "sons of worthlessness" (19.22, repeated by Israel in 20.13) are now part of his brotherly moral network, whereas a few hours ago he had warned the Levite not to linger all night in their public square (19.20).

Having invoked brotherhood, the Ephraimite adds a second tactic, attempting to activate their sense of guest-host reciprocity. They shouldn't "do

evil … do not do this folly," he says, explaining, "that this man has come into my house" (19.23). The Ephraimite expects that the four walls of his home will protect a guest who would be otherwise exposed to assault, should he have slept on the street. He insinuates that the web of brotherly relationships in Gibeah could be enough to dissuade the mob from attacking a fellow Israelite man. Rape of a man, especially a supplicant bound by fraternity and guest-host norms, would act as a "doubly potent symbol of acultural, non-civilized behavior from the Israelite point of view" (Niditch 369). Whereas sexual assault against women was built into the economy of the day, male rape threatened to destabilize the concept of fraternal relationships between patriarchs, and by extension the Israelite national community.

It is therefore an option utterly unacceptable to the Ephraimite. And so, even as he relies on male solidarity for protection, the Ephraimite makes a third, shocking play — a concession consistent with economic norms. The offer, if accepted, would serve as damage control, minimizing the crime of male rape (Jones-Warsaw 24). This is where the womanist principle of "the inherent value of each member of a community in the text" nuances the "dichotomy of wicked men/innocent women" perpetuated by individualistic readings (Gafney 2017, 8; Jones-Warsaw 27). Men in this setting exercise power over the lives of women, and yet that power is shaped by their economic, geographic, and kinship relations with other men. For example, the Levite is threatened with rape as a guest in the land of Benjamin and is defended as such by his protective host (19.22-23). The host himself is an Ephraimite sojourning away from his tribal inheritance, working in the fields until dark (19.14-16). He is unable to simply reject the mob's demands on the body of the Levite because he wields no power over them in their geographic place. But since Beth-sheber and his own virgin daughter are present and under his authority, the Ephraimite is able to use them as a counter-offer. Womanist and materialist analysis can hold space for the interplay of complex dynamics, without denying one to acknowledge the other.

As we have seen, a *piylegesh* and virgin daughter are both inherently sexually available, to the extent that their male next-of-kin permit. In the ancient Near East, a man in debt could pledge as collateral his wife, children, "concubines," and *their* children, along with any other people he held in bondage (Lerner 90). Grasping for something of value, the Ephraimite offers his own daughter, along with Beth-sheber, to the mob. "Behold … please let me bring them out and you humble them" (19.24). Nobody has demanded access to or even mentioned the young women at this point. He makes the deadly suggestion of his own accord, leveraging the bodies of the two women at his disposal.

The crowd does not reply to the Ephraimite's proposition, and says nothing else for the duration of the narrative. The narrator adds dramatic weight to their silence, declaring that they "have not been willing to listen" (19.25). For the first time in this encounter, the Levite is spurred to action.

The otherwise explicit text casts a smokescreen over his identity for this one act of betrayal. Referred to obscurely as "the man," he takes hold of Beth-sheber, "his *piylegesh*," and brings her outside to the men, who "know her and roll themselves on her all the night until the morning" (19.25). This whole night happens quickly from a textual perspective, in the span of one long sentence: the unwillingness to listen, the delivery of Beth-sheber, her rape, and her stagger back toward the house. She "falls at the opening of the man's house where her lord is, until the light" (19.26).

When, in the morning, the Levite gets up, he finds Beth-sheber laying unresponsive at the house's threshold. He loads her onto a donkey and takes her across tribal borders again to complete his journey (19.27-28). After arriving home, the Levite takes his knife, "butchers her to her bones," and sends the twelve pieces throughout the countryside (19.29-30). Israel gathers and demands an explanation, joined later by a certain third grader in twenty-first century Texas.

Speak!

Reading Judges 19 through a hermeneutic of remembrance requires the use of what Kelly Brown Douglas calls a "moral memory." Moral memories, she writes, "acknowledge the ways in which our systems, structures, and ways of being" — e.g., an economic system of human trafficking — "are a continuation of the myths, the narratives, the ideologies of the past" (Douglas 221). A moral memory takes into account the desperate situation a historical woman resembling Beth-sheber would have found herself in and looks for her in the present.

If as Douglas writes, "To have a moral memory is to recognize the past we carry within us," the American reader of Judges has much to recall (122). It does not suffice to recite the names of those people lost to systems that enslave, kill, or subjugate. Nor does it suffice for a people to cry out to their rulers, "Stop the violence!" And so, prison abolitionist Mariame Kaba writes that "stop the violence" should sound more like "stopping the poverty, stopping the foreclosures, stopping police harassment, stopping the mass incarceration of black and brown bodies" (U.S. Prison Culture). The reader of Judges may add to Kaba's list, stopping the abductions, stopping the pillaging, *stopping the rape, and stopping the societal use of women as sexual currency.*

A state's response to harm is guided by the motives of its ruling classes, whether they be tribal patriarchs or congressional millionaires. Prisons and armies do not form in order for victims to heal. If justice-minded communities are to cut off violence at its root, materialist analyses are crucial in order to identify and "abolish the conditions under which prison [and war and sexual assault] became the solution" (Gilmore 176). Israel's military response to Beth-sheber's trauma and death never once deviates from its violent economic system or from the religious texts underpinning it. In fact, the horrors

she endures and the terror visited on thousands thereafter is appropriated to a political moral that seeks to justify centralized, punitive state power. Judges has no interest in critiquing the social hierarchies by which Israel's most vulnerable are brutalized. It aims to expand and enforce them.

In "Speak! What Judges 19 Has to Say About Domestic Violence," Gafney insists that it is "far past time" to "seriously engage … the survivors and abusers in our midst — in our scriptures, congregations, and communities" (2015). Whereas punitive states address alleged violence by creating violence of their own (arrest, confiscation, deportation, execution, incarceration), the critical reader of Judges 19 may see things more clearly. A materialist analysis goes beyond merely crying out "Stop the violence!" to take a more compassionate and informed approach to violence of all kinds as an issue of collective well-being and public health. In particular, it opens up new perspectives on the life, suffering, and resistance of Beth-sheber.

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Ambitious, Monstrous, Remorseful: Alexander the Great in 1.5 Million *Tesserae*

By Alivia Mayfield

Few people in history have undergone as many historiographical meta-morphoses as Alexander the Great of Macedonia. For over two millennia, he has been reinterpreted to accommodate and reflect cultural attitudes toward power in different eras and places, especially that of the individual. As such, he has been cast as everything from a divinity on earth and a benevolent unifier of mankind, to a genocidal megalomaniac nothing short of a proto-Hitler. Such disagreements suggest it is neither possible nor productive to formulate a single, definitive, precise understanding of Alexander. Rather, we must acknowledge the one truth we do know for certain: that he was a complicated human being. In this way we can, if not arrive at a "true" image of Alexander, at least begin to approximate a sharper silhouette.

The arguments and divisions in Alexander's scholarship did not begin by chance. Alexander attempted, to the best of his ability, to control the narrative of his life so that he might be remembered as someone akin to a Homeric hero. As Peter Green puts it, Alexander "spent his life, with legendary success, in the pursuit of personal glory, Achillean kleos" (1991, 488). He went so far as to claim descent from Achilles on his mother Olympias' side (5). In affirmation of the demigod status this lineage conferred upon him, while in Egypt Alexander famously — or infamously — proclaimed himself the son of Zeus Ammon.[1] His self-promotion met with great success, inspiring extraor-

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[1] Alexander already claimed descent from Zeus through Heracles, who was supposedly an ancestor on his paternal side (Romm 72n.4). The Greeks had long equated Ammon with Zeus, and so Alexander's visit to his oracle at Siwa in *332* BCE was likely a quest to further prove his divine lineage, another feature he shared with heroes of Greek myth.

dinary loyalty in his men. By Arrian's account (a secondary source at best, he lived over 300 years after the events he describes), on learning he had survived a seemingly mortal wound Alexander's men "shouted aloud, some holding up their hands to heaven, and others towards Alexander himself; and many involuntary tears were shed in the unexpectedness of their joy" (Arr. *Anab*. 6.13.2). Even Alexander's unseasonal death[2] at the age of thirty-two seems designed to build his legend. Unseasonal deaths were hallmarks of Homeric heroes, as, according to James Romm, "there is nothing quite so compelling as a heroic life cut off in its prime, the principal theme of tragic literature since the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and the *Iliad*" (xvi).

Nothing, however, facilitated Alexander's legend more than the scarcity of firsthand accounts of his life. The works of historians writing during or directly after Alexander's lifetime have not survived in their entirety. Such writings were already biased and inconsistent. Callisthenes, the first Alexander historian, recruited by the king himself, mostly praised him — though we know that he criticized Alexander's attempt to introduce *proskynesis*[3] into his court, which likely contributed to his execution (Heckel 7). Ptolemy and Aristobulus, the two main sources behind Arrian's account of Alexander's campaigns, "defended the king's actions and omitted certain episodes that placed him in an unfavorable light" (8). On the other hand, Cleitarchus, who began writing shortly after Alexander's death, criticized him based on soldiers' eyewitness accounts.

Though there are multiple fragmented and contradictory primary sources, Alexander's scholarship relies heavily on five surviving secondary ancient texts for their more complete accounts. These sources are not without their own inconsistency as they are built on fragments of and testimonies about earlier, lost writings (such as those of Aristobulus, Ptolemy, and Cleitarchus). They have therefore failed to un-muddy the waters of Alexander scholarship. This essay will draw on each of these works for evidence. Already mentioned is Arrian of Nicomedia's writings which, based on the flattering accounts of Aristobulus and Ptolemy, tend to treat Alexander favorably. In addition, there are the works of Quintus Curtius Rufus, Justin (who wrote an epitome of Pompeius Trogus' longer history), Plutarch, and Diodorus Siculus,

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[2] *Unseasonal deaths* refer to unusually constructed lifespans —heroes who grow up too quickly, for example, or die too soon. This is usually to prevent them from conquering the world, as they would be too powerful otherwise (Nagy). Alexander seems unseasonal because of his sudden death so soon after establishing the world's then-largest empire.

[3] *Proskynesis* was a Persian practice wherein visitors to a king's court would prostrate themselves before him. Such genuflection lowered Persians in Greek estimations, as it suggested they were enslaved to their monarch. *Proskynesis* failed to be introduced to Alexander's court because his subjects resisted such debasement.

all of whom represent the "vulgate" tradition that draws on Cleitarchus and tends to be more critical.

Given the inconsistency of source materials, it is unsurprising that modern scholarship has developed seemingly infinite Alexanders. Sir William Tarn famously saw Alexander as the first proclaimer of all mankind's "unity and brotherhood" (147). Ernst Badian's influential essays characterized a "man who conquered the world, only to lose his soul" (204). More recently, Peter Green has argued that Alexander stimulated trade and economic development by disrupting the Persian economy (1990, 366). In response, A.B. Bosworth flatly asserted that "the history of Alexander is the history of waste — of money, of forests stripped for siege works and navies, and above all of lives" (30). By turns Alexander is described as "seldom cruel" (Tsouras xiii) and "clinically insane" (Cantor 143), as a "kind of unacknowledged proto-feminist, limited multi-culturalist, and religious visionary" (Rogers v) and a "murderous, rage-filled, paranoid, alcoholic, religious fanatic" (Gabriel 39). In short, Alexander has been controversial since antiquity and remains a divisive historical figure — or rather a collection of figures.

If such contradictory accounts of Alexander prove anything, it is that he is difficult to accommodate within any one interpretive rubric. The inconsistency of his figuration in ancient records means that no single ideological perspective or psychological evaluation can satisfactorily contain him. The French essayist Michel de Montaigne writes in his essay "On the Inconstancy of Our Actions" that people defy categorical descriptions as their deeds "commonly contradict each other in so odd a fashion that it seems impossible that they should all come out of the same shop" (124). This is the crisis that has plagued Alexander scholarship for more than two millennia.

If, therefore, it is a feature of Alexander that he escapes categorical description, then it is a bug in Alexander scholarship that we keep trying to describe him singularly. In this essay, I will adopt a different approach. Rather than impose singular coherence onto Alexander, I gesture towards an interpretive rubric that embraces his inconsistent characterization. To do so, I offer three contradictory interpretations of the *Alexander Mosaic*, each supported by other incidents in his life as portrayed in the ancient record. Together, they suggest that it would benefit Alexander scholarship to accept his contradictions. A simultaneously heroic, tyrannical, and remorseful Alexander, as argued by three interpretations of the mosaic, is more compelling than stagnant, monolithic accounts. By demonstrating that the events of Alexander's life do, in Montaigne's phrase, "commonly contradict each other," I offer an account that embraces his complexity.

The Mosaic

The *Alexander Mosaic*, which is comprised of 1.5 million *tesserae*,[4] was created in the second century BCE and originally covered the floor of a room in the House of the Faun in Pompeii (Moreno 11). The mosaic is likely a copy of a now lost Greek painting. The technique used in the mosaic, *opus vermiculatum*,[5] as well as the small size of the tesserae, make the mosaic seem like an "imitation of a painted surface" when viewed from a distance [Moreno 11]. It is an acknowledged masterpiece.

The mosaic most likely depicts the Battle of Issus,[6] which took place during Alexander's Persian campaign in November of 333 BCE. The scene shows the battle's conclusion. Alexander and his army surge forward from the left of the scene as King Darius III and his Persian soldiers flee to the right. Alexander's triumph at Issus was shocking. While his forces had earlier defeated Darius in Battle of the Granicus (334 BCE), Issus was the first battle in which he faced the Persian King himself. The Persians fielded a powerful and experienced force of somewhere between 50,000 and 60,000 troops, while the Macedonians deployed around 37,000 men (Hyland 78). Despite the earlier defeat to Alexander's forces, the long-established Persian Empire likely still regarded him as some upstart Macedonian. Persian defeat — on their own

Fig.1. *Alexander Mosaic*, 2nd century BCE, Naples National Archaeological Museum.

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[4] Small pieces of stone, ceramics, or glass used to make mosaics.

[5] *Opus vermiculatum* is a second-century BCE technique in which the tesserae are placed in a "very precise arrangement" of "undulating or circular patterns, following the forms of the figures in a wormlike manner, from which its name derives (vermis is Latin for worm)" (Moreno 11).

[6] This is an area of contention in the study of the mosaic. Some posit that the mosaic does not depict the Battle of Issus, but rather the later Battle of Gaugamela. For the purposes of this paper, however, I will stick to the predominant interpretation that the mosaic shows the scene at Issus. For further reading on this dispute, see Stewart 134-138 and Badian 409.

land, no less — was not the foregone conclusion (Heckel 58) Alexander's subsequent greatness might suggest to us today.

Arrian is the clearest of our sources regarding Alexander's military tactics. According to him, the battle began with the two armies facing off on opposite sides of the river Pinarus. Alexander arranged his battle line to outflank the Persian line (Arr. *Anab*. 2.9.4). This was key to his success, as "the moment the battle joined, the Persian left gave way" (Arr. *Anab.* 2.10.4). The Macedonian infantry kept the Persian center occupied, allowing Alexander and his cavalry (originally stationed on the Macedonian right) to sweep left across the Persian line, eventually pressuring Darius to flee on horseback. The flight of the Persian king decided the battle. When the Persian troops saw their king retreat, "the rout was open and universal" (Arr. *Anab*. 2.11.3). Alexander could have defeated Darius then and there, had Darius not escaped.

The mosaic shows the moment of *peripeteia* (reversal of fortunes) in the battle when Darius is forced to turn and flee (Cohen 90) as Alexander in profile (Fig. 2) and on horseback, surrounded by his men, charges forward. While interpretations of the mosaic vary, it is undoubtedly a masterful depiction of the terrifying chaos of warfare in Alexander's time. The mosaic feels cramped. Everywhere, horses rear and thrash and Persians look on wide-eyed.

Fig. 2. Detail of the *Alexander Mosaic* showing Alexander himself as he charges forward on his horse, Bucephalus.

To the right of Darius, one such Persian stands in shock with his hand on his head, frozen in disbelief. In the left center, another is skewered by Alexander's *sarissa*.[7] His horse lies dying underneath him, blood foaming from his wounds. The fleeing Darius' chariot tramples a Persian soldier as another nearby stares at himself in the reflection of his shield. Despite the chaos beneath him, Darius draws the viewer's attention with his eyes wide, lips parted, and arm flung toward Alexander as he is pulled from the field, "a gesture of entreaty that is often used by the vanquished and particularly by rape victims in Greek art, where chariot abductions had a long history" (Stewart 143).

Fig. 3. Detail of a fresco showing the rape of Persephone by Hades, found on Tomb I of the Macedonian Tombs at Vergina. Ca. 340 BCE.

Fig. 4. Detail of the *Alexander Mosaic* showing King Darius III as he flees in his chariot.

"Raw Pothos in Action": The Siege of Tyre

In *Faces of Power: Alexander's Image and Hellenistic Politics* (1993), Andrew Stewart claims that the mosaic shows an "emphatically virile" Alexander, noting his "deep chin, curling lip, powerful nose, huge eyes, jutting brow, swept-back hair, and generally forceful modeling" (141). Alexander is an invincible, unstoppable force. Stewart emphasizes Arrian's description of Alexander as possessing a "perpetual desire to do something new and extraordinary" to posit that the mosaic shows him as "*raw pothos* [desire] in action." He is "young, glorious, and implacable," and "radiant like the sun, he blazes into action like Achilles." Alexander's countenance and control of his horse, Bucephalus (notoriously responsive only to Alexander), communicate "emphatically that Alexander's knowledge, forethought, leadership, and courage — in short, military *aretai* [excellences] — are the prime ingredients of his success" (147). In Stewart's view, the Alexander depicted in the mosaic is an

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[7] Designed in Philip II's (Alexander's father) time, these were "fifteen- to eighteen-foot pike[s] ... The sarissa heads alone measured almost two feet and sliced through shields and armor like swords attached to hardwood poles" (Heckel 16). The design of these weapons ended up "rendering the traditional Greek phalanx obsolete" (Romm xi).

ambitious, intelligent, and confident battlefield commander. This is reflected in one of the best examples of Alexander's military leadership, the siege of Tyre in 332 BCE.

The siege took place after the Battle of Issus as Alexander campaigned to secure the coastlines of Asia Minor and Egypt. All of the five extant sources describe the basic parameter of the siege similarly. For one reason or another, Alexander demanded access to Tyre, a city built on an island off the coast of Phoenicia. The Tyrians refused and responded to Alexander's subsequent threats with the decision to endure a siege rather than surrender. They believed their city's position on an island would protect them. Alexander then besieged them from January to July. Over those seven months, he built a causeway to connect Tyre to the mainland.[8]

The details of Alexander's motivations and methods during the siege, however, vary from source to source. Rufus, Arrian, Diodorus, and Justin claim that Alexander's primary motivation to besiege Tyre was offense at being refused access to the city's temple of Heracles. As a member of the Argead dynasty who traced their lineage from Heracles (Plut. *Alex*. 2.1), Alexander may have desired to make sacrifice to his ancestor. However, the willingness of the Tyrians to endure a siege suggests they understood Alexander's desire to extend beyond a religious observance. As Plutarch points out — and this is reflected in the accounts of Rufus, Arrian, and Diodorus as well — Alexander had turned his eye to Tyre only after he had decided to "make himself master of the sea-coasts" (Plut. *Alex*. 24.2). The Tyrians must, at the very least, have suspected this and perceived a risk that Alexander intended to subdue them.

Arrian's account of the siege suggests a deeper purpose behind Alexander's choice to attack Tyre. In a speech to his men, Alexander explained that the city was "of doubtful allegiance" and that it could not be left free (Arr. *Anab*. 2.17.1). His decision to commit to the coastal siege rather than to chase the recently vanquished Persians inland suggests the extent of his military intelligence. If he were to move east into the Persian Empire, leaving Tyre unconquered behind him, the city could ally with Darius. This would allow the Persians to launch their ships to Greece from the city, forcing Alexander to turn back. A conquered Tyre, however, locked in Macedonian sea and coastal power, giving Alexander the freedom to move forward without having to worry about the Persians operating behind his back (Arr. *Anab*. 2.17.4).

Much of the writing on the siege in the ancient sources reflects the strength of Tyre, representing most of the seven months as a game of moves

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[8] Among the extant sources, only Justin, in his very short description of the siege, does not mention the causeway or the specific way Tyre fell. He merely states that the city was "captured through treachery" (2, 14)

and countermoves between the Alexander and the Tyrians. When the Tyrians declined to submit to Alexander, they did so in the belief that it would take a miracle to conquer their city. Tyre occupied the entire island and was walled on all sides, making an approach from land impossible (Curt. 4.2.9). Furthermore, the sea surrounding it was deep, so the construction of a causeway seemed impractical and incredibly difficult, especially given that the waters around Tyre were known to be turbulent (Curt. 4.2.7-9). At this point, Alexander had no ships at his disposal — and even if he did, they would easily have been kept away from the city by projectiles.

In fact, the siege was so difficult that Alexander nearly abandoned it. However, in Rufus' account, Alexander persevered because "he was as much ashamed to withdraw baffled as to delay, thinking that his reputation also, by which he had overthrown more than by his arms,[9] would be impaired if he should leave Tyre as a witness that he could be defeated" (Curt. 4.3.2). Diodorus concurs that Alexander "thought of giving up the siege attempt, but [persevered], driven by ambition" (Diod. *Sic*. 17.42.6). The construction of the causeway was itself a labor befitting his ancestor Heracles, not least because according to both Rufus and Diodorus it had to be rebuilt when it was destroyed by a storm (Curt. 4.3.6-8; Diod. Sic. 17.42.5-7). The finished work, however, was so stable that Tyre is now permanently a part of the mainland of Lebanon.

Perhaps the most stunning moment of this siege — and the one most illustrative of the Alexander that Stewart sees in his interpretation of the mosaic — is Alexander's leading role in the charge onto the walls. According to Diodorus, the Tyrians maintained their confidence throughout the siege and proved fierce adversaries in the final battle. In the heavy hand-to-hand combat, the Tyrians "were bold in the face of their enemies and left the shelter of the walls and their positions within the towers to push out onto the very bridges and match the courage of the Macedonians with their own valor" (Diod. Sic. 17.45.5-6).

Neither side could gain an upper hand until Alexander took "a conspicuous part in the action," exposed in "his royal garb and gleaming arms" (Arr. Anab. 2.23.4, Curt. 4.4.10). According to Diodorus, this was "a feat of daring which was hardly believable, even to those who saw it" (Diod. *Sic*. 17.45.2). This was, in Stewart's phrase, "raw *pothos* in action" (141). By means of this performative act of valor, Alexander initiated the moment of *peripeteia*. Tyre was conquered after a seven-month siege; a feat that took an earlier king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar II, thirteen years to accomplish (Garstad 175). The

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[9] As Alexander gained a reputation for invincibility, several of the cities he encountered along his campaign surrendered without battle at the mere sight of him (Romm 84-85).

siege of Tyre, then, suggests that there is truth to the Alexander that Stewart sees in the mosaic: he was an ambitious and intelligent military commander.

Alexander the Monstrous: The Murder of Cleitus

But Alexander's victory was a bloody one: 6,000-8,000 Tyrian soldiers were slain in battle, 2,000 captured soldiers were crucified and 13,000-30,000 of the remaining non-combatants were sold into slavery (Curt. 4.4.16-18, Arr. *Anab*. 2.24.5-6, Diod. *Sic*. 17.46.3-4).[10] Only Arrian comments on the total losses incurred on the Macedonian side, which he says amounted to four hundred over the entire siege (Arr. Anab. 2.24.4). The sheer number of Tyrian casualties suggests the propriety of Ernst Badian's interpretation of the mosaic.

In his essay, "A Note on the 'Alexander Mosaic'" Badian argues that it portrays Alexander as an ugly, horrifying monster. He quotes Bernard Andreae, a prominent art historian, who comments "on the heavy chin, the arrogant lips and the knitted eyebrows, which, with his large (and, we may add, ruthless and fanatical) eyes make the face 'schreckenerregend' [terrifying]" (Badian 409). Alexander is not only horrific, but out of control. His horse, Bucephalus, rears away from the action, as though Alexander cannot control his horse and he himself is leaning back from the battle. Badian posits that Alexander's helmetless head is not a symbol of heroism, but rather of incompetence. He is not brave, he has just "lost his hat" (410). The tesserae of Badian's Alexander gives us a reckless monster – the opposite of the Alexander seen by Stewart.

Beyond the mosaic, Badian's Alexander is suggested by accounts of the Macedonian king's murder of Cleitus the Black, one of his most senior and trusted officers (Cleitus had served under Alexander's father, Philip II). All the extant sources comment on this moment except Diodorus Siculus, whose accounts of the murder and several other events occurring around that time have been lost.

In 328 BCE, during his campaign in Bactria, Alexander threw a banquet following a sacrifice to the Dioscuri (Arr. *Anab*. 4.7.2, Plut. Alex. 50.1).[11] All the sources agree that, over the course of the night, Alexander and his fellow partygoers became increasingly inebriated; Arrian even charges Alexander with taking "to barbaric ways in drinking" (Arr. *Anab*. 4.7.2).

Deep into their drink, Alexander's flatterers began to praise his achievements, declaring that he had surpassed the accomplishments of the Dioscuri. Some even dared to compare him to Heracles (Arr. *Anab*. 4.8.3). Arrian, notably, does not put this comparison in Alexander's mouth, but leaves it to his admirers. Distressed by the praises being heaped on the king, Cleitus

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[10] The accounts record varying numbers of casualties.
[11] The Dioscuri are the mythical twins Castor and Pollux.

intervened, claiming that "Alexander's achievements were not so great and wonderful as they exaggerated them to be; nay, Alexander had not achieved them by himself, but they were for the great part Macedonian achievements" (Arr. Anab. 4.8.5). According to Arrian, Alexander was hurt by this, but let the comment slide.

When the flatterers began to degrade the accomplishments of Philip, Alexander's father, "Cleitus could no longer control himself and spoke up on behalf of Philip's achievements, making little of Alexander['s]." Cleitus pointedly reminded Alexander that he was not infallible: he had saved his life at the Battle of Granicus (Arr. *Anab*. 4.8.6-7).[12] This was a step too far for Alexander, who, enraged, grabbed a spear and murdered Cleitus.

Arrian provides two accounts of Cleitus' murder. In the first, Alexander killed Cleitus immediately upon grabbing the spear. The second account, Arrian writes, comes from Aristobulus, a lost primary source, who claimed that when Alexander moved to kill Cleitus, the officer was rushed away by concerned friends. Alexander called for Cleitus, who freed himself and returned, declaring, "Behold, here is Cleitus, Alexander!" (Arr. *Anab*. 4.8.9). Alexander then skewered him with the spear. Both accounts agree that Cleitus' murder was a crime of passion, committed at the height of a drunken rage.

In Justin's account, Alexander, more than basking in the flattery of others, actively praised himself above his father. Plutarch's account also differs from Arrian's as it includes several omens foretelling the death of Cleitus that make the murder seem fated rather than the result of an out-of-control Alexander. Still, the basic facts remain consistent: Cleitus is openly disturbed by Alexander's ego, and Alexander murders him in response.

While Rufus' account agrees that Cleitus was incited by Alexander's boasting, his record of the murder stands out starkly from the other sources. According to Rufus, in addition to defending Philip, Cleitus suggested that Alexander was betraying his father's legacy by ousting the men who had served him faithfully. He invoked the names of Parmenion and Attalus, who had fallen afoul of the Macedonian king and paid with their lives. Attalus, who was a member of Philip's court, was a political rival of Alexander's. Parmenion, at the time a trusted Macedonian general, assassinated Attalus in a display of loyalty to Alexander (Heckel 24). Parmenion was later himself assassinated, having been implicated in a treasonous plot by his own son, Philotas, who had

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[12] During the fighting at the Battle of Granicus, which was the first battle Alexander fought against Persian forces, Alexander was nearly killed by Spithridates, a Persian satrap. At the last minute, however, Cleitus cut off Spithridates' arm, saving Alexander's life (Arr. *Anab*. 1.15.8)

been arrested by Alexander's men and was likely tortured into incriminating his father as a co-conspirator (Romm 95).

When Alexander took offense to Cleitus' words, the king was removed from the banquet hall. Restrained by two of his generals, Ptolemy and Perdiccas, Alexander was prevented from murdering Cleitus at the height of his rage (as he does in the other accounts). Instead, Alexander took a lance from one of his guards and waited outside the entrance where he knew Cleitus would pass. Cleitus was the last to come out, whereupon Alexander murdered him, crying, "Go now to Philip and Parmenion and Attalus!" (Curt. 8.1.52). In this version, the murder is calculated.

No matter the account, however, the murder of Cleitus presents us with a drunk, insecure, monstrous Alexander who lacks control of his court and is, himself, a picture of the man Badian sees in the *Alexander Mosaic*.

Tragedy and Lament: Alexander's Remorse

The aftermath of Cleitus' murder reflects Ada Cohen's interpretation of the *Alexander Mosaic*. She sees an Alexander overtaken by "a sense of revulsion and abhorrence at his own act" (93). For Cohen, the mosaic positions Alexander and Darius amidst Persian carnage and fear. The piece is intended to evoke a sympathy in the viewer: "Alexander and Darius seem to be suffering the same sense of ultimate loss and to be sharing a common tragedy" (120). To Cohen, the scene is tragic, and the countenances of Darius and Alexander reflect this. From her perspective, Alexander is filled with regret at the destruction he, himself, perpetrates.

Cleitus' murder, likewise, is an event worthy of a Greek tragedy. As such, Alexander's reaction to the deed is suitably dramatic. In all four accounts, Alexander displayed immediate regret in the wake of Cleitus' death. In fact, his grief was so overwhelming that, according to the accounts of Justin, Rufus, and Plutarch, he attempted to kill himself, and would have succeeded had he not been restrained by his friends.[13]

When his anger abated, Alexander was consumed with guilt. In Justin's account, he burst into tears and embraced Cleitus' corpse, admitting his mistake (Just. 6.8). In Rufus' account, after attempting suicide, Alexander was taken to his tent, where he tore "his face with his nails, begging those who stood around him not to suffer him to survive such a disgrace" (Curt. 8.2.5). He ordered Cleitus' body to be brought into his tent, where he mourned over it until his friends have it removed. In Plutarch's account, Alexander "spent

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[13] It must be noted that Arrian emphatically insists that this suicide attempt never took place (Arr. *Anab.* 4.9.2-3).

the night and the following day in bitter lamentations, and at last lay speechless, worn out with his cries and wailing, heaving deep groans" (Plut. *Alex*. 52.1). According to Arrian, Alexander "kept again and again calling himself the slayer of his friends, and lay three days without food or drink, and careless of all other bodily needs" (Arr. *Anab*. 4.9.4). Justin's and Rufus' accounts also record Alexander's refusal to eat. In the end, Alexander's lamentation was forcibly ended by his men out of concern for his health.

While Alexander's grief and guilt do not atone for his murder of Cleitus, they do suggest there was more to the Macedonian king than the monstrosity Badian sees. The mournful Alexander Cohen identifies is capable of regret and repentance, and is in possession of a tragic conscience.

Alexander: A Constellation (or Mosaic)

Ambitious, monstrous, and remorseful. Andrew Stewart, Ernst Badian, and Ada Cohen see remarkably different Alexanders in the mosaic. Yet each version of him is supported by the facts of his life. The siege of Tyre shows a capable military leader who perseveres under extraordinary conditions to achieve his goal. The killing of Cleitus evinces a drunken murderer who cannot control himself, let alone handle criticism in his court. The reaction to Cleitus' murder suggests a guilt-ridden man who feels the weight of his actions.

Choosing one major event to support each interpretation necessarily neglects many others that could also be used to define Alexander. The point is not to create a list of "good" and "bad" actions and to weigh them against each other to determine if Alexander was mostly one thing or another. The more productive approach, which in the case of Alexander is so easily neglected, is to recognize that he was both "good" and "bad." Any single judgment concerning the kind of person he was fails to understand him in his complexity.

The versions of Alexander evidenced by these events do, to reinvoke Montaigne's understanding of human inconsistency, contradict each other. How can a calculated, competent leader kill his friend in a fit of rage? How, in the next breath, can that same man tear his skin in lament over the crime? Yet these deeds all bespeak Alexander. And when viewed from above — from the perspective that history alone can afford us — we see they are rather like the tesserae of a mosaic, or a constellation.

Notably, the *Alexander Mosaic* is missing portions. Just like the empty spaces between the stars of a constellation, our picture of Alexander will never be fully complete. Some stars will shine brighter than others; some sources will ring truer (or closer to historical "truth," anyway) than others. Often, we can only guess at the picture they are meant to cohere. The evidence we have for Alexander's life will never amount to a "true" image of the man. Nevertheless, a rich understanding of Alexander entails grappling with his complexity. All available evidence should be considered, even if doing so suggests an inconsistent man.

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A Nation of Sons and Stars: The Santo Niño de Cebu in Colonial Narratives of Filipino Identity

By Nine Abad

A child is donned in monarchical robes twice the length of his body. Every square inch of his image is embellished with threaded aureate laurels and intricate ornaments. Enshrined behind bulletproof glass and guarded by armed sentries and images of angels, his face is stuck in a perpetual blush. Tourists and religious pilgrims alike wait in long queues so that they can lay their human eyes upon him, so that they can pray in the presence of him, so that they can devote themselves to him — the sun-and-star-crowned son of God.

Despite a stature of about twelve inches, the Santo Niño de Cebú — a carved, wooden statue depicting the infant Jesus — is a potent icon for Filipinos. It is fortified in a grand stone church, the Basilica Minore del Santo Niño, in the city of Cebu. The church itself is built in veneration of the miraculous statue and as a testament to its unbelievable story. In 1521, the Santo Niño was gifted to a recently converted Indigenous leader by Ferdinand Magellan, an infamous Portuguese explorer commissioned by Spain. Soon after bestowing the image, he was killed, putting a temporary pause on the Spanish conquest of the Philippines. When Fray Andrés de Urdaneta and Don Miguel Lopez de Legazpi[1] were commissioned by Spain in 1565 to retrace Magellan's route, they had inadvertently come upon the Santo Niño, and Legazpi commissioned the church that year. In his written testimony dated "Año 1565-16 de Mayo" (translated by Christina H. Lee) he declares

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[1] For consistency purposes, this paper will use the spelling of "Legazpi" instead of the alternative Filipino spellings of "Legaspi."

the justification of the allotment of land to be "so that there remains perpetual memory of […] how the said image was found in the land of the unfaithful" (Lee 2021, 22).

Fig.1. Worshippers visiting a guarded Santo Niño in the Basilica Minore del Santo Niño de Cebu from: *Basilica Minore del Santo Niño de Cebu*. https://santoninodecebubasilica.org/basilica-minore-del-santo-nino/santo-nino-chapel/

The Basilica has since expanded, now including a chapel dedicated to the veneration of the original statue (Fig. 1), a museum displaying replicas and offerings to the Child Christ and a souvenir shop that sells shirts, magnets, and replicas of the Santo Niño of all sizes. The museum of the Basilica declares its mission as expanding awareness of "the origin, circumstances and events related to the formal Christianization of the Philippines through the image of Señor Santo Niño de Cebu" ("Basilica Minore del Santo Niño Museum"). Suffice to say, the Santo Niño holds great significance for Filipino people, especially Filipino Catholics.

In fact, there are Filipinos around the world, especially of Cebuano origin, who partake in the Sinulog Festival every year, celebrating the "conversion to Roman Catholic … and [honoring] the Santo Niño" (Oracion 107). From the grand and extravagant festivals in the city of Cebu to the homemade shrines in modest homes across the world, the statue has become a national Filipino icon. Filipino Catholics have used this dominant image to create a uniform identity throughout a post-colonial and Hispanicized Philippines. The image of the Santo Niño has become a north star for Filipinos, a symbol to connect them to their heritage and worship practices both at home and in the diaspora.

This article examines how the Santo Niño de Cebu's story and image plays a critical role in Filipino identity formation. I argue that the Santo

Niño de Cebu and its association with Catholicism facilitated the justifications for colonial expansion, which aids the development of a modern Filipino nationalism. Moreover, the symbol and the story, as reiterated by modern Filipinos, has formed connections to Filipino identity across the diaspora. From the rediscovery of the child Christ to the extravagant honorific festivals to the shrines replicated across oceans, the image creates the conditions for Filipinos to rally together. Just as ancient Filipino seafarers relied on the stars to guide them back to familiar shores, the image of the Santo Niño serves as a contemporary constellation for overseas Filipinos, holding microcosms of histories and meanings that can navigate them towards their cultural heritage.

(Re)Discovery and Divine Predestination

The surviving records of the Santo Niño's introduction to the Philippines contains minor variations, but the main elements of the story remain consistent: The birth of the child Christ begins with rediscoveries. When Magellan "discovered" the Philippines (or, "rediscovered," given indigenous peoples), he converted the local ruler, Rajah Humabon (baptized as Don Carlos), and his chief consort, Hara Humamay (baptized as Johanna), to Catholicism on April 14, 1521. At the conclusion of her baptism, Magellan bestowed the Santo Niño to her, and Rajah Humabon and Hara Humamay allied with Magellan, ordering nearby chiefs to also convert to Christianity. However, Datu Lapu-Lapu, a chief of the island of Mactan, refused. Magellan led a battle to force his compliance. That skirmish, known as the Battle of Mactan, became a celebrated victory in Filipino history and for Indigenous groups resisting colonization. Magellan could not overcome war strategies of Datu Lapu-Lapu's forces, intentionally developed based on intimate local knowledge. As a result, Magellan and much of his crew were killed. The few survivors of the battle were either poisoned in a feast plotted by Rajah Humabon or fled immediately upon learning of his scheme. With this rejection of Spanish conquest, European chroniclers were temporarily banished from the Philippines, and the Santo Niño was thought to be lost to history as the written record ran dry.

Forty-four years later, on April 28, 1565, Miguel Lopez de Legazpi and his crew "rediscovered" the Santo Niño. Legazpi's expedition landed in the Philippines and was met with opposition from Cebuano natives. Legazpi, fought the Cebu rajahnate — the same one Rajah Humabon once ruled. Desiring conquest, he ravaged and burnt down much of the town. In the ruins of the destruction, a member from Legazpi's crew discovered a wooden box in the house of a Cebu native. To their wonderment, the Santo Niño was found inside it.

This "rediscovery" was immediately exalted as miraculous. These notions of the Santo Niño as a sign from God fed into Spain's colonial am-

bitions for Filipino land. Lee explains that "religious leaders and devotees consider the Santo Niño's continuous presence in the Philippines since Magellan's arrival [...] as proof that God predestined the Philippines to Catholicism" (2017, 80). This narrative is evident in the earliest records of both Magellan's and Legazpi's "rediscoveries."

In the "Ambrosia Manuscript" written by Antonio Pigafetta, who accompanied Magellan on his voyage and kept detailed records of the journey, there is a clear presumption of European superiority. The overwhelming piety and revelation ascribed to Hara Humamay, newly named Johanna, is emblematic of this:

> After dinner the priest and some of the others went ashore to baptize the queen, who came with forty women. We conducted her to the platform, and she was made to sit down upon a cushion, and the other women near her until the priest should be ready. She was shown an image of our Lady, a very beautiful wooden child Jesus, and a cross. Thereupon, she was overcome with contrition, and asked for baptism amid her tears. We named her Johanna, after the emperor's mother; [...] Counting men, women, and children, we baptized eight hundred souls. The queen was young and beautiful, and was entirely covered with a white and black cloth. Her mouth and nails were very red, while on her head she wore a large hat of palm leaves in the manner of a parasol, with a crown about it of the same leaves, like the tiara of the pope; and she never goes any place without such a one. (154-157).

In this and similar passages, Pigafetta uses relatively plain language when describing Indigenous culture and people but elevates his diction when describing their interactions with the religious imagery: that she is "overcome with contrition," the details of the baptismal naming, and the counting of "eight hundred souls" suggests his greater interest in the Christianization of the Indigenous peoples than in their humanization. It is only *after* her baptism and rebirth into Catholicism that the queen is described in detail, making her regal appearance and demeanor worthy of admiration: She is "young and beautiful" with a "crown … like the tiara of the pope." The sequencing suggests how the Spanish view the Philippines' peoples. They are only worthy of description, detail, and humanization because of their conversion, suggesting that conformity, submission, and acceptance of their colonization was a precondition for respect.

Furthermore, Pigafetta asserts that she immediately "asked us to give her the little child Jesus to keep in place of her idols; and then she went away" (154-157). This account counterintuitively suggests that the queen immediately cast aside all vestiges of her prior cultural and religious practices and that she, and by extension, the other Cebu natives, blindly accepted the un-

questionable truth and superiority of European Catholicism. Nevertheless, this complete rejection of Indigenous religion and embrace of Christianity remains a dominant narrative of the Church and among Filipinos.

Legazpi's accounts of the Santo Niño serves as a kind of Filipino origin myth, the folkloric stories becoming foundational to the interpellation of Filipino identity. He demanded multiple written testimonies of his plunder of Cebu. In his own account, he insists that there was nothing of value in the village and that the only item worthy of admiration was the statue of the Child Jesus.[2] He embellishes the story so that he equates the discovery as evidence of his own piety. He paints himself as a savior to the Philippines, his discovery indicative of his holy calling, revelation, and God's approval of righteous Spanish conquest.

Such stories of the Santo Niño's arrival and miraculous rediscovery infiltrate education, politics, and personal relations via the church and, in so doing, uphold racialized colonial power. It becomes central to Filipino life, owing to localized (i.e., parents, friends, and family) and structural (i.e., schools and government systems) factors disciplining subjects to associate the "discovery" of the Philippines with Catholic imagery. The story of the Santo Niño is regarded as the definitive turning point and revelation for the Philippines' transition to "civilization," but has removed nuance from Filipino understandings of Indigenous religions.

There is evidence of complex and rich Indigenous religious practices and cultural interactions prior to and during Spanish colonization. Many regions of Southeast Asia were multi-faith or displayed influences from various religions and traditions, and this was especially true of the Philippines. As a major region for trading, Indigenous Filipino spiritual traditions reflected many influences. Some regions may have practiced exclusively Islam or Buddhism, but many practiced a variation of animism, including Rajah Humabon and Hara Humamay. In fact, early Filipinos were not foreign to the concept of a singular God, and the "monotheistic element […] may have been a borrowing from the Islam religion, brought to the Philippines before the coming of the Spaniards by Malay traders, teachers, and settlers who formed communities particularly in southern Philippines" (Reyes 85). Depending on regional proximity to the Philippine region, there were elements of similar Hindu and Buddhist religious adaptations.

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[2] Christina H. Lee translates Legazpi's writings in "[Año de 1565] Relacion circunstanciada" in her article "Saints of Resistance": Nothing could be found of sustenance or of importance. All were pots, jars, serving jugs, some millet, and very little rice. The only thing worthy of admiration that was found was a Child Jesus of the Flemish kind. (2021, 28).

This amalgamation, syncretism, and assimilation of religious traditions also applied to the Santo Niño with even Legazpi's account suggesting as much. Accordingly, the Santo Niño statue was found in a wooden box within a native home. Yet, its storage does not necessarily mean it was forgotten and left behind by the Indigenous populations. Just as localized religions would integrate aspects of Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism into their animist practices, the Santo Niño was reiterated to fit within Indigenous pantheons. The child-king had become the "Santonilyo," a deity of rain and good graces that took on the appearance of a young boy with similar features to the statue.[3]

The Jesuit missionary, Pedro Chirino, writing a history of the rediscovery in 1604, nearly forty years after Legazpi declares the Santo Niño miracle, corroborates the idea that the image was integrated with local deities and religious practices:

> [The] Indios, partly because of the novelty of the image, which they understood […] to be the God of the Christians, [and] partly for the respect and reverence endowed on them by the Lord, venerated it greatly (as it was later found out) and went to it for aid in their times of necessity, making sacrifices in their manner and dipping him in their oils (as they did with their idols). (Lee 2021, 30)

In this account, the Cebuano people make the statue part of their worship – praying, sacrificing, and anointing it as they do with other deities. Chirino also records that they called the Santo Niño the "Divata of the Castilians" and that, further north in Manila, Philippines, the locals referred to it as "Bathala or Anito" (2021, 30). Interestingly, Diwatas and Anitos[4] are known as ancestral divinities, nature spirits, or a type of deity — there is never a singular Diwata or Anito, indicating the Santo Niño was worshipped among others. This form of worship indicates that pre-colonial religious fluidity was not simply abandoned with the arrival of Catholicism. The no-

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[3] The Santonilyo myth rose in popularity with Indio, the 2013 flagship TV show of the GMA Network. The fantasy show was set in the same period of Magellan's conquest and featured gods, goddesses, and diwatas, including the Santonilyo. It is likely that Indio took on inspiration from compiled myth sources such as F. Landa Jocano's Notes of Philippine Divinities, which mentions the Santonilyo as a diwata in the Upperworld (178). The *comparison of the Santo Niño* and Santonilyo is also noted in popular mythology and folklore blogs such as Jordan Clark's article, "Santonilyo and the Syncretization of Santo Niño," posted on the Aswang Project.
[4] Chirino uses an alternative spelling of "Divata" with a "v" most likely due to different alphabets (as there is no "v" in the Cebuano alphabet) and transliterations, but this paper will use the more common spelling, "Diwata." Similarly, there are alternative spellings for "Anito," such as "Anitu," but this paper will use the common spelling and Chirino's spelling of "Anito."

tion that native peoples wholly rejected Indigenous religious practices (as suggested by Pigafetta's account of Hara Humamay's "replacement" of other idols) is more indicative of the colonizers' rigid Catholic binarism between the converted and the damned than of the historical facts. This rigidity, in turn, served their narrative of Filipino submission to Catholicism, colonizers, and the crown of Spain.

The complexity of pre-colonial Cebuano religion suggests alternative accounts to Pigafetta's conversion narrative. While there is no way to certainly say why Humabon and Humamay chose to engage in the baptism, it is very possible it was not out of immediate deference or religious epiphany. Various speculations may account for their motivation: Perhaps they participated in the ceremony out of pure interest and curiosity. Or assumed the wooden figure was an animist deity. Or they intended to add the European's gods to their pantheon as a religious olive branch. Conceivably, like Magellan, they took part with broader political motives in mind.

For Magellan, demanding religious conversion was an expression of political power. He made chiefs, including Humabon, "swear their allegiance before the image of Our Lady," which Astrid Sala-Boza argues it exemplifies Magellan as "a conqueror seeking glory and the spoils of war for Spain and himself, and an active defender of the faith and keeper of Catholic traditions – by all appearances, a practicing Catholic" (247). The conflation politics and religion speak to the contradictions the heart of the encounter and settler-colonialism more broadly: Magellan disdains and is reductive of Indigenous religions as a pretext for the holy virtuousness of his quest yet presumes that the chiefs were not similarly engaging in sophisticated agendas.

Despite complex motives and competing historical accounts, the story of the Santo Niño is shaped and sustained by Catholic ideological domination of the Philippines. In 2021, the Order of Saint Augustine Province of Santo Niño de Cebu-Philippines, celebrated the 500-year anniversary of the "miraculous arrival," noting that "[it] is indeed through the abiding presence of the Father in the Santo Niño that we have thrived this far" ("Background of the Event"). The syncretic incorporation of Catholic images into regional practices may have allowed for some semblance of cultural survival, it also invited colonial thinking into Filipino self-conceptions. The Spanish Catholicism imposed by settler-colonialism is so foundational to the ways Filipinos shape their identity, that "being an observant Catholic [is a] de facto marker of 'proper' Filipino citizenship" — to be Filipino is to be Catholic (Paredes 17).

From Cebu City to Foreign Coasts

The Santo Niño continues to shape modern Filipino nationalism. Benedict Anderson's seminal *Imagined Communities* discusses the ways nationalism proliferates. Anderson argues that nationalisms are the socially

constructed ways that peoples imagine themselves to be part of a broader community. The Santo Niño's history renders the image crucial to any understanding of Filipino nationalism. The statue is the embodiment of the reductive Spanish accounts of Indigenous Filipino acquiescence of Catholic and colonial rule. The Santo Niño is welded to the same rhetoric, modes of thought, and stories that have defined Filipino identity.

Anderson analyzes how colonialism forms nationalist sentiments and describes the use of maps and museums to "[shape] the way in which the colonial state [imagines] its dominion – the nature of the human beings it ruled, the geography of its domain, and the legitimacy of its ancestry" (164). The Santo Niño was not an exception to this. As Spanish forts were established in the Philippines, so too was the Santo Niño established as a holy symbol. Over multiple centuries of settler-colonialism persisting, Spain drew its borders around the Philippines, maps emblazoned with the Royal Insignia beneath an image of the Santo Niño. These maps suppressed the tribal and cultural diversity of the Philippines with an overarching emotional and theological notion: all Filipinos were subject to the Spanish Crown. The imagery of the child Christ on a map was an indication of the Catholic religious justifications to draw lines that would establish colonial order.

With the report of the rediscovery of the Santo Niño to the Spanish monarchy, the conflation of religious justification with political motives engendered a belief among the Spanish that it was Spain's God-given right to expand their empire. The Santo Niño image was superimposed on many structures of logistical governance, forming an emotional and ubiquitous connection to it. Exemplifying this is the placement of such imagery in forts, such as Fort San Pedro, established by Legazpi and regarded as the center for the first Spanish settlement. The entrance sports a replica of the Santo Niño, embedded above the Spanish king's coat of arms — a reminder of the omnipresent history of colonialism. Even after Filipino liberation from Spain in 1898, the statue's replica remained on the fort, central to "Cebu's 'authentic' claim to be the 'spiritual capital' of the Philippine nation" (Bautista 2005, 188).

For almost half a millennium, the Santo Niño has been proliferated by the settler-Catholic complex and the broader capitalist structures that allowed for its commodification. This is evident in the integration of not only a museum, but also a souvenir shop within the Basilica Minore del Santo Niño de Cebu. Ostensibly a bastion of piety, it has lent itself to converting religious and national ideals into profitable idols. Filipinos from all over the world take home replicas of the Santo Niño, purchased, gifted, or passed down through generations, creating shrines to it in their own homes, affirming their proximity and emotional attachments to it and its history. The narrative consequently severs Filipinos from their indigeneity and origins as pre-Hispanicized subjects.

Even now, the Santo Niño and the introduction of Catholicism is one that is ritualistically celebrated. Santo Niño festivals are common in Cebu and around the world. However, it is commonly interpreted as a celebration of the arrival of Catholicism in the archipelago and the salvific spread across the country. The Sinulog-Santo Niño Festival is highlighted for the express purpose of celebrating the declaration that the Philippines would now be Catholicized. Historically, Legazpi proclaimed that the festival would commemorate his rediscovery of the Santo Niño and "founding" of the Philippines insisting that "every year on the day in which the image was found they would celebrate a fiesta to invoke the name of Jesus" (Lee 2021, 22).[5]

The religious hegemony of the Catholic church in the Philippines meant that Filipinos inevitably adopted the fiesta as their own after independence from Spain. The Sinulog is often used as a marketing tool to entice guests to visit the Philippines and observe the wavelike motions of the fiesta dances in grandiose and opulent costumes. Thousands gather for these shows and, of course, bear witness to the cleansing and blessing of the Santo Niño. Indeed, members of the diaspora have brought the Sinulog with them as festivals held by Filipino communities from Toronto to Los Angeles to Hong Kong grow in popularity. Rather than their physical separation distancing them from the Santo Niño, the Filipino diaspora has forged the Sinulog into a broader cultural symbol. Filipinos abroad claim it as their own, putting in hours of labor and research to produce their own celebrations of a major turning point in Filipino history. In doing so, they shape their own nationalism, using the Santo Niño to form an identity for themselves.

Towards a New Saint, Sons, and Stars

Rejoicing in an image whose dissemination helped to facilitate colonialism may seem counterintuitive. On one hand, Filipinos across the globe increasingly participate in this fiesta to connect and be closer to their culture and heritage. On the other hand, the fiesta actively celebrates a violent force that justified cultural genocides and atrocities in the Philippines. These contradictions arise in Filipino understandings of their histories and modes of celebrations.

The anti-colonial movement is growing in popularity in the Philippines and in the diaspora. The Santo Niño, the same image that facilitated Filipino colonial subjugation, may also have the potential to help Filipinos define themselves in resistance to colonialism and imperialism. In response

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[5] From the testimony of Legazpi's crew, sixteen days after finding the image.

to writer and journalist Nick Joaquin's description of a new Santo Niño wearing common Filipino clothes as the Philippine revolution unfolded, cultural historian Julius Bautista understands him to be defining "'Filipino-ness' not simply [by] discarding the most potent signifiers of Spanish colonialism, but [by] replacing it with distinctive, tangible and localized signifiers of Filipino ethnicity" (2006, 295). He points out that the Santo Niño played a crucial role in the "anti-colonial revolution [by] facilitate[ing] Filipino 'loyalty' to the 'nation', even though that concept was not yet fully realized." This understanding of the Santo Niño weaponizes and reclaims it as part of an anti-colonial national history. Rather than a symbol of Filipino conversion and surrender, the Santo Niño has and can be a symbol of resilience and resistance. Reclaiming the image in this way might open new, generative ways to negotiate Filipino national identity. Under Anderson's definition of nationalism, there is certainly the possibility that the Santo Niño and the identity it shapes can be one that reconnects and reconciles a vision of a Filipino community to celebrate its *own* culture.

The story of the inception of the Santo Niño's worship in the Philippines is just one instance of colonial powers finding religious reason to expand their power and influence. The Spanish accounts do violence to the memory of Indigenous Filipinos. The idea that they thoughtlessly adopted the Santo Niño at first contact erases the complexity of their religious practices and oversimplifies the event of their Baptism. The narrative eliminates the agency of Hara Humamay and Rajah Humabon by denying their political and personal motivations. The implications have been long-lasting. Filipinos who celebrate rarely look beyond the version of the story insisted upon by the Church and Spanish.

This creates a dilemma at the heart of Filipino nationalism: We celebrate a colonialist image, but it is an inherent part of our culture. Yet, that dilemma could also be the site of a new Filipino identity. Reclaiming the Santo Niño by recognizing its role in the anti-colonial struggle and rewriting its history to pay due respect to the pre-Hispanicized Filipino means that the image can be used as a positive tool. This new Santo Niño could unify Filipinos and the Filipino diaspora in generative ways. The gilded threads of the Santo Niño can burn brighter than the constellations in the sky, guiding Filipinos to the promise of home across landmark-less oceans. For the diaspora, this complicated, contradictory image of the Son of God could bring us closer as an imagined community and make us proud to hold the flag of suns and stars.

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Katabasis in the Black Diaspora: Dante's Pilgrim in Ellison's *Invisible Man* and Walcott's *Omeros*

By Kalena Holeman

Ralph Ellison spent seven years crafting his magnum opus, *Invisible Man*, in the wake of the Harlem revolts of 1935 and 1943. Published in 1952, the novel follows a nameless Black man (henceforth, the Invisible Man) as he migrates from the Jim Crow American South to the supposedly liberatory North. Ellison enriches his narrator's journey with various textual allusions, from Dostoyevsky to Plato, Homer, Shakespeare, and the writings of W.E.B. DuBois.[1] One vital yet rarely explored source of inspiration for *Invisible Man's* structure is Dante's *Divine Comedy* (1307).[2] Much of the Invisible Man's journey parallels Dante's narrator's voyage into the Inferno. Even beyond the level of plot, Dante's exiled status, his relationship to the politically tumultuous Florence, and his intermediary position between classical antiquity and Medieval Italy provide rich inspirations for Ellison.

The Caribbean poet Derek Walcott, though writing four decades later, also alludes to Dante in his epic *Omeros*. The narrator spends most of the poem preoccupied with Homeric associations and grandiose notions of representation, obsessed with his greatest poetic challenge yet: conveying the history of St. Lucia, a nation torn between the legacies of its colonial past and its newly independent present. However, in Book VII, Walcott's narrator comes to realize his dependence on Homer prevents him from tru-

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[1] The Invisible Man's subterranean dwelling parallels the narrator of Dostoyevsky's *Notes from Underground* (1864). The novel's motif of knowledge and blindness echoes Plato's "Allegory of the Cave." The most overt reference to Shakespeare is to Brutus' eulogy in Julius Caesar (1599). For Homeric allusions in Ellison, see Rankine 2006; Cook and James 2010; and McConnell 2013.
[2] *La Divina Commedia*, further referred to in this article as the *Commedia*.

ly representing St. Lucia and all its beauty. He promptly abandons his journey, and undergoes a literal descent into hell reminiscent of Dante's *Inferno*, where he beholds the injustices that plague St. Lucia.[3] Dante and the *Inferno* function as jumping-off points, models through which to explore the composite nature of postcolonial existence.

Dante's reception in the Black diaspora is seldom studied; the connections between Ellison and Walcott's similar yet unique re-imaginings of the Commedia even less so. In this regard, they are not unusual. Despite serving as a rich source of inspiration for Black diasporic writers, the classics remain largely neglected by literary scholars of their works. Often, scholarship on classical reception — the ways modern artists interpret and rework antiquity — excludes Black voices and widens the gap in our understanding of Black literary traditions. Yet, as Rex Nettleford contends, the "driving aesthetic energy" of Black artistry manifests in the interaction of the premodern and "popular contemporary" issues (28). Indeed, such intertextual imaginings can be traced back to the poetry of Phillis Wheatley (1753-1784). However, it was not until the 1990s that Black Atlantic Classical Reception Studies sparked as a critical movement. Christopher Schliephake argues that this emergence complicates "the idea of a uniform reception of antiquity" (55). As a result, "the hegemonic conception of a classical 'canon' has become increasingly fragmented in favor of complexity and heterogeneity." Inevitably, scholarly interest extended beyond antiquity with the development of Black Medievalism, which explores Medieval literature's legacy in a way that, according to Matthew X. Vernon, "refuses the primacy of nation or race" (203).

Emily Greenwood situates the Black literary reimagining of classical works against the backdrop of racial trauma. Accordingly, Black authors repurpose classic texts as "middle passages which mediate between the different histories of English" (54). This is the tradition in which I place *Invisible Man* and *Omeros*, texts that have rarely been compared. Their authors are mostly discussed in relation to their respective regional contemporaries: Ellison represents Black American literature and Walcott Caribbean writing. Notwithstanding their cultural divergences, the histories of Black American and Caribbean people have much in common, not least, the cultural trauma and resilience arising out of the Middle Passage and transatlantic

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[3] Although Homer also features descents in his texts — namely Odysseus's descent into Hades in Book 11 of the *Odyssey* — what makes *Omeros's* descent distinctly Dantesque is that it is hell instead of Hades, theologized by Christian as opposed to pagan belief. Moreover, its thematical structure clearly parallels Dante's hell.

slave trade. In this light, Ellison's and Walcott's appropriation of Dante's motif of descent becomes especially interesting.

Beyond this motif, Ellison and Walcott deploy Dante as part of a larger play on classical tradition and its mediation by the dominant Western canon. Just as Dante utilized the belief system of his time — Medieval Christianity — as well as classic Greek and Latin tradition, molding and reconstructing it to fit his own needs, so Ellison and Walcott use Dante (among others) to do the same.

Though Ellison and Walcott both derive inspiration from Dante, their artistic approaches manifest in distinct ways. Each writer comes to understand that to convey, in Ellison's words, "the beautiful absurdity of their … identity and mine" (Ellison 559), he must paradoxically embrace the European canonical tradition and its influence on his writing (Looney 101). Their narrators must, as Patrice Rankine observes, "come to terms with the … historical facts that lead to [their] cultural environment" (462). Though Black American and Caribbean cultures share much of the same "memories of loss, separation, and embodied trauma," due to the "historical catastrophes of the Middle Passage and racial enslavement that are common to both" (Allen-Paisant 668), the divergence in the narrators' journeys points to the heterogeneity of experiences in the aftermath of slavery across the diaspora.[4]

I argue that *Invisible* Man and *Omeros* use Dante in a manner Vernon calls vernacular translation: a perpetual modification of antiquity that reflects lived experience and that is continually reimagined by successive generations; a creative subversion of the dominant canon (205). Vernon is particularly interested in Dante, who for him acts as an intermediary between the classical past and Medieval present. As Vernon notes, "vernacular translation's impulses towards preserving some of the venerability of an older text while offering a space for the writer to claim his or her new voice as overtaking, or usurping, the freshness of language creates the possibility of unexpected ligatures across time" (208). Drawing on Vernon's definition, I argue that analyzing the Dantean allusions in Ellison's *Invisible Man* and Walcott's *Omeros* enables a deeper understanding of the authors' views on their lived experiences in the diaspora. Ellison and Walcott allude

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[4] Jason Allen-Paisant writes about the cultural significance of the Caribbean Island colonies, far-flung status in the context of the Empire. Unlike Black America, which was "co-opted as the racial other of the American population," the geographical separation of the Caribbean meant that "despite the colonialist machinery of assimilation, enslaved Africans were able to conserve more vestiges of their pre-colonial languages than was possible in most of the United States" (669).

to the Commedia in a simultaneous homage to and subversion of the historically white literary canon.[5] Furthermore, my comparison of *Invisible Man* and *Omeros* instantiates what Vernon describes as a broader global literary project. Vernacular translation's "unexpected ligatures across time" extend across space, too. Situating Ellison and Walcott in conversation with one another illuminates their place in a constellation of Black writers who claim the classics to themselves, their people, and their experiences.

Ralph Ellison's Infernal Chaos

Ellison begins *Invisible Man* with an allusion to Dante, and thereby signals the canonical aspirations of his own work (Looney 92). Invisible Man (the novel's narrator) is listening to Louis Armstrong's "What Did I Do to Be so Black and Blue" in the basement of where he lives, when he "entered the music" and "descended like Dante into its depths" (Ellison 9). The allusions, both to Armstrong's music and Dante's *Inferno*, interlace the African American blues and jazz tradition with the Western literary canon. Ellison thus lays the foundation for his account of Invisible Man's hellish journey as a negotiation between motifs within the Western literary tradition and the lived experience of Black Americans. It is a claim to the timelessness of his work. Writing in the vulgate, Dante refutes his own transience by "placing [his work] in the company of the most enduring writers: Virgil, Ovid, Lucan" (Vernon 230). In the same fashion, Ellison places *Invisible Man* in the company of Dante.

This initial allusion forms part of a larger pattern within *Invisible Man* as its narrator recounts his journey through early twentieth-century America. Expelled from his University in the American South, he travels to New York on the false promise of employment. In his northward passage he encounters various forms of "evil" that parallel the sins in the sequential circles of Dante's hell. The Commedia thus becomes a device in Ellison's hand by which to reflect on the different forms of interpersonal and systemic racism his Invisible Man encounters.

Ellison describes the structure of his novel as tripartite, following the narrator's movement from Purpose, to Passion, then Perception (1964, 176-

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[5] Dennis Looney points to the duality of Black writers' reconfiguration of Dante — that they "hold him up as a foundational text of the Western tradition" while simultaneously "us[ing] him to critique the system that produces and values that sort of canonical thinking" (6). Moreover, he connects Dantean reception by writers of color to what is defined in postcolonial theory as "hybridity" (6-7). Edward Said explored this concept in *Orientalism* (1978); Homi Bhabha further developed it in *The Location of Culture* (1994). Their theorizing of the hybrid, mutable ways culture is transmitted and upended between the colonizer and colonized encapsulates Ellison's and Walcott's relationships with Dante.

177). Robert J. Butler connects this threefold division to that of Dante's *Inferno* (61). The Purpose movement aligns with the beginning of Invisible Man's journey as he naively sets forth, assuming the goodwill of those he encounters. The movement includes the Battle Royal, Invisible Man's brief time at his southern university, and his encounter with Norton, a white benefactor of the university who superficially obsesses over Black achievement. Such false goodwill aligns with the sins of "incontinence" in Dante's upper hell where people who are obsessed with material wealth are punished.

The sins the *Invisible Man* encounters worsen the further he journeys. The Passion movement features explicitly violent acts: Liberty Paints Factory, with its "Keep America Pure With Liberty Paints" slogan (*Invisible Man* 196), actively exploiting Black labor; the narrator is expelled from the all-white labor union; one of their oldest workers is relegated to the basement because he is Black; and the narrator is terminated after falling victim to a work-related accident. Racism, a function of parasitic white capitalism, permeates Invisible Man's life on practically every level.

Butler understands Ellison's jaded vision of the world, most explicit in the Passion movement, as the result of slavery's legacy and argues that it is purposefully juxtaposed with Dante's understanding of the universe as harmonious.[6] However, I argue that although the *Inferno* seems harmonious on the surface, it is undergirded by a distinct chaos: Dante's life and times were tumultuous, too, including his exile from Florence amid the corruption of the Christian Church and feuding between the White and Black Guelphs.[7] It is this chaos that draws Ellison to the *Commedia*. Even so, he turns Dante's model on its head. Although Ellison's sinners exist in an inferno of sorts, they never face punishment. Rather, the narrator (Ellison's "Dante") endures the consequences of their maltreatment as he is humiliated in the Battle Royal, expelled from his university, and blindly sent from place to place in search of a fleeting sense of identity (Ellison xxii).[8]

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[6] Butler evidences this harmony in the *Inferno's* layout of firmly fixed concentric circles, such that each wrongdoer is systematically allocated to a circle in line with the law of *contrapasso*. Every crime receives equal and fitting punishment.

[7] The dark woods of *Inferno* represent Dante's tangled involvement in Florentine politics, which was overcome by internal discord and a *coup d'etat* of Dante's party leading to his exile (Kirkpatrick "Introduction" ix).

[8] Ellison's engagement with DuBois' notion of "double consciousness" further signals his manipulation of the Western literary canon. He not only he asserts his own voice in conversation with Dante's texts, but also calls to a subtended history of Black writers who formed a canon in their own right.

As Ellison sends his narrator on a journey that parallel's Dante's through Hell, his journey assumes allegorical proportions. Invisible Man becomes a keen observer of a broken world, an "eternal system of punishment" (Vernon 216) and must come to understand the sins around him to transcend and reach *purgatorio*. He must do so alone, as opposed to Dante who has a guide to help him realize the nature of each sin: Virgil precedes him and serves as a model of wisdom. Vernon suggests that their relative positioning is a "vision of literary supersession" (226). The poet (Dante) literally follows in a forebear's (Virgil's) footsteps before overtaking his "poetic position" and transcending to Paradise. The In-visible Man's loneliness puts an ironic twist on the journey. When Ellison leaves his Invisible Man guideless, he alludes both to the system that leaves Black men destabilized, forcing them to "keep running" (Ellison 574), and to a dearth of literary forebears resulting from the historical exclusion of Black writers from the canon.[9]

Those who seem to provide Invisible Man with direction (Dr. Bledsoe in the Purpose movement, or young Mr. Emerson and the false promises of employment that impel him onward in the Passion movement) only confuse him further, pushing him down the infernal path of servitude. The narrator's experiences "trap him in his own compulsions" and he falters to the "rigid expectations" imposed on him by a racist world (Butler 59). With no clear sense of self, he yearns for the approval of the oppressive hegemonic powers which seek to control him. In the Passion movement, then, it becomes apparent that gaining a sense of self must be the goal of his journey. To do so, he must cast aside his naivete, recognize that he is a victim of a sinful world, and gather the strength to grapple with the circumstances of his oppression.

In the Perception movement, the narrator sheds his rose-colored glasses and finally understands the world around him. He initially joins the Brotherhood (an anti-racist activist group that is a likely analogy for the American Communist Party) as a spokesperson. He soon realizes that the Brotherhood needed him solely as a mascot to bolster their numbers in Harlem. He becomes disillusioned after realizing they are corrupt — like the sinners in Dante's Eighth and Ninth Circles — and that they only care about the Black community when it benefits them (Ellison 472). Comparing

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[9] Allen-Paisant's observations regarding the limited African American connection to pre-colonial languages and cultures, relative to the African diaspora of far-flung Caribbean Island colonies (see fn. [4]) is germane here. The greater preservation of African cultural and linguistic traditions makes Dante's vernacular revolution a more natural literary predecessor for "Caribbean vernacular discourse" and its role in "cultural decolonization" ([669]). It is telling, therefore, that unlike Dante (and Walcott), Ellison chooses to subject Invisible Man to the Inferno without a literary forebearer as guide.

the Brotherhood to Dante's fraudsters transforms their wrongdoing. More than well-intentioned but misguided, the association suggests the calculated nature of their deception. They are purposefully malicious, an evil far more damnable.

The sins of the world reach their zenith during the Harlem riots, ignited by the murder of Tod Clifton (about whom more later) at the hands of white police officers. As the Brotherhood do nothing despite Invisible Man's pleas, he becomes profoundly disoriented. The utter chaos of the violence around him — the cacophony of "shouts, screams, burglar alarms, and sirens" (Ellison 549) — give him a clear view of the hell in which he lives, in which he was a "tool" (553). This is the center of Hell. Ellison thus uses Dante to bring the chaos of modern Black experience under narrative control (Butler 59). Dante's *Inferno* serves as a space to both illustrate and condemn the violent, complex nature of Black existence.[10]

At the height of the riots, the narrator descends below the surface via manhole (Ellison 565). He recognizes the corrupt, manipulative world around him: "this is the way it's always been, only now [he] knows it" (566). To escape, he descends into an even deeper hell, where he burns the items in his briefcase (Bledsoe's letters, a Brotherhood leaflet, his high school diploma, for example), thereby "confronting" and "casting aside the illusions of his past" (Fischer 367). He "awakens in the blackness," both literally and figuratively confronting the harrowing reality of his existence (Ellison 570).

The conceit of Ellison's novel is that the narrator tells the story of his journey from this deeper hell, perhaps signaling the extreme evil of America's sin and the depths that must be plumbed to grapple with the complex (hi)story of the descendants of enslaved peoples. Arguably, though, Invisible Man also descends deeper into the Inferno than his Western literary predecessor, Dante. Ellison thereby suggests his own vision of literary supersession. To have a chance against Western history and literature that looms over them, Black writers must find their own footing in the dark truth of their painful past, a space beyond oppressive shadows, and pave their own path upward from there.

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[10]The chaos Ellison draws from Dante, however, isn't only negative; treating it as such runs the risk of equating—of reducing—Blackness with impassive victimhood. Ellison views Blackness as chaos, but also as culture and creativity (Rankine 464–465).

[11] We meet Philoctete already wounded, worn down mentally and physically from the festering sore on his leg. His wound functions both as a call to the injured Philoctetes of Homer's *Iliad* and Sophocles's *Philoctetes*, as well as a symbol of the generational inheritance of the trauma of slavery.

Derek Walcott's Soufrière: European Ruins and African Orishas

Like Invisible Man, Derek Walcott's poet-narrator (a Dantean figuration of the writer himself) undergoes a preliminary epiphany before his descent. In Book VI of *Omeros*, the poet-narrator has returned to St. Lucia from a journey to Europe where he reveled in art and history, but drew uncomfortable links between the glories of antiquity and Imperialism. Back home, he is torn, unable to reconcile his desire for grand Homeric gestures with the broader neocolonial power structures in which he now sees them implicated. Can he write a St. Lucian history without Europe's guiding hand?

His epiphany comes to him unbidden as he sits and ponders on the balcony of his hotel café. On another part of the island, and seemingly unrelatedly, Ma Kilman, shopkeeper of No Pain Café, realizes the cure to her friend Philoctetes' leg wound[11] lies in African traditional medicine (Walcott XLVIII.II). Thus reconnecting him to their African roots, Philoctete experiences an Adamic rebirth: He is healed a new man (XLIX.II.32-33). This moment coincides with the poet-narrator's sudden sensation that the "wrong love" is leaving him (XLIX.III.1). He is freed from his desire to be Homeric, to chain St. Lucia to western traditions.

Tearing himself away from Homer's shackles allows the poet-narrator to see the similarity between his historiographical project and that of Major Plunkett, an English expatriate and World War II veteran trying his hand at crafting a history of St. Lucia. Deeply uncomfortable and desperate to distinguish his work from Plunkett's, he wonders "Why not see Helen / … with no Homeric shadow" (LIV.II.24-25)?

Helen is Plunkett's fiercely independent maid, a young St. Lucian woman who insists on defining herself on her own terms as her two suitors (Achille, the African traditionalist and Hector, the neo-colonial entrepreneur) try to impose their worldviews upon her. She is the embodiment of the island itself: St. Lucia was called "Helen of the Antilles," so named as an object of desire and reason for the war between England and France. Both the poet-narrator and Plunkett habitually slip between these two iterations of Helen, until the former has his revelation. He realizes the extent to which the literary association places the woman and the island under a "shadow."

Perhaps the poet-narrator is drawn to Homeric analogies because, without a distinct literary tradition, the people of the Caribbean are left

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[11] We meet Philoctete already wounded, worn down mentally and physically from the festering sore on his leg. His wound functions both as a call to the injured Philoctetes of Homer's *Iliad* and Sophocles's *Philoctetes*, as well as a symbol of the generational inheritance of the trauma of slavery.

tied to the accounts of their colonizers. As Thomas Austenfeld asserts with regard to Caribbean literature, "postcolonial writing is haunted by a dichotomy between the old and the new, between imitation and originality" (19). In *Omeros*, Walcott transforms the poet-narrator's journey into a struggle to detach himself (and St. Lucia) from the dominant Western tradition, to enter the "light beyond metaphor" (Walcott LIV.III.12). What remains most striking, however, is that rather than entirely abandoning Western tradition altogether, Walcott turns his attention to Dante's *Commedia*.[12]

 Though the majority of the poem up to this point echoes the style of Dante's characteristic *terza rima*, the narrator only begins to engage the *Commedia* closely in Book VII. Unlike Ellison, who uses the descent motif figuratively, Walcott's narrator is literally led by a Virgilesque combination of Omeros (the bust of Homer) and Seven Seas (a blind St. Lucian fisherman) into the gurgling pits of the Soufrière volcano. Already Dantean allusion gives order to Walcott's postcolonial chaos, an inversion of Ellison's model. The poet-narrator wanders through the sins around him (land developers, rapacious tourism, neo-colonial entrepreneurship), made to see the impacts of colonial endeavors on his island. Furthermore, in line with Dante's contrapasso, he witnesses the punishment each group receives for their wrongdoings.

 However, rather than lean in wholly to Dante's *Inferno* as an organizing principle, Walcott disrupts — or erupts — the allusion with the Soufrière: hell is inside a volcano rearing upwards rather than a deep pit. The ferryman (resembling Charon of *Inferno* III) who pilots them through the river into hell is described as both "white-haired" and "charred" (Walcott, LVI-LVII). They sing a calypso for St. Lucia as they make their way (LVII.I). Later, they meet the guardians of the Pool of Speculation: Hephaestus, the Greek god, and Ogun, the Yoruba god (LVIII.I.11). Walcott thus refuses to let the Dantean frame control his narrative, interrupting traditional Western imagery with Afro-Caribbean associations. In having Omeros and Seven Seas serve variously as guides, he defies the supposition that postcolonial

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[12] That isn't to say that Walcott's transition from Homer to Dante was as easy or sudden as *Omeros* might lead us to believe. Dante's presence can also be found in Walcott's *Epitaph for the Young* (1949) and *Another Life* (1973). Mark Balfour, in his chapter "The Place of the Poet," posits each poem marks a particular point in Walcott's life and career as a poet: first, the transition into adulthood; second, the middle of his life; and third, nearing the end. He grapples in every stage with situating himself among others – both canonical poets and St. Lucian citizens (230), the "community of poets … and the wider community" (236). If we look at the poems as a trajectory of Walcott's development as a writer, the shift in *Omeros* serves as a final stop in a longstanding, tumultuous creative journey through which he explores and rediscovers his purpose as a poet.

literature must exist – must come into itself – by rejecting Eurocentrism for indigeneity. He views the artist of the New World as "intrinsically creative, futuristic, and without ties to the past," while at the same time recognizing "the European 'ruins' from which he himself, and any other artist, must draw, ruins that he melds with the ancestral African Orishas" (Rankine 462).

Unlike his earlier ties to Homer, the poet-narrator's relationship with Dante is not one of dependence. The combination of historical traditions in his Soufrière (from Ancient Greece to Medieval Europe to West Africa) reflect the cultural hybridity of his postcolonial nation. As Maria Cristina Fumagalli argues, "Christianity and the classic tradition cohabit in Dante's mind," allowing him to mold and shape a world that is "profoundly Christian" (34-35). Walcott, bringing multiple cultural traditions to bear on Dante's vision, reconstitutes it into something "ultimately and unmistakably West Indian" (34-35). Hence, he rebuilds the *Commedia* as a platform for an image of the historically underrepresented St. Lucia.

But Walcott's vision of St. Lucia's cultural hybridity also elucidates the harm colonialism and exploitation bring upon the disempowered. The *Inferno* / Soufrière allows him a space to condemn slavery and its legacy. The first "circle of hell" the characters encounter, the Pool of Speculation, alludes to a combination of the Inferno's Eighth and Ninth Circles where fraudsters are sent.[13] In *Omeros* it is where the exploitation of Black land and labor is punished. The poet-narrator describes the speculators as politicians and traitors with "sucking faces that argued Necessity / in rapid zeroes which no one understood / for the island's profit" (LVIII.I.22-24). As Ellison implicates Norton and the owners of Liberty Paints, so Walcott suggests that the dominant caste of St. Lucia live like parasites ("with sucking faces"), extracting resources against the interest of the subaltern.

While some of the speculators are white (the poet narrator pass "Messrs. Bennet & Ward" of the English land development company), many of the sinners are Black St. Lucians. There are corrupt, traitorous politicians who sold shorelines to land developers who built hotels, or who rented the sea to trawlers whose nets were longer than the entire coastline. "Another thief" is described as "turn[ing] his Black head like a ball in a casino" (LVIII.I.26-27), suggesting at once his race and sin: exploiting the desper-

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[13] Not only is the Eighth Circle filled with Italian fraudsters — like Popes Nicholas III, Boniface VIII, and Clement V — but it also houses the Greek figure Odysseus and the Biblical Simon Magus (Inferno XVIII-XIX). The multicultural influences on the Florentine imagination mirror those to which St. Lucians are subject.

ation of St. Lucians while screaming in "contempt" at "Black people's laziness" (LVIII.I.29-30). The sinners in the Pool of Speculation betrayed their own people, echoing white colonizers while doing so. Tellingly, Walcott does not allow their circumstance (they too are postcolonial subjects) to mitigate their sentence. They succumbed to global capitalism to the detriment of St. Lucian people: a sin deserving a Dantean eternity in hell's sulfuric lakes.

Walcott thereby highlights the conflict between national allegiance and the personal benefits of embracing neocolonial worldviews. The growth of global capitalism and extraction of St. Lucian resources is suggested by the fact that the Soufrière "kept making room" for more "slaves" ready to "betray their brothers" (LVIII.I.38). These "slaves," St. Lucians, descendants of the Middle Passage, are now coerced into subordinating themselves to the will of neocolonial power. This is the trap of global capitalism. To quote Jason Allen-Paisant, "in the colonial and neo-colonial machineries, even the innocents are damned" (673). Walcott thus diverges from Dante's model, blurring the line between the guilty and innocent, the perpetrator and the victim. Condemning his fellow St. Lucians to the same pool as the speculators, the poet-narrator implicates the exploitative ideologies that continue to relegate Black bodies to subservience.

That is not to suggest that Walcott demands ideological purity. The culturally heterogeneous St. Lucia represents the site of "multiple and inextricable histories of victimization and cruelty" (Ramazani 415) that turn St. Lucians against one another. However, rather than finding himself "overly determined by their normative history," Walcott's conscious decision to reshape the Eurocentric literary narrative to fit the postcolonial experience signifies an acceptance of the "contradictions and complexities of the Caribbean" (Austenfeld 24). Even so, Walcott explicitly differentiates between cultural integration and the abandonment of indigeneity. Though survival as a postcolonial nation means adapting to inevitable cultural mixing, it should not be at the cost of becoming unmoored from indigenous roots.

Here, a comparison between *Invisible Man* and *Omeros* is instructive, as both texts consign seeming innocents to hell for failing to reconcile with their people's histories: Brother Tod Clifton and Hector, respectively. Clifton, next to Invisible Man one of the only other Black members of the Brotherhood, grows disillusioned with the organization, specifically their exploitation of Black members to gain popularity in Harlem only to abandon them when things get inconvenient. However, Clifton fails to find purpose and structure beyond the organization. Before he is arrested, abused, and killed by a white police officer, Invisible Man sees him selling racist car-

icatures — Sambo dolls — on the streets (Ellison 434-437). In *Omeros,* Hector, sees no future for himself without embracing the rapidly developing economy of St. Lucia. The only way to survive — to not be left behind — is to abandon his traditional fisherman trade, to abandon the sea[14] in favor of economic success on land as a van driver for tourists (Walcott XXII.II.1-2; Fumagalli 29). Later, he appears in the Malebolge, and likened to Ulysses "shoulders the lance of an oar" (Walcott LVIII.II.37), recalling the ritual by which Tiresias commands Homer's hero to move on from his seafaring life. Both characters are guilty of the "sins" of selling out, of being interpellated into betraying their "brothers."

In utilizing the *Inferno* as a space to condemn fraudulence, the punishment of these men — their relegation to the pits of hell — provides a harrowing perspective on Black survival. Black people are coerced into subservient positions to fit the needs of those in power. The names these positions are given may change, but the hierarchy and exploitation remain. And yet, giving in to them as a matter of survival is an act of betrayal. The Invisible Man and the poet-narrator meet Clifton and Hector late into their journeys. Given that the sins Dante witnesses worsen the deeper he goes, Clifton's and Hector's betrayals seem to constitute among the most nefarious sins of the postcolonial age.

Walcott's invocation of Ulysses in the Malebolge represents a new iteration of the archetype: Once Homer's hero, then Dante's sinner, Hector-as-Ulysses recasts him as a complicated coerced colonial subject. The progression from Homer to Walcott suggests two dialectic sides of literary history: the dominant voices of old, and the new voices that have begun to assert themselves. As Fumagalli writes of Dante, he did not "reproduce [the classics] in the vernacular; he appropriates and submits these texts to his own convenience" (Fumagalli 34). The same could be written of Walcott. Just as Dante manifests his great work by laying claim to Virgil's, so Walcott draws on Dante to develop an artistic vision that reflects his worldview and the complexity of Black existence.

The Ascent into Purgatorio

Both Walcott's and Ellison's narrators must attain a higher self-awareness to ascend from their respective hells and into purgatorio. Just as their

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[14] The sea is presented throughout the poem as a recurring symbol of Black history and St. Lucian culture. It is the middle passage, a physical manifestation of the legacy of slavery. It is the chasm dividing the Old and New Worlds, but also the bridge of shared cultures. For more on the middle passage's importance to Caribbean poetics, see Greenwood 2020.

descent is initiated by an epiphany, so is their ascent. At his final stop in the Soufrière, the poet-narrator of *Omeros* finds poets like himself — at least the poet he was before he sloughed off his Homeric attachment — condemned to a pit. They akin to Dante's swine: "stew[ing]" in their own "shit" (LVIII. III.16), punished for only "[seeing] surfaces" and "smil[ing] at their similes" (LVIII.III.11-12). Walcott dooms these poets for prioritizing their artistic vision over the complex humanity of those they represent. Helen Kauffman implicates the poet-narrator and Plunkett in this sin for their treatment of Helen, the embodiment of St. Lucia. They both share an urge to "pin her […] down in familiar terms in order to make sense of her," which inevitably "implies another, postcolonial, colonization" (Kaufmann 194). In the Soufrière, the poet-narrator is briefly tempted to slip back into his dependence on Homer: he almost slips into the "backbiting circle" before Omeros pulls him out (LVIII.III.20). This moment of self-awareness is crucial: He realizes that to avoid damnation he must avoid his peers' misuse of languages, a perpetual risk as his project toes the delicate line between representing St. Lucia in poetic language without obscuring its complex and nuanced reality.

As Ellison's narrator recounts his journey from the "deeper" hell under the streets of Harlem, he realizes that the only way to truly live is to move forward. While he is tempted to break the cycle of suffering by removing himself from society and "hibernat[ing]" (Ellison 573), he comes to understand that he must "shake off the old skin and come up for breath" (580). Butler argues for the Invisible Man's deepest descent as a "fortunate fall," a wake-up call that "prompts him to take genuine responsibility for his life" (72). However, the novel does not falter to general platitudes. Rankine points out that while Ellison may reject essentialist views of Blackness, he does not move "beyond Black identity to craft a universal humanity" (464). Rather, he conducts his character "*through* an ontological blackness, just as Virgil does for Dante" (original emphasis).[15] The Invisible Man cannot abandon his Blackness. It is an inextricable, cultural facet of his existence. The deeper hell under the streets of Manhattan allow him the opportunity for introspection. Its "blackness" serves doubly as a voyage "into the self" (Butler 75).

Ellison and Walcott thus seem to share a purpose as Black diasporic writers. Their narrators' journeys are not epics in the technical sense of the word, but they also are "in the same way Dante's *Commedia* is an epic, that

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[15] For more on the ontology of Blackness in *Invisible Man,* see Rankine 2012.

is, an epic of the self" (Fumagalli 23). And, like Dante, Ellison and Walcott recognize the near-impossibility of definitively and finally communicating experience. Dante's struggle to reconcile his experiences becomes especially apparent at the end of *Paradiso* when he returns to earth, not because his journey ends, but because the medium by which he elucidates his experiences, poetic allegory, demands it (Verdicchio 20-21). The return to earth is not an entry into the promised land (paradiso), so much as a concession that the journey is ongoing and its fundamental tensions, though better understood and accommodated, remain unresolved.

The journeys recounted by Ellison's *Invisible Man* and Walcott's poet-narrator evidence struggle with self-representation akin to Dante's. They, too, battle to cohere themselves because they are subject to irresolvable tensions. This is especially true prior to their epiphanies. In the thick of the riots, Invisible Man struggles to convey the events around him. He cannot understand the Harlemites' desire to burn down their home (545). When he realizes it is a "decision [of] their own and their own action," he wants to capture the scene to convey to the Brotherhood that such actions are possible (548-549). Even as he realizes he has "no words" to properly express himself, he finds himself pulled between two ideological worldviews: the self-interested posturing of the Brotherhood and that of Ras the Destroyer, the embodiment of militant Black nationalism. In *Omeros,* this tension is illustrated by the poet-narrator's near-slip into the Pit of Poets, torn between his newfound hybridity (the spirit of decolonization) and the erstwhile obsession with Western tradition (recolonization).

Like Dante, Ellison's and Walcott's narrators' epiphanies lead to the next stage of their journeys: they resurface into purgatory "endow[ed] with dramatically new meanings" (Butler 75). Their journeys' endings transform into new beginnings. However, in another gesture towards the ongoing nature of their narrators' journeys, purgatory is where they fall silent. Readers lose access to their voices when they ascend to purgatory, a middle space, a holding room, that represents but one step towards redemption.

For both, ascendance to purgatory is accompanied by an acceptance, or at least a willingness to accommodate, the irresolvable complexity of their circumstances and histories. As Walcott's poet narrator emerges from the Soufrière, he finds he has come to understand that the sea, which represents the Middle Passage and its legacy of slavery, is also a source of his "privilege" (Walcott LIX.I.10). The "roar of famous cities" (Western influence, both artistic and violent) entered the sea and came out on the other side as the "silence" that "pushed his hand to write" (LIX.I.11-13). He derives his purpose from the sea: he must sing the history of the silenced. As for Dante, this history takes the form of autobiography that "mingles the personal and the universal into his poetic whole" (Austenfeld 22). Walcott's poet-narrator embodies the history of the African diaspora, and his Dan-

tean poem serves as the Middle Passage, recalling Greenwood's use of the term to speak to, that "mediate[s] between the different histories of English."

Walcott's poetic voice speaks to these different histories. Like Dante, he takes on the "vernacular of his people" (Fumagalli 22). Some scholars directly parallel Walcott's use of Patois with Dante's writing in vernacular (Tuscan) Italian rather than Latin. However, Walcott's *Omeros* is largely in standard English and any Patois is immediately translated.[16] Walcott's vernacularity most closely accords with Vernon's understanding of vernacular translations, which refers not to a literal translation of an original language (say, Italian) to a target language (say, Patois), but as conceptual reimagining of established writing. Vernacular translations function as a "bridge between codified and unruly forms of literary production" (203). The challenge Walcott takes on is not the formation of a national language, but the appropriation of historically dominant languages and literatures to reflect historically silenced experience. He looks to reconcile the "seemingly impossible relation between older literary forms and the lived experience of race." His endeavor simultaneously grapples with the conflicted, highly-localized self and challenges the homogeneity of the Western literary canon. This is where Dante's and Walcott's goals align.

Like Walcott, Ellison's proximity to empire prevents him from completely eschewing the Western tradition. Emerging from the "deeper" hell, Invisible Man realizes he must "denounce" and "defend" and "hate" and "love" to portray his experiences to the fullest (Ellison 580). He "has to love" in order to "get … it down" (580), to come to terms with the intricate reality of Black existence. Ellison gives us a "complex double vision" (Butler 73) in which his hero, like Dante, can "condemn and affirm, say no and say yes" (Ellison 579). Although he realizes life is "ornery, vile," he also believes it can be "sublimely wonderful" because it contains "infinite possibilities" (Butler 74; Ellison 580). Reassembling Dante's form as a model through which to illustrate the realities of Black diasporic experience allows Ellison more artistic agency and authority to negotiate his complex relation to the empire "on the terms … [he himself] set[s] out" (Vernon 203).

When Invisible Man resurfaces in purgatorio, he ends his narration by asking the reader, "who knows but that, on the lower frequencies, I speak for you?" (581). He thus implicitly situates himself as the reader's guide

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[16] An example of this can be found in the first interaction between Ma Kilman and Philoctetes. Her *"Mais qui ça quit rivait-'ous, Philoctetes"* is followed by "But what is wrong wif you, Philoctetes" two lines later (III.III.1-3). Moreover, Patois is only spoken by the other St. Lucian characters, rather than the poet-narrator, indicating that for Walcott, at least, the conversation is not about Caribbean language-making.

(a Virgil to their Dante) having undertaken his own journey through hell alone. The reader, then, is interpolated into the chain of literary supersession: He invites them to realize their own invisibility and to continue the vernacular tradition, whether they are writers or not, as a way to grapple with the cultural uprootedness of African American experience. Vernacular translation's mutability opens the door, as Vernon argues, for these "future transformations of blackness" (203).

For Vernon, vernacular translations allow for "connection to writers across time." By this logic, vernacular translations of the *Commedia* do not just connect Ellison and Walcott to Dante, but also to each other. They also function as a transnational bridge across the diaspora. When Ellison's narrator describes himself as but a "disembodied voice," a transparent apparition (581), it is tempting to draw a connection to the "phantom hearer" (Walcott LXIV.II.32). Walcott's poet-narrator addresses near the conclusion of *Omeros* as though he is picking up *Invisible Man's* mantle, so to speak, and passing it on to his own readers. He appeals not just to Ellison's vernacular translation, but to the long history of Black writers that came before them both. Whether or not Walcott read Ellison, echoes of Ellison's voice exist in Walcott's writings and vice versa. Invisible Man slips further and further until he falls through the manhole. *Omeros's* poet-narrator slips into the Pit of Poets, drawn in by the false promise of poetics. In Walcott's poet-narrator's journey, we see the Invisible Man. They are bridged together both by their shared experience of race and their contribution to the vernacular tradition. The texts reveal, through their connections and variations and rich vernacularity, how lived experience of race mutates across time and space.

Thus, the vernacular presents a method to weave Black artistry into a global constellation, to illuminate what Vernon describes as a "broader global literary project" (203). This interpretation also draws on what Greenwood refers to as a "dense web of intellectual relationships" (2010 18). Greenwood mainly implements the phrase in relation to Walcott's Caribbean counterparts, but I extend this web beyond the Caribbean. Studying Dantean receptions in postcolonial contexts provides valuable insight into the lived experience of individual Black writers like Ellison and Walcott. Using Dante as the basis for comparisons, however, reveals links and reverberations across the diaspora, illuminating an ever-changing, endlessly creative wellspring from which future writers can draw to integrate the past and the present into one (hi)story.

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Bollywood on *TikTok*: The Item Song, Community, and South Asian Diasporic Identity

By Isha Merchant

In 2021, *TikTok* user @aishuadd (whose real name is Aishwarya Adde-palli) found herself at the heart of a controversy when she recreated one of the most technically complicated sequences of the dance accompanying "O Saki Saki," an "item song" from *Batla House*, a 2019 Bollywood film. Adde-palli, a 24-year-old medical student in Texas, is a bharatanatyam student, one of India's oldest classical dance styles. She uses her *TikTok* page to celebrate her Telegu heritage and classical Indian dance skills. Her November 2021 submission of the "O Saki Saki" dance caused controversy when comment-ers celebrated her "correct" performance of the dance in terms of her South Asian ethnicity, critiquing non-South Asian creators by comparison for their over-emphasis of the dance's erotic elements.

As a member of the South Asian community, I am interested in the ways members of the diaspora use Bollywood item song dances to navigate their identity in new media. To lay the groundwork of my inquiry, I will draw on Christiane Brosius concept of "Bollyworld" to provide the historical backdrop of diasporic efforts to construct a united South Asian identity that erases eth-nic, religious, and national differences. I will also build on Sociologist Rolf Lidskog's work, which investigates the role of Bollywood music and dance in diasporic performances of South Asian identity.

I will argue that the item song acts like a north star for many South Asians in the West. Bollywood dance occupies a special place in diaspora cul-ture in the United States. Many young people take dance classes, and dance is a major part of social events. Many are audience-practitioners, with expertise in the techniques and appreciation for the tradition, which serves as more than mere entertainment, but a site of identity creation.

This understanding is necessary to grapple with the "O Saki Saki" controversy, which should be understood as a conflict between those who lay claim to Bollywood dance as an aspect of their ethnic identity, and the unconstrained freedom to create content offered by new media. South Asian audience-practitioners saw themselves as defenders of the tradition, and perceived a lack of respect on the part of non-diaspora creators. The controversy reveals the potentially problematic nature of new media like TikTok, a largely-unregulated platform that invites users to participate in performances and trends by producing creative content. The controversy over "O Saki Saki" reveals the challenges diaspora creators face when they use new media as a space to perform and create identity.

Bollyworld

The South Asian diaspora or "desi community" (terms that will be used interchangeably in this article) consists of a global population of people displaced from the South Asian subcontinent. They have their roots in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, among other nations. Although the South Asian diaspora began hundreds of years ago along trade routes, the modern understanding of the diaspora is mostly informed by the postcolonial era. In the United States, the great influx of Desi immigrants began around 1980 when Indian governmental policies looked to expand the nation's global horizons (Bhandari). The United States, UK, and Canada are the biggest recipients of the South Asian diaspora, with estimated South Asian citizens numbering 5.4 million (ONS), 5.5 million (*The Daily*), 2.5 million (Bhandari), respectively between 2019 and 2023. The Desi community is one of the fastest growing immigrant groups in the United States, with large regional populations in Texas and New York.

This growing diaspora gave Bollywood a new global reach, fostering cultural contact between South Asians. Lakshmi Tirumala, a Digital Media researcher argues Bollywood films "[erase] geographical boundaries [for Indian American students in the United States] and thereby [influence the] ethnic group's identity construction and maintenance" (31). They serve "as a bridge between home and diaspora [and] also transmit [cultures] and traditions that play a crucial role in constructing and maintaining identity in second-generation Indian American students" (77).

Anthropologist Christiane Brosius, uses the term "Bollyworld" to describe how the reception of Bollywood films has "shaped by the diverse cartographies of diaspora communities" (2). Brosius (who works out of Heidelberg University in Germany) interviewed Indian shopkeepers in Frankfurt to understand how the Desi community perceives itself with respect to their Indian and German identities. She argues that those within the South Asian diaspora embrace a "homing desire," as they navigate their adopted culture

they also feel a nostalgic longing for their origins. The Desi community's consumption of Bollywood films is a symptom of this homing desire.

Of the various South Asian film hubs, Bollywood is by far the most prolific. As a result, Bollywood films are often the most immediately accessible to the South Asian diaspora. Despite the diverse subcontinent ethnicities, cultures, and language groups represented in the diaspora, Bollywood's Hindi films appeal across such differences, and have become a site of connection that cuts across these national and ethnic boundaries. Brosius noticed that members of the Desi community went out of their way to watch Hindi-language films in theaters even though many of them did not speak Hindi. Brosius writes about Ashraf, who has organized Bollywood film screenings in Frankfurt. Each Sunday, his cinema was packed with Pakistanis, Bengalis, and Indians (Brosus 8).

Central to the appeal of Bollywood films is song and dance. Sangita Gopal and Sujata Moorti argue that "the Hindi film song […] cut[s] through all the language barriers in India," thereby creating a sense of cohesion across difference (14). Writing about diasporic spaces more broadly, sociologist Rolf Lidskog argues that "music is at the heart of cultures' most profound social occasions and experiences" and can come to have "special meanings" to immigrant communities, "creat[ing] a diasporic consciousness among its members" (8). Music thus assumes the role of preserving culture and creating social cohesion as "members can…unite around common expressive music practices… despite their differences."

As a second-generation Pakistani-American, I relate deeply to these findings. I have no connection to India besides watching Bollywood films growing up. Some of my earliest memories are going to the Indian grocery store with my family to buy pirated versions of Bollywood films. When Bollywood films became available on streaming services like Sling and Netflix, I would spend entire summers watching them out of pure interest, often inviting my friends over to watch with me. This allowed me to contextualize and share in conversations with my South Asian classmates, and to discuss favorite films or songs. I would do the same on online platforms like Tumblr, re-blogging images of my favorite Bollywood movies. Bollywood films were so formative that I often feel I hold a stronger connection to Indian culture than I do to my Pakistani culture.

Item Song Dances

One of the most recognizable features of a Bollywood film is the "item song," a convention in which a beautiful woman sings and dances in a public setting for the admiration of, typically, multiple men who follow her every move with alcoholic beverages in hand. Item songs were historically targeted at men, given the overt appeal to sex. In the past, men would gather in cinemas to watch these scenes together. Since the 90s, however, attempts have

been made to mainstream item songs given the global economic appeal of Bollywood films.

The item song has become an especially important cultural touchstone in the diaspora where they are played, their dances recreated, in a variety of social contexts such as weddings and family gatherings. Rita Brara writes about the ways the item song "Kajra Re" has become widely performed by Desi people in the United States (73). She claims that these "ritualized performances" have become increasingly common within the middle class. Some women may want to be seen as attractive to the men in the audience. Mothers encourage daughters to dance as a way to embrace their femininity (72). These dances are still sexual in nature, but this function is secondary to their communal celebratory contexts.

So, while item songs still play an erotic role in the Bollywood films and diaspora cultural events, they play a more important role in South Asian diaspora communities as sites of nostalgia. Young second-generation girls grow up learning to dance to item songs without having the often-vulgar lyrics translated into English. Their knowledge of the intricate dances and techniques initiate them into a community of audience-practitioners who associate the dance not primarily with eroticism but with their Desi identity.

Addepalli's faithful recreation of "O Saki Saki" paid close attention to the choreography of the original dance performed by Nora Fatehi in *Batla House* (2019). This was an expression of the TikTokker's diasporic identity through dance. Her skill spoke to her upbringing within the diasporic community of audience practitioners with a deep embodied understanding of the traditions, music, and subtleties of dance moves.

Growing up, I attended dance classes with other South Asian girls, and would perform dances to item songs on stage for my community. Our dance teachers taught us about the cultural roots of songs and dances and we were required to be proficient in specific techniques. Many of the dances I learned incorporated kathak dance steps, a classical style that is often referenced in the Bollywood fusion of dance styles. Kathak classes were filled with other young second-generation immigrant girls, connecting us to our shared South Asian identity. Our performances were mostly in front of South Asian audiences.

In "The Role of Music in Ethnic Identity,"Rolf Lidskog argues that various forms of musical expression — including musical performance, song, and dance — are important means of asserting cultural identity within broader society. In accordance with this thinking, Desi people who dance to item songs are claiming space for their identity within a predominantly western culture. Lidskog stresses that "musical numbers [… show] that a particular culture should be a part of the wider society" (9).

Item songs, then, are used within South Asian communities to actively claim identity, a sense of cultural specificity sustained by a deep ap-

preciation of the traditions behind the dance. More recently, access to editing software and social media platforms have allowed item songs to be appropriated (independently of their original film) to eye-catching content by which the Desi community has laid claim to a cultural space on the internet. Like Bollywood itself, social media collapses pre-existing boundaries and brings together global audiences, creating both opportunity and conflict.

Desi Identities on Social Media

TikTok has increasingly become a platform on which South Asians can share their versions of item song dances. Lakshmi Tirumala writes that "new media technologies create ample opportunities for minority communities to find a new sense of connection and maintain their identities" (37). According to Mohammad Hossain, social media "provide the ability to connect with people in a network … this leads to a community-formation process" that is especially present within the diaspora (3). *TikTok* allows South Asian people to create a close knit community through the recreation of the item song.

"O Saki Saki" is one of the many item songs that have gone viral on TikTok. Often, the virality of certain songs or dances spark "trends," which I use here to describe a *TikTok* participatory phenomenon in which users put their own spin on a shared text — dancing to the same piece of music, lip-syncing to the same song, adding their own visuals to the same audio clip. Especially on *TikTok*, item song trends allowed young practitioner-audiences to connect with a wider Desi community. Arguably an online extension of Brosius' concept of 'Bollyworld,' South Asians come together as a community to share their appreciation for Bollywood item songs through dance, even when they do not necessarily share the same regional heritage. Addepalli, who identifies as a member of the Telugu ethnicity, draws followers from wide variety of South Asian people. Online item song trends overcome caste, nationality, and religion.

However, online spaces challenge creators in the diaspora, since they must learn to negotiate Desi appreciation of their content, as well as audiences and audience participants who have no direct cultural connection to South Asia. Addepalli is one of the creators to suffer a backlash on social media from other users for this reason.

An "O Saki Saki" trend went viral in 2022 when predominantly non-South Asian users began copying the dance based on Nora Fatehi's performance in music video. However, they subtly and seemingly inadvertently, altered the choreography. In the music video, Nora Fatehi, a popular Indian dancer, performs a hip thrust to the main chorus. Many white creators misinterpreted this dance move and instead performed hip rolls, a slower, more sensual movement. In late 2022, Addepalli uploaded her "O Saki Saki" dance recreation, and carefully performed the hip thrusts as Fatehi did. She received 5.2 million views and 875k likes (@aishuadd, 2022). However, non-

South Asian commenters took issue with her performance, believing it to be incorrect, and accusing her of misinterpreting the dance. One commenter insisted that "the actual dance is way smoother cuz it's supposed to be sexier [and] not this aggressive." Addepalli posted a side-by-side comparison of the original music video and her recreation.

Many South Asian users commented on the video in support of Addepalli. User @muktea said "the way it's the SAME as Nora [Fatehi] omg you rlly did that sis." Commenters focused on how she had done the dance correctly and were appreciative of Addepalli's close attention to detail. Even Nora Fatehi, the original dancer, reposted Addepalli's *TikTok* to her Instagram in recognition of her dance skills.

Much of the controversy seemed to center on questions of sexuality and the extent to which white users eroticized the dance. Addepalli's and other South Asian creators' defense of the dance's technical integrity might seem puzzling given the erotic character of item songs and their dances in Bollywood films. However, South Asian *TikTok* viewers seem to agree that this portion of the dance is not meant to be sexy but empowering. Neha Namboodiripad, a popular *TikTok* creator, argued that by adding the sensualized body roll white creators were "fetishizing Bollywood and South Asians in general … [without] acknowledging where it came from" (Cheong). While the use of the term "fetishizing" suggests concerns that white audience-participants were perpetuating colonial stereotypes of Indian dance as over-sexualized, most of the comments defending Addepalli came from Desi people who understood the erotic underpinnings of the item song but wanted to distinguish it from western tropes surrounding South Asian culture. They insisted that getting the dance right was a mark of respect for "where it came from." They placed emphasis on culturally specific expertise. Addepalli, in the caption to her side-by-side video comparison, wrote "that 'body roll' [I] keep seeing yt [white] ppl do is NOT the original dance" (@aishuadd, 2022).

Some Desi commenters claimed "O Saki Saki" as a "cultural dance" and felt white creators performing it incorrectly was an act of appropriation (@aishuadd, 2022). They saw incorrect choreography as an unnecessary effort to improve the dance and as an attack on their expertise and the long cultural history of dance in South Asia. In an interview, Addepalli lay claim to her platform as a space to celebrate South Asian identity in the face of a broader colonizing American culture that does not see it as legitimate. She aimed to counter mainstream preconceptions: "many Westerners don't [think of] Eastern dance forms as dance…they don't consider it as art and they don't consider it as an athletic capability" (Hatangadi).

Conclusion

Although Addepalli's audience is largely South Asian, *TikTok's* global reach means that "O Saki Saki" reached audiences with no understanding

of the deeper significance of the dance. In a sense, this "outsider audience" is the price Desi communities pay for using social media to build a unified South Asian identity through the item song. Item songs allow South Asians to construct a north star, a way to orient themselves towards a nostalgic idea of "home," but the need for such navigation suggests their subjection to a world beyond the subcontinent.

New media such as *TikTok* demonstrates unifying power of Bollywood music and dance but also evidences the tension between South Asian and non-South Asian audiences. Performances like "O Saki Saki" on TikTok reveal how cultural identity is a "socially and historically constructed outcome of locating the self in relation to interactions with others as well as to socially and culturally conditioned communicative structures within a given society" (Tirumala 12). South Asians in the United States must constantly negotiate this process by locating themselves between Western culture and their heritage. Online spaces such as *TikTok* force creators to defend the identities they create against the perception that their culture is a consumable trend.

By continuing to stand up for herself amid the controversy, Addepalli saw herself as supporting her community in the face of western attempts to commodify their culture: "I try to make my page a safe space … and make my ppl less insecure about [our culture] in western settings" (@aishuadd, 2022). Her performance allows South Asians to construct a shared identity across ethnic and linguistic boundaries but also invites the collective celebration of dance as a means of preserving identity in a new environment. Like a north Star, it is an easily recognizable way to navigate their way home.

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The Power of Naming: Father-Daughter Rape in Nabokov's *Lolita*

By Katerina Munoz

Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* forever changed the name of its title character. As the diminutive form of Lola, it should suggest it belongs to a little girl. But so influential was Nabokov's novel, which is narrated from the perspective of a child molester, Humbert Humbert, that the name Lolita (his 12-year-old victim)[1] is typically associated with erotic imagery. From book covers to film adaptations, Lolita is represented by isolated images of a young girl's body parts: her eyes, her lips, her legs (Savage 157). What this eroticization — which asks the viewer to assume Humbert's gaze — obscures, is the reality of the abuse that she, a child, suffers at the hands of a father-figure. "Lolita" is Humbert's pet name for the minor he sexualizes. It reflects the "nymphet" of his imagination. I want to bring the young girl back into focus. She is Dolores.

I use Elizabeth Ward's concept of "Father-Daughter Rape" to examine sexual abuse in *Lolita*. It offers a productive framework for a sociological reframing of the novel. By *capitalizing* the term, Ward emphasizes its significance while differentiating it from "Father-Daughter Rape"; the rape of a daughter by the biological father. "Father-Daughter Rape" describes the phenomenon of a "girl-child" who has been sexually abused by an older man

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[1] While I understand "victim" may be a contentious term, I argue from the perspective that victimization does not make a young girl or woman any less of a person. I use the word only to denote the severity of the crimes committed against them. In her memoir *Hunger* (2017), Roxane Gay argues that there should no longer be a feeling of shame surrounding the word "victim." Gay indicates that buying into this stigma may "diminish the gravity" of the sexual violence they have suffered (18).

(Ward 78) often considered a father figure in the household or community. When applied to Nabokov's novel, Ward's expansion of the term offers productive optics for understanding the complex mechanisms of this abusive relationship.

A constellation is made up of individual points that together create a larger image. That image, in turn, depends on the orientation of points towards each other. My argument clarifies the various ways in which Humbert orients himself towards Dolores — as her teacher, confidant, and abuser, but also, as Ward uses the term, her "Father." This approach allows me to reframe Dolores in terms of Ward's concept of the "Daughter." Understanding their relationship from various perspectives allows us to grapple with the complex insidiousness of Father-Daughter Rape. Thereafter drawing on Ward's insistence on the "power of naming" (211-212), I argue that recognizing the relationship at the center of *Lolita* as Father-Daughter Rape models an approach that gives voice to survivors and inspires the possibility for social change.

Reframing *Lolita*

The novel focuses on Humbert's obsession with Dolores Haze, or "my Lolita" as he calls her. Dolores is the twelve-year-old daughter of widowed Charlotte Haze, in whose house Humbert is boarding after his arrival in the small town of Ramsdale. Infatuated with Dolores from the moment he lays eyes on her, Humbert sets out to steal glimpses and touches of her, continually escalating his transgressions on her body. He strategically marries her mother to maintain proximity to Dolores. When Charlotte is tragically killed by a car, Humbert seizes sole parental control. Under the guise of a loving father, Humbert whisks Dolores away from her hometown and the life she knows for a cross-country trip on which Humbert keeps her isolated while sexually and psychologically abusing her.

In the nearly seven decades that have passed since the initial publication of *Lolita*, many[2] have grappled with the ethics of reading or teaching the novel because of its shocking premise: abuse through the eyes of a pedophile. Yet many young girls and women have described *Lolita* as important to their process of recognizing or coping with the abuse they have faced at home, as well as hostility they feel in public. Bindu Bansinath writes that the novel was "more than just a coping mechanism," but a "guide" for surviving

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[2] See, for example, James Phelan's "Estranging Unreliability, Bonding Unreliability, and the Ethics of 'Lolita;'" Erika L. Sanchez's "Lolita in the Time of Trigger Warnings"; Benjamin Seigle's "Humbert Humbert and the Kids These Days: On Teaching Lolita in a High School Classroom"; Morgan Jerkins' "Lolita, #MeToo, and Myself."

and fighting against her uncle's abuse (Bansinath). Rebecca Solnit identified with the novel because it served as a reminder of "how hostile the world, or rather the men in it, could be," and she gestures to Azar Nafisi's identification of *Lolita* as belonging to a "category of victims who have no defense and are never given a chance to articulate their own story" (Solnit). Each victim connects with the novel in unique ways but together suggest the value of reframing *Lolita* through the lens of Father-Daughter Rape. Clearly, understanding the relationship at the forefront of the novel is key for victims navigating their trauma through their identification with Dolores.

Critics of this approach might argue it reduces a complex novel about aesthetics and pleasure to advocacy or a therapeutic device. Nabokov himself insisted the book did not have a "moral in tow" (315). Instead, he argued that the work of fiction, in his opinion, only exists "insofar as it affords [him]" what he calls "aesthetic bliss" (315). My approach, however, is not beholden to authorial intent, and understands the novel's cultural reception in ways inspired by literary theorists such as Hans Robert Jauss and Roland Barthes. They posit that the recipients of a cultural object, such as *Lolita*, will make their own meanings based upon their values and social positioning. Of course, these two approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive, as Jen Shelton points out: "the reader, like [Dolores], can refuse Humbert and Nabokov's terms […] by creating a counter-narrative in which recognizing incest and [aesthetically] enjoying the text are not contraries but instead exist simultaneously and in collusion with each other" (Shelton 274).

My argument contributes to other feminist conversations about *Lolita* by recalibrating the text to place Dolores and her victimization at the forefront. Some scholars turn to the cultural images or ideas that surround *Lolita* to demonstrate how they have affected the cultural reception of the novel. Shari Savage writes on the genealogy of *Lolita* book-covers, specifically those depicting or referencing the titular character, and how these images further propagate "mythic signifiers" of girl-children as temptresses that are then "projected onto real girls" (Savage 159). Other scholars approach the novel by framing a specific dynamic or crime in the text. Jen Shelton, for example, explores incest as a thematic and narrative tool. My research speaks to this feminist scholarship by framing *Lolita* within the cultural and societal phenomenon of Father-Daughter Rape, which emphasizes Dolores as a pre-pubescent girl victimized by Humbert's abuse. She does not have agency in their relationship. She does not seduce him. She is not a controlling nymphet, as popular media often portrays "Lolitas."

I have chosen to use Elizabeth Ward's conceptualization of Father-Daughter Rape for multiple reasons. Her book *Father-Daughter Rape* (1985) was one of the earliest feminist texts to tackle the phenomenon. She purposefully "eschew[ed]" language she felt misrepresented such abuse (77-

78), echoing my own misgivings about the euphemistic language (such as "father-daughter incest") often used to describe the phenomenon (Ward 3-4; 77-79). By naming the roles of the perpetrator and victim, Father and Daughter, and using rape rather than 'incest' (which obscures the lack of consent), Ward created a term that more "accurately [conveyed] the dynamics of the situation" (78).

Ward's transcription of conversations with survivors of Father-Daughter Rape came to serve as the experiential ground on which my analysis rested, their humanity a vivid counterpoint to statistics or trend studies. Daughters exist not only as theories, characters, or statistics, but as real women and girls made victims by the ones they are told to trust, in the places they are told are safe. For countless reasons, many Daughters are unable or unwilling to share their story, and when we do hear their stories, they are often presented as faceless or nameless victim statements. In *Lolita*, I saw images and experiences that directly paralleled descriptions by Ward's survivors. Their voices speak through my reading of *Lolita*. Their names are Sonia, Jude, Kim, Ann, Vera, Cathy, Virginia, Marge, and Lynette (5-73).

Humbert Humbert as Father

Nabokov constructs the narrative viewpoint of the novel through prison writings. Humbert is awaiting trial, not for his sex crimes, but the murder of Clare Quilty, the man to whom Dolores eventually escapes and who turns into her second abuser. Humbert's manuscript begins with his childhood in France, where he fell in love at the age of thirteen with a girl his own age, Annabel. He laments that they were never able to consummate their love, prevented by watchful parents and Annabel's untimely death of typhus. This disappointment, he claims, is where his love for "nymphets" originated (13-16). Humbert coins the term "nymphet" to describe a girl between the ages of nine and 14 whose true nature is not human, but "nymphic" or "demoniac" (16). He claims that it is not beauty or any other visible attribute that sets a nymphet apart from her peers. It is what he sees as her "elusive, shifty, soul-shattering" charm, amongst other hidden traits (17). While such descriptions of pubescent girls as seductive she-devils may seem like the ramblings of a fictional pedophile, they resemble published accounts of historical clinicians and researchers studying father-daughter sexual abuse. These accounts will be elaborated upon in my discussion of Dolores as Daughter.

Although Dolores is only one of many girls on whom Humbert bestows the title of nymphet, she is his only victim relative to whom he positions himself as a father figure. This positioning is sanctioned by

Dolores' unwitting mother. In a letter to Humbert, Charlotte expresses her desire that he "link up [his] life with [hers] forever," becoming her "lifelong mate" and "a father to [her] little girl" (68). While Humbert's first reaction to the letter is one of "repulsion," it doesn't take him long to begin imagining how such a scenario might play out in his favor:

> I imagined [. . .] all the casual caresses her mother's husband would be able to lavish on his Lolita. I would hold her against me three times a day, every day. All my troubles would be expelled, I would be a healthy man. 'To hold thee lightly on a gentle knee and print on thy soft cheek a parent's kiss …' Well-read Humbert! (70)

Humbert agrees to play the role of dutiful husband, even though Charlotte disgusts him, because it allows him to take on the role of father to Dolores. He admits this is not the first time he had considered such a setup, saying it had already crossed his mind to marry a "mature widow" to "have [his] way with her child" (70). While Charlotte's letter is the first time someone refers to Humbert as a father or father-figure to Dolores, his narrative reveals that he intentionally crafted a father-daughter dynamic from the beginning of his time in the Haze household. By assuming this role, he resembles Ward's concept of father (3; 83). The father takes many forms, including stepfathers, brothers, uncles, grandfathers, mother's boyfriends, family friends, male babysitters, and more (3).

Ward emphasizes the inherent trust and unfettered access adults in a child's life must give to the father for Father-Daughter Rape to occur without intervention (5; 78; 84). Ward frames the most influential of these adults in the child's life as Mother. This role can be played by a variety of caretakers: biological mother, stepmother, grandmother, aunt, sister, friend, and others. What makes them the mother within the Father-Daughter Rape dynamic is what Ward calls a "conditioned blindness" (5).

In a journal entry soon after Humbert moves in, he describes sitting closely to Charlotte, with Dolores having squeezed herself between the two adults. He begins telling a story with gestures intentionally animated to disguise his attempts to "caress" Dolores' legs, back, hair, and hands, even going as far as to place kisses on her head (Nabokov 45-46). Charlotte's misplaced trust allow his actions to go, if not unnoticed, then certainly unquestioned. Humbert thus sets a standard for physical contact with Dolores that allows him to take liberties in full view of the mother.

Ward argues that caretaking adults often create a distinction in the young girl's mind between the Father, a man they are told they should trust, and the Stranger, a man they are told they *should not*. This false dichotomy, "one of the mindbinds of the patriarchy" (5), is a cultural myth that facilitates the abuse of children. Ward points out that when adults distinguish safe familiar men from dangerous strangers to children, they effectively erase the reality that the men in their lives can be Strangers to other little girls, not to mention a danger within their own spheres (5; 99; 165).[3]

Even though Charlotte knows nothing about Humbert when he moves in, he is immediately treated as a familiar presence in the Haze household. Charlotte fails to establish boundaries early on. Most egregiously, she often leaves Dolores alone with Humbert. He uses Charlotte's trust to his advantage, detailing in journal entries how he orchestrates physical proximity to Dolores through "stealthy maneuvering" (Nabokov 43). The nonchalance of Humbert's descriptions of attempts to talk to Dolores, to touch her, even to masturbate near her, without intervention from "mother Haze" (54) suggest the normalcy he ascribes to such actions. However, recognizing such scenes as part of a pattern of abuse allows us to analyze them for insights regarding the ways he "grooms" her for abuse by establishing her trust while simultaneously testing her boundaries.

Across Ward's survivors' accounts, fathers employ this "stealthy maneuvering" to initiate assault or abuse (Ward 6-7: 15-17: 26: 45: 66-67). Fathers take daughters on solo drives, walks, or trips; they follow them into rooms while they do chores; they visit their bedrooms when everyone else is asleep. Humbert develops intimate knowledge of Dolores' daily routine in order to seek her out. He describes this strategy as having "mentally mapped out Lolita's course through the house" (77). Humbert knows Dolores' routines as a father does their child's, and utilizes this familiarity (as well as Charlotte's habits and regimen) to fulfill his abusive desires.

Charlotte's trust allows Humbert to position himself as a father-figure. Her death presents him the opportunity to further solidify this role. Humbert convinces the townspeople of Ramsdale that he is Dolores' biological father, playing the role of "distraught father" who must care for "his delicate daughter" (101). Humbert assumes fatherly responsibility for Dolores, assuming custody, providing shelter, travel,

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[3] This idea of "Strange Men" as the ultimate threat to children is not supported by data gathered from child welfare services and law enforcement. RAINN [Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network] reports that, among the occurrences of child sexual abuse reported to law enforcement, 93% of the accused abusers were known to the victim. Just over one-third of this number were family members to the victims.

food, an allowance, deciding on her schooling, as well as controlling the time she spends with friends and her outside communications. His position as the father gives him access to Dolores and allows his abuse to continue for years. Without it, he could never have become her Father.

Dolores as Daughter

The role of daughter can be filled by sisters, daughters, granddaughters, stepdaughters, nieces, and others. In Ward's transcribed interviews with Daughters, they present as complex, fully realized individuals. They are victims and survivors of abuse coming to terms with their post-traumatic realities. They express "helplessness," "hope," and "anger-with-nowhere-to-go" (Ward 5). These emotions are visible in Dolores, too, but must be parsed from Humbert's narration which distorts her in ways that serve his own delusions. Despite being the title character, Dolores' real voice is rarely featured. Therefore, to provide a clearer image of her, I synthesize fragments of her identity by drawing on trends and patterns in Daughter's transcripts. An analysis of Dolores that layers victims' experiences with our understanding of her is especially important because she, a twelve-year-old abuse victim, has been mostly subsumed in popular culture by Humbert's nymphet, "Lolita."

Humbert often describes Dolores as none-the-wiser regarding the impropriety of his perversions. His narration is pleading as he attempts to convince the reader (and himself) of her still-intact purity. After an especially disturbing description in which Humbert brings himself to climax with Dolores in his lap, he thinks himself in the clear: "I felt proud of myself. I had stolen the honey of a spasm without impairing the morals of a minor. Absolutely no harm done. [. . .] The child knew nothing. I had done nothing to her" (62). Not only does he feel that he has "protect[ed] the purity" of twelve-year-old Dolores — which he believes clears him of wrongdoing – but he also feels emboldened to consider a "staging" a "repetition of the […] scene."

However, there are many indications in the narration that Dolores is all too aware. Moments after Humbert's "no harm done" climax, she drops from his lap as though ripping herself off him: "Immediately afterward (as if we had been struggling and now my grip had eased) she rolled off the couch and jumped to her feet [. . .] There she stood and blinked, cheeks aflame, hair awry, her eyes passing over me as lightly as they did the furniture [. . .]" (61). While he interprets her state as oblivious, some scholars read her as being flustered, upset, and even aroused. Sarah Herbold, for example, claims that Dolores is not only aroused in this moment, but also "shamelessly complicit – or even in control" of the arrangement of "mutual stimulation" (82).

The mention of the daughter's pleasure in abusive encounters between a Father and Daughter appears across various case studies and victim accounts (Ward 106; 142; 151-153). This pleasure, or even passivity read as pleasure, led many early-to-mid 20th century clinicians and therapists studying father-daughter sexual abuse to claim that the daughters "accept" or even provoke it. Daughters' pleasure is often leveraged to suggest the "mutuality" of these "liaisons" (periods of abuse) and the reason they typically last years (148). Ward notes that early clinicians had considerable influence on the opinions of the public (106-107; 153). In her understanding, these approaches framed victims as "carriers of an innately evil weapon — their own sexuality" and manifested in the treatment of abuse victims as "she-devils in the guise of children" (148). Ward rebuts their thinking by emphasizing the overarching control of the abuser: "That so many 'liaisons' go on for so long […] is certainly a measure of the power of the Father over a Daughter" (148-149).

Humbert's thinking echoes that of the clinicians by portraying Dolores as a sensual, powerful nymphet. Contradicting his assertion of her innocence and purity, he absolves himself of wrongdoing by laying the blame on her supposed inherent sexuality and beauty. His "Lolita" has "a kind of eerie vulgarity" (Nabokov 44) and is "dimly depraved" (92); She is a "fey child" whose every pore breathes "nymphean evil" (125). Her nymphet status is an implicit defense of his perversion as though her sexuality pushed him into the role of father, rather than his own desires and power.

Yet, there are times in the text in which Humbert cannot sustain the illusion that Dolores is his nymphic seductress. In the series of exchanges after Humbert rapes Dolores for the first time, he initially describes as her "seduc[ing]" him (132), but later experiences a feeling of "horror that [he] cannot shake off" (140). Only hours after the rape, Humbert notes a marked change in Dolores' demeanor as they begin a long drive. She withdraws from his attempts at conversation, and Humbert describes her mood as a "queer dullness [that] had replaced her usual cheerfulness" (139). Her discomfort and irritation continue to build, until Dolores berates and threatens him for assaulting her. This transformation in her behavior pushes Humbert into action. Having withheld the news of Charlotte's death from Dolores, he cynically chooses the moment of her accusation to deliver it. Humbert does not describe Dolores' reaction to the news or details of the hours that follow the reveal. He does book them separate rooms for the first time at the hotel that evening, but notes that "in the middle of the night she came sobbing into mine, and we made it up very gently. You see, she had absolutely nowhere else to go" (142).

In this scene, Dolores' resistance is evident, as are the strategies by which Humbert manipulates her into compliance. Humbert's account fails to offer any sense of Dolores' grief at her mother's death, an implicit denial of her utter vulnerability to him. She is isolated and desperate, entrusted to him by her family, society, and the law. She turns to the only adult she knows. He, in turn, projects sexual desire onto her appeal for comfort, "made it up very gently" a clear euphemism for rape. Dolores' resistance to Humbert's sexual advances, her awareness of their wrongness, and his leveraging of her dependence on him to get what he wants sets the precedent for their subsequent dynamic.

This is the true evil of this phenomenon. This is the reason Father-Daughter Rape often lasts for several months or years — not because daughters are seductresses, but because fathers have the power and control to abuse their trust.

The Power of Naming

In the concluding chapter of Father-Daughter Rape, Ward outlines a series of calls to action for social change given the prevalence of Father-Daughter Rape. These actions are mostly directed towards victim's healing and speak to the power of sharing: sharing resources such as support networks or places of refuge; sharing in a collective push for more accessible contraception and sex education; sharing the language and knowledge necessary for victims to recognize the abuse they suffer; sharing memories with other Daughters and Mothers to make them feel less alone in their anger and fear; licensing their confusion by sharing intimate contradictory feelings towards the father such as pleasure, affection, or love (206-213).

However, building such a community depends on the "power of naming" the phenomenon for what it is, Father-Daughter Rape (212). Terms such as incest, pedophilia, and abuse fail to accurately represent the phenomenon in its particular complexity, leaving victims without a targeted framework within which to understand their experience. Bindu Bansinath speaks to power of language in helping lay claim to her experience as a daughter: "I had not mischaracterized [things]. The story I told was neither unreliable nor glamorous, and it didn't belong to him. It was, and is, mine" (Bansinath).

While some have argued that Nabokov's *Lolita* is a harmful text that should be censored out of curriculums, I argue that ignoring the novel represents a lost opportunity to address the misrepresentation of daughters, and to counter social ignorance surrounding father-daughter rape. Silence

benefits no one but the fathers like Humbert, while we should actively be helping daughters like Dolores. Doing so requires grappling with the pervasive reality of father-daughter rape. By framing Humbert and Dolores as father and daughter, I utilize the power of naming to recast a literary classic as a way to instigate a very necessary discussion.

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"Remember Who You Are": *The Lion King* and the Disney Aura

By Adriana Lopez Cajigas

The Lion King has been present in my life for as long as I can remember. My father greatly admires the film and its message. Whenever we rewatched it together, he would quote the line that, in his understanding, was the moral of the story. In the film, Simba, the rightful heir to the great King Mufasa, is exiled from his kingdom when his father is murdered by his evil uncle. In the process, he loses touch with his heritage. In a pivotal scene, Mufasa appears to his son as a constellation in the night sky. "Remember who you are," he says to his son (*The Lion King* 1:06:35-1:07:37). "Remember who you are," my father said to me.

In 2019, Walt Disney released a CG (Computer Generated) photorealistic remake of *The Lion King,* a cel animation classic originally released in 1994. The remake received mixed reviews, as critics struggled to separate it from the original. A.A. Dowd, an *A.V. Club* reviewer, lambasted its director, Jon Favreau, as having "almost no knack for spectacle, and over and over again, he botches scenes that soared in '94." CNET's Abrar Al-Heeti admired the lifelike quality of the animals in the remake but added "there's no need to mess with something so good." The language of these reviews expresses a sense of betrayal and discomfort with the new film. My reaction was no different.

I was especially horrified to see that the remake abandoned the constellation image. Instead of appearing as stars in the sky, Mufasa's presence is suggested by a storm, with lightning only briefly illuminating vague suggestions of his face. I was initially convinced that the removal of the constellation changed the meaning of the remake, rendering it a lesser film. I understood the constellation scene as a simple yet profound expression of undying parent-child love. Its centrality as a symbol of father to son continuity was established earlier in the film when, before his death, Mufasa said to his cub, "Look

at the stars. The great kings of the past look down on us from those stars" (*The Lion King* 25:10-26:00). The constellation suggests Mufasa's eternal presence and his continual guiding role as Simba's father. I couldn't conceive of a version of the film without that crucial symbol.

However, the narrative impact of the change is minimal. Mufasa still appears to Simba and was still part of Simba's life. Regardless, critics and audience members like me felt angry and betrayed. Why is that so? Why did the removal of Mufasa's constellation bother me so much?

Many critics and viewers alike struggled to separate the 2019 remake from the 1994 original, unable to judge the film as a standalone aesthetic experience. However, as I will show, this is a problem of Disney's own making. Walt Disney's nostalgia marketing contributed to the close bond that many viewers like my father and I feel with *The Lion King* from 1994. I will argue that decades of Disney's marketing leading up to the original film created an effect similar to what Walter Benjamin describes as the "aura" of original work of art. In turn, the photorealistic CG remake of 2019 broke with this tradition. Recognizing this tradition, as well as the cultural assumptions on which it relies, allows to isolate a critique of the remake of *The Lion King* on its own terms, not in comparison to the original film. Through this lens, it becomes clear that the key problem with the 2019 film is that the photorealist aesthetic is at odds with its fantastical narrative.

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Walt Disney's nostalgia marketing encouraged viewers to bond with the original 1994 film. Nostalgia is a "sentimental longing for one's past" (Sedikides). Clay Routledge from The Institute for Family Studies argues that most "nostalgic memories involve intimate relationships, especially family" (Routledge). From its inception, the Disney company has used this feeling of nostalgia accompanied with a focus on familial values and relationships to market their films. This all started with their founder, Walter Elias Disney.

Walt Disney came to be known as "the inventor of childhood" (Campbell). Even more revealingly, in terms of Disney's marketing scheme, he was referred to as "Uncle Walt." Walt deliberately cultivated this moniker, asking children on his *Mickey Mouse Club TV* show (1955) to refer to him as such (Hodges). Walt broadcast his avuncular presence into homes through other weekly television programs, such as *Walt Disney's Disneyland* (1954-1958), *Walt Disney Presents* (1958-1961) and *Walt Disney's Wonderful World of Color* (1961-1969). These shows were not only meant to generate additional revenue for the company but to build Uncle Walt's legend and to inform audiences of his various projects. The shows featured clips from his theme park, cartoon shorts, and behind-the-scenes materials (Van Riper). This anthology television made Uncle Walt a staple in the lives of children and adults. His weekly

appearance allowed him to insert himself as a family member, who not only brought stories but aged along with families just as any relative would.

The nineteen feature-length animated films overseen by Uncle Walt during his lifetime have a strong focus on family values. Walt's philosophy was that "the most important thing is the family. If you can keep the family together — and that's the backbone of our whole business, catering to families — that's what we hope to do" (Walt Disney Archives). He wanted the stories of his films to entertain the entire family, stating: "I do not make films primarily for children. I make them for the child in all of us, whether we be six or sixty."

The Walt Disney Company employed nostalgia marketing techniques starting with its first feature length animated film released in America: *Snow White and The Seven Dwarves*. Toys and other Snow White-themed items were sold in stores a year before the film's release to drive up excitement (Pitman). This strategy was not only successful in marketing the film but gave audience members items they could use to remember their viewing. Merchandise was made with the purpose of replicating "the emotional attachment created by their films into physical purchasable consumer products" (Campbell). Uncle Walt died in 1966 having developed and maintained a nostalgia marketing approach for the Walt Disney Company to continue.

The Lion King was a case in point, beginning with an early merchandising strategy. It was released on June 14th, 1994, but merchandise was already on shelves by April. Parks like Disney World held off on selling too early but had to give in to public pressure in May. Retailers reported that after four weeks of the film's release, 90% of their merchandise was sold (Moreau). Only a third of the film's billion-dollar earnings came from box office sales; the rest was merchandise (Brynam 83).

Another crucial element of the nostalgia marketing strategy was to publish material on the creation of The *Lion King* on DVD. Just as Uncle Walt showcased his own work, the DVD's bonus features gave viewers a window into the hard work that went into the making of *The Lion King*. These behind-the-scenes features suggest how carefully the Walt Disney Company followed the strategies of Uncle Walt, perfecting the lucrative tactics of nostalgia marketing.

I argue that this nostalgia is at the heart of what I call the "Disney Aura," an idea that combines Disney's marketing with a concept described by art critic Walter Benjamin in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1935). His essay examines the artistic, political, social, and cultural effects of the mechanical reproduction of original works of art. While the reproduction of art has long been a practice and should not be thought of as a new phenomenon (Benjamin 2), Benjamin is interested in new technologies such as photography and film that allowed for the mass reproduction and consumption of art. To explain the effects such reproductions, have on an original piece of work, Benjamin develops the concept of an "aura."

An aura is the "physical and temporal sensation that emanates from the artwork" (Gill). It is the experience that an original piece of work affects, owing to the singularity of "its presence in time and space" (Benjamin 3). A unique history is embedded in the piece itself, such as its proximity to the artist, the traditions that inspired its creation, the materials available during the time of creation, and its various owners. All these factors make a work original while, by definition, a reproduction lacks them. According to Benjamin, the aura of an original work of art gives it a kind of "cult value" (7). They are priceless, out of reach for all but the richest few, kept safe in museums, to which viewers flock like pilgrims to bask in their presence. Cult value, which gives rise to institutions and rites that speak to an art work's preciousness, further enhances its aura-effect.

The aura of an original artwork is affected by its mechanical reproduction. The countless copies of the piece allow for its mass distribution. The artwork, in the form of duplicates, becomes broadly accessible as it is liberated from the institutions dedicated to its cult value. Copies of the original are suddenly thrust "into situations which would be out of reach of the original itself" (4). On the one hand, mass mechanical reproduction democratizes the artwork: Everyone gets to see its duplicates. On the other hand, the copies cannot manifest the aura of the original. They are removed from its specific presence in time and space: the context, conditions, and history that make the original unique. Rather than cult value, Benjamin imbues mechanical reproductions of artworks with "exhibition value."

While copies of the 1994 *Lion King* are mechanical reproductions of the original imprint and cannot fully fit Benjamin's definition of an original artwork, I argue that Disney's marketing strategies, which invoke the time, space, and tradition out of which the film emerged, are designed to imbue it with a similar quality. This "Disney Aura," as I call it, is a potent mix of nostalgia, Uncle Walt's cult-following, and the conceit of Disney's innovative genius.

Walt Disney was a founding, cutting-edge figure in the field of animation. He improved the field with techniques such as the synchronization of music, sound effects, full Technicolor, and advanced camera techniques (Kaufman). If part of the aura of an original artwork has to do with its historical proximity to great artists, then Walt Disney, the man, has been carefully built into a mythical genius associated with the brilliance of Walt Disney Company films. The first five films he personally oversaw fall into what became known as the Golden Era,[1] suggesting the elevated cult value he is afforded.

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[1] The Disney Eras are useful to situate and analyze Disney films according to the time and technologies available at the time of their creation. The eras began with the 1937 release of Disney's first feature length film, *Snow White*. There are 7 eras as of 2023 (Bell).

Most of the animated films made during Walt's lifetime use two-dimensional cel animation,[2] a style that became the gold standard for Disney films. This is the style used in the original *Lion King*, a film representative of the Walt Disney Company's so-called "Renaissance Era."[3] The original *Lion King* is composed of 119,058 individually hand-colored frames (*The Lion King: Film Notes*). The fact that its style mirrors that of Disney's earlier Golden Era films indicates that its creators deliberately drew on the cult value ascribed to Walt Disney's signature techniques, his direct hand being a key component of the Disney Aura.

In the early years of Disney, consumers only had access to films in cinemas. Watching a Disney film was, for most, an event imbued with the Disney Aura: a singular experience. Advances in technology and the increased prevalence of videocassette players in the 1980s posed a challenge to the cult value of such screenings. The mechanical reproduction of Disney films promised consumers ease of access which could reduce the films to having mere exhibition value.

Recognizing an opportunity to maintain the premium that the Disney Aura afforded their product, the Walt Disney Company deliberately limited consumer access to their films, releasing their films on VHS for limited periods of time only, once every five to seven years. When copies were sold out, Disney declared that the films were going "back into the vault" (Campbell 0:19). This strategy built a sense of urgency into each rerelease and created the impression that they were rare. Parents were prompted to buy them while they had the chance. In addition, each rerelease was imbued with exclusivity through strategic branding of generational "collections," the names of which invoked the genius of Disney's founder, the artistry of the films, and the tradition out of which they emerged. The Walt Disney Classics, The Masterpiece Collection, Gold Classic, among others, lured collectors, and fans with their crafted "authenticity" (Yesterworld Entertainment 10:30).

Later DVD rereleases added value through the inclusion of Bonus Features with "limited edition" content, promising exclusive insights into the making of Disney films (21:10). *The Lion King's* bonus features included footage of voice actors recording performances, animators explaining their creative processes, and writers discussing narrative struggles. Viewers could

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[2] Cel animation requires artists to draw every frame by hand. The initial sketch is laid under and traced onto a transparent celluloid sheet. These outlines are hand painted. A completed celluloid sheet constitutes a single frame. A sequence of hand-sketched, -traced, and -painted sheets denote miniscule shifts in, say, a character's posture or expression may be laid over the same background and photographed. Projected at a speed of 24 frames a second, these images create the illusion of movement (Cel Animation Explained).
[3] "Renaissance" is a French word that translates to "Rebirth." The European Renaissance of the 14th through 16th century marked the "rebirth" of artistic and philosophical obsessions of antiquity.

see the artists' hands at work, creating sketches to be painted and layered in celluloid. In the process, they might learn that movement of characters was dependent on the artistic choices of the animators and director. Andreas Deja, the supervising animator for Scar (Simba's evil uncle), described his process of sketching frames as akin to "giving a performance," more like acting than simply drawing (Behind the Scenes of *The Lion King* 2:50). Conceptualizing the character of Simba's evil uncle Scar, Deja modeled him in part on the physical appearance of Jeremy Irons, the character's voice actor. The bonus features, in other words, connect audiences to the time and space of the film's creation. They put Walt Disney Studio artists at the center of the film's origin story, lauding their creative and technical brilliance which, viewers infer, is embedded in their experience of the film. The artists, carrying on the tradition of Uncle Walt, give the film its humanity and warmth.

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If the Disney Aura survived each of the rebranded rereleases of the 1994 *Lion King*, then the 2019 remake of the film was a step too far for many fans. The remake, departing from the original in production process and aesthetics, more closely resembled a "mechanical reproduction," in so far as it undercut the Disney Aura. As Benjamin put it, a mechanically reproduced artwork is not imbued with cult value because it "detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition" (4).

The most notable discrepancy in the remake is its animation aesthetic. *The Lion King* remake was rendered photo-realistically through computer graphics (CG). Undoubtedly, the 2019 *Lion King* showcased impressive technological advances, an aspect of the creation process foregrounded by the films own behind-the-scenes production material. New motion capture and CG technologies (akin to the photography and film of Benjamin's day) allowed the filmmakers to render the characters and their environment in vastly greater detail than would be allowed by hand-drawn cel animation. For example, *The Lion King* remake used over 100 species of plants for its environment models in order to add depth to the film's stage (*Behind the Scenes Production Material* 7:07). However, this aesthetic represented a drastic departure from the Uncle Walt-inspired playful, two-dimensional aesthetic of the first *Lion King*. While cel animation was imbued with the warmth and humanity of the artists who hand-drew the frames, its replacement with highly automated production processes was a blow to the Disney Aura.

The displeasure of the Disney faithful is, arguably, based on cultural assumptions that often accompany technological advances. The filmmakers used machines to render images that, in cel animation, would have been drawn by hand. This technological intervention in the creation process may, in the eyes of viewers, have lessened the aesthetic achievement of the filmmakers.

Consider, as an analogy, the work of 17th century Dutch painter Johannes Vermeer, who was renowned for his highly detailed, beautiful renderings of everyday scenes. When art historians confirmed that Vermeer had traced images projected onto his canvases by a *camera obscura* (Janson), popular articles declared that "This Incredibly Famous Artist Might Just Have Cheated the Whole World" and "Vermeer Cheated." In the eyes of those who wrote the articles the technological intervention of the camera obscura represented a betrayal, diminishing the artistry of Johannes Vermeer. Arguably, audience members reacted the same way to the 2019 *Lion King* remake. The heavy reliance on advanced technologies to remake such a beloved masterpiece represented a betrayal of the principles that made Walt Disney and his legacy great.

Moreover, the film was one of the first to escape the restrictions of the Disney Vault tradition. Months before *The Lion King* remake's release in October 2019, the Disney Vault program was terminated and replaced with Disney's own streaming service, DisneyPlus. The entire contents of the "vault" would now be available to any viewer at any time (Alexander). Rather than having to wait 5 to 7 years between the initial release and rerelease on VHS or DVD, *The Lion King* remake was available for endless rescreening a few months after it left theaters. The Walt Disney company seemed to have abandoned the idea that its films could maintain their cult value through scarcity of access.

<p style="text-align:center">∗   ∗   ∗</p>

The broad disappointment felt by many when the 2019 *Lion King* was released can be attributed to cracks in the Disney Aura. The film failed to honor the creative and aesthetic traditions that, for many Americans, were a site of deep nostalgia. It is important to note, however, that such criticisms are comparative, dependent on prior viewings of not only the original *Lion King*, but other Disney features, too. This begs the question: is the film successful in its own right? Does it work as a standalone piece of art?

The rare critics who evaluated *The Lion King* remake on its own merits were largely ambivalent. They found the film's technological achievements impressive while also claiming that it made them feel uneasy. David Ehrlic of *The IndieWire,* for example, highlighted *The Lion King's* masterful use of graphics, but felt it could not effectively convey talking animals. *The Guardian's* Mark Kermode expressed similar sentiments: "watching photorealistic recreations of animals speaking and bursting into song is altogether harder to swallow" (Kermode).

Ehrlich referred to the film as a "disastrous plunge into the uncanny valley," invoking a concept invented by Masahiro Mori, a professor at the Tokyo Institute of Technology, to describe uncomfortable encounters with increasingly human-like robots. Mori came up with the term when, shaking the hand of a prosthetic limb, he was startled by the "limp boneless grip together

with […] a texture and coldness.". This inspired his coinage of the phrase (Caballar). The "uncanny valley" describes his simultaneous feelings of familiarity, strangeness, and uneasiness.

Robin Sloane, writing in 2012, criticized the tendency to invoke the "uncanny valley" in relation to photorealistic animation of animals. For him, the term refers only to uncomfortable encounters with human likenesses which he distinguishes from anthropomorphic representations of humans. He argues that audience identification with anthropomorphic animals depends on their suspension of disbelief: They have to buy into the world and characters represented on screen, even if they do not accord with empirical reality. This is not so much a matter of realism as it is of character design and consistency. He uses the original *Lion King* as a prime example, suggesting it tells a powerful human story with skillfully designed animal characters. Because the audience did not expect to see realistic lions "they willfully suspended their disbelief and accepted the characters as they were " (21).

Challenged to tell a fantastical story requiring audiences to suspend their disbelief, animators of the original *Lion King* utilized the 12 Principles of animation developed by Walt Disney and his team.[4] Applied correctly, these principles make for natural and appealing movements, even for highly stylized animated characters (Akkuzhyna 1), imbuing them with their own, unique personalities. In the original *Lion King*, for example, the Principle of Exaggeration was used to emphasize the essence of a character through their physical qualities. The aim is not to distort the object beyond recognition, but to highlight key aspects of its persona (Akkuzhyna 9). Simba's face can thus portray a wide range of human emotions while maintaining the appearance of a lion. So, in the constellation scene, we see Simba cry as his father, Mufasa, speaks to him. His eyes widen as he undergoes the pivotal realization that he must take his father's place in the circle of life. Obviously, lions do not speak in real life nor do their facial expressions align with human emotions, but that is not the point of the original *Lion King*. Given its consistent application of the 12 principles, the audience suspends their disbelief.

The same cannot be said for the remake. In the scene that is the equivalent to 1994s constellation scene, the lions are depicted realistically. Simba's reaction to the presence of Mufasa is visually muddled. His facial expressions are that of a realistic lion and are not emotionally expressive. When Mufasa arrives, his presence is barely insinuated through a storm rather than made

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[4] These 12 principles are: Squash and stretch, Anticipation, Staging, Straight-ahead Action and Pose-to-Pose, Follow Through and Overlapping Action, Slow in and Slow out, Arc, Secondary Action, Timing, Exaggeration, Solid Drawing and Appeal.

explicit in a constellation. Clearly, the aesthetic adopted by the remake did not allow for such fantastical elements as it would jar against the photorealism of its world. Director John Favreau's decision to eliminate the Mufasa constellation (replacing it with a vaguely suggestive storm cloud) is a response to the possibility that it would shock audiences out of their state of suspended disbelief. However, audiences have had their suspended disbelief consistently disrupted by the fact that the animals in *The Lion King* remake speak (an experience Ehrlich describes, incorrectly by Sloane's reasoning, as "uncanny"). The remake's photorealism, in other words, is out of step with the fantastical story it seeks to tell.

Sloan argues that the original *Lion King* successfully captured "the human condition" (21). Even though the 2019 remake offers audiences the same narrative, characters, and songs, its primary interest seems to be the accuracy of its lion portrayal. Even without an original to compare it to, the 2019 *Lion King* cannot overcome the disconnect between its fantastical story and its photorealist aesthetic.

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Looking back at my initial response to the remake, I felt it was a betrayal of the Disney Aura (although I did not then know to call it that). This aura, a combination of nostalgia and admiration for the artistry of the film's makers, was strategically constructed by Uncle Walt and his company. The original Lion King was unforgettable for me: It was a family experience filled with gifts, memories, and park visits. I imbued the original film with the cult value as though it was an original work of art.

Ultimately, the *Lion King* remake felt like a betrayal of the traditions and principles that made Disney so central to my life and that of many others. In the remake, Mufasa still says the same words that my own father repeated to me as the film's central moral: "Remember who you are." Perhaps the problem is that Disney forgot who it was. It forgot that its success was grounded in nostalgia and tradition, rather than technological innovation. In doing so, it shattered its own aura.

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Rehumanizing the War in Vietnam: Propaganda Art and the Northern Perspective

By Tuyen Le

      In 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower declared a global crisis. Communism was on the march in Asia, and without U.S. intervention its increasing influence would threaten democracy everywhere. Eisenhower described the threat in accordance with a "Domino Theory:" the fall of French Indochina to the Vietnamese communist rebels would inevitably lead to the fall of all of Southeast Asia to communism. This supposed inevitability was used to justify escalation and intervention with the ostensible aim of "protecting the free world."

      What began as a civil war was thus recast as a focal point of a global clash between the forces of communism and democracy. In the process, the nuances that drove Vietnam to war with itself, as well as the narratives of the Vietnamese people became lost. Cold War era scholarship regarding the War in Vietnam framed the conflict in terms of global political narratives, military capability and strategy, and competing economic systems. What was largely excluded is the constellation of cultural, psychological, and historical nuances that shaped the experience of Vietnamese people. In the eyes of the West, the nation of Vietnam was reduced to proxy Cold War combatants, split between malevolent communist adversaries in the North and democratic allies in the South.

      While the truth was not as simple, such scholarship continues to inflect the general public understanding of the War. To rehumanize the people of Vietnam requires that we step out of the imperialist, ethnocentric framing by which U.S. intervention was justified. More than players in a global conflict, it is necessary to understand the Vietnamese people in their specificity, as cultural and political agents in their own right, with individual consciousness and motivations. To demonstrate this approach, my research looks to

understand the history of the Vietnam War, not as a debate between East and West, but in terms of the conversations Vietnamese people were having with each other. I will analyze propaganda posters circulated from 1945 to 1985 by the Northern government and the Viet Cong among the citizenry, to uncover marginalized narratives deeply rooted in the culture and history of the Vietnamese people. In the process, I will challenge the conventional American framing of the Vietnam War, exposing it as an oversimplification of a complex constellation of nationalism, anti-colonial feeling and, at heart, the will to survive.

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Propaganda art played a significant role in mobilizing Vietnamese citizens against Japanese (1940-1945) and French occupation (1887-1954). Of the 127 issues of The Việt Nam Độc lập (Vietnam Independence) (D. Nguyen), a newspaper founded by Hồ Chí Minh in the early 1940s to promote Vietnamese revolution against Japan and France, 23 issues included illustrations considered to be political propaganda. The majority of the 221 artifacts collected by the Vietnam National Museum of History from 1946-1954 consists of artwork promoting anti-invader movements, strong military-civilian relationships, and positive images of national figures (D. Nguyen). The art movement's success led Hồ Chí Minh to support the development of the medium for the purposes of communicating government and social ideas to citizens who were largely rural and illiterate (A Revolutionary Spirit). Following the division of Vietnam, propaganda art became a crucial tool to promote the goal of reunification.

The First Indochina War (1945-1954) was fought in an effort to liberate Vietnam from French colonial control. It ended in the stalemate of the Geneva Conference, which split Vietnam into two territories separated by a demilitarized zone. The Accords sent Hồ Chí Minh and communist forces to the North and all anti-communist military to the South, creating two sides that were ideologically polarized ("Vietnam and French Colonialism"). In the wake of the Accords, Northern propaganda art turned toward the project of maintaining the unity of North and South Vietnam in the consciousness of the citizenry. "The Dogma Collection," a private archive in Hồ Chí Minh City, contains propaganda art from 1945-1985 that focused heavily on the idea of southern liberation and Vietnamese reunification. Even as Vietnam was split in two, propaganda art allowed its people to imagine a unified nation.

The success of this project is evinced in the resolve of the North Vietnamese people and combatants during the War in Vietnam (1963-1975), especially considering the suffering they underwent in the name of unification. Already depleted and scarred by famine and the war against the French and Japanese occupations, North Vietnam weathered one million tons of U.S.

bombs, often dropped indiscriminately on villages, schools, and hospitals. Airstrikes damaged over 70 percent of Northern industries, cutting resources in half, destroying roads and railways ("The War's Effect on the Vietnamese Land and People"). The North Vietnamese were at a disadvantage in size and strength, but their tenacity was evidenced in their tireless pursuit of national unity. For the nearly 20 years the North and South were divided, soldiers and citizens risked their lives to fight in a war that, by all appearances, seemed irrational and unwinnable.

Paul C. Stern theorizes such determination in his article, "Why Do People Sacrifice for Their Nations?" He builds on political scientist Benedict Anderson's definition of nations as "imagined communities." These communities are "imagined" because, even though citizens will never meet the majority of their compatriots, they share an illusorily deep (socially-constructed) sense of community and solidarity (Anderson 5-6). In times of war, the imagined community may compete with other communal formations for loyalty. Nationalism often requires that citizens put aside self-interest and loyalties to other groups, even those to which they have deep, emotional ties. Stern suggests that leaders can elicit irrational levels of national altruism by convincing members that the connections they share through national identity are not just socially-constructed, but primordial (Stern 229).

One of the ways by which leaders can construct the nation as an object of primordial attachment is through the development and exploitation of "direct emotional ties to the nation and its symbol" (Stern 229). By investing in collective events, such as parades and national holidays, leaders can classically condition the public to respond positively to national symbols.

Fig. 1. Unknown artist. *Không có gì quý hơn độc lập, tự do.* The Private Dogma Collection 1945-1985. Translation: "There is Nothing More Valuable than Independence and Freedom."

Within propaganda art of the War-in-Vietnam-era (1963-1975), this classical conditioning occurs via the inclusion of national symbols in conjunction with positive ideologies. "There is Nothing" (Fig. 1) is a poster created during the War in Vietnam, although the precise time of its distribution is uncertain. It foregrounds a woman in profile, holding the bayonetted barrel of a rifle. In the top right corner, there is a picture of Hồ Chí Minh, and below him the text of his famous proclamation, "Không có gì quý hơn độc lập, tự do" ("There is nothing more valuable than independence and freedom"). A red lotus flower is pictured at the center of the image, behind the text and the bayonet blade.

As the North Vietnamese leader, depictions of Hồ Chí Minh often stand in place of the communist government and the North as a whole. North Vietnamese propaganda that references freedom, strength, victory, or other positive sentiments almost always contain images of either Hồ Chí Minh or the national flag. The association of national iconography with positive messaging suggest that the government and these ideas are one in the same.

The lotus is the national flower of Vietnam and represents optimism. Lotuses typically grow in dark swamps and must break through the muddy water to bloom. Their ability to blossom in unfavorable conditions led the Vietnamese to view the flower as a symbol of persevering and determination (A. Nguyen). This attitude came to define the Vietnamese people's strong fighting spirit, represented in the poster by the armed woman. In addition, the lotus is a recognizable Buddhist symbol, which would resonate with the majority Buddhist Vietnamese population, suggesting the extent to which nation is deeply intertwined with their culture and religion.

Many of the conventional associations at work in War-in-Vietnam-era propaganda art grew out of preceding conflicts and were repurposed in the cause of Hồ Chí Minh's unification project. The prior resonance of these conventions deepened the impact of propaganda art on the Vietnamese people.

Hồ Chí Minh's rise to prominence in the era of Japanese occupation (1940-1945), established the nationalist associations that public art movements would later depict. Japan co-occupied French Indochina after France's defeat in 1940 with promises to liberate the Vietnamese people from French imperialism. However, rather than eliminate the colonizers, Japan seized control of almost all internal government operations and drained Vietnam of resources to fund the Japanese WWII campaign (My-Van 135-145). This Japanese betrayal clarified for many Vietnamese people that no foreign powers would ever prioritize the interests of their nation. The Vietnamese could only rely on themselves to achieve liberation (145).

These circumstances proved fertile ground for Hồ Chí Minh's eventual popularity. Amidst the resultant chaos from Japan and France's power transition in Indochina, the Việt Minh League under Hồ Chí Minh began launching guerilla attacks on both French and Japanese forces. As Japanese power de-

clined towards the end of WWII, Hồ took advantage, organizing a large-scale insurgency that liberated large portions of North Vietnam (142-144), "Vietnam and French Colonialism"). His success shaped the public perception that the Việt Minh and Hồ were the solution to the nation's rising anti-colonial feelings.

When Japan surrendered to the Allies, Hồ Chí Minh gave his famous "Declaration of Vietnamese Independence" speech which further entrenched his image in the national consciousness. Northern propaganda was effective because Hồ Chí Minh and the Việt Minh had fulfilled their liberatory promise. Their success engendered hope and joy which, in the eyes of the Vietnamese people, were directly associated with the Việt Minh and Hồ Chí Minh. Propaganda art of the War-in-Vietnam-era thus reinforced (rather than invented) the correlation between nation and positive values.

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The North's propaganda art spoke to Vietnamese identity that had set itself up in opposition to foreign occupiers even before the French and Japanese. This history was invoked by the propaganda art's portrayal of a "foreign" threat. As Stern points out, national altruism can be elicited by explaining "current events in terms of remembered experiences" (Stern 230). The "foreignness" of American troops was therefore used to call to mind the centuries of Vietnamese resistance to imperialism.

This strategic framing of the war perfectly aligned with the history and identity of the Vietnamese people. Vietnam was first colonized by China in 111 BCE, only about 100 years after the beginning of the country's recorded history, when China expanded South and conquered Nan Yue, a region encompassing North Vietnam and the southeast region of modern-day China (Osborne et al, "Vietnam-Timeline of Historical Periods"). During their occupation, the Chinese government attempted to assimilate the Vietnamese people to secure Chinese influence and rule.

Chinese colonization greatly shaped Vietnamese sensibilities. While full assimilation never occurred, many Chinese traditions were adopted by native Vietnamese, the continuous practice of which established them as fundamental to Vietnamese culture. As importantly, however, more than a millennium of continuous rebellion against Chinese occupation instilled resistance as characteristic of Vietnamese national identity: "China failed to assimilate the Vietnamese, who retained their ethnic singularity despite their receptivity to Chinese innovations [...] Over the centuries, they would repeatedly challenge Chinese domination. And that hostility entered their historic consciousness" (Karnow 111)

Many pieces of propaganda art from the North Vietnamese government were effective not because they espoused pro-communist ideas, but because

they displayed hostility to foreign imperialists. They framed America as the enemy, allowing them to maintain the idea of a unified Vietnam by projecting the conflict between the North and South onto an invading foreign threat. Indeed, Northern propaganda art never portrayed the South as the enemy. Instead, America was represented as the cause of all their problems.

Fig. 2. Unknown artist. *Dân tộc khổ đau là vì ai?* The Private Dogma Collection 1945-1985. Translation: "The People Suffer Because of Who?"

"The People Suffer" (Fig. 2) depicts a man holding a cane and cigar wearing a long coat. His top hat contains the word "Mĩ," which translates to "America." Even without the label, the man's attire resembles that of Uncle Sam, a popular symbol of the United States. His leashed dog wears traditional Vietnamese clothing and is named "Diệm," referring to Ngô Đình Diệm, the American-backed President of South Vietnam at that time. A sign behind them identifies the path they are on as the "road against the country," portraying the popular sentiment among the North Vietnamese that Diệm was put in power and controlled by the United States.

This sentiment was justified, given the role America had assumed in the region. Following the Geneva Conference, the U.S. feared that the referendum planned for 1956 to decide the leadership of Vietnam would lead to Hồ Chí Minh's victory and a communist takeover. To combat this outcome, they sent economic and military support to the Southern government then ruled by Diệm (Osborne et al.). Diệm announced his refusal to participate in the referendum on July 16, 1955, arguing that the Accords represented the desires of the North's communist government, rather than the populace: "We are not bound in any way by these agreements, signed against the will of the Vietnamese people" ("Ngo Dinh Diem on National Elections,1955").

But Diệm was deeply corrupt. He staffed his government with family members and suppressed rights, persecuting South Vietnamese Buddhists and banned the display of religious flags. He met the consequent protests with disproportionate violence. Diệm's forces sprayed the public with tear gas, poured battery acid on the heads of Buddhists, and killed protestors. Under the guise of anti-communist action, Diệm committed numerous human rights violations, killing not only communists and suspected sympathizers, but also South Vietnamese citizens ("Ngo Dinh Diem").

The Vietnamese people suffered significantly under Ngô Đình Diệm's rule, and with the diminished influence of the French, America was soon blamed for the corruption and policy failures of the Southern government (Chapman 676). The North's propaganda art quickly exploited the failures of Diệm's U.S.-backed leadership to fuel an anti-American narrative. Diệm assassination in 1963 did not assuage this narrative, especially when Lyndon B. Johnson escalated the American presence in the South after the 1964 Gulf of Tokin incident. This sequence reinforced the idea that America had used Diệm to prevent the election (Hồ 197-199), that the Southern people were victims of their alliance and needed to be freed from U.S. imperialism. This was the logic by which the North's propaganda mobilized the people to fight.

Even though Diệm represents the Southern government in the propaganda art (Fig. 2), he is not to be confused with the South Vietnamese people. The clothing the dog wears is a reference to the traditional formal attire in which he was often pictured. On this regard, it does suggest that Diệm wants to be seen as Vietnamese: Traditional clothing acts as a signifier of identity. But in Diệm's case, his Vietnamese-ness is in appearance only. He is a leashed dog following a foreign invader. Notwithstanding his own terrible human rights violations, Diệm did not uphold a tradition that is constitutive of Vietnamese identity: He failed to resist.

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Beyond a shared tradition of resistance, Northern propaganda art appealed to the most basic of human connections. Paul Stern describes a third method of mobilizing nationalism: "A national identity can also 'win' a contest of altruisms by tying itself symbolically to the groups to which people have the strongest and most primordial ties: family and community" (Stern 230).

This method is evident in the frequent use of kinship rhetoric in reference to the Vietnamese nation. Propaganda posters regularly refer to "our people", "our brothers and sisters", and "our homeland." For example, "Resolutely Defend the Homeland" (Fig. 3), suggests that the nation is more than just a community of unknown individuals, but a place of familiarity. While the language of the poster clearly establishes the connection between nation and family, the kinship metaphor is also manifest in its visual representations.

Fig. 3. — Unknown artist. *Kiên quyết bảo vệ quê hương. Chống Mĩ cứu nước.* The Private Dogma Collection 1945-1985. Translation: "Resolutely Defend the Homeland. Resist America, Save the Country."

During the 20th century, South Vietnam adopted many Western fashion trends. The attire of Southern Vietnamese women, especially in urbanized areas like Saigon, was often indistinguishable from the clothing of American women in the 1960s (Bui). Yet the majority of propaganda posters during the time depicted characters wearing traditional Vietnamese attire. In "Resolutely Defend Our Homeland," a woman aims her rifle wearing an áo bà ba, a simple shirt worn by farmers in the rice paddies of the Mekong Delta. The clothes worn by the two men in the background also mark them as farmers. They aim weapons at a U.S. aircraft from a boat.

Northern propaganda art often did not depict Vietnamese forces in military uniforms or combat gear, even when fighting. They wore common attire such as scarves and straw hats. By depicting these soldiers as ordinary people fighting in the familiar countryside and villages of Vietnam, the Northern government was able to orient the conflict around the common Vietnamese peasantry and the working class. Unlike in America where there was a disconnect between political military goals and the demands of citizens, this type of imagery produced strong military-civilian relationships that united the front lines and the domestic work force under one goal of liberation.

The traditional clothing also distinguished the Vietnamese fighters from their foreign adversaries. Their clothes called to mind a people unaffected by Western influence and thereby framed the war as a fight for Vietnamese ethnicity and identity against corrupting foreign invaders. This ethnicity and identity were the basis of the strong ties that, in the face of foreign aggres-

sion, hoped to unify a theoretically "imagined" and physically split national community. More than an abstract concept, the nation was dependent on the continued sacrifice of people that resembled neighbors and family.

The usage of both rhetorical and visual metaphors of kinship symbolically equates the nation to family and community (Stern 230). These bonds were greater than the division sewn by the Geneva Accords. North Vietnam refused to see the separation of the country as creating two distinct Vietnamese identities. Those in the South were no less recognizably Vietnamese than those in the North. Southern liberation was therefore equivalent to national liberation.

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Analyzing propaganda art through the lens of Stern's understanding of altruistic nationalism offers insight into the conversations Hồ Chí Minh and the Northern government were having with everyday Vietnamese people, as well as their effectiveness in directing national sentiment towards goals of liberation. Doing so makes clear that the tendency of Western historians to frame the conflict in ideological terms can only ever tell part of the story. Historiographical approaches that conceive of North Vietnamese people merely in opposition to American values strips them of their humanity. Although the conversations between propaganda art and the people played a limited role in a complex conflict, they provide a window to the rich associations — positive feelings towards government, a culture of resistance, and a love of community — that appealed to ordinary Vietnamese men and women.

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Si No Sanas Hoy, Sanarás Mañana: *Curanderismo* and Healthcare for Undocumented Mexican Immigrants

By Adolfo Salazar Mendoza

Sana, sana, colita de rana. Si no sanas hoy, sanarás mañana. [Heal, heal, little frog's tail. If you don't heal today, you'll heal tomorrow]
— Spanish rhyme sang by Latin American guardians to comfort sick children.

The rooms are different. One is sterile, muted, and cold. The other is adorned with familiar and vibrant colors. Most undocumented Mexican immigrants (UMIs) in need of medical care do not have the luxury of choosing the former, thereby sacrificing on the advances of modern biomedicine. They are more likely to resort to the latter, seeking advice from a *curandero*[1] – a healer well-versed in their culture. *Curanderismo*, or Mexican folk medicine, represents more than an alternative to biomedical health care, it is a place of homecoming, of comfort, and — given a more holistic understanding of treatment which looks beyond the biological body – of healing. However, allopathic[2] medicine has historically disregarded *curanderismo*.

This article argues, given the centrality of *curanderismo* in the Mexican undocumented immigrant experience, this disregard represents a missed opportunity to provide care for an underserved community. And, in order to

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[1] For the purposes of this research, *curandero* (male) and *curandera* (female) will be used interchangeably as a political stance against the gendered, Spanish language. If the gender of a particular practitioner is important, this will be noted.
[2] Science-based modern medicine.

begin this conversation, curanderismo needs to be understood and respected in its complexity. Hybrid medicinal knowledge and adaptive healing practices allow curanderos to view illness beyond a single pathogenic cause or discrete set of symptoms. Their practices may be characterized in terms of a constellation in which the body is but one estrella (star). Their remedies take into account and draw on various other estrellas such as the patient's emotional, mental, social, and spiritual well-being, weaving them together into a comprehensive treatment plan.

"Dirty, Lousey, Destitute Mexicans"

To understand the allopathic disregard for curanderismo, as well as the skepticism of UMIs toward the health care system, it is useful to place them against the backdrop of American conceptions of Brown Mexican bodies. For all of America's willingness to benefit from the labor of undocumented immigrants, it programmatically reviles Mexican bodies.

Although American conceptions of Mexican personhood, or the lack thereof, have a longer history, the mass influx of Mexican labor was kickstarted by the United States' decision to abandon its neutral stance and send its citizens to Europe in World War I. This left many vital job openings, increasing the demand for manual laborers in agriculture, mining, and railroads ("Depression and the Struggle for Survival"). With the promise of stability from the chaos of the Mexican Revolution and better wages, America successfully recruited Mexican citizens.

The influx of Mexican immigrants soon rattled southern white communities, encouraging politicians like Tom Lea, the white mayor of El Paso, to paint them as a threat. Fearmongering to gain political clout, he ran on a platform of purifying the city of foreign contagion. Lea was obsessed with "cleanliness." The pretext of an imminent typhus outbreak was used to disdain the Brown bodies of immigrants as "dirty, lousey, destitute Mexicans" (Romo 233).

Lea orchestrated inspections of homes in predominantly Mexican neighborhoods, forcing occupants "to take [...] vinegar and kerosene bath[s], have their heads shaven and their clothing burned" (Slater). In one inspection at the El Paso jail, the kerosene in which inmates were being forced to bathe caught alight, claiming the lives of 27 people, the majority of whom were Mexican and Mexican-American (Romo 226). Similar practices were widespread. According to David Dorado Romo, author of *Ringside Seat to a Revolution*, Mexicans traveling daily to the United States would have their clothes fumigated with Zyklon B, the same chemical later concentrated by Nazi scientists to murder millions of Jewish people (Romo 244).

During WWII, again to counteract the deployment of citizen laborers to the warfront, the U.S. requested that the Mexican government allow its citizens to work in America. The Bracero Program, as it was known, was established in 1942. Colloquially, *bracero* translates to "laborer," but the Spanish derivation of the word "brazo," meaning "arm," suggests the ways in which laborers are

conceived of purely in terms of their productivity: They are working arms, detached from their torsos, bodies, and humanity. Their sole purpose was to work the jobs left vacant by American citizens at war.

Fig. 1. Braceros being inspected before being sprayed with pesticides, ca. 1942. Courtesy of Carlos Marentes, Proyecto Bracero Archives, Centro de Trabajadores Agricolas Fronterizos, El Paso.

The braceros were not dignified with decent wages or proper work conditions. They, too, were probed and "disinfected" at the border. This time, they were sprayed with dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT), a toxic pesticide that would later be banned from use because of its devastating environmental impact. Given such mistreatment, union groups, civil rights activists, and religious leaders called for an end to the program, which was terminated on December 31, 1964.
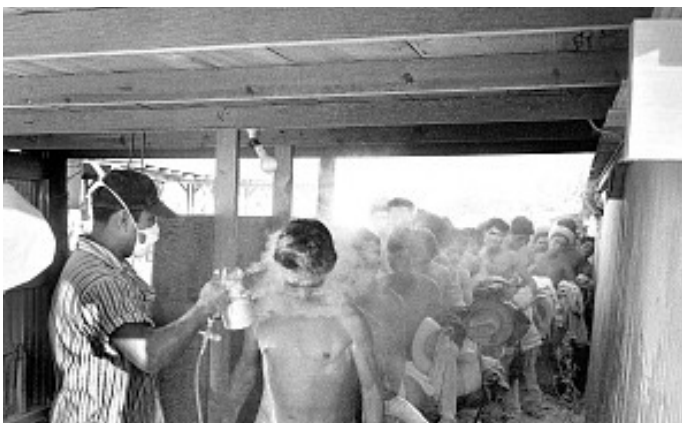

Fig. 2 Fumigation of contract Mexican laborers with the pesticide DDT in Hidalgo, Texas, in 1956. Leonard Nadel, Courtesy National Museum of American History.

This history evidences the notion that immigrant bodies represent a contagious threat to a "healthy" America. Laborers were subjected to chemical "disinfection" (read poisoning) at the behest of the biomedical doctors who inspected them upon entry to the United States (see Fig. 1 and 2). One effect of such mistreatment is a skepticism among undocumented immigrants towards Occidental medicine. Also apparent, is the assumption by many American doctors of that era that the cultural conventions and health care practices of Mexican immigrants are ineffective (otherwise, why the need for fumigation?). This, at least in part, is the historical background to the undocumented immigrant tendency to seek treatment from curanderos whose practices are often disregarded by Western medicine.

Flexible Curanderismo

Contrary to this view, *curanderismo* has a profound historical legacy and can impart abundant wisdom. The term refers to traditional healing arts with Mexican and Latin American indigenous roots. It derives from the Spanish verb *curar*, which means "to cure." As an umbrella term, curanderismo can refer to the practices of different types of traditional healers: *parteras* (midwives)], *sobadores* (healing masseuses), and *yerberos* (herbalists) to name a few. However, the appellation refers specifically to those practices that incorporate both the physical and spiritual. Therefore, while all curanderos are healers, not all healers are curanderos.

Traditionally, Mexican healers have multiple areas of expertise: they could, for example, be parteras, yerberas, and curanderas. This is because they are not beholden to the Western scientific tendency to parse the body into various systems. Whereas a neurosurgeon specializes in the nervous system and a gastroenterologist in gut health, in traditional healing practices these systems are not believed to operate in isolation from each other. This ethos extends beyond the body, too. Whereas Western medicine tends to treat the physical body without engaging the patient's spiritual health, curanderismo does not so readily dichotomize these aspects of wellbeing (Holland; Kiev). Their lack of specialization, however, should not be confused with ignorance: curanderos are expected to undergo extensive training under the watchful eyes of their elders who expose them to herbal medicine, rituals, and spiritual knowledge.

The efficacy of curanderismo as a constellation of healing practices is addressed by scholar of religion Brett Hendrickson in *Border Medicine*. Hendrickson argues that even "…non-Mexican American people have been and can be healed by the flexible and multifaceted modalities of curanderismo" (Hedrickson XI). There are four overarching factors he attributes to the flexibility and transcultural potential of curanderismo as a healing practice: eclecticism, spiritualism, empiricism, and an emphasis on community. Eclecticism refers to the diverse historical and contemporary cultures reflected in curan-

derismo (to be discussed later). The ability to incorporate and adapt healing practices speaks to curanderismo's capacity to improvise remedies for individuals from diverse backgrounds. Such improvisations are not an abandonment of the conventions but are reliant on the empirical knowledge of its practitioners. For Hendrickson, spiritualism and community are the connective tissue that cohere curanderismo.

Hendrickson's account of curanderismo alludes towards the constellation analogy established earlier. Building on his account and in order to analyze core elements of curanderismo, we might usefully engage Chicana artist Carmen Lomas Garza's painting, *Barriendo de Susto* (*Sweeping of Scare*) (1986). In doing so, this article will posit that curanderismo's capacity to constellate estrellas into treatment plans is anchored in four foundational principles: syncretism and tailoring; mind-body-spirit connection; community and reintegration; and cultural medicine.

A Susto and a Limpia

Fig. 3. Garza Lomas, Carmen. *Barriendo de Susto*, 1986.

Garza's works detail her childhood experiences growing up in a Mexican family in the United States. She writes and illustrates children's books, and her approachable paintings reflect a sense of nostalgia. *Barriendo de Susto* (Fig. 3) uses vibrant color to showcase the vitality of a curanderismo ritual as it is practiced within the community. A woman lies on a white sheet, with red candles at each of the four corners, and a copal incense burner at her feet. She is surrounded by members of the community. An image of the Virgin de Guadalupe hangs on the wall. The window is open, and a boy sits outside.

Notably, Garza sets the ritual in the full light of day and within the ordinary confines of a bedroom. This is contrary to stereotypical depictions of

indigenous practices as mysterious, dark, even occultic. As such, the smoke from the copal incense does not fill the room, making the atmosphere hazy, and clouding the viewer's perspective. The smoke parallels the cleanliness of the white sheet and the starched white collar of the curandera who holds a broom over the supine patient. While the domestic setting is clearly distinct from a biomedical clinic, Garza bathes the scene in familiarity rather than strangeness. Relative to the comfort of the bedroom, it is the clinic that seems foreign.

Garza illustrates intimate facets of curanderismo. She centers a common practice: a *barrida* (sweeping) or a *limpia* (cleansing) by which the negative effects of a traumatic experience are expelled. In curanderismo, traumas, also known as sustos (scares), are believed to fracture the soul. The curandera, then, addresses the patient's mental and spiritual aspect in order to restore physical harmony. Garza represents the limpia in media res. The process culminates with the patient being covered by a blanket. The curandera recites the Apostles' Creed thrice while performing full head-to-toe sweeping gestures. Between recitations, she whispers into the patient's ear, asking the fractured soul to reconcile itself. The patient responds with "I am coming" (Trotter and Chavira 90-91).

On the one hand, the barrida plays an important role in healing the individual body and soul. As Hendrickson writes, "[D]uring or after this procedure, especially if the diagnosed problem is susto, or soul loss, the healer will often admonish the person's soul to be restored to the body, thus recreating wholeness and wellness" (Hendrickson 79). On the other hand, the *barrida* takes on deep communal resonances for the UMI community, given their collective subjection to systemic discrimination. UMIs live in a state of hypervigilance, under threat by governmental and civilian organizations that consider them "illegal" and "aliens." The limpia serves as a site of cultural retreat and protection from this vicious atmosphere. Patrisia Gonzales, author of *Red Medicine*, suggests limpias have the power to dispel the lie of inferiority racist narratives impose on undocumented immigrants: "Limpias provide coherence between nature and culture (Mesa-Bains 1993) and can contest the [seemingly] coherent [myths] sustained through violence and domination. In [her] own practice, limpias […] can elicit powerful spiritual and emotional relief" (Gonzales 226). Gonzales implies limpias serve as a form of resistance, and they counterbalance oppression that seeks to control and dominate the psyches of UMIs.

Curanderismo's Liminality

Although some view curanderismo as deriving solely from the Aztecs, it draws on more diverse cultures and healing modalities. The conquistadors brought medical understanding infused with Hippocratic[3] and Roman approaches combined with Arab medicine introduced during the Moor in-

vasion from 711 CE to 1492 CE (Trotter and Chavira 28). The conquest of Central and South America resulted in mutual influences between Spanish and indigenous healing practices. Curanderismo is a syncretic system of healing incorporating methods from various cultures and traditions, even if they seem contradictory. As I will show, these superficial conflicts are marks of cultural flexibility, allowing curanderas to draw on a range of healing modalities to tailor their practices to individual patients.

The greatest Spanish influence on curanderismo would go on to form its most prominent foundation: Christianity. We see this reflected in Garza's painting through the figure of the Virgin Guadalupe, the kneeling women praying with rosaries in hand, and the Christian cross above the bed accompanied by the decorative stellar crosses on the wall. It is through Christian beliefs and teachings that a curandero's don [gift of healing] is established. Curandera's might draw on Old Testament descriptions regarding the healing properties of plants and animal products (Ezekiel 47.12; Luke 13.15), but many see the Holy Spirit as the medium by which they are emboldened to heal (1 Cor. 12). This view, however, is contested. Religious purists have demonized curanderismo, claiming that the ambiguity of the curanderos' healing sources means they are best described as false prophets (Burns; Hinojosa). Indeed, the influence of occult systems such as witchcraft and divination are evident in the work of many curanderos.

The simultaneous Christian and occultist underpinnings of curanderismo might appear contradictory. However, curanderismo uses such seemingly contradictory philosophies to its benefit. Witchcraft, for example, operates under the belief that human rituals can influence supernatural forces to produce favorable outcomes. In this sense, witchcraft and natural sciences have similar goals. Both deploy their respective methods — grimoires and laboratory manuals, potions and chemical solutions, rituals and scientific procedures – in hopes of controlling often unseen forces to better our worldly circumstances. By contrast, Christianity tends to be more subservient to the natural world, ascribing suffering to the will of God.

Curanderismo draws inspiration from these opposed worldviews, reconciling them in the name of pragmatism. The moral implications — the contest between "good" and "evil" — do not have bearing on their healing practices. Or rather, the unquestionable good of curing illness and alleviating suffering justifies methods that, in the eyes of religious purists, are "evil."

We will return to Curanderismo's holistic approach — its inclusion of the mind and spirit in its treatment plans — in the next section (Estrellas at

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[3] Medical practice and philosophy attributed to the Greek physician, Hippocrates, who lived from 460-370 BCE.

Work). More immediately, it is worth noting that it does not neglect the physical wellbeing of patients. Indeed, as with their religious syncretism, *curanderas* make use of every available resource, often referring patients to allopathic care if it is necessary and feasible to their patients. Unfortunately, feasibility depends on financial resources many UMIs lack. As a result, they often forego routine preventative care or allow minor conditions to exacerbate into significant crises (Akincigil et al). Curanderismo provides healing at drastically lower prices, without the threat of discriminatory institutions.

A willingness to refer patients to allopathic medicine should not be seen as a denial of curanderismo's efficacy as a modality suited for physical healing. Herbal medicine derived from the Mexican indigenous peoples is a major component of *curanderismo* (Kay). Many plants were circulated among natives for their chemical properties long before modern science verified their benefits (Panet al). These herbs are integrated into the curandera's rituals. The broom in the *barrida*, for example, is interchangeable with a bundle of herbs like yerba anis, or the Mexican Tarragon (*Tagetes lucida*).[4] This herb is used for stomach pains, lack of appetite, lethargy, and irritability. These symptoms, according to allopathic medicine, align with depression, a diagnosis considered taboo in Mexican and Mexican American culture (Martinez). The curandera, however, is fluent in the societal language — she diagnoses sustos and undertakes a limpia to reconcile the fractured soul — while also remedying the physical symptoms in a culturally appropriate manner.

Curanderismo, as a syncretic approach, is at ease between Christianity and the occult, between Spanish and Indigenous medicine, and between the physical and the spiritual. This accommodating capacity is a source of its resilience. In addition, its navigation of liminal spaces is emblematic of its appeal to undocumented immigrants who find themselves caught between countries, languages, cultures, and healing modalities. They are Ni de aquí ni de allá (neither from here nor there), a sentiment expressed by the title of a 1988 film in which an undocumented protagonist is chased by both Mexican assassins and U.S. immigration officials. Rather than having two homes, many undocumented immigrants truly have none. Mexico no longer feels like home, and America is

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[4] As studied by ethnopharmacologists, yerba anis possess antidepressant-like properties, and in contrast to antidepressants given in the U.S., low libido or a decrease in motor activity are not side effects — even at varying doses (Guadarrama-Cruz et al. 2008).

unwelcoming to Black and Brown bodies, never mind those of undocu-mented immigrants. Curanderismo offers them a home away from home, wherever that may be.

Estrellas at Work

Western medicine often overlooks how cultural context plays a role in a patient's healing process. In *Curanderismo: Mexican American Folk Healing,* Robert Trotter II and Juan Chavira, argue that the "best way practitioners can successfully treat the whole person is to understand the social frame-work that surrounds his [or her] biological illness" (Trotter and Chavi-ra 41). The authors call for an integrated holistic approach to treatment. Arguably, allopathic health care is increasingly culturally sensitive and conscientious about mental health, a step in the right direction. However, the culture of medical specialization means their treatment of patients tends towards the piecemeal rather than holistic. Complex medical refer-ral systems might suggest a centralized database, but patients experience shuttling between doctors, repeating their description of symptoms, be-ing repeated tested like specimen, leaving them overwhelmed. With re-gard to mental health, the centralized database may contain information regarding psychiatric prescriptions, but psychologist and therapists do not typically communicate with general practitioners.

Unquestionably, millions of lives have been saved and improved by the developments and methods of allopathic medicine. Ironically, its in-sistence on efficiency limits its efficacy. It is highly organized, fast, and impersonal. One sometimes imagines they would prefer their patients to line up like McDonald's customers in the drive through lane. The high de-mand for medical services and proliferation of administrative duties leave health care professionals with punishing schedules. Rarely can physicians spend enough time with patients to fill in the gaps on their treatment charts. Such time is necessary for them to cohere a holistic view, given the discrete impressions of various colleagues in other specialties. Without an understanding of the their circumstances and culture, patients remain fragmented.

Curanderismo prioritizes the cultural and personal aspects conven-tional medicine struggles to integrate. This is not to suggest that its meth-ods lack rigor. Its systematic approach is evident in the ways it classifies illnesses and tailors its treatments to address the patient holistically, as a constellation of estrellas, rather than discrete symptoms manifested by different physiological systems.

Curanderismo distinguishes illnesses in accordance with their caus-es. A "natural cause" is one a curanderos treats using herbs administered in a series of sessions, or refers to allopathic doctors. "Natural causes," in

other words, align with physiological illnesses. However, a malady can also have "supernatural causes." These can only be treated by curanderas because of their deep knowledge of the social and moral origins of the illness, a function of the patient's cultural context.

Curanderismo's holistic approach to various estrellas that constellate in the patient is evident in Garza's painting. Curanderismo understands the importance of a patient's cultural beliefs in its design of treatment plans. The copal incense in Garza's portrayal of the barrida is an example of cultural medicine. The physiological effects of the copal smoke are well-documented: Aside from the anti-inflammatory and anti-microbial effects, copal smoke produces anti-anxiety effects (Díaz-Ruiz et al.; Romero-Estrada et al.; Merali et al). But the smoke's hypnotic upward dance in Garza's painting tells another story. The smoke has a distinctive woody, earthy scent with zesty citrus hints dancing in the background. Mexican cultures are not monolithic, and yet the scent is common in Mexico. Some immigrants to the United States might find it deeply resonant, whether their home culture uses copal incense to purify, worship, clean, smudge,[5] decorate, protect, or heal (Altamirano; Martinez; Olivier). The patient's comfort is not just a function of the chemicals inhaled. They are at peace because they feel deeply connected to their cultural origins.

A patient's spiritual connection is another estrella curanderos consider. The Catholic roots of curanderismo help it to connect with its predominantly Mexican clientele, most of whom are Catholic, have Catholic connections, or find comfort in certain saints or religious figures. In Garza's painting, pictures of family members are illuminated by a burning candle, possibly an ex-voto[6] for the Virgen de Guadalupe. Prayer, a spiritual rite, is prominent in the image. Two women are portrayed on their knees in conversation with the Virgen Mary through the prayer of the rosary.[7]

Another estrella recognized by curanderismo is family and community, the importance to any patient of those closest to them. In Garza's painting, the barrida is clearly a communal affair. Various generations are represented. The women in prayer are of different ages (one young, the

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[5] An act that involves the burning of herbs and using the smoke to energetically cleanse a space, object, or living organism. It is a sacred and religious ritual mostly practiced by the Indigenous peoples of America.
[6] Votive offering to a Christian figure as an act of fulfilling a vow, expressing gratitude, or demonstrating devotion.
[7] Traditional Catholic prayer that involves reciting different sets of prayers while reflecting on the life of Jesus Christ and asking for the Holy Mother's intercession.

other middle-aged), a man stands in the foreground, and a young boy sits outside, visible through the screen door. Critically, the community portrayed in Garza's painting is characterized by an ethos of non-judgmentalism and acceptance. The healer is a woman, a curandera, an elevated position that, until recently, was not open to women in Western medicine. She is supported by other women, kneeling, prayerful, suggesting curanderismo as a place that offers solidarity outside the patriarchal mainstream. This is affirmed by the presence of the disabled man, diminished in the eyes of a patriarchal society that associates able-bodiedness with masculinity, but welcomed among the community of healers. As Rivera points out, curanderismo has become a haven for the LGBTQIA+ community, the obese, and other disenfranchised groups (1:13:20).

Curanderismo's treatment plans address these, and other *estrellas*, that constitute the patient-as-constellation. It is premised on the patient's complex physiological, spiritual, and cultural constitution. As such, treatment does not simply end when symptoms do. Rather, curanderismo plays an integral role in the patient's continued wellbeing, a sort of post-procedure preventative care. Ari Kiev, the writer of *Curanderismo; Mexican American Folk Psychiatry,* points out the long-term nature of curandero-patient relationships, and how this serves as a treatment in itself. Healing "is not merely the result of the doctor-patient relationship but is instead a form of social reintegration through socially recognized methods. Mexican folk medicine thus plays a dual role, for it is designed to maintain the continuity of society as a functioning whole as well to reintegrate individuals into the community" (20). This reintegration process is key to curanderismo's effectiveness. If a patient's illness has cultural or spiritual causes, it is inherently logical the curandero would help them navigate their own social and religious milieus. Curanderos thereby serve to guide their patients back to their communities.

Holistic Healing in a Brutal World

It would be contradictory to say each treatment plan addresses the same estrellas in the same way since curanderas' approaches differ from patient to patient. Yet, there are certain estrellas in the curanderismo framework of healing that resurface frequently due to the common biological and emotional needs. Garza portrays these estrellas in her painting, showing that limpias incorporate the mind, body, and soul. These are the foundations of curanderismo's integral approach to holistic medicine, capitalizing on their interconnectedness to provide healing. Modern health care could benefit from curanderismo's integral approach perspective. To be clear, I am not advocating that curanderismo be practiced in hospitals or clinics. The ethical implications are too great. However, it is

important that allopathic medicine reconsider its views of curanderismo. Western medical institutions have generally failed to acknowledge alternative medicine. When they do, they often pluck out practices deemed "useful.". This maintains divisions between allopathic and alternative medicine, depriving patients of the benefits of potential collaboration.

Curanderas provide physical and emotional comfort, profoundly important medicine for people who suffer marginalization in a strange land. America's exploitation of UMIs continues to have adverse effects on their bodies, minds, and souls. In the context of this history, Garza's portrayal of the limpia could take on a new significance. The curandera and her community cleanse the patient of an illness America has brought into her body. Mexican bodies do not infect America. Instead, it is America that infects undocumented Mexican bodies with injurious rhetoric and cruel work conditions. The copal smoke, the community, and determined sweeping motions of the curandera return the patient to the innocence of home, cleansing her as a baptism does.

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Islam on Disability: Physical and Metaphorical Blindness

By Zainab Tafish

We have set constellations up in the sky
and made it beautiful for all to see.
— (Quran 15.16)

As the world's second largest and the fastest growing religion Islam plays an important role in the lives of a significant portion of the global population (Lipka and Hackett). As such, it is important to understand and discuss the Islamic perspective on disability and to analyze the depictions of disability in Islamic religious text.[1] In this article, I posit that while the Quran at times deploys disability as a symbol of spiritual degradation, discussions of the lived experiences of disabled people in foundational Islamic texts suggest an Islamic worldview that prizes the diversity disabled people bring to their communities.

The majority of scholarship dedicated to the subject takes a broad view, framing disability in general in the Quran (Bazna and Hatab), contextualizing disability within Islamic cultural conceptions (Al-Aoufi et al), or historicizing disability in the medieval Arab world (Richardson). This leaves a gap in scholarship when it comes to placing disability studies into conversation with core Islamic beliefs. There is also a lack of discussion regarding specific disabilities, as well as the negative meta-

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[1] The major denominations in Islam are the Sunni and Shia branches, which are similar in many regards but differ in beliefs on the succession of Islamic leadership and certain religious practice (Esposito 2003, 292). Given that the Sunni branch vastly outnumbers the Shia, most scholarship on Islam and disability has been undertaken through a Sunni lens. This is the scholarship on which I will draw.

phorical usages of disability in the Quran. Overall, prior scholarly work in this arena remains sparse and lacks specificity.

The Quran does not mention disability or health conditions very frequently.[2] However, blindness holds a unique place as it is portrayed as both a metaphorical and physical condition. Analyzing various examples from the Quran and drawing on Islamic beliefs and philosophies, I will develop a framework for an Islamic perspective on disability.[3]

Of the various disabilities discussed in the Quran (including leprosy, deafness, muteness, and deformity) blindness is the most prevalent (Richardson 22). It is referenced in no less than 47 verses. However, the majority of mentions of blindness are to metaphorical blindness of the "heart" or "soul." Disabilities that impede the senses such as deafness, blindness, and muteness are frequently used as metaphors for spiritual ignorance or a disconnection from God, with blindness being the most commonly used. The Quran repeatedly uses metaphorical blindness in conjunction with muteness, deafness, or both, to describe the ignorance of disbelievers. For example, in the second surah, disbelievers are described as saying "We believe," in the company of believers, "but when they are alone with their evil ones, they say, 'We're really with you [the evil ones]; we were only mocking [them; the believers]'" (2.14). Later, the disbelievers are described as "Deaf, dumb, and blind — so they will not return to the right path" (2.18).[4] There are many reiterations of the phrase "deaf, dumb and blind" to describe those who are disbelievers, hypocrites, or evil. Indeed, in Arabic, the phrase is "summum bukmun 'umyun" with a meter and internal rhyme that suggests it might be used as an idiom.

There are also verses where only blindness is used to describe disbelievers —blindness acting as a metaphor for those who refuse guidance, with sight representing spiritual illumination. For example, 10.43 states,

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[2] The primary religious sources in Islam include the Quran and Hadith. The Quran is believed to be the word of God transmitted to the Prophet Mohammad by the angel Gabriel. It is split up into 114 chapters, called *surah*, plural *suwar*, which in turn are divided into verses, called *ayat,* plural *ayat.* The Quran is written in Arabic, and I will use the Oxford English translation. Following the Quran, Hadith are the second major source for Islamic law and knowledge. *Hadith* are narrations about the prophet passed down through a chain of narrators and include things he has said and did. Canonical Hadith have gone through a thorough vetting process by Islamic scholars to ensure their authenticity (Brown 3-4)

[3] There is no encompassing term for disability in the Quran. Condition-specific Arabic terms such as *'a'ma'* for blind, *'summ'* for the deaf, or *'baras'* for leprosy are used instead; the term *'marda'* is also used, which refers to the sick but not necessarily the disabled (Bazna and Hatab 5-6).

[4] The term "dumb" is used by the Oxford English Translation to refer to the condition of muteness. My use of it here is meant to maintain the integrity of the translation. However, I recognize and do not condone the offensive nature of the word.

"Some [disbelievers] look at you: but can you guide the blind if they will not see?" Guiding the spiritually ignorant to righteousness is compared to directing people who are blind. Spiritual blindness is equated with the choice to ignore the truth. Other verses reinforce the idea of this deliberate choice, in contrast to physical blindness over which people have no control, so, 7.64 describes the spiritually ignorant as "willfully blind." As I will show, the concept of the willfully blind becomes important in later suwar that describe their Resurrection.[5]

Sometimes, the Quran juxtaposes the spiritually blind to the seeing. So ,Prophet Mohammed and Muslims reading the text are asked "Is a blind person like one who can see?" (6.50). Questions like this are reiterated throughout the text. It asks, for example, "Are the blind and seeing equal?" (35.19); an inquiry seemingly answered in a later surah: "The blind and the sighted are not equal, just as those who believe and do good works and those who do evil are not equal …" (40.58). In this formulation, blindness and sight are equated to evil and good, respectively.

At first glance, blindness as a metaphor for a lack of faith has worrying implications for both the status and treatment of blind individuals or individuals with other disabilities of the senses. But to reveal the whole picture, we must look at all the factors that contribute to the Islamic perspective on disability. The Quran makes clear that this symbolic spiritual blindness is not tied to an earthly physical condition. Rather, the spiritually blind will be rendered physically blind in the afterlife. In the 17th surah, it is written that "Those who were blind in this life will be blind in the Hereafter …" (17.3). The confusion of those who must now live their spiritual blindness physically is addressed later: "We shall bring him [the disbeliever] blind to the Assembly on the Day of Resurrection and he will say, 'Lord, why did You bring me here blind? I was sighted before!'" (20.124).

These resurrection ayat show that there is a clear distinction between the use of blindness as a metaphor for the spiritually ignorant and earthly physical blindness. God's divorce of the physical state and the metaphysical soul becomes evident in the usage of blindness as a metaphor. Here, then we have an answer to the question of inequality raised by 35.19. When faith in God is used as the metric that raises the status

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[5] In Islam it is believed that on the Day of Judgment people will be resurrected and then judged by God for their actions during life (Berjak 27).

of one individual over another, it can be assumed that the inequality ascribed to the metaphorically seeing and blind speaks to the quality of their faith. It does not, however suggest that people who are physically blind in their earthly lives are of lower status than people who are sighted.

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By themselves, multiple iterations of the blindness metaphor do not provide sufficient information to contextualize the status of disability in Islam. Rather, we must also discuss the religious depiction of actual blindness and then contextualize them within core beliefs and philosophies of Islam. To do so, we are left with four ayat that mention physical blindness and the 80th surah, "He Frowned," which describes an encounter between the prophet and a physically blind man.

Physical blindness is first mentioned in 3.49 in the context of a miraculous healing. Jesus (who is a prophet in Islamic scripture) lists the miracles he can perform: "I will heal the blind and the leper and bring the dead back to life with God's permission." In 5.110 God reminds Jesus of his blessings to him, "Remember My favour to you and to your mother … how, by My leave, you healed the blind person." Here, curing blindness is a miracle made possible by God. The question this raises, given God's almighty power, is why physical blindness exists at all.

Physical blindness, and other disabilities, are described as pretexts for exceptions from certain Islamic laws. In 24.61, disabled people are absolved of blame they might be assigned for being burdensome:

No blame will be attached to the blind, the lame, the sick. Whether you eat in your own houses, or those of your fathers, your mothers, your brothers, your sisters, your paternal uncles, your paternal aunts, your maternal uncles, your maternal aunts, houses you have the keys for, or any of your friends' houses, you will not be blamed: You will not be blamed whether you eat in company or separately.

Rather than placing the responsibility on people who are disabled, the community is held responsible.

48.17, in turn, releases people who are disabled from fighting in wars for God's cause, which is generally a requirement for believers: "The blind, the lame, and the sick will not be blamed. God will admit anyone who obeys Him and His Messenger to Gardens graced with flowing streams". More than pretexts for exceptions, the fact of the inclusion of these ayat in the Quran means they are commands from God.

The exceptions are Islamic Laws. They serve to accommodate disabled people for limitations in fulfilling religious duties that would otherwise be required for a devout Muslim.

The Quranic chapter, "He Frowned," or "Abasa" in Arabic, which describes a negative interaction between Prophet Mohammed and a blind man, provides the most significant engagement with a physical disability in the Quran. In the chapter, God reprimands the Prophet for his disregard of a blind man. In an editorial note, the translator of the text, Abdel Haleem, provides the context. The Prophet was speaking to the elite men of Mecca, hoping to convert them to Islam when a blind Muslim man approached him with a religious query. The Prophet, "frowned and turned away" (80.1). God reproaches the Prophet for prioritizing the disbelievers over the blind Muslim man seeking to learn. The blind man, "… might have grown in spirit, or taken note of something useful to him." (80.3-4). God tells the prophet that he is not responsible for the ignorance of the "disbelievers" but that he is responsible for the spiritual growth of "one who has come to you full of eagerness and awe" (80:8-10). The chapter concludes with the proclamation that "This is a lesson from which those who wish to be taught should learn" (80.11-12).

The chapter has many implications for the status and rights of Muslims with disabilities. In their article "Disability in the Qur'an: The Islamic Alternative to Defining, Viewing, and Relating to Disability" Bazna and Hatab suggest that "Abasa" indicates "The value of a sincere seeker of God, even though weak and/or disabled, is more than that of one who is heedless of God, no matter how wealthy or powerful" (13). Accordingly, they have a right to be treated equally, to be educated, to be included within society, and should not be underestimated because of their disability (Al-Aoufi et al. 211). This interpretation is supported by the Islamic belief that God's judgment of an individual is divorced from their physical body.

One of the major factors that shapes the Islamic perspective on disability is the concept of submission. The word "Islam" means specifically submission to God and his will (206). In practice, this means obeying the commandments of God in the Quran. It also means an acceptance of that which God has willed: Whether that be wealth or poverty, hardship or ease, sickness or health. This principal pillar of submission affects the way Muslims interact with people and the world, including their view on disability.

One of the fundamental building blocks of the Islamic faith is the belief in preordination,[7] or the divine decree. This is the belief that everything that God wills to happen will happen (212). Belief in the divine decree is one of the root beliefs in Islam and is one of the six articles of faith that every Muslim is required to believe.[8] Belief in the divine decree also requires faith in God's divine wisdom and plan (212). Preordination directly ties into the Islamic philosophy of submission to God. Hence, an individual's disability is an act of God that falls under His divine wisdom and plan and thus must be accepted.

Another important belief that impacts the Islamic perspective on disability is the notion that no one can be punished for the actions of others. In fact, Islam does not share the Christian idea of an inherited original sin. Sinfulness is not a hereditary state of being, but the result of actions that go against the commands of God (Esposito 2016, 27). This distinguishes Islam from cultures or religions that believe that a child's disabilities could, for example, be divine punishment for the sins of a parent (Al-Aoufi et al. 214-215). This is contrary to the Islamic perspective. In the Quran it is written that "no soul shall bear the burden of another" (53.28).

Physical ability or disability is irrelevant to the Quran's view of human perfection which, I argue, is a moral state of being. The Quran says that God created humans "in the finest state" (95.4) but that "thereafter We reduce him to the lowest of low — except those who believe and do good deeds" (95.4-6). In other words, all people have the same "finest" starting point, but only those who do good deeds will maintain their perfection. Others will be "reduced." The meaning of "reduction" is arguable: reduction from Heaven to the Earth, reduction to Hell after death, or a moral reduction on Earth due to one's sins. Regardless, humans can keep (or regain) their "finest state." The implication is that in God's eyes, perfection of the human state is divorced from the human physical body. "The finest state" refers to the metaphysical soul: any human, regardless of their physical ability, can rise again to perfection through their actions and faith in God (Bazna and Hatab 11-12). Moreover, according to a Hadith from the collection of Sahih Muslim, the prophet stated, "Allah does

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[7] In Islamic tradition the term for divine providence is *Al-Qada' wa'l-Qadar*, which translates directly to the decree and the measure (Parrott). Divine providence and preordination have historically been highly discussed topics among Muslim scholars especially in regards to their implications on free will. See Parrot for more information on the Muslim relationship with the concepts of preordination.

[8] These include belief in Allah, His messengers, His books, Al Ghaib (angels, jinn,etc…), resurrection on the Day of Judgment and the belief in the divine decree.

not look at your figures, nor at your attire, but He looks at your hearts [and deeds]" (ibn al-Hajjaj, 2564c). As Bazna and Hatab argue, these verses show the "the concepts of perfection and imperfection in the physical sense ... have little application in the Islamic view of human life" (12).

But the Quran does not simply dismiss disability as irrelevant to spirituality. Instead, it portrays disability as a fundamental avenue for human understanding. The Quranic attitude towards difference is compelling: "O humanity! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may 'get to' know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you .…" (49.12-13). Just as God placed the constellations up in the sky, making it beautiful for all to see, his creation of differences among humans is also both intentional and purposeful. Scholars interpret this verse as an injunction to the whole of humankind to avoid and fight prejudice due to perceived differences (Ala-Maududi). The verse starts by reminding humanity of their common origin: whether they share common ancestors or not (Adam and Hawwa), they were certainly conceived by a man and a woman. Thereafter, the verse speaks to the diversity of the human race as willed by God so that different groups of people could get to know and learn from each other. Ultimately, however, for all their diversity, all humans are held to the same moral and spiritual standard. In this Muslim worldview, disability is just another aspect of human diversity — an important one, given the enormous number of people who are disabled and the diversity of disabilities (Couser 96). Disabled people offer opportunities for Muslims to celebrate the diversity of God's creation but also to recognize shared origins and inherent equality in the eyes of God.

A final foundational belief of Islam is that life is a test meant to decide a person's position in al-akhira, or the Hereafter. Belief in the Hereafter is one of the six articles of faith Muslims must believe (Berjak 27). Between a Muslim's earthly life and al-akhira, the latter is believed to be the more significant and deserving of greater focus. The earthly life is seen as divine test – an Ibtila' in Arabic, by which one's afterlife is decided. This frames the Islamic view of suffering. Suffering is one way God ascertains the faith of an individual. He favors those who do not stray in times of hardship.[9] Patiently enduring a disability is enough to guarantee someone a place in heaven.

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[9] Health, wealth, and happiness are also tests which the faithful pass by attributing such blessings to God.

This also put pressure on Muslims to utilize their earthly lives to please God with a view to a blessed Hereafter. A popular opinion among Muslim scholars is that the faithful must view suffering as an opportunity to grow spiritually, and to perform good deeds (Rouzati 47). It also purifies the soul and brings Muslims closer to heaven. In the Sahih Al-Bukhari collection of Hadith, the Prophet is reported to have said that "[n]o fatigue, nor disease, nor sorrow, nor sadness, nor hurt, nor distress befalls a Muslim, even if it were the prick he receives from a thorn, but that Allah expiates some of his sins for that "(Al-Bukhari 5641-2). In fact, one of the Hadith in the Riyad as-Salhin collection speaks specifically to disability, and blindness in particular. The prophet is reported to have proclaimed that "Allah, the Glorious and Exalted said: 'When I afflict my slave in his two dear things (i.e., his eyes), and he endures patiently, I shall compensate him for them with Jannah" (An-Nawawi 34).[10]

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All of the beliefs and philosophies described above come together to provide a framework for the Islamic perspective on disability. The submission to God's divine will means that Muslims must respect the disabilities of those around them and must accept their own disabilities. The belief in the "ideal [moral] state" of human beings requires that people refrain from using the physical body to measure a person's worth. Islam also dictates that people learn about each other's differences while recognizing that humans are fundamentally connected and inherently equal in the eyes of God. The Islamic view on suffering and the belief in the hereafter means that disability can be viewed as a test and that remaining patient and accepting the challenges of one's disability can pave the way to heaven.

The major beliefs and philosophies of Islam come together to clarify a humane image of the disability in Islam. Disabilities are morally neutral in Islam (Bazna and Hatab 24). They are neither a punishment nor a blessing from God. They are a way to expiate moral imperfection, rather than imperfections in and of themselves. They should be viewed as a fact of human diversity. Disabled Muslims are stars in God's constellation, part of the beauty of His creation.

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[10] Jannah is the Arabic word for heaven. Meant to be the eternal resting place of good doers and believers.

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Beyond Tut-Mania: Contextualizing Pharaoh Tutankhamun's Iron Dagger

By Skyler Houser

The discovery of Pharaoh Tutankhamun's tomb by archaeologist Howard Carter in 1922 set off a phenomenon known as "Tut-mania." Around the world, people went crazy for everything relating to Pharaoh Tutankhamun and his "fabulous treasure" (Wilkinson 17). Carter's discovery brought media and public interest to ancient Egypt, and a popular idea of the Pharaoh to the modern psyche, albeit often overdramatized and misconceived. The golden treasure and unusual artifacts energized the imagination of the world. Stories of the tomb discovery emphasized the visual splendor: the dazzle of gold and wealth of decoration that greeted Carter when he opened the door.

The broader public was more interested in this wealth than they were in the culture of Pharaoh Tutankhamun's day. In this regard, perhaps the richest object in Tut's sarcophagus was made not of gold, but of a seemingly humbler material. In the tomb, lying atop the pharaoh's mummy were two finely decorated daggers, one of gold and one of a material very rare in that time, only recently determined to be iron (Comelli 1302). The iron dagger's handle was finely decorated with an ornate golden sheath, showing a "floral lily motif" and a feather pattern. While the iron dagger is certainly a beautiful item, its significance goes far beyond its decorative qualities, and beyond that of other iron objects found in the tomb, like chisels and further ritual items. Understanding the symbolic and physical attributes of Tutankhamun's dagger reveals that, to the Pharaoh, the accessory was divine in every aspect.

To understand the dagger, we must understand Tutankhamun's role in his changing world. Ancient Egyptian civilization endured for millennia, maintaining a complex theological system throughout. Its history is divided into three main periods: the Old Kingdom period from around 2686-2125 BCE, the Middle Kingdom period from around 2055-1650 BCE, and the New

Kingdom period from around 1550-1069 BCE (Teeter xv-xvi). The years in between these periods are considered intermediate periods, marking times without a central government, most often due to incursions and war (Teeter xvi). Each of the kingdoms was marked by specific lines of royal families, or dynasties, with specific pharaohs characterizing the period. The New Kingdom's most famous pharaoh, Tutankhamun, reigned during the first half of that period.

For most of the Old and Middle Kingdom periods, the Egyptians believed in many gods who affected the natural world but dwelled in the afterlife. This myriad of gods was led by Ra, the sun god. While many cults following specific Egyptian and foreign gods existed throughout Egypt's history, the state religion at the start of the New Kingdom Period followed Amun-Ra, a combination between the sun and the creator deity. In the New Kingdom, Pharaoh Amenhotep IV introduced a change to this ancient framework. He replaced Amun with Aten, declaring Aten-Ra the sole god. He changed his name to Akhenaten, making himself the son and sole earthly communicator with Aten (187). The monotheistic reform was sudden and may have lasted only briefly after Akhenaten's death (184). His son, Tutankhaten meaning "living image of Aten," returned Egypt to polytheistic beliefs centered around Amun-Ra and signaled his rejection of his father's monotheism by changing his name to Tutankhamun meaning "living image of Amun."

Tutankhamun's shift back to polytheistic worship erased the pharaoh's status as sole communicator with the god. Instead, like earlier pharaohs, he was considered a "semidivine ruler" (Teeter 33). The iron dagger found in Tut's tomb signified the pharaoh's elevation to godly status and signaled the protection of the pharaoh's body. It likely represented the knife of Isis mentioned in *The Book of the Dead*, a book reserved for the funeral ceremony of pharaohs during the Old Kingdom (though later used for non-royals as well) (Allen 1). A reliable translation of *The Book of the Dead* refers to the knife as "the hand of Isis" and the "decapitating sword of Isis" (Faulkner 123-124). Using her knife to protect Amun-Ra in his nightly journey through the underworld and punishing the guilty souls in his path, Isis was a protective and "punitive goddess wielding a knife" (Gad 117). She further used her power to be "the protection of [the pharaoh's] body" (Faulkner 155). Isis needed her knife to survive and to protect other gods – and pharaohs.

Pharaohs were believed to join the gods in heaven after death (Teeter 33). In *The Pyramid Texts*, a series of "rituals and magical spells" were written on tombs in ancient Egyptian pyramids, and pharaohs were described as ascending to heaven and becoming like the gods: "She has lifted him to the sky ... among the akh [spirit] gods ... [the pharaoh] shall see [how they become akh] and he will become akh in the same way" (Allen 1, 186). Sim-

ilarly, the king's likeness was compared to a god's likeness: "Raise yourself on your metal bones and your golden limbs. This body of yours belongs to a god" (327). The king was even believed to be immortal like the gods, as his body "cannot end" and "cannot decay." In *The Book of the Dead*, the dead pharaoh is imagined to speak in the first-person, "I do as [the gods] do … I live on what [the gods] live on" (Faulkner 124). Far from decaying and dying, in the afterlife, the pharaoh became a full-fledged god. Thus, the dagger in his tomb symbolized both the protection of the gods and the newfound protection Tutankhamun would wield in the afterlife.

The dagger would also serve to preserve Tutankhamun's spiritual integrity. Ancient Egyptians believed that humans consisted of three primary parts: their physical body and two essences of their being, called the *ka* and *ba*. The ka brought life into the body. It was the energy of being alive, as compared to a corpse (Allen 7). After death, the ka returned immediately to its creators, the gods. The ba is comparable to the Western idea of the soul. It carries the memories and personality of the human being. The ba had to find its way to the ka to become an "effective" spiritual entity, called an *akh*, capable of eternal life like the gods. In the afterlife, Egyptians believed that the akh had to struggle to survive and must therefore be well-equipped to fight. Tutankhamun's iron dagger was likely a protective knife to assist his ba in safely finding his ka and becoming an akh.

Further exploring the dagger's symbolic value, its physical composition plays a significant role in ancient Egyptian religion. Tut's dagger was created from a material believed to be divine: meteoritic iron. While the dagger's precise origin is not yet fully known, scientists are certain that the dagger does have meteoritic origins. Using x-ray fluorescence spectrometry (XRF), a non-destructive chemical analysis that determines the amount and type of elements in a substance, scientists determined the exact percentage of each element in the iron blade. The high nickel content of the dagger's blade, composing about 12.8% of the iron blade's weight, "cannot normally have a terrestrial origin" (Broschat, et al. 31). According to findings by Broschat et al., the iron could have originated from the Kamil meteorite in the Southwest of Egypt, finding similar nickel and cobalt levels in the iron blade as those in the Kamil meteorite (31). Comelli and associates found that the dagger's chemical composition had similar, though reduced, levels of nickel compared to the Kharga meteorite in the Northwest of modern-day Egypt, citing it as an unlikely, but possible source of iron for the dagger (1307).

Interestingly, ancient Egyptian diplomatic documents indicate that the iron dagger was a gift sent to Egyptian royalty by foreign powers. Records show that King Tushratta of Mitanni sent several iron items to Pharaoh Amenhotep III not long before Tutankhamun's reign began. The Egyptians were detailed record keepers, particularly in the royal houses, and among these iron gift items were described as "daggers with iron blades and a gilded iron hand

bracelet" (1303). Amenhotep III is thought to be Tutankhamun's grandfather, and therefore could have passed the dagger to his grandson. However, there is no way to be certain that the dagger would have been passed down and that Tut's iron dagger was the same as his grandfather's.

The origin of the artifact has long been contested, but from the beginning it was suspected to be from outside the kingdom. Howard Carter's comment on the appearance of both the iron and gold dagger, that "both daggers … are foreign in shape," could support the hypothesis that the daggers originated in Mitanni (qtd. in Broschat, et al. 32). The style of fabrication of both daggers is not typical of contemporaneous Egyptian technology, but according to Petschel, "stimuli were again and again adopted from the area extending between the Near east and the Mediterranean" (32). The dagger could have been created by ancient Egyptians who merely adopted foreign methods of production.

Regardless of the exact provenance of the iron, the fact that the dagger is made of meteoritic iron — material coming directly from the sky — reflects its divine status. The sky played an important role as the land of the gods and was revered as such. In *The Book of the Dead*, Faulkner translates a description of the heavens as "the firmament on which the gods stand" (Faulkner 123). Therefore, anything in the sky or derived from the sky was innately divine. "The Destruction of Mankind," a story in a collection likely originating from the Middle Kingdom and later recorded in New Kingdom hieroglyphs, describes the wrath of the gods at human treason. This tale was inscribed in several New Kingdom's pharaohs' tombs, including in Tutankhamun's (Lichtheim Vol 2 198). The first part of the tale describes the wrath and punishment of the gods upon humanity, as well as the salvation brought by Ra, saving the rest of mankind from one god's ultimate destruction. The second part of the tale recounts Ra returning to the sky and letting the other gods rule the heavens and the earth (199). Ra was one of the earliest gods, the sun god, who dwelt only in the sky kingdom.

The sky itself was a god. Art from Thebes depicts the goddess Nut as a woman, her body stretched like a bridge above the earth (Teeter 11). Nut's torso is the sky, a star-studded abdomen, forming a bridge with her feet touching land in the West and her hands touching land in the East. The sun-disc, Ra, was reborn from Nut's womb each day, and had to traverse its way across her abdomen by the evening, swallowed by her mouth which signaled nightfall. Darkness was caused by Ra passing through Nut's torso (12). Without the goddess Nut, the sun, which is necessary for sustaining life, could not pass through the sky each day. The Egyptian gods were vital to sustaining the daily tasks of life, as they were the bringers and sustainers of life on Earth and life after death. A rock, or meteorite, falling from Nut towards Earth would have been an unusual and divine occurrence.

In the New Kingdom, ancient Egyptians used the term *bia-en-pet* to refer to meteoritic iron. This term, written as the N41 hieroglyph, is variously translated as "iron of heaven" or "iron of the sky," and with the alternate translation of bia as "marvel," could also be translated as "marvel of the sky" (Bjorkman 114; Comelli, et al. 1307; Wainwright 11). The Egyptians' recognition of the "marvelousness" of the material and recognition of its origins from the sky signify that the dagger's iron blade was likely held in great esteem and revered as a special item reserved for a pharaoh.

In James Allen's translation of one significant pharaonic afterlife spell in *The Pyramid Texts*, the king's divine messengers go "to the sky" ahead of him to warn the gods of his arrival so that the king may "sit … on the chair of metal at which the gods marvel" (Allen 275). Samuel Mercer's earlier translation of the chair's description refers to the "chair of metal" as "throne of copper (or iron)" (1992). Almansa-Villatoro tries to make sense of these differing translations of the N41 hieroglyph. She rejects Allen's translation by distinguishing between the hieroglyph he translates as "metal" and another he translates as "gold" in a passage that refers to the gods' "metal bones" and "golden limbs" (Allen 327). She suggests this indicates that the N41 hieroglyph is meant to designate a more specific substance than metal in general (Almansa-Villatoro 75). As Egyptians had no reason to believe that bronze came from the sky, she argues, the hieroglyph refers specifically to a "chair of iron" (74). She argues that the hieroglyph necessarily refers to "iron." In light of this, this paper will henceforth substitute "[iron]" for "metal" in translations by James Allen referring to the sky.

Another mention of an iron throne in the sky comes earlier in *The Pyramid Texts*. The recitation describes the king's reverence and power, stating that "he will remain in the sky like a mountain" and "sit on his [iron] chair, his [iron] baton in his arm" (Allen 186). Besides the iron throne and baton, the sky itself was often described as composed entirely of iron. The Pyramid Texts recount that "[the pharaoh] will acquire the sky and split open its [iron],"[1] demonstrating how "iron is … belonging to the sky" (Allen 45; Almansa-Villatoro 75). Since the dagger was composed of heavenly, or meteoritic, iron, it originated from a divine location and was worthy only of someone god-like: a pharaoh.

Not only was the gods' dwelling place, the sky, believed to be composed of iron, so were their bodies. The ancient Egyptians knew iron as the "bones

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[1] Allen translates this passage as "Unis will acquire the sky and split open its basin" (45). In Almansa-Villatoro's article, she translates the same passage (PT 257) as "Unis acquires the sky and splits its bia-en-pet" (75). Because Almansa-Villatoro identifies the final word of the passage as the N41 hieroglyph, "basin" in Allen's translation can be replaced with "[iron]" as in his other uses of the hieroglyph.

of Seth," god of storm and "Lord of metals" (El-Mahdy 60). The Pyramid Texts mention an "[iron] Striker," used in funeral rituals, made from "the [iron] that came from Seth" (Allen 252). In a later incantation, several protective gods of the deceased "opened [the pharaoh's] mouth with their [iron] fingers" to give the dead pharaoh life (267). In all the above passages, iron was only associated with divinity. While ancient Egyptians valued certain substances, they built their significance by combining them with others. On Tutankhamun's sarcophagus, gold and lapis lazuli were used together to identify the Pharaoh as a god, for Ra had skin of gold and hair of lapis lazuli (Lichtheim Vol 2 198). The godlike pharaoh had "[iron] bones" and "golden limbs" (Allen 327). An iron dagger would have been fit only for a king.

Meteoritic phenomena, too, were associated with the gods. In "The Tale of a Shipwrecked Soldier," a divine serpent describes the destruction associated with meteors falling to Earth. The serpent's eyebrows were "of real lapis lazuli" and his body was coated in gold, like a god (Lichtheim Vol 1 212). The combination of lapis lazuli and gold identified the serpent as divine (just as Tutankhamun's gold and lapis lazuli funeral mask elevated him to god-like status after death). In the story, the snake explained that his fellow serpents went "up in flames" after a star fell on them, and he found them in a "heap of corpses" (213).

As a semidivine ruler, the pharaoh had a distinctive connection to meteors. He was referred to as Seshed, a special name for the pharaoh, meaning "shooting star." In a poem inscription on a stela in the Karnak temple, the sun god, Amun-Ra, celebrated the triumphs of the divine king. This poem was adapted by several New Kingdom pharaohs, including Amenhotep III, Seti I, and Ramses III, to show off their great battle strength. In it, Amun-Ra described the pharaoh's majesty as a shooting star "that scatters fire as it sheds its flame" (Lichtheim Vol 2 37). In the following quatrain, the enemy, "Keftiu" (likely referring to the Cretans), were "in awe of the pharaoh." If the pharaoh's power in life was compared to that of a shooting star, perhaps crashing to earth like a meteorite, then, in the afterlife the divine king became a fixed star in the sky. In *The Pyramid Texts*, the pharaoh is in "eternal existence in company with the 'Imperishable Stars,'" which were the more northern stars that never dipped below the horizon (Allen 12). *The Pyramid Texts* recount the ascendence of the king to the sky, claiming his divine power over the people "once the Imperishable Stars have raised [him] aloft" (31).

Given this symbolic significance, the iron dagger would never have been actually wielded as a tool or weapon. Iron at the time was not strong enough to be used as such. It wasn't until after the Iron Age that occupying Romans in Egypt used iron for weapons, tools, and building materials, trad-

ing between kingdoms for ferrous metals[2] and using techniques such as "fire welding, carburization, and quenching" (Lang 858). Some of the earliest iron Roman tools date back to the 1st Century BCE, almost a millennium after the end of the New Kingdom and more than a millennium after the reign of Tutankhamun. Interestingly, during the era of the New Kingdom, most available iron originated from meteorites, iron core remnants of asteroids that had fallen to the earth in a fiery streamer, followed by an immense explosion. Ancient Egyptians would have used cold working, grinding, and polishing to process iron, as "smelting of iron is only documented from the sixth century B.C. onwards" (Broschat, et al. 24). Since smelted iron was used in tools, weapons, and building materials, the ancient Egyptians used meteoritic iron, such as the items in Tut's tomb, for purely religious and ritual purposes.

Ancient Egyptian religion relied primarily on rituals to communicate with and honor the gods. As a part of the Egyptians' religion, rituals were crucial to staying in the gods' favor and to maintaining proper care for their dead. The Opening of the Mouth ceremony, performed on a body as part of the burial rites, was critical for enabling the dead to eat and drink in the afterlife ("Opening of the Mouth"). Iron chisels were used to open the dead's mouth and allow the dead to be nourished.

During a ritual, the objects involved in the ritual became what they represented. For the Egyptians, an item created as "a representation was a counterimage — an actual substitute for the object portrayed" (Teeter 4). Even hieroglyphs were counterimages, since they were each drawn as miniature picture representations. During the Opening of the Mouth Ceremony, the faux iron chisels in Tutankhamun's tomb became transfigured into real chisels, with their respective power (Almansa-Villatoro 74). In the passage where the gods "opened [the pharaoh's] mouth with their [iron] fingers" to give the dead pharaoh life, these "iron fingers" were the chisels of the afterlife (Allen 267). Just as Tut's dagger helped him reach the afterlife, the iron chisels kept him nourished there.

The blade was composed of the same material as the heavens and as the bones of a god. Not only was the type of material significant, but its source was significant. The iron came from a meteorite, directly from the heavens, as recognized by the ancient Egyptians. Meteors had a special connection to the pharaoh as a symbol of his authority. Tut's dagger was not merely ornamental, nor was it used by Tut defensively in a battle. It was a weapon and protective device that would have allowed the king to live after death.

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[2] A Ferrous metal describes any metal containing iron, like stainless steel, and is known for its material strength.

As television long has, museums now also sensationalize ancient Egypt. Topics like "pyramids, mummies, Tutankhamun, and Cleopatra" offer "predictable popularity" (Wilkinson 17). A detailed inspection of Tutankhamun's dagger and a broader view of his culture can provide a deeper insight into the ancient Egyptians' unique religion and lifestyle. The ancient Egyptians revered Tutankhamun as a god and treated him as such, placing a divine dagger alongside the king's mummy to aid him in the afterlife. The dagger is much like the ancient Egyptians' ability to survive, highlighting the strength and versatility of its culture. Their culture was ever-changing and constantly faced new challenges and foreign people, and yet survived for more than three millennia. The iron dagger is strong but malleable and, upon a closer look, reveals more than first meets the eye.

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