A Journal of Student Research

Scientia et Humanitas

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# Scientia et Humanitas

Middle Tennessee State University

## A Journal of Student Research

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*Scientia et Humanitas:*
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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR IN CHIEF

It is an honor to return as editor of *Scientia et Humanitas* for the second consecutive year. This journey has proven to be exceptionally rewarding, and I am delighted to unveil the largest volume in the journal's history. Serendipitously, Volume Fifteen features exactly fifteen articles, each reflecting the richness and diversity of the contemporary interdisciplinary research conducted at Middle Tennessee State University.

The volume opens with Emiliya Mailyan's article, "From Waves: The Deliberate Odds and Ends of Mansfield's Garden Parties," in which Mailyan analyzes Katherine Mansfield's intricate narrative techniques. Landon Funk then offers "The Ramifications of Female Sexuality: Cultural Uncertainty, Domestic Confinement, and Threatened Patriarchy in Robert Frost's 'Two Witches,'" in which she discusses Robert Frost's complex place in the patriarchal trajectory of American history. Evan Knutila's genre-bending piece, "From *Anomie to Metanoia*: The Spiritual-Political Thought of Henry Thoreau and Thomas Merton," takes an inward turn, reflecting on Thoreau and Merton's understanding of solitude as a means to discover the inner dimension of divinity.

We shift our emphasis to contemporary social sciences in Elaina Manuel's "A Harm Reduction Approach: A Discussion of Supervised Consumption Site to Address Opioid Use Disorder" in which Manuel advocates for the establishment of supervised consumption sites as a vital intervention for opioid use disorder. Harley Mercadal provides a literary reading of Cormac McCarthy in "Where 'dead people lay like saints': Gothic Modernism in Cormac McCarthy's *Child of* God," making a case for the author as an expression of Gothic Modernism. In "The Purpose of Comparison Between Grendel, the Dragon, and the Hero in *Beowulf*" Miles Wine examines the monsters of *Beowulf* as reflections of moral conventions in archaic England.

Returning us to social science, Elizabeth Counts and Dr. Elizabeth Smith examine the relationship between processed foods and chronic diseases among food bank clientele in "Examining Processed Foods in Food Banks and the Presence of Chronic Diseases in Food Bank Clientele." Rashieq Cockerham brings us into the natural sciences in "Characteristics of the Structure and Selected Biological Activities of Polysaccharides Isolated from Fedora 17 Hemp (Cannabis sativa)," investigating the use of hemp polysaccharides as potential applications in developing sustainable, bioactive products.

Matthew Hutton's article, "A Fool's Errand: Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and the Parodic Use of Tragic Characterization in Early Elizabethan Drama," challenges the conventional reading of Marlowe's play, interpreting *Doctor Faustus* as a parody of the title character. Feminist theory informs Mavis Wolff's piece, "Off with Her Head!

An Analysis of Female Awakening Through Social Deviance in Lynn Nottage's Las Meninas," considering Queen Thérèse as an expression of female empowerment.

The last movement of the volume showcases its interdisciplinary component. In "How the Courts Affect Social Change Through Rent Control," Alexander Garcia examines cultural mores through a social science lens, arguing that the courts are limited by the judicial system's constraints. Brandon Black's literary analysis "Outcast of All Outcasts: The Doppelganger in Poe's 'William Wilson'" discusses Poe's use of the doppelganger archetype. Nethanial Belmont reconsiders the American historical narrative in "Survival of the Tribe: How the Cherokee Nation Fought Genocide," reframing the history the Cherokee through firsthand interviews and accounts. Angela Benninghoff discusses Milton's characterization of the Biblical Eve in "The Mother of All Living: Eve's Redemptive Role in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Finally, Patrick Wells highlights the frequently overlooked contributions of the United States Colored Troops during the Civil War in "Those Who Paved the Way: A Detailed Look into the Contributions of the USCT in Tennessee."

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to our diligent reviewers, Briley Welch, Hannah Antrican, and Eilidh Hancock, whose thorough evaluations and constructive feedback have significantly enhanced the quality of the journal. Additionally, I would like to extend my appreciation to my associate editors, Rebecca Price, Nicholas Krause, Angela Benninghoff, and Brittney Norton, for their unwavering commitment and hard work. Your dedication to fostering innovative scholarship has been commendable and has substantially contributed to the success of this volume. Notably, I wish to acknowledge my managing editor, Matthew Hutton, whose expertise and efforts have ensured that this volume is not only polished but also impactful. I would also like to extend my sincerest thanks to Dr. Philip Phillips, Associate Dean of the MTSU Honors College, not only for the opportunity and help with this volume of *Scientia*, but also for the continued mentorship he has offered throughout my graduate career. An exceptional amount of thanks is also due to Honors College Dean John R. Vile and Strategic Communication Specialist Ms. Robin E. Lee, both of whom extended significant guidance.

Thank you all for your continued support of *Scientia et Humanitas*. I hope you enjoy this volume as much as we enjoyed bringing it to fruition.

Best regards,
Kylie Petrovich
*Editor in Chief*

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# From the Waves to the Shore: The Deliberate Odds and Ends of Mansfield's Garden Parties

**Emiliya Mailyan**

ABSTRACT

Katherine Mansfield, a New Zealand modernist writer, demonstrates the power of indirect methods to create meaning in many of her short stories. Rather than relying on detailed character backgrounds, Mansfield uses figurative language, silences, and the implications within dialogue to convey emotional depth and insight into her characters. While these techniques are crucial in building the narrative, her use of suspense and the withholding of information until the story's conclusion also play a key role in her storytelling. Through a close reading of stories such as "Miss Brill," "The Voyage," and "The Singing Lesson," it becomes clear how Mansfield's revelatory endings—what I refer to as "wave moments"—serve as deliberate shifts in mood that contribute to the meaning-making process. These "wave moments" highlight Mansfield's non-linear storytelling approach and her careful crafting of stories—defying traditional narrative expectations.

**The Opening Wave**

In many of her short stories, New Zealand modernist writer Katherine Mansfield shows how effective an indirect method of creating meaning can be. Rather than provide detailed background information about a character, Mansfield relies on the figurative language, silences, and implications in dialogue to help create emotional meaning and insights into the character's lives. However, in several of her stories, the ending moment also reveals much about the characters. Thus, while the techniques of indirect speech, omission, and nonverbal communication are key to creating meaning and tension in the narrative, it is also necessary to devote time to discussing how Mansfield's decision to pack suspense and withhold information to the end speaks to her subtle art of avoiding linearity while crafting a short story. In "On Form/s: Woolf, Mansfield, and Plato," scholar Susan Reid notes how some Mansfield critics have dismissed Mansfield's choice of form as not being productive for dynamic analyses (14). Yet, as Reid points out, it is imperative not to generalize about the form of short fiction and its affordances (14). Stories such as "Miss Brill," "The Voyage," and "The Singing Lesson" contain powerful, revelatory endings. In conducting a close reading of these stories, the shifts in mood at the end of the narratives—what I call "wave moments"—reveal themselves as deliberate in the meaning-making process. Just as a wave can unexpectedly crash down onto shore, the way in which Mansfield structures her stories to have such significative endings indicates a consistent pattern in her writing style—one in which she writes against the current.

In the brief biographical piece included in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, the editors remark on the following characteristic regarding Mansfield's work: "The meaning is achieved most of all through the atmosphere, built up by the accumulation of small strokes, none of which seems more than a shrewdly observed realistic detail" (Greenblatt 2567). To refer back to the wave metaphor, the "small strokes" can be seen as ripples or currents before the ultimate rise and fall of the ending wave. In an essay for *Virginia Woolf Miscellany*, Alda Correia comments on the effect and structure of Mansfield's signature moments, writing, "The moment … is in Mansfield more associated with daily situations and action and shows in an ironic, heartbroken, and intense way the clash of the character's consciousness with the exterior world" (25). In a sense, the "clash" Correia refers to mirrors the meeting of wave and shore, or inner consciousness and outer world. As further analysis into the aforementioned stories will show, these wave moments, while following Mansfield's own style, refuse to follow any sort of preconceived prediction forecasted by previous writers.

**Fleeting Happiness in Miss Brill's Garden Thrill**

In the story, "Miss Brill," the technique of shifting the mood near the very end leaves a lasting mark on the story as a whole. As discussed previously, it is necessary to closely analyze the changes in language from the beginning to the end of the story to understand the impact of this late shift. The main character, Miss Brill, who lives alone, looks forward to her weekly trip to the public gardens near her house. Apart from her English students and an elderly gentleman she visits a few times a week, Miss Brill seems to not have a lot of social interactions with other people. She "speaks" only in her own thoughts, and Mansfield turns to emphasizing the character's actions, thoughts, and lack of direct dialogue to tell the story. In an article for *Studies in Short Fiction*, Miriam Mandel observes how "Miss Brill" has "less action and more figurative language" (473). As such, Mandel posits that the narrative relies on "sense imagery"—yet all of the imagery is reductive. The result of this reduction is a limited perspective framed through Miss Brill's thoughts (Mandel 474). Yet, her loneliness becomes all the more apparent as the images Miss Brill keenly observes fill her mind with stories of make-believe—stories that fall apart at the story's conclusion.

Readers learn about the Sunday routine of Miss Brill—who is all too happy to put on her fur and go to the public gardens to watch people go about their lives from her "special" seat (Mansfield 110). Words like "glad," "brilliant," "pleased," and "enjoyed" populate the first few pages of the story as the action unfolds. Indeed, Miss Brill *enjoys* the imaginative possibilities of people-watching and creating her own stories for these individuals. The narrator describes: "Oh how fascinating it was! How she loved it! How she loved sitting here, watching it all! It was all like a play" (112). She looks forward to other people's conversation so much that she expresses her sadness when an old man and woman seated next to her do not speak: "This was disappointing, for Miss Brill always looked forward to the conversation. She had become really quite expert, she thought, at listening as though she didn't listen, at sitting in other people's lives for just a minute while they talked round her" (111). The fact that people are talking "round her" suggests that Miss Brill may be used to not being the center of attention or even being included in conversation with others. Rather, she finds comfort in knowing that there is conversation and life going on surrounding her, and perhaps this offside affiliation is what makes her feel as if she belongs to her community. The detail of "listening as though she didn't listen" further shows that Miss Brill does not want to make her eavesdropping obvious. However, the very act of eavesdropping alludes to a person not being included or purposefully placing themselves on the outside. What is most perplexing is that, up until

this point in the story, Mansfield does not offer any clues as to why Miss Brill should be the observer rather than an active participant in her own world.

In an effort to better understand her role, perhaps looking back to how Miss Brill considers everything before her to be "like a play" will shed light on her curious positionality. Ruminating further on how the scenes before her resemble a performance, Miss Brill ponders the following:

> Who could believe the sky at the back wasn't painted? … Miss Brill discovered what it was that made it all so exciting. They were all on a stage. They weren't only the audience, not only looking on; they were acting. Even she had a part and came every Sunday. No doubt somebody would have noticed if she hadn't been there; she was part of the performance after all. (Mansfield 112)

In this narrated observation, several key words stand out. First, the use of "they" to refer to the people that Miss Brill watches establishes a sense of exclusion. If Mansfield had switched the narration and used the pronoun "we" instead with Miss Brill's thoughts, the feeling of actual connection and belonging would be made stronger. But Miss Brill does not think in this way. To add, "even" connotes some sort of disbelief or hesitance at the thought of Miss Brill's also being a part of this act. The adverbial phrase "of course" would have better emphasized this imagined sense of belonging that Miss Brill maintains. And finally, the repetition of "she had/was a part" coupled with "no doubt" carries an ironic undertone—as if the narrator catches the suspended disbelief of Miss Brill's world. In effect, this narration achieves two purposes: first, it establishes Miss Brill's tendency to imagine circumstances, which signals to readers that her perceptions may be inaccurate or exaggerated; and second, it foreshadows the fleeting quality of her imagined happiness which dissipates at the end.

The phenomenon that Mansfield's shifting narration and implicit dialogue creates is a topic that Joanna Kokot reflects on in her chapter contribution to *Katherine Mansfield and Literary Modernism*. Kokot posits the following:

> The problem is tangible enough because the world presented in Mansfield's stories often hovers on the verge of reality. What is merely the figment of a character's imagination becomes fact on the page, mainly due to the narrative strategy adopted by the writer. The character's point of view blends with that of the narrator, and as a result, the narrative distance from the protagonist's fantasies is blurred; they are presented as facts, even if they become so only in the observer's mind. (68)

Indeed, as closely reading the "Who could believe the sky at the back wasn't painted?" passage shows, the narration and Miss Brill's own thoughts blend in a way that makes distinguishing the two types of speech difficult. Yet, this blending element, while perplexing, does not affect the readability. One manages to continue taking in the observations of Miss Brill and subsequent action without much glancing back to see where the narration stops, and Miss Brill's thoughts begin. Structurally, this technique accentuates how Miss Brill's own perception of reality and illusion are blurred. Like the sometimes-indistinguishable way different tones of water blend in the depths of the ocean, Mansfield shows how reality and fantasy exist parallel and so near each other that, at times, the difference is not clear.

With such a blurred perception of reality, the abrupt ending of this story becomes all the more intriguing—as I would argue that the ending scene depicts more lucidity than any part of the rest of the story. Readers see how fragile Miss Brill's inner imagined world is when she overhears a young boy calling her stupid and saying, "Why does she come here at all—who wants her?" (Mansfield 113). As the narrator describes, Miss Brill would usually stop by the bakers for a piece of honey cake after her Sunday people-watching routine. However, after hearing the exchange between the young couple, she heads straight home—implying that her earlier happy mood has been completely ruined by this one outburst. The narrator relates, "But today she passed the baker's by, climbed the stairs, went into the little dark room—her room like a cupboard—and sat down on the red eiderdown" (114). Miss Brill sits alone for a while, and when she puts her fur away, she believes that she can hear crying coming from its box (114). This last image of Miss Brill shutting herself away from the outside world is one of stark contrast to the way she presents herself just moments before. From merriment and wonder, the mood quickly changes to disenchantment and letdown. The small actions that gave Miss Brill happiness and joy before—such as the little almond "surprise" in her honey cake—cease to exist in this moment (114). For all the build-up and attention to others shown in the gardens, Miss Brill's actual world at home reveals itself as isolated and lonely.

**Clear Skies Ahead: No Storms on This Voyage**

In "The Voyage," the withholding of plot information until later in the story creates an impact in meaning just as previously described with "Miss Brill;" however, unlike the latter story, the pattern changes from happy beginning/distraught ending to the opposite. In a bustling harbor scene, readers are introduced to young Fenella and her grandmother as the two prepare to take off on their voyage—with Fenella's father saying his goodbyes to them. Having just lost her mother, Fenella boards the Picton boat to the apparent

unknown. While the reason for their departure is not revealed immediately, contextual clues hint at Fenella's hesitance to leave.

In his critical study on Mansfield's writing style and literary form, W.H. New posits that the introductory details within "The Voyage" indicate "no immediate possibility of change" (111). He also conducts close analysis of the verb usage within the first few scenes of the story to indicate how subtle shifts between passive to active verbs suggest possibilities for a brighter future (New 111). Yet, these inklings toward a possible brighter future are also revealed through implicit dialogue and a particular narrative symbol.

The contextual clues employed by Mansfield vary between details in character actions and silent disclosures. When her father gives her a shilling, Fenella assumes that she will be "going away forever" (Mansfield 103). Additionally, the overall uneasy tone and absence of one member of the family—the mother—fill in plot details that would otherwise be revealed through narration. The mother's death is revealed through indirect conversation between the grandma and the stewardess later on—as the stewardess observes the black clothing on the grandma and Fenella once they board the boat: "'I hope—began the stewardess. Then she turned round and took a long mournful look at grandma's blackness and at Fenella's black coat and skirt, black blouse, and hat with a crepe rose" (105). All that the grandma offers in reply to the stewardess is "'It was God's will'" (105). Here, the lack of elaboration—as to what the cause of death was, for example—speaks to how sudden or unexpected the circumstance might have been. When the stewardess comes in to check on the two, she observes how sweetly Fenella has fallen asleep and exclaims, "'Poor little motherless mite!'" (107). What follows in response is one sentence of narration explaining how the grandma tells the stewardess "all about what happened" while Fenella sleeps (107). True to the writing methods previously described, Mansfield avoids the custom of revealing information as it unfolds in the narrative.

Withholding information and creating suspense connect to reveal the possibility of hope through the presence of one particular object—the grandma's umbrella. As a symbol that carries meaning throughout the text, the umbrella appears each time the action in the story changes. In the beginning, when young Fenella's father is saying his goodbyes and sending his mother and Fenella off on their journey overseas, Mansfield directs readers to Fenella and a specific object in her hands. The narrations offers, "As well as her luggage strapped into a neat sausage, Fenella carries clasped to her her grandma's umbrella, and the handle, which was a swan's head, kept giving her shoulder a sharp little peck as if it too wanted her to hurry . . ." (Mansfield 102). Such a focused image may pass by without

so much as a second thought during a first reading of the text. However, this insertion is strategic, as references to the umbrella continue to occur.

During their journey on the boat, Fenella is responsible for making sure the swan-neck umbrella does not break. Once they are alone, Fenella's grandma mentions, "And be careful the umbrellas aren't caught in the stair rail. I saw a beautiful umbrella broken in half like that on my way over" (Mansfield 104). Fenella takes great care with the umbrella, yet so much emphasis is placed on this one object—causing one to wonder why Fenella is responsible for it and why the grandma cannot simply carry the umbrella herself. In a moment where the two are finally able to unpack their things and rest—where one could say that Fenella might have her guard down—she recalls with a start that she left the umbrella standing up on the couch. Yet, Fenella merely wrestles with this worry in her thoughts—no direct speech occurs. The narrator relates: "Fenella remembered she had left the swan-necked umbrella standing up on the little couch. If it fell over, would it break? But grandma remembered too, at the same time" (107). As this observation ends, the dialogue picks back up with the grandma asking the stewardess to lay the umbrella down. In a seamless blend of inner thoughts, Mansfield shows how interconnected Fenella and her grandma have become. As a result, they understand the effect that this one object has on their consciousness. If the umbrella did not hold much significance, then neither Fenella nor the grandma would worry about its being left outside or breaking.

At the end of their voyage, the grandma asks "You've got my—" as they are leaving the boat. Readers can assume that here, she is referring to the umbrella—as Fenella is described as merely showing "it to her" (Mansfield 108). The umbrella, the it that has a superstitious hold on the success of their voyage, maintains a constant thread of hope for better tidings throughout the story. All the while on their journey, cold imagery and language follows Fenella, as readers do not get the sense that she is comfortable by any means. For example, the wind "tugs" at Fenella's skirts; the bed sheets are "stiff," and she has to "tear" her way in (104-106). The atmosphere around them is described in bleak terms as well: "But if it had been cold in the cabin, on deck it was like ice. The sun was not up yet, but the stars were dim, and the cold pale sky was the same colour as the cold pale sea" (108). On top of the already dreary circumstances, Fenella grows even more guarded as she is constantly worried about this umbrella. Yet, an incredible shift occurs when the pair finally make it to their destination—home. Once they make it home to her grandpa, Fenella lets go of the umbrella: "Fenella smiled again, and crooked the swan neck over the bed-rail" (109). This holding on/letting go displays Fenella's desire for her family unit to be whole again and for things to no longer be "broken." The attempts

by both Fenella and her grandma not to lose the umbrella and make sure it stays in one piece reflect the effect that the mother's death may have had on the family as a whole. With the father not offering any explanation as to why he cannot join the rest of his family from the very beginning, and the mother's death, the story begins on a broken note. Commenting on the shift between bleak beginning to hopeful ending, New writes, "Mansfield's story works to a different and more sophisticated kind of revelation, one that requires the sense of bleakness to recur and permits the counter-powers of action and life to deal again and yet again with it, before stasis slowly loosens its hold on Fenella's future" (112). What occurs at the end of the story is a sweeping shift from discomfort, sorrow, and unhappiness to that of comfort, togetherness, and hope. The "wave moment" at the end here, rather than projecting confusion, instills a surge of comfort—potentially washing away the sadness that Fenella wished would disappear.

**Laments of Love, Sense Withholding**

Similar to the sudden shift in mood with "The Voyage," in "The Singing Lesson," short and punctuated lines of dialogue reveal much about a character in the place of lengthy visual descriptions. This story revolves around a recently heartbroken music teacher, Miss Meadows, detailing no more than an hour of present literary time as she arrives at school to teach her class. While the fact that Miss Meadows's fiancé has called off their wedding is not revealed until after the opening scene and a bit of dialogue, readers are met with such strong emotion from Miss Meadows that the inference of something bad transpiring is only logical. When on her way to her classroom, Miss Meadows runs into the Science Mistress, who states, "You look fro-zen" (Mansfield 121). Here, the description of "frozen" may not only refer to the fact that it is cold, but that Miss Meadows, because of her heartbreak, looks meaner and icy in a way—as she does not smile. Rather, she is "hugging the knife"—a meticulous use of metaphor on Mansfield's part that both creates an unsettling and dramatic feeling. The knife is figurative—made up of Basil's cutting words—which Miss Meadows reveals through interior monologue later on.

The sudden jumps in narration to where readers see excerpts from Basil's letter calling off their marriage are unannounced, nor are they formatted in a different font style or offset from the rest of the narration. On the matter of jumps in narration and time, the *Norton Anthology* editors offer the following observation: "Mansfield also manipulates time masterfully: she makes particularly effective use of unobtrusive flashback, where we find ourselves in an earlier phase of the action without quite knowing how we got there but fully aware of its relevance to the total action and atmosphere" (Greenblatt

2567-2568). While the shifts to letter writing never show specific time makers, the minimal—or lack of—transition phrases from Mansfield balance the narrative to where one paragraph manages to flow into the next. This combination of withholding information and unchanged formatting helps show how Basil's words are lingering over Miss Meadows's head, ultimately affecting her in a major way. Her body language and speech reveal this effect as well; she stalks to the piano, and her voice is made of "ice" (Mansfield 122). The blending of time reflects how Basil's rejection permeates Miss Meadows's thoughts and actions—shaping the tension that is woven through the story.

There are further details that show how the icy behavior and tenseness are not typical of Miss Meadows. When young student Mary Beazley approaches Miss Meadows, the narrator explains that Mary "was waiting for this moment" and that the presenting of a yellow chrysanthemum had become "a little ritual" for quite some time (Mansfield 122). However, the given circumstance refutes any routine, as the narrator continues, "But this morning, instead of taking it up, instead of tucking it into her belt while she leant over Mary and said, 'Thank you, Mary. How very nice! Turn to page thirty-two,' what was Mary's horror when Miss Meadows totally ignored the chrysanthemum, made no reply to her greeting, but said in a voice of ice, 'Page fourteen, please, and mark the accents well'" (122). The word "horror" indicates that Mary—and perhaps the other girls in the class—would not have been accustomed to such coldness and dismissive behavior on Miss Meadows's part. Miss Meadows then asks the girls to sing a lament, "without expression" at first (122). She is so focused on the lyrics and music of this powerful lament that the girls begin to tremble and cry, and the overall feeling in the room is one of tension and unease. Because all of the commentary on Basil and the heartbreak are shown through interior monologue—rather than direct speech—these glimpses of Miss Meadows's determined movement and abruptness are all the girls have to witness. Thus, there is a simultaneous nature to the fear of the girls being juxtaposed against Miss Meadows in her dismay. In her work looking at the juxtaposition in Mansfield's diction, Aimee Gaston writes, "It is an example of Mansfield's deftness in selecting from her word-hoard and juxtaposing her treasures, making words yield far more than their literalness and letting language coruscate" (273). Indeed, the short, punctuated phrases in the moment described above reflect and reverberate across the page. And by contrasting these two emotions as the interplay between Miss Meadows's preoccupied thoughts and the students' unease, Mansfield demonstrates yet again the "clash" (to refer back to Correia's observation) between a character's awareness and the exterior world (Correia 25)

Furthermore, even as the waves of her emotions continue to dominate the narrative, an exterior force changes the direction of the story. When Miss Meadows is called to head mistress Miss Wyatt to receive a telegram from Basil, her mood completely changes, as does her tone. Kokot notes how, in Mansfield's short fictions, "a character's attitude towards reality often changes on an impulse, thanks to a defined stimulus or emotion—and it changes drastically" (73). Upon receiving the pink envelope, Miss Meadows's first thought is that Basil has committed suicide—yet throughout the story, there was no indication of Basil's sadness. What Mansfield does provide is just a couple of nods to his characteristics through Miss Meadows's own inner deliberation. In the letter excerpt, Basil reveals how the idea of marriage fills him with "disgust" (Mansfield 122). Miss Meadows later thinks about how surprised she was that he even confessed his fondness for her (with her being thirty and him twenty-five, the age gap could indicate uncertainty in the relationship). She also makes a nod to him being aware of his attractiveness (123). These qualities all indicate that Basil really only thinks of himself, and nothing about the glimpses of him show how he had any deep concern for Miss Meadows's own wellbeing. Then, the format and lack of punctuation in the one-line telegram reveals more about Basil's character: "Pay no attention to letter must have been mad bought hat stand today Basil" (125). First, Basil instructs Miss Meadows to simply *ignore* the rejection letter, then places the blame on shift in emotional state, to finally end with an unrelated aside—that he bought a material item. Perhaps the purchase is his way of calling back to the idea of the two of them getting married and preparing for life together. Regardless of his intent, what Mansfield is masterful at showing is how the focus placed on Miss Meadows's reaction and emotions reflects more about both her and her relationship with Basil. Yet, this is another instance where the specifics are left for the reader to decide; Mansfield does not explain her character's actions one way or the other.

Consequently, after receiving Basil's change of heart, Miss Meadows experiences a change in mood and is now "on the wings of hope, of love, of joy" (Mansfield 125). Such gaiety contrasts incredibly with the opening images of her stalking with "despair – buried deep in the heart like a wicked knife" (121). Back in her class, she tells the girls to turn to "page thirty-two" and sing a happy song as opposed to the earlier lament (125). She tells her students, "Don't look so doleful, girls. It ought to sound warm, joyful, eager" and her own voice resounds, "glowing with expression" (126). While the girls struggle to match the tempo and feel of the new song, Miss Meadows has no trouble at all. What is so striking about this shift in character mood is how quickly it occurs—another example of the "wave moment" effect. The story itself spans only five pages, and it is not until the last full page that readers see this change in Miss Meadows.

Therefore, there is neither the space nor the time for any of the reactions of the girls to be captured. One may consider how shocked the girls must be to now see Miss Meadows in a happier and lighter mood—a change that in the real-time action of the story might have occurred over a few minutes. Yet again, the focus stays on Miss Meadows and her transformation over the course of the story. What Mansfield's story construction reveals is the way that emotions can take hold of someone—just like a crashing wave. Rather than offer extensive backstory and present chronological time markers for Basil and Miss Meadows's relationship, Mansfield only offers what is necessary for readers to grasp how Miss Meadows functions within this heartbreak. All the rest—what others around her may think or feel, the build-up to why the engagement was broken off, more context into Miss Meadows's life—seems irrelevant to where (thinking in terms of Mansfield's writing style) the information would just cloud the story with over-explanation.

**Drawing Conclusions in Disappearing Sand**

With each of the stories explored above, the manner in which Mansfield saves a punctuated revelation for the very end maintains similar plot and character development patterns. Still, it is in the words of the last sentence or two in each story that welcomes an immense amount of significance and consequence to flow all the way to the final word. As reflected by scholars, Mansfield's use of such strategies reveals her own aversion to the typical structure of story writing. Because Mansfield's stories provide brief glimpses into a short period of time in character's lives, zeroing in on what is said versus what is left unspoken becomes imperative to understand the behaviors and motivations of a given character. Especially considering how Mansfield withholds information from readers, minute details become the building blocks to understanding the jarring shifts that occur at the end of her stories. Providing limited perspectives, in turn, allows for more imagination when analyzing the figurative language, absences in dialogue, and implied feelings of each character. As opposed to revealing everything about a character's life through lengthy narration, Mansfield gives readers the chance to figure things out on their own. The resulting implicit techniques in Mansfield's writing are what make the endings more meaningful than surprising, more deliberate than accidental. Her "wave moments" may seem like they come out of nowhere, but in taking the time to look past the water's (or word's) surface, the indications reveal themselves as being there all along—simply waiting for the right time to break.

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# The Ramifications of Female Sexuality: Cultural Uncertainty, Domestic Confinement, and Threatened Patriarchy in Robert Frost's "Two Witches"

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ABSTRACT

During World War I, American women entered the workforce in greater numbers than ever before. However, once their husbands or other family members returned home, women in the workplace were forced out of their jobs in order to support more traditional gender roles. These "New Women" were, for the most part, college-educated, empowered in their sexuality, and had higher aspirations than being a stay-at-home wife and mother. Robert Frost's 1920 poem "Two Witches" explores what forced domesticity did to New Women mentally, physically, and sexually. The narrative poem is split into two sections, "The Witch of Coös" and "The Pauper Witch of Grafton," and while progressive in its social politics, the poems still confine their protagonists and reaffirm the tradition of American patriarchy.

At the turn of the twentieth century, first-wave feminism and the Great War brought women out of their homes and into the workforce. According to acclaimed sociologist Dr. Michael S. Kimmel,

> In the public sphere, the rise of women's colleges, women's increased literacy, delayed age of marriage, an ideology of upward mobility, and capitalist development gave rise to the New Woman. Single, highly educated, and economically autonomous, she challenged existing gender relations and the distribution of power.[1]

For the first time, women were able to use their education and other skills outside of their homes as switchboard operators, nurses, stock takers, yeomen, and magazine editors,[2] offering an autonomy and freedom that only men had ever been granted.

Once the First World War ended and American soldiers returned home in 1918, many career women went back into the home despite earning the right to vote within a year.[3] The number of female writers and editors dissipated, giving rise to male influence in women's magazines where male decision-makers and editors began to push "the new image of woman as housewife-mother"[4] with the support of "religious theories [that] demanded women's return to the private sphere of hearth and home."[5] In doing so, those pushing this ideology "yearned nostalgically for the mythical separation of spheres that has served to keep women from explicitly challenging men in the public realm."[6] Unable to come to terms with the New Woman's independence and self-reliance, men who were threatened by the new world order needed to find ways to push women back into their domiciles and found that writing and publishing propaganda pieces on "true femininity" would do the trick.

With politics and culture changing swiftly, poet and academic Robert Frost and his wife, Elinor, moved their family to a farm in Derry, New Hampshire. In their first few years there, Frost's first-born son died, his mother was notified of a fatal cancer diagnosis, and Elinor's sister and father fell ill. To make matters worse, Frost learned

1. Michael S. Kimmel, "Men's Responses to Feminism at the Turn of the Century," *Gender and Society* 1, no. 3 (September 1987): 261–83, www.jstor.org/stable/189564, 265.

2. "Women in WWI," National WWI Museum and Memorial, 2024, https://www.theworldwar.org/learn/women.

3. "Women in WWI."

4. Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 1997), 49.

5. Kimmel, "Men's Responses," 262.

6. Kimmel, 261–83.

that his sister Jeanie was "increasingly disturbed."[7] Like Frost, his wife and sister both graduated with honors from Lawrence High School, one of the most esteemed high schools in the country, went to college, and worked as teachers.[8] They were the New Women that were able to use their education in order to educate others, a career that was respected and generated enough income to support their basic needs and then some. In her family memoir *You Come Too: My Journey with Robert Frost*, Lesley Francis, Frost's granddaughter, recounts, "Tragically, during World War I, Jeanie was arrested in Portland, Maine, for the exhibition of severe symptoms of paranoia. Under her brother's guardianship, she was committed in 1920 to the Augusta, Maine, state hospital, where Robert Frost continued to visit her until her death in 1924."[9]

Jeanie's arrest and subsequent committal is indicative of relations between the sexes after World War I. As a career woman, Jeanie was stable; however, she was surrounded by written and visual propaganda that stated that, in order to be a true woman, women like Jeanie needed to abandon their education and start a family. Contrary to Francis's claims about Jeanie, Jay Parini, noted Frost scholar and academic, posits that Jeanie was institutionalized for being too promiscuous with her male colleagues.[10] Once she was arrested—whether that be for paranoia, what second-wave feminist Betty Friedan calls "the problem that has no name,"[11] or for promiscuity— her brother was made responsible for her and found that "Jeanie had made the wrong decisions and she had paid dearly with her sanity."[12] Like many women in the early 1900s, Jeanie was forced to come to the realization "that the very meaning of her existence is not in her hands."[13]

It is not surprising then that the man whom Francis calls an empathetic poet wrote "Two Witches," a piece exploring the feminine voice as well as the ramifications of female sexuality and domestic confinement, in the summer and fall of 1920,[14] the same year that he was made guardian of his sister and put her in an asylum. Frost's respect

7. Lesley Lee Francis, *You Come Too: My Journey with Robert Frost* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2015), 5.

8. Francis, *You Come*, 221.

9. Francis, 31.

10. Jay Parini, *Robert Frost: A Life* (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 1999), 197.

11. Betty Friedan, *The Feminine*, 1.

12. Parini, 200.

13. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2011), 485.

14. Parini, 197.

for gossip[15] and empathy for the plight of women[16] ran concurrently with his own internalization of the ubiquitous patriarchal propaganda. The sentimentality of poetry did not reinforce the masculine identity of Modernist poets that upheld patriarchal beliefs. Recognizing this, Frost made a bold declaration by including "Two Witches" in *New Hampshire*, his fourth published book of poetry, as it gives an authoritative and autonomous voice to two separate women living on the outskirts of society, two women who, like his sister, had been made out to be too paranoid and too promiscuous. It is one of Frost's most haunting and unsettling poems as it perceives the societal and emotional boundaries women, who threaten the patriarchal order, face every day.

Split into two sections, "The Witch of Coös" and "The Pauper Witch of Grafton," "Two Witches" features women who are characterized as highly sexual and, as such, a threat to the American puritanical patriarchy. Feminist theorist Katherine Kerns writes in her book *Robert Frost and a Poetics of Appetite*, these women and their "salient differences function as a means by which the male more firmly establishes his oppositional identity."[17] In "The Witch of Coös," this is represented as her husband and the male traveler recording the conversation; for "The Pauper Witch of Grafton," her narrative is littered with men forcing her out of town because of her sexuality.[18] In every instance, it is men who are doing the pushing, the aggravating, the imposing, and the imprisoning in an attempt to control the women in their lives.

Simultaneously, Frost's omnipresent cultural uncertainty[19] seeps through the lines of this poem in search for a deeper understanding of power and subordination between the sexes. In "Two Witches," it is as if Frost acknowledged that, because he had never lived as a woman, he was ignorant of the problems that plagued them. However, it is clear that he very much valued intelligence in the women with whom he surrounded himself: his wife, his sister, his mother, and the female writers with whom he was acquainted (e.g. Amy Lowell, Susan Hayes Ward, etc.) and must have regularly seen them struggle with the "unfeminine" career woman and the "feminine" housewife. His poetic practice shrouded in empathy leads him to investigate that which he does not

15. Robert Frost, Richard Poirier, and Mark Richardson, *Robert Frost: Collected Poems, Prose, & Plays* (New York, NY: The Library of America, 1995), 685.

16. Karen L. Kilcup, *Robert Frost and Feminine Literary Tradition* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 123.

17. Katherine Kearns, *Robert Frost and a Poetics of Appetite* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 97.

18. Frost, *Robert Frost: Collected Poems,*192-194.

19. Robert Pack, *Belief and Uncertainty in the Poetry of Robert Frost* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2003), 189.

know, and with "Two Witches," Frost raises the question: what happens to the women we marginalize and/or subordinate?

In *Robert Frost: The Work of Knowing*, Richard Poirier sees Frost's marginalized women as a way to "recall a nineteenth-century novelistic convention in which the repression of women and the restriction on their active participation in the outdoor world force them into exercises of free imagination and fancy."[20] Frost conveys the patriarchal and societal restrictions placed on women during the early 1900s in "Two Witches" by confining his female protagonists either within the domicile or through forcing them to argue their personhood. Poirier even notes that "Frost's best poetry emerged from a central nervous tension about 'home' and 'extravagance.'"[21] For Frost, the idea of home was often a source of fear, thus mirroring many arguments from second-wave feminists that surfaced towards the end of Frost's life.

One such feminist, Simone de Beauvoir, dedicates an entire chapter to domestic married life in her renowned The Second Sex. She compares the home to "an isolated cell,"[22] a kind-of solitary confinement, that "becomes the center of the world and even its own one truth…refuge, retreat, grotto, womb, it protects against outside dangers."[23] Yes, the home does protect from outside dangers as can be seen in Frost's "The Witch of Coös" via the reclusive relationship between the mother and son; nevertheless, as de Beauvoir offers and Poirier recognizes, the home is a place riddled with anxious fear, specifically by the women who are imprisoned there, where "neither time nor space escapes into infinity but instead quietly goes round and round."[24] Frost's women, shackled within the confines of the home, slowly start to become paranoid and lose their sense of self, something he knew all too well from his sister Jeanie. No matter what happens, this struggle that the empathetic poet wants to understand is one that "begins again every day."[25] The only way out of this timeless, confined loop is through imagination, and it is here where Frost's "Two Witches" is rooted.

Showcasing Frost's terrified fear of the home and what happens when one is forced into confinement, Poirier says,

20. Poirier, *Robert Frost*,112.

21. Poirier, 100.

22. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2011), 469.

23. de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 471.

24. de Beauvoir, 469.

25. de Beauvoir, 474.

> Especially when a woman is the speaker in such poems the bursting out of imagination comes in the form of images at once terrifying, comically macabre, and sexually charged. These are poems of the mind's extravagance not supported by the feet, of women stuck at home rather than of men wandering beyond the boundaries of the homestead.[26]

It is not the fear of someone who has the option to leave a given situation, a predominantly masculine option, but the fear of someone who cannot leave, an integral part of the female existence. The women of "Two Witches" are "bent on subverting" the idea that women belong in the home[27] and subtextually illustrate that "witchness is immanent in the female form" and surfaces "even in the most seemingly domesticated woman."[28] For both witches, it is their womanness, their femininity, that "is both alluring and deadly, provocative of madness and of delight,"[29] that Frost dangerously explores while questioning patriarchal certitude.

The first section of "Two Witches," "The Witch of Coös," first appeared in the January 1922 issue of *Poetry*[30] and is the transcript of a conversation held at the home of a mother and son as recorded by an assumed-male traveler staying with them for the evening.[31] Like the transcriber, the reader of the poem feels a sense of intimacy in each of the poem's lines (e.g. "I never could have done the thing I did,"[32] "I don't remember why I ever cared,"[33] "That made him throw his bare legs out of bed"[34]). Critic Karen Kilcup proposes that this is because the poem contains the "dangerous, sexualized, and seductive gossip of rural life along an uncertain continuum of intimacy with the reader, as the events described are bordered by a reporter whose desires are frequently ambivalent and guarded and whose situation as outsider or insider is in question."[35] It is almost as if the transcriber is spreading a rumor that he knows is not something he should spread, a sort of forbidden fruit that he cannot help but bite into. And yet, he is

26. Poirier, *Frost*, 119.

27. Kearns, *Frost*, 87.

28. Kearns, 97.

29. Kearns, *Frost,* 106.

30. Lesley Lee Francis, *You Come Too: My Journey with Robert Frost* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2015), 46.

31. Frost, *Robert Frost: Collected,* 187-192

32. Frost, *Collected*, 189.

33. *Frost*, 191.

34. *Frost*, 190.

35. Kilcup, *Frost*, 113.

the one telling the story, so the reader has no choice but to believe him – even though Frost has taught his readers never to believe anyone or anything as it is presented.

"The Witch of Coös" begins in the transcriber's voice: "I stayed the night for shelter at a farm/ Behind the mountain, with a mother and son,/ Two old-believers. They did all the talking."[36] The poem proceeds in a play-like narrative structure with speakers noted, yet the reader must not forget that these lines have been passed through at least one other person, the one who is recording them. Thus, the assumption that the lines spoken by mother and son cannot and should not be seen as absolute truth, calling into question the transcriber's authority and his position of power. In the transition of speakers, Frost incorporates his first use of empathetic understanding for female confinement for even within his own narrative Frost confines this mother and her son to the story of another man; their story does not belong to them. The recorder passes a narrative of murder, promiscuity, and madness, but "in spite of the horror, he finds such merging with a female alter ego seductive."[37] He simply cannot resist telling her story for it is at once foreign and titillating, an unexpected kind of intimacy that he did not expect when stopping for shelter. Kilcup notes, "As his proxy, the witch speaks from a maddened and maddening 'I' that simultaneously concerns itself utterly with relationships to the lover, the husband, the sons, the visitors, the reader – and situates herself as their confounding matrix of meaning."[38] He becomes her, an intentional crossing of gender boundaries that Frost hides within the first lines of his poem.

Even as the poem moves into the narrative, the Witch of Coös continues to face patriarchal restrictions, speaking only about her deceased husband, about her former lover, to her son, and to the transcriber. She exists only in relation to other men, completely devoid of any other relationship. In fact, the title of the poem "The Witch of Coös" is synonymous with "The Witch of Whore" for, in New England at the turn of the century, "coös" was a slang term for a prostitute or promiscuous woman.[39] Frost's naming of her is deliberately damning, showing how he views her actions despite giving her voice. Furthermore, the home where the witch inhabits notably has a cellar and an attic where she keeps the bones of her dead lover. Kearns asserts, "The cellar hole is traditionally a place of potential horror, often associated with sexual betrayal."[40]

36. Frost, *Collected*, 187.

37. Kilcup, *Frost*,152.

38. Kilcup, 121.

39. Kilcup, *Frost,* 156

40. Kearns, *Frost*, 93.

Especially in "The Witch of Coös," the cellar is a literal representation of the mother's sexual transgressions for it is here where her husband attacks and kills her lover. Kearns continues, "'Cellar holes' become pits that represent female sexuality, birth, death, and the grave, and attics are minds filled with the bones of old lovers."[41] It can be thusly assumed that the cellar is not only a representation of her sexual transgressions but also indicative of her vagina, the hole in which these sexual transgressions took place. Her home becomes a metaphor for her person, the cellar a metaphor for her sexuality, the attic a metaphor for her sanity. Because of the witch's relationship to her home, she will never be able to leave it. The lines stating, "The bulkhead double-doors were double locked/ And swollen tight and buried under snow," are a clear example of this metaphor, noting that her breasts were wrapped up in at least two layers of clothing and no sex drive permeates her vaginismus. Most importantly, Frost denotes that all of this is "buried under snow" to show that the Mother is cold and frigid to male advances.

When women are categorized as "cold" for refusing sexual advances, their "frigidity[…]can be seen as a punishment that woman imposes as much on herself as on her partner: wounded in her vanity, she resents him and herself, and she does not permit herself pleasure,"[42] a prevalent through line in a lot of the propaganda against The New Woman that surfaced around the same time as "Two Witches." It painted "domesticated sexuality" specifically as "pale and fruitless,"[43] but by the time second-wave feminism came onto the scene in the late 1950s, enough married women had shared their stories of a lackluster sex life that Simone de Beauvoir is able to claim, "Apathetic and languid women are always cold; there is a question as to whether constitutional frigidity exists, and surely psychic factors play a preponderant role in the erotic capacities of woman; but it is certain that physiological insufficiencies and a depleted vitality are manifested in part by sexual indifference."[44] In layman's terms, women who are seen as cold are not really cold and are either no longer sexually aroused by their partner, mentally stimulated as a result of their confinement to the home, and/or depressed for both aforementioned reasons. The sheer fact that the Witch of Coös seeks sexual validation outside of her marriage indicates that she was not happy with her husband, sexually or emotionally. She sought intimacy with another partner in order to fill a void, like her cellar, that second

41. Kearns, 89.

42. de Beauvoir, *Second*, 414.

43. Kearns, 89.

44. de Beauvoir, 390.

and third wave feminists knew/know cannot ever be filled: the impossible patriarchal standards to which all women must adhere in American culture.

Once the Witch of Coös's husband finds out she is cheating on him, he kills her lover. She recounts, "Tell the truth for once./ There were a man's his father killed for me./ I mean a man he killed instead of me./ The least I could do was to help dig their grave."[45] What is more is that the husband kills this lover *instead* of his wife, hinting that she is the one with whom he is truly upset. Many of the antifeminist texts produced after the First World War "argued that if masculinity was in crisis, it was women's fault, and the solution to the crisis was the revival of the subordination of women."[46] With this knowledge, these lines hint that the Witch of Coös's husband claimed her sexual transgressions were responsible for the murder of her lover and reasserted his dominance by making her oblige to help him dig the ex-lover's grave. The reason he is able to do this is through his "privileged situation" as "biologically aggressive" and "social function as chief and master." De Beauvoir argues, "Because man is sovereign in this world, he claims the violence of his desires as a sign of his sovereignty…on the contrary, woman being only an object is considered *hot* or *cold*; that is, she will never manifest any qualities other than passive ones."[47] Her husband is quick-tempered, violent, and murderous; his sovereignty permits and excuses this behavior, a temper-tantrum gone wild, because of his gender and status within the world. Enchanted with jealousy steeped in his wife's sexual prowess, the husband's actions to claim her transform him into the bestial form of a power-hungry man.

Only through both of her sexual partners' deaths is the Witch of Coös able to live freely and without patriarchal constraints—although she did "merge" with her home and is poetically unable to leave her domestic confinement. She still lives with the trauma of her infidelity and its aftermath as represented by the ex-lover's bones in the attic trying to communicate with her and one of his "finger-pieces" being lost within her box full of buttons.[48] "Not only is the phallic residue of the lover missing; it is magically transformed into a flood of buttons. The witch's clitoral sexuality, significantly located 'in her lap,' is not singular but multiple, both comical and terrifying in its excess," Kilcup writes.[49] Throughout early twentieth-century women's literature buttons were often a

45. Frost, *Collected,* 191.

46. Kimmel, "Men's Responses," 266.

47. de Beauvoir, *Second*, 397.

48. Frost, *Collected*, 190.

49. Kilcup, *Frost,* 156.

metaphor for a woman's clitoris,[50] and, as a well-read and well-established poet, Frost would have known this, which is one possible reason why the "finger-piece," yet another metaphor but for the phallus, is amongst the buttons. The Witch of Coös, in placing the buttons in her lap, supposes personal ownership over her lover's penis, a comical subversion of patriarchal ideas. Instead of him dominating her with his phallus, she dominates him with her clitoris.

Throughout "The Witch of Coös," Frost is at his best with metaphor, expertly mixing the "literal and figurative: whimsically yet gruesomely, buttons and bones are mixed up, language signifies something other than it appears to, something adjacent to but not symbolic of 'reality,' as figure is detached from ground."[51] He knows the subversion of patriarchal customs will frighten his readers, mostly his male ones, but, at the same time, Frost delicately and beautifully weaves feminine hysteria through the Witch of Coös, her story, and her actions. Subtextually, the Witch of Coös sees herself as a sexual object who is only able to find happiness through her own sexuality, a concept which Friedan illustrates: "Since that endless search for status as a desirable sexual object is seldom satisfied in reality for most American housewives, it is very easily translated into a search for status through the possession of objects."[52] The Witch of Coös is satisfied by neither sexual partner and only becomes comfortable once both men are out of her life, leaving only tokens of their remembrance to add to her collection. Her independence following her undermined sexuality—and her casualness to it—is what makes the Witch of Coös so "terrifying to the male reader-narrator, for it offers not understanding but violent appropriation posing a threat to his coherent identity."[53]

In addition, the emotional and psychological grip the Witch of Coös has over her son is a strong warning that matriarchal power will only lead to "weak" men. The only man that seems to remain in adoration of her is her potentially illegitimate son in a Hitchcockian twist that, like the buttons and her sexual freedom, only makes the narrator and reader more uncomfortable. Kilcup argues that the son is the "'illegitimate' product of the untold union of the mother and her lover, a socially subversive 'utterance' of her body – but he inherits her 'knowledge' without her vision and remains silent until the end."[54] With only a few lines at the beginning of the narrative, her son serves as witness

50. Kilcup, 155.

51. Kilcup, 120.

52. Friedan, *The Feminine*, 322.

53. Kilcup, *Frost,* 119.

54. Kilcup, 116.

to her testimony, an unreliable one, and believes her to be the source of his concept of truth. In direct contrast, the transcriber goes to verify the old woman's story, another attempt to undermine her narrative, and makes himself known to his reader again in the last few lines of the poem: "I verified the name next morning: Toffile./ The rural letter box said Toffile Lajway."[55] Instead of solidifying her tale as fiction, he finds proof that, at the very least, her husband's name was Toffile. Kilcup inquires,

> What seems odd about this conclusion is that the narrator tries to verify only the witch's *husband's* name, as if he – and the mailbox, their link to the (rational) outside world – is complicit in silencing her. In the traditional terms of the patriarchal family, translated onto and into a masculine lexicon, her story is after all the story of the cuckolded Toffile.[56]

Even after she has intimately gossiped about the primary events of her life, a likely moment of desperation to chat with anyone who has not already heard the story, the narrator dismisses her unreliability as if nothing this woman could have ever said was true. However, as Kilcup posits, he is able to come to terms with the story only as it relates to the men whose paths the Witch of Coös happened to cross. As her Frostian name underlines to the male reader and narrator, the Witch of Coös is a whore and nothing more. With a deeper understanding of female hysteria and sexuality, her sexual transgressions are only the surface. If Frost has taught his readers anything, it is that what lies underneath— in the case of "The Witch of Coös," the causes and effects of her sexuality and subsequent hysteria—serves a much deeper and more significant critical reading.

While "The Witch of Coös" investigates what happens when a woman is forced to see her worth in terms of her domesticity, "The Pauper Witch of Grafton" examines the role of women who are not a part of the domestic sphere. This poem is told solely from a female speaker, the Witch of Grafton, as she tries to persuade a township to let her live there after being labeled a witch for sexual deviance before, during, and after her marriage to Arthur Amy.[57] Despite her outsider status, the Witch of Grafton still defines her worth in terms of her sexuality as do the town and men who have ostracized her. Katherine Kearns argues, "'The Pauper Witch of Grafton' reinforces Frost's implicit assumption that, degraded to their most natural state, women will become witches, metamorphic and powerfully seductive."[58] Kearns uses the word "implicit" to denote

55. Frost, *Collected,* 192.

56. Kilcup, 119.

57. Frost, *Collected*,192-194.

58. Kearns, *Frost*, 97.

Frost's patriarchal conditioning to automatically assume women are dangerously sexual, as is reinforced across twentieth century literature. In fact, Friedan also picks up on this in *The Feminine Mystique*, noting, "As American women have turned their attention to the exclusive, explicit, and aggressive pursuit of sexual fulfillment, or the acting-out of sexual phantasy, the sexual disinterest of American men and their hostility toward women, have also increased."[59] The Witch of Grafton chooses to be sexually liberated ("I took him out in his old age/ And rode all over everything on him"[60]), and it is this sole reason that she is easily painted as a witch ("But everybody took it for a proof."[61]). Her character "allows Frost to make explicit the paradox of sexual fear coupled with desire at the same time it allows him to repudiate her by showing the social and legal consequences of her extremism."[62] She is a woman who lived a life of sexual freedom in her youth, something which the Puritan-rooted patriarchy very much feared for if a woman was sexually free, then she would not be easily, and subserviently, controlled.

For the Witch of Grafton, her life with her husband is described as sexually fruitful; she says in her own testimony, "Up where the trees grow short, the mosses tall,/ I made him gather me wet snow berries/ On slippery rocks beside a waterfall./I made him do it for me in the dark./ And he liked everything I made him do."[63] Her words tell of a healthy sex life between Amy and herself, one with manual stimulation, oral sex, and female orgasm. For a male poet to indulge in female sexuality and pleasure, and the female ownership of that pleasure, in such a way was truly novel, and, as prominent reviewer Randall Jarrell points out in his analysis of this poem for *The Kenyon Review* in 1952, "...there is more sexuality there than in several hothouses full of Dylan Thomas; and, of course, there is love, there."[64] Yes, there is supposed love there, but the reader also realizes that it is exactly this "love" during the witch and Amy's sex that causes Amy to paint her as a witch who should never be allowed to exist among other people. The witch divulges, "But he liked best/ To let on he was plagued to death with me:/ If anyone had seen me coming home/ Over the ridgepole, 'stride of a broomstick,/ As often as he had in the tail of the night,/ He guessed they'd know what he had to put up with."[65] Amy is

59. Friedan, *The Feminine*, 310.

60. Frost, *Collected*, 193.

61. Frost, 193.

62. Kearns, *Frost*, 98.

63. Frost, 194.

64. Randall Jarrell, "To the Laodiceans," *The Kenyon Review 14*, no. 4 (Autumn 1952): 535–61, www.jstor.org/stable/4333363, 555.

65. Frost, *Collected*, 194.

spreading rumors that his wife is a witch ("I guess he found he got more out of me/ By having me a witch."[66]) in order to make it easier for him to leave and start his life anew. The Witch of Grafton hints that she and Amy would have consensual intercourse in the early hours of the morning with "'stride of a broomstick," but her husband alleges that it was her witchy, deviously sexual ways that ensnared him rather than spousal sexual arousal. Kearns notes that through Amy's degradation of his wife, "Frost finally makes explicit the potential in women to induce sexual madness[…]These woman signs are not decipherable through logic and they do not appeal to rationality, but they instead short-circuit cerebral function and make their appeals more viscerally."[67] "The Pauper Witch of Grafton" does show how men paint women as inducers of "sexual madness" through Amy's claims and the witch vying for her right to live where she pleases, but to argue that Frost "makes explicit" that the witch induces such madness is questionable. By having her as the speaker and pairing it with "The Witch of Coös," it makes more sense that Frost is using his empathetic side to "put himself in another's shoes."

Likewise, Friedan emphasizes, "When woman was seen as a human being of limitless human potential, equal to man, anything that kept her from realizing her full potential was a problem to be solved: barriers to higher education and political participation, discrimination or prejudice in law or morality."[68] It is evident that Frost believed in the education of women as his mother, sister, and wife were all highly educated, and it is easy to suppose that he would want to understand the root of their hysteria. Through his poetry, Frost questions all existing realities to find the ultimate truth. Robert Pack adds that for Frost, "there is no such thing as simple truth, only speculation and uncertainty, grounded, as is highly likely, in illusion."[69] Especially with "The Pauper Witch of Grafton," Frost is searching for something, a potential empathetic understanding of why and how his sister went paranoid. What caused her to get this way? Do all women feel that their worth is bound to their sexuality, their partners, their domestic lives? De Beauvoir claims that the "patriarchal civilization condemned woman to chastity,"[70] which in turn highlights the notion that women, during the first half of the twentieth century, were seen as non-human and, thus, non-sexual, a status lower than that

66. Frost, 194.

67. Kearns, *Frost*, 100.

68. Friedan, *The Feminine*, 57-8.

69. Robert Pack, *Belief and Uncertainty*, 188.

70. de Beauvoir, *Second*, 386.

of the human male, making it easy for Frost to subtextually illustrate this patriarchal push for purity.

Frost is not the only man to pick up on this idea; in fact, Jarrell describes "The Pauper Witch of Grafton" as "where the testy, acrid mockery of the old pauper, of the 'noted witch' always plagued by an adulterous generation for a sign, turns into something very different as she remembers the man who first exposed and then married her."[71] What she turns into, though, is what she has been all along: a woman trying to exist in a world that tells her everything is wrong with her. It is only the men—Amy, Mallice Huse, and the men in power who believed them— who have made her out to be the subject of such scrutiny. "The power of naming lies, in large part, within paternalistic systems that may exploit and use the woman according to what they name her."[72] As evidenced by her testimony, the Witch of Grafton has been chewed up and spit out by the "paternalistic system," only to come back on her knees to beg for forgiveness for transgressions that never should have brought her excommunication. These men, while delighting in their earthly masculinity, are bound to face a judgment before their higher power for the spreading of such falsities. "The liar deceives himself by repressing his knowledge that God perceives his lie," Pack notes,[73] applicability to Amy and Huse resounding.

Furthermore, Kearns finds that the Witch of Grafton is "a parodic symbol of the aging (male) poet who fears that his inspirative powers are lagging, that his poetry can no longer attract and seduce,"[74] a reading that is significant but leads to a more self-centered Frost. Frost, despite his empathetic poetics, still has the need to encase his feminine empathy within boundaries, not letting his metaphors or understanding ever stray too far away from the masculine. Kearns explains, "Femininity, that which swells into the metaphoric language of poetry where metaphor is, indeed, the whole of thinking, must be encased in 'masculine' femininity."[75] Caging women within the confines of physical or poetical boundaries is a trend for Frost despite his inherent and progressive views on women's education. Poirier finds these restrictions "are a precondition for expression,"[76] and, for Frost specifically, they very much are. The women in Frost's poetry must obey society's rules, but he is also curious about how these rules drive them to madness,

71. Jarrell, "To the Laodiceans," 554.

72. Kearns, *Frost,* 98.

73. Pack, 183.

74. Kearns, 98.

75. Kearns, 106.

76. Poirier, *Frost*, 104.

paranoia, self-worth tied to sexuality, and hysteria. There are two Frosts actively coming out in "The Pauper Witch of Grafton:" one who wants to understand and another who wants to confine.

As specific and rooted in twentieth-century American culture as the poems within "Two Witches" are, they allow Frost to highlight "the local" as it transforms "into the universal."[77] The women and their supporting casts, all of whom are men, subvert traditional gender norms through the uplifting of female voices, dedicating most of the lines in each to spoken words by women. Frost does this to show that, as Poirier aptly suggests, "very often 'home' is the prison of madness, recognized as such by the keepers and so acknowledged by the victims…"[78] The home belongs to those who inhabit it, and, at the turn of the twentieth century, that meant women of cisgender-heterosexual families, one where the patriarch was king and his wife was a servant to his every need. For the educated career women, the thought of domestic confinement without intellectual or sexual stimulation induced paranoia and hysteria, often leading their husbands to violent outbursts as seen in "The Witch of Coös" or to brand them as a witch for easy disposal as Arthur Amy does to his wife in "The Pauper Witch of Grafton." Kearns stresses that

> Frost's witches literalize [the] capacity to transform and to be transformed, and they stand as cautionary figures who prove the powers of women who escape socially determined boundaries of behavior. Promiscuously inclined, morality, whether embodied in human form or in poetic language, represents the metamorphic, the seductive, and the maddening: those forces against which man must stand his ground.[79]

The Witch of Coös and the Witch of Grafton both undergo significant transformations as a result of what men in their life did in response to their sexuality and sex lives. Kearns argues that these women are almost like giant warning signs with bold letters saying, "if you, a woman, desire sexual satisfaction, then you will end up like these abandoned, mad, and confined women, a fate no one could or would ever want." Unlike the men in the poems, Frost, through the provocative and erotic feminine voice, empathizes with the plight of women, but he still suggests that their madness must be contained. Like a bear when looked in the eye, a sexually awakened woman, according to "Two Witches," is a danger to her society; with his verse, Frost is able, at the very least, to cage, if not tame, them. He highlights the wrongs of the men, an acknowledgement that is progressive and significant, but his poetic and confined structure reveals that that is where Frost's feminism comes to an end.

77. Parini, *Frost,* 212.

78. Poirier, 113.

79. Kearns, Frost, 89.

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# From *Anomie to Metanoia*: The Spiritual-Political Thought of Henry Thoreau & Thomas Merton

**Evan Knutila**

ABSTRACT

Both Henry David Thoreau and Thomas Merton revolted against the state of society as they saw it and lived in it. They retired to their respective wildernesses to seek solitude and dive deep for truth. Merton and Thoreau were not content with a solitude that did not also involve a meaningful relationship to society. They were concerned with social justice and communicated that through their writing, which, it seems, came about because of their solitude. In that way, each author encourages his readers to build their own inner retreats, and in the end, they do this as a means of furthering social reform in their times. For both men, a relationship to God—or to nature, to cosmic divinity—is cultivated within. Furthermore, once the individual's relationship to this higher power has been established, this leads to a recognition of the divinity in others. Both Merton and Thoreau, from their respective hermitages, reached inward—only to find themselves also reaching outward. Both Thoreau and Merton offer a vision of solitude and silence that goes hand in hand with social justice and political action.

In 1845, the oddball naturalist Henry David Thoreau moved into a cabin that he built on the shore of Walden Pond, in Concord, Massachusetts. Almost a century later, the Christian mystic Thomas Merton was accepted as a novice monk at the Abbey of Gethsemane, near Bardstown, Kentucky. In the next century, I took it upon myself to visit Walden Pond, and travel to the secluded monastery in the hills of Kentucky, to see how these places reflected their most famous guests. On the surface, Thoreau and Merton might appear to be two very different thinkers and writers. On the one hand, Thoreau was a Transcendentalist who eschewed the strict religious confines of his time. Merton, on the other hand, was a devout Catholic and ordained Trappist monk. Yet I had to ask myself: what, if anything, ties these two radical iconoclasts together? Where does their thinking diverge? I wondered, above all, what it means to me—and whether any of this still matters in the 21st century.

"Rather than love, than money, than fame, give me truth," wrote Thoreau in *Walden,* the famous account of his two-year retreat to a cabin at Walden Pond (1153). Through silence, solitude, writing, close observation of self and of nature, Thoreau would arrive at his version of truth. Nature held the answers; there was no other way in. The noise and clutter—both spiritual and material—that clouded Thoreau's vision finally cleared when he was alone at the pond. Ironically, within his experiment of self-exploration, Thoreau actually spends most of *Walden* critiquing his Concord neighbors and society at large: they were myopic; they did not see reality for what it is.

In Thomas Merton's view, similarly, our "short-sightedness as the pace of modern culture accelerated" seemed to be quickly making us "less than human;" "often with good intentions man ends up distorting fundamental truth" (Kramer 93). Succinctly put, Merton's view of the modern world was one where many people were simply losing the ability to distinguish what was true. Appreciation of truth was apparently being lost because of "increasingly greedy, cruel, and lustful pressures common to a society which encourages man to ignore the truth and to be primarily concerned with fitting in, or with his own satisfaction" (Kramer 93). Both Merton and Thoreau felt repulsed by the burgeoning modernity they observed.

Solitude became the space in which they could plumb the depths of their inner selves, and climb the high peaks of reality and truth. Both Merton and Thoreau, from their respective hermitages, reached inward—only to find themselves also reaching outward. As Thoreau wrote in *Walden*, "Not till we are lost, in other words not till we have lost the world, do we begin to find ourselves, and realize where we are and the infinite extent of our relations" (1070). Merton, seemingly echoing Thoreau, wrote in *No Man is an Island*, "Only when we see ourselves in our true human context, as

members of a race which is intended to be one organism and 'one body,' will we begin to understand" (xxi). A cultivated interior life, for both men, would lead to an intimate relationship with a higher power, and one that would ultimately call them to action.

For Thoreau, "Nature" was the supreme being; for Merton, "God." My suggestion is that although Thoreau and Merton may have had different conceptions of God, their ideas ultimately do not oppose each other; in fact, there is significant overlap. For both men, a relationship to God—to nature, to cosmic divinity—can only first be cultivated within. Once the individual's relationship to a higher power has been established, this leads to a recognition of the divinity in others, for both God and Nature are all-encompassing. Both erase the barriers between perceived "individual" entities, highlighting the universality of all Being. Moreover, that universality, when properly understood, develops a concern within the individual for other people and the world at large. Both Thoreau and Merton offer a vision of solitude and silence that goes hand in hand with social justice and political action.

At first glance, solitude and society may seem diametrically opposed. However, both Thomas Merton and Henry David Thoreau were not content with a solitude that did not also connect meaningfully to society. Both were concerned with social reform—and communicated that through their writing—which came about *through* their solitude. In that way, both authors also encourage their readers toward their own inner retreats. And in the end, they do this as a means of furthering social justice in their times.

Once a deeper awareness of one's self develops, that awareness reaches out to others. Although he fled to the monastery to escape the decadence of both his former self and the wider world, Merton expressed his renewed sense of mission as it naturally matured: "Solitude has its own special work," he wrote, "a deepening of awareness that the world needs. A struggle against alienation. True solitude is deeply aware of the world's needs. It does not hold the world at arm's length" (Hinson 65).

Thoreau took a similar journey from self to society. As one critic wrote, throughout Thoreau's rumination is implied "the notion that the individual must first discover himself as an individual, which can only be done in solitude. When this self-discovery has taken place, and the individual is a true individual, then he is able properly to function in and contribute to community" (McInerny 176). Indeed, it was only through his experiment of living at Walden Pond that Thoreau was ready to return to life in Concord and report his findings to the community. He did this by publishing *Walden* and followed up by delivering lectures on the popular lyceum circuit, even though he met only mixed success with popular audiences.

For both thinkers, their personal solitude was also the solitude of Nature, or God. As Merton wrote, "Man's loneliness is, in fact, the loneliness of God. That is why it is such a great thing for a man to discover his solitude and learn to live in it. For there he finds that he and God are one" (MacCormick 118). In that sense, there is no such thing as true solitude, because all things share a sense of "Being" in a vastly interlinked web. In the cities, Merton wrote, people have constructed "a world outside the world, against the world, a world of mechanical fictions which condemn nature and seek only to use it up, thus preventing it from renewing itself and man." The antidote was "the solitary, [who] far from enclosing himself, becomes every man" (O'Connell 145).

This revelation of interconnectedness hit Merton like a ton of bricks: "In Louisville, at the corner of Fourth and Walnut, in the center of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers. It was like waking from a dream of separateness, of spurious self-isolation" (O'Connell 105). The Western legacy of Cartesian dualism was an inherited illusion that Merton knew must be shattered if we were to heal as a species and live in harmony with the planet. Up at Walden, far from being entirely alone at the pond, Thoreau discovered in a similar way that "every little pine needle expanded and swelled with sympathy and befriended me" (Van Doren 31). These solitaries found themselves in the company of others, even when they initially thought otherwise.

Thoreau and Merton both found themselves enmeshed in a society they recognized as corrupt and decadent. Both found themselves repulsed by aspects of human civilization. But they were also greatly concerned for its welfare and reform. The scurry and strife of human society was, for both, exacerbated by industrial machine technology. Thoreau's blistering critique in *Walden* that "We do not ride upon the railroad; it rides upon us," (1029) should be read as encompassing his larger stance on the illusions of technology. For Thoreau, these flashy gadgets and devices are "improved means to unimproved ends" (1007-1008). Human life was Thoreau's concern, ensconced as he was in the natural world of Walden Pond.

Writing of the Transcendentalists broadly, George Hochfield notes that "They belong to an age of burgeoning industrialism, and they were among the first Americans to see that this new social fact [of capitalist economic organization] cast a problematic and threatening light on the hope for democratic fulfillment" (xxiv). Private ownership of property, and capitalist production, were incompatible with the democratic ideal of individual freedom. "Private property tended to destroy the social equality on

which freedom was based; it seemed to be creating a new class system and new forms of dependency in which masses of men were the helpless victims of economic power controlled by a few" (xxiv). Thoreau was one of many in the Transcendental movement who "recognized the factory system as the most ominous fact of American life" (xxv). The machine had entered the garden. In a time of increasing competition, the Transcendentalists saw yawning class divides and widespread economic anxiety. Money and power had come to define individual and social life. It is astounding to read Thoreau's words in *Walden*, as if he's commenting on 21st century America: "The principal object [of the factory system] is, not that mankind may be well and honestly clad, but, unquestionably, that the corporations may be enriched" (994). It is no wonder that Thoreau was met with indifference: "Preoccupied with industrial growth and westward expansion, Americans had become less pietistic and idealistic, putting their faith not in the power of ideas but in the idea of power" (Judd 33). Times were changing, and a loafing idler like Thoreau represented vices like sloth, even greed. His message would be obscured by the zeitgeist.

The erosion of social values, and the concomitant imposition of a spiritual malaise, can be best summed up by the term anomie, or alienation. Bewildered by the pace of change and discomfited by societal ruptures, both Thoreau and Merton identified technological "progress" as a defining factor of society's ills. "Why should we live with such hurry and waste of life?" Thoreau wonders in *Walden*. "We are determined to be starved before we are hungry. Men say that a stitch in time saves nine to-morrow" (1029). What were all of these mechanical advances for? They did not aid our inner spiritual development. He observes "a hundred 'modern improvements'; there is an illusion about them; there is not always a positive advance" (1007). Thoreau looked out on his native Concord and saw mindlessness, ennui, townspeople going through prescribed motions, not bothering to look up from their work to ask the fundamental questions about life. "We need to be provoked," he wrote (1038). Indeed, in the very epigraph of *Walden* Thoreau makes explicit that his aim is "to wake my neighbors up" (980).

Merton, too, found himself shocked awake from the slumber of his appetites when he underwent a spiritual conversion—a change of heart, or *metanoia*. Merton looked out on the modern world and observed "the ceaseless motion of hot traffic, tired and angry people, in a complex swirl of frustration" (MacCormick 122). Just as Thoreau in his time diagnosed the "quiet desperation" in the "masses of men" (984), Merton saw a society full of "men worn out by a dirty system" (Kramer 39). Dennis McInerny likens what I call the anomie of the individual in modern society to a "disease [of] mindless materialism and an infatuation with power which is caused by severe spiritual anemia"

(187). Importantly, for Merton and for Thoreau, a degraded society is only the outward manifestation of the inward ills of the individuals making up that society. Ironically, society, as it is, in turn keeps its individuals sick. The inner and outer states of conflict and malaise, the chicken and the egg, are not clearly distinguishable, but they are related.

In our increasingly digitally-lived lives today, with the unfathomable power of artificial intelligence looming before us, Merton's thought from half a century ago seems startlingly prophetic: as E. Glenn Hinson puts it, "Merton could be highly critical of modern technological culture, precisely because it dehumanized and depersonalized…. by becoming autonomous technology threatens to undo man entirely" (66). Both men looked out on a civilization that was teetering, imbalanced. The result of unregulated capitalist competition was that, as Thoreau had pointed out in *Walden*, "A few are riding, but the rest are run over" (1008). Merton was so taken with this phrase that he copied it into a piece of calligraphy in his journal, over an abstract Eastern-influenced drawing (O'Connell 126). American capitalism, both men saw, was set on a course to ravage nature, then the whole continent, and eventually the whole world. Without serious efforts to preserve nature—and hence, the self—we would end up destroying ourselves.

So, the role technology plays in distracting us from ourselves is not only self-destructive, but world-destructive. In *No Man is an Island*, Merton writes, "Those who love their own noise are impatient of everything else. They constantly defile the silence of the forests and the mountains and the sea. They bore through silent nature in every direction with their machines, for fear that the calm world might accuse them of their own emptiness" (257). Merton identified this sickness in his time, Thoreau in his. People zoomed from place to place, abuzz from information overload, hasty and harried. That Thoreau could be so aware of this trend in the 1840s is astonishing. Merton's 1940s were even more saturated with machine technology. And to reflect on the fact that neither man was remotely acquainted with the Digital Age, of the Internet, social media, or artificial intelligence, is to see both as issuing essentially prophetic warnings about our physical and mental health, and the wellbeing of Planet Earth.

Through the haze of media and technology, we can barely distinguish truth from falsehood, true self from mere illusion. Dennis McInerny writes of this problem in his essay, "Thomas Merton and the Tradition of American Critical Romanticism": "In a world in which there is much activity one might conclude that one is in the thick of life. Merton would argue otherwise. Look closely at the activity and you will note its frenetic quality. It is the activity of a people who are in despair, who use activity as a means of maintaining a distance between their consciousness and a reality which they do not want to face" (177-178). Solitude is the antidote to alienation, for in our solitude we hear

the true voice of reality, and then we can act in accordance. As several commentators have pointed out, "Thoreau heeded an inner voice he believed to be divine in origin and universal in scope" (Judd 121).

Thoreau famously claimed he went to the woods because he wanted "to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life" (1028). He means to arrive at the deeper meanings of existence itself: to approach the endeavor of living a human life with the seriousness it deserves and with full consciousness. What *is* life? Why are we here? To mindlessly consume? Those who too commonly "lived lives of quiet desperation" were not waking up to these "essential facts."

Merton, at the monastery, came into contact with Thoreau relatively late in his life. As Patrick O'Connell notes, "It was apparently not until December 1950, almost exactly nine years after entering the monastery, when he had already published four volumes of verse and five of prose, including the autobiography that made him a household name, that [Merton] read *Walden*. His response to it was immediate and profound," (117). Merton found particular resonance with Thoreau's "beautiful pages on morning and on being awake" (117). He compares Thoreau's basic aestheticism to St. John of the Cross's, and reflecting in his journal, Merton admired how Thoreau "did not intend to be resigned to anything like a compromise with life" (117). Merton, like Thoreau, believed that the world and the culture in which he lived were characterized most essentially by evasion, by delusion. And technology was the chief means that we use to avoid the truth of reality. Distilling Merton's thinking on the subject, Dennis McInerny concludes:

> Contemporary Western man was in flight, a massive madcap flight from the deepest realities…Everything in contemporary society seems to work toward the perpetuation of this delusion, for we live in a world which is aroar with noise, a world which seems to be conspiring constantly to distract man from himself… ubiquitous media cover all, and they trivialize everything they touch; by a process of relentless reductionism they depress everything to the level of bland inanity. The "news" which we think it so important to "keep up with" is often little more than glorified gossip. (177)

On this score Merton and Thoreau were in perfect accord. In *Walden*, Thoreau drolly satirizes his contemporaries' lust for information: "To a philosopher, all *news*, as it is called, is gossip… Hardly a man takes a half hour's nap after dinner, but when he wakes he holds up his head and asks, 'What's the news?' as if the rest of mankind had stood his sentinels" (1030). It was technology that delivered this news, and the speed of communication in Thoreau's time, as in ours, was undergoing massive, rapid growth.

Technology, ostensibly intended to bring people closer together, was backfiring—in Thoreau's time, in Merton's time, and in ours. "Merton was against technology because he believed that, ultimately, technology was against man. The machine had become so prevalent and powerful that it ruled the life of its creator. The master had become the slave to his own creation. He had been dehumanized by it, himself transformed into a machine," Dennis McInerny writes (183-184). In this sentiment Merton echoes, however unconsciously, Thoreau's revelation in *Walden* that "We do not ride the railroad; it rides upon us" (1029). The idea that technology serves to benefit humankind is, for both men, sheer nonsense, a deceptive trap. Technology, rather than bringing us closer to reality and to each other, instead removes us from *fully conscious contact* with God or Nature. For Merton, as for Thoreau, "a great deal of what was wrong with American culture could be explained by the social structure of the country, built almost entirely around the machine. The machine lies at the heart of the troubles that beset contemporary life" (McInerny 182-183). It is chilling to consider what either would have made about the increasingly documented relationship between social media and teenage depression, anxiety, body issues, and self-harm.

"Everything in modern city life is calculated to keep man from entering into himself and thinking about spiritual things," Merton writes in *No Man is an Island*. "Even with the best of intentions a spiritual man finds himself exhausted and deadened and debased by the constant noise of machines and loudspeakers, the dead air and the glaring lights of offices and shops, the everlasting suggestions of advertising and propaganda" (108-109). And Merton didn't have a smart phone to have to deal with. Yet, he was already grasping that "The whole mechanism of modern life is geared for a flight from God and from the spirit into the wilderness of neuroses. Even our monasteries are not free from the smell and clatter of our world" (108-109). Looking out on the world today, it is easy to see these "neuroses" manifested on an even grander scale. The smart phone is a distraction machine and a behavior modification system. In our personal and our public lives, we are increasingly defined by digital algorithms.

One of Thoreau's biographers uses Thoreau's own cosmic vision to zoom out on our world for an alternative, more encompassing perspective. "From 'an observatory in the stars,' would America's 'beehive' of commercial activity really look like freedom?" Laura Dassow Walls asks. "Hardly. 'There would be hammering and chipping, baking and brewing, in one quarter; buying and selling, money-changing and speech making, in another.' By tying us to material goods, commerce does not free us but enslaves us, turns us into brutes" (Walls 81). This commerce—capitalism, consumerism—joins machines

and technology to offer the *appearance* of growth and evolution. But instead, it leads us away from ourselves, and in the end, away from each other as well.

Rejecting the myth of Thoreau as an eccentric, self-obsessed hermit, Walls concludes, "Thoreau was a haunted man. He and everyone he knew were all implicated: the evil of slavery, the damnation of the Indian, the global traffic in animal parts, the debasement of nature, the enclosure of the ancient commons—the threads of the modern global economy were spinning him and everyone around him into a dehumanizing web of destruction" (438). Even in his hermitage, Thoreau was concerned with the outside world. In fact, it is my contention that through his solitude and silence, however relative it was, Thoreau arrived at a deeper concern for society and the natural world. Haunted he may have been, but despairing he was not. Thoreau found hope in his revelations, urging others to take whatever path they needed in order to arrive at a similarly widened consciousness. In *Walden*, Thoreau issued an invitation—a provocation, really—for others to establish in their own lives their personal equivalent to his sojourn in the woods, so that when they "came to die," they would not discover that they "had not lived" (1028). As Dennis McInerny makes clear, many of Merton's books, also, were in effect "invitations to his readers to adopt a monastic mentality toward the world and their experiences. He was constantly challenging them to force the issue, to face their situation nakedly, to dispose themselves for the totally transforming *metanoia*," or change of heart (178).

Paradoxically, Thoreau located the macro of the universe in the micro of the self. By looking deeply inward, outward truths could be revealed. We are, after all, each of us threads of some larger abstract fabric of Being. Thoreau would identify that Being as Nature. He could walk through the woods near Concord and find the whole universe composed in a single fallen leaf. As critic Mark Van Doren concluded about Thoreau, his "whole life was a search for embodied Reality, and his whole contention on paper is that Reality is accessible…if he finds his self, he finds reality. If he finds reality, he has found the universe" (121). This bedrock reality—nature, the universe—is the same essential capital-B Being that Thomas Merton would identify as "God."

In his runaway bestseller autobiography, The *Seven Storey Mountain*, Merton recounts his experiences with medieval mystic literature, and his first encounter with the notion of Aseitas:

> The English equivalent is a transliteration: aseity—simply means the power of a being to exist absolutely in virtue of itself, not as caused by itself, but as requiring no cause, no other justification for its existence except that its very nature is to

> exist. There can be only one such being: God. And to say that God exists *a se*, of and by reason of Himself, is merely to say that God is Being Itself…God is being *per se*. (189)

If God is another word for Being Itself, it seems that we can also substitute Nature with little to no loss of meaning. In that nexus, Thoreau and Merton meet.

The critic Victor Kramer also makes a connection between Thoreau and Merton. "When one agrees to stay put…one can really begin to travel," Kramer writes. "Merton's writing finally allowed him to move beyond a concern with self, yet the only way to do this was to begin with an examination of self. Just like Thoreau's apology within the opening pages of *Walden* for the subject matter he knows best, himself, Merton's strategy builds on paradox" (Kramer 28). The paradox Kramer sees here is similar to the micro-to-macro mirror of self-universe; understanding oneself leads to a better understanding of others. To examine the self is to also observe the world. Solitude, actually, unites. "The closer the contemplative is to God, the closer he is to other men," Merton wrote. "The more he loves God, the more he can love the men he lives with. He does not withdraw from them to shake them off, to get away from them, but in the truest sense, to *find* them" (Hinson 69).

In her biography of Thoreau, Laura Dassow Walls notes a similar paradox. Modern audiences have been handed down two different versions of the man, "both of them hermits, yet radically at odds with each other. One speaks for nature; the other for social justice" (xx). One is alone, cloistered in his cabin, while the other is among the masses, acting as town gadfly. "Yet the historical Thoreau was no hermit, and as Thoreau's own record shows, his social activism and his defense of nature spring from the same roots: he found society in nature, and nature he found everywhere, including the town center and the human heart" (xx).

One can never find the self if one insists on looking elsewhere than in the self. Therefore, in Merton's words, "in order to find our souls we have to enter into our own solitude and learn to live with ourselves" (Kramer, 1984, p. 95). Merton's extensive writings suggest, and his actions illustrate, that we must be more attentive to our interior, individual lives. With such focus, we can hear God. The possibility for this transcendence of mundane reality lives within us. There is a divinity in our hearts, if we can only learn to hear it. "To be human is to search for one's unique inner powers and then consciously unfold, guide, and nourish them," Laura Dassow Walls writes of the Transcendentalists. "In most people those powers lie dormant; to awaken, to become fully human, is to see

that of all creation, humans alone carry God's nature within. As William Ellery Channing wrote, 'We see God around us, because he dwells within us'" (88).

The call of this divinity within also becomes a call to action. Victor Kramer writes, "More concern about solitude and silence led Merton to an awareness of his fundamental responsibility to suggest links between his insight as a monk and his understanding of questions that people in the world faced" (Kramer, 1984, p. 94). For Thomas Merton, Kramer writes, "the great delusion of our time is the delusion of a 'humanism' within a society in which man has been alienated from himself by economic individualism and lost in a mass society where each person is hardly distinguishable from others" (Kramer, 1984, p. 94). The voice of transcendent reality—God—is being snuffed out by the hustle and bustle of modern life. What Merton wants us to realize is that "the vocation of any person is to construct his own solitude…for a valid encounter with other persons," (Kramer, 1984, p. 94). It is only *through* solitude that one can begin to build toward cooperation and communion.

Even for Merton, the monk, solitude does not mean a necessarily *religious* withdrawal. This may be why, if only in passing, Merton singles out Thoreau and Emily Dickinson as inspirations, in his essay "Notes for a Philosophy of Solitude": the hermit withdraws from others not out of his rejection of them, but rather so he can be "closer to the heart of the church" (Kramer, 1984, p. 96). Withdrawal, Merton demonstrates, is a form of love for other men. "It should never be a rejection of man or of his society," Merton states clearly; a true solitary is one who has gone *beyond* the shallow "I"; true solitude is not a form of selfishness. Merton rightly concludes that "without solitude of some sort there is and can be no maturity" (Kramer, 1984, p. 97).

In his incisive essay on Merton, Dennis McInerny takes note of this paradox as well. "The hermit sever[s] himself physically from other human beings, not out of an antipathy for men, but rather out of a love for them" (176). True solitude, then, has an inherently social element. The hermit's ecumenical contemplation has the potential to benefit society at large. Likewise, the world at large nurtures the thoughts of the solitary. The psychologist Anthony Storr confirms this: "A man in isolation is a collective man. One cannot even begin to be conscious of oneself as a separate individual without another person with whom to compare oneself" (147). Although we are accustomed to thinking about solitude and society as diametrically opposed, their true relation is paradoxical. That means they are not opposed, but rather, are two sides of the same coin, a yin-yang.

Thoreau and Merton were also both influenced by Eastern Philosophy. Thoreau brought a copy of the *Bhagavad Gita* with him to Walden Pond. Transcendentalism

was the first philosophical movement in America to seriously attempt to bridge the gap between East and West.

In his *Journal of 1850*, Thoreau levels the barriers between all religions, identifying their essential equivalence: "I do not prefer one religion or philosophy to another—...To the philosopher all sects of all nations are alike. I like Brahma—Hare Buddha—the Great Spirit as well" (O'Connell 134). In the same vein, Merton recorded in his own journal, "One of the things I like best about Thoreau is not usually remarked on. It is the fact that he is something of a bridge builder between East and West. Gandhi liked his essay 'Civil Disobedience,' and Thoreau had a liking for Oriental philosophy. So do I," (O'Connell 133). Not only does Merton take inspiration from Thoreau, but he recognizes that others whom he esteems—Gandhi being one—had also noticed Thoreau's sage recognition of the East. Merton's unabashed admiration for Mahatma Gandhi is of a spiritual-political nature. He saw that Gandhi "applied Gospel principles to the problems of a political and social existence in such a way that his approach to these problems was *inseparably* religious and political at the same time" (Hinson 64). Eastern spiritual wisdom was useful for all of these men when they turned their attention to social reform.

Observing the bitter clash of the Civil Rights Movement in the early 1960s, Merton summarized the history of non-violence in America:

> The purpose of non-violent protest, in its deepest and most spiritual dimensions is then to awaken the conscience of the white man to the awful reality of his injustice and of his sin, so that he will be able to see that the Negro problem is really a *white* problem: that the cancer of injustice and hate which is eating white society and is only partly manifested in racial segregation with all its consequences is *rooted in the heart of the white man himself.* (Woodcock 131)

It was in the same way, of course, that Gandhi set out to show that the problem of a subject India "were those of the conquerors and not of the conquered" (Woodcock 131). Gandhi, in fact, had been so affected by Thoreau's essay "Civil Disobedience" that he mentioned wanting to make a pilgrimage to Walden Pond himself (Judd 143).

In a series of essays on the racial strife of the 1960s, Thomas Merton returns again and again to the necessity for a radical transformation of inner self—in perceptions and patterns of behavior—not just in outward laws. Merton's "Letters to a White Liberal" (1963) like Thoreau's "Slavery in Massachusetts" (1854) condemns those who pay lip service to reform so long as it does not interfere in any significant way with their own comfortable existence, those "who blithely suppose that somehow the Negroes (both north and south) will gradually and quietly 'fit in' to white society exactly as it is, with

its affluent economy, the mass media, its political machines, and the professional inanity of its middle class suburban folkways" (O'Connell 129). Merton's reiterated message is that "American society has to change before the race problem can be solved" (O'Connell 129). Before society can be changed, both men argue, the individual must first undergo its own revolution.

For Merton in particular, his encounter with the *Tao Te Ching* was especially profound: Taoism is, in a very literal sense, "a way, a mode of living that recognizes the existence of universal forces—something close to what we call natural laws—and which holds that man can live according to these forces, and can benefit from them, by ceasing to be conscious of any distinction between himself and the world around him" (Woodcock 161). Recognizing the "way" of nature was, for both Merton and Thoreau, the surest path to truth, to reality. It is also an apt description of both men's journeys: examining the individual self to arrive at a better understanding of the larger world.

Merton, despite being a devout Catholic, became later in life enamored with not only Taoism, but Confucianism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam. As a monk of the West, Merton nonetheless sought bonds with the East, especially when the Vietnam War became a political and cultural flashpoint. Merton passed away suddenly in Bangkok in 1968 during a grand tour of the Buddhist holy land, where he had gone to forge international spiritual-political alliances. He was deeply moved by his experience. At a Buddhist shrine in Ceylon, having "pierced through the surface…beyond the shadow and the disguise" (O'Connell 137), Merton's preexisting ideas had been reinforced. "Everything is emptiness and everything is compassion," he wrote, finding existential confirmation of his statement that "The geographical pilgrimage is the symbolic acting out of an inner journey," (137). In the last speech he made, a few hours before his death in Bangkok, Merton said: "The monk is essentially someone who takes up a critical attitude toward the world and its structures" (O'Connell 120).

Deep in his solitude Merton had become concerned with the plight of others, even on the other side of the world. And in his own country, of course. As E. Glenn Hinson points out, in a letter to James Baldwin, Merton wrote that he found Baldwin "right on target with reference to…the racial crisis in America" (Hinson 67). He disagreed with him only in Baldwin's insistence that he did what he did as a "non-Christian" or "anti-Christian." To the contrary, Merton insisted, what Baldwin said was "fundamentally religious, genuinely religious, and therefore has to be against conventional religiosity" (67). For those who might consider Merton a dogmatic or purely orthodox thinker, think again. Merton even found existentialists such as Camus "essentially Christian," despite Camus'

avowed agnosticism (67). True concern for social welfare dismantles these artificial boundaries.

God was the ultimate force erasing those demarcations. Merton found evidence for this in his study of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Writing about that text, Merton returns to the idea of a "cosmic dance": "Arjuna surrenders totally to the will and wisdom of Krishna," the Almighty. "Arjuna thus attains the pure consciousness of Being, in which the subject as such 'disappears.'" It is at this moment, Merton goes on to say, that one "encounters [God] not as Being but as Freedom and Love" (Patnaik 86). Arjuna's "true self comes to full maturity in emptiness and solitude" (86). Once again, through solitude, the fundamental self can finally emerge—this true self being one of Thoreau's "essential facts" of life. As Thoreau had asserted in the "Higher Laws" chapter of *Walden*: "Man flows at once to God when the channel of purity is open" (Schneider 100). When authentic selfhood is established, as both Merton and Thoreau attest, a deep concern for the welfare of society and other people can truly begin.

To lose the self, then, is the first step to finding the self. Only later can we discover the true nature of the world, and act on what we find. First, we must be subsumed by God—Nature—Being. As Dennis McInerny summarizes, "In the contemplative experience…we find ourselves (or, what amounts to the same thing, we lose ourselves) in the All, the All that is no thing…for if the All were a single separate thing, it would not be the All. The goal of contemplation is to live in All, through All, for All, by him who is All" (200). Merton had written, "I too must be no thing—and therefore no separate individual identity. And when I am no thing, I am in the All" (200). Once you are "in the all," once the veneer of dualistic thinking is shed, others, too, appear in their true form.

In *The Seven Story Mountain*, Merton details his first encounter with Eastern mysticism. It came from a Westerner, but one who took seriously the lessons of "Oriental" texts: Merton's contemporary, Aldous Huxley. In particular, Huxley's *Ends and Means*. "[Huxley] had read widely and deeply and intelligently in all kinds of Christian and Oriental mystical literature, and had come out with the astonishing truth that all this, far from being a mixture of dreams and magic and charlatanism, was very real and very serious," Merton writes (202-203).

> Not only was there such a thing as a supernatural order, but as a matter of concrete experience, it was accessible, very close at hand, and extremely near, an immediate and most necessary source of moral vitality, and one which could be reached most simply, most readily, by prayer, faith, detachment, love. (202-203)

The spiritual realm was readily accessible—one just needed solitude and silence to locate it. Merton found himself increasingly committed to intermingling these ancient ideas. He writes, "The point of [Huxley's] title was this: we cannot use evil *means* to attain a good *end*" (202-203). Huxley argued that we were using the means that precisely made good ends impossible to attain: war, violence, rapacity. Huxley, Merton writes, "traced our impossibility to use the proper means to the fact that men were immersed in the material and animal urges of an element in their nature which was blind and cruel and unspiritual" (202-203). Thoreau would have found much to agree with in the idea that vacuous materialism held no answers. Rather, truth, as lived in the spiritual realm, is accessible through nature, and the self.

Patrick O'Connell, comparing the two men, sees one crucial distinction in their approaches to social justice in their respective times. Merton, a committed nonviolent actor, "does not agree with or justify the turn to violence, as Thoreau apparently does in 'A Plea for Captain John Brown'" (130). "I do not wish to kill or be killed," Thoreau had said, "but I can foresee circumstances in which both of these things would be by me unavoidable" (Gougeon 208). Yet, Patrick O'Connell finds, "Merton sympathizes with the frustration of those who imagine that violent revolt is their only recourse against oppression" (130). Perhaps this is a defining break between them. Nonetheless, of this we can be certain: in Merton's dedication to both solitude *and* social reform, his silent retreat and his written expression, his Americanness *and* his interest in ancient Eastern thought, he and Thoreau do have much in common. Henry Thoreau and Thomas Merton were two radical thinkers who shook the world with their pens. Each moved from the self to the world, from a sense of alienation to a change of heart.

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# A Harm Reduction Approach: A Discussion of Supervised Consumption Sites to Address Opioid Use Disorder

**Elaina Manuel**

ABSTRACT

The opioid epidemic, a pervasive public health crisis, demands innovative solutions to address its widespread impacts. In Tennessee, the reliance on abstinence-based interventions has resulted in high recidivism rates, highlighting the necessity for alternative strategies. This paper explores supervised consumption sites as a harm-reduction approach that prioritizes individual autonomy while addressing substance use disorders (SUD) comprehensively on micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Grounded in human behavioral theories, the analysis examines systemic contributors to opioid use disorder (OUD), including familial dynamics, societal stigma, and cultural influences. By integrating evidence-based practices, supervised consumption sites are shown to effectively reduce overdose fatalities, enhance access to healthcare services, and strengthen community resilience. The discussion also emphasizes the intersectionality of discrimination, illustrating how marginalized populations disproportionately experience the adverse effects of OUD due to systemic inequities. Through policy analysis and cost evaluations, the findings support the economic and social benefits of harm-reduction measures. This paper advocates for the implementation of supervised consumption sites as a transformative intervention, shifting the paradigm from punitive and stigmatizing practices to inclusive and compassionate care.

Substance use interventions approaches within Tennessee promote the use of abstinence-based approaches that have a higher rate of recidivism (Mutter et al., 2023). The intervention approach based in harm reduction is based on a primary goal to lower the harms of the targeted behavior of the intervention, while the behaviors still occur (Tsui, 2000). Interventions based on harm reduction approaches can aid in individuals' ability to practice self-determination while still providing access to care. Combining an understanding of substance use through the theoretical lenses of human behavior provides meaningful context for the proposal of a harm reduction intervention approach, such as a supervised consumption site. This discussion will provide pivotal information on the social problem of the opioid epidemic on a micro, mezzo, and macro level through the lens of a harm reduction approach.

**Social Problem**

Since 1999, the opioid epidemic has affected individuals and families across North America, with more than six hundred thousand deaths from opioid overdoses (Opioid epidemic, 2022). This epidemic has been noted to have four eras: physicians' prescriptions, heroin use, fentanyl without stimulant use, and fentanyl with stimulant use (Friedman & Shover, 2022; Opioid epidemic, 2022). While physicians have weened away from prescribing opioids since becoming aware of how highly addictive opioid substances are, individuals who use opioids continue to find them elsewhere (Opioid epidemic, 2022).

Opioids themselves are highly addictive, and factors at the micro, mezzo, and macro scale of an individual's life can contribute to the development of opioid use disorder (OUD). The population of individuals who have been incarcerated but are re-entering the community have a higher risk of OUD during this transitional period (Cadet et al., 2023). Traumatic events, such as seeing an overdose, have been connected to individuals who use pain killers (Hughto et al., 2023). Even family members who have at one point been prescribed opioids or painkillers can predispose individuals to develop OUD (Ali et al., 2019). Professionals also hypothesize that the OUD can be connected to community factors, such as loss of community culture and loss of educational resources within the area (Barbalat et al., 2023). The loss of community culture promotes the ideals of individualism, and the loss of educational resources can lead to feelings of humiliation that can increase one's desire to use substances in order to further disengage with these feelings (Barbalat et al., 2023). These are just a few social determinants that can impact an individual's relationship with opioids on a micro, mezzo, and macro scale.

While pharmaceutical companies and physicians have played a key role in the opioid epidemic, there is not one specific demographic that is predisposed to OUD. Though White individuals are more likely to develop OUD due to access to routine healthcare, individuals spanning different ethnicities, races, and ages can all find themselves in positions in which they use opioids (Siddiqui & Urman, 2022). Some individuals who develop OUD in their life experience a multitude of factors that affect their quality of life and health, including higher risk of being incarcerated, higher risk of overdose from opioids, exclusion of self-care activities, mobility issues, and declined mental health (Cadet et al., 2023). While the prescribed use of opioids was meant to help individuals experiencing chronic pain, their use and abuse has created a lasting impact on individuals, families, and communities.

## Micro

Theoretical frameworks based on human behavior can aid in understanding the impact of substance use disorders related to the individual and how they manifest throughout family systems. Substance use disorders develop in individuals due to either a biological, environmental or developmental factor that have affected them within their life (NIDA, 2018). Understanding the connection between human behavioral theories at an individual level and the connection to substance use can allow for a better understanding of OUD at a micro level.

### Individual Theories

The behaviors of an individual experiencing OUD can lead to various theoretical explanations. Psychodynamic theory explains that individuals develop OUD due to either unknown factors or deeper emotional or subconscious desires that OUD mask (Dale & Smith, 2013). Clinical studies have found that individuals who use opioids find managing emotions, such as depression, anxiety, and pain, exceedingly difficult (Karakoula & Triliva, 2022). Another approach from the psychodynamic perspective is that individuals who use opioids continue to do so to hide their own shame, disconnect from others, and to even abuse themselves and others (Karakoula & Triliva, 2022). From the framework of psychodynamic theory, individuals with OUD consciously recognize their disconnection from themselves and others, which can be inferred through the use of opioids as a maladaptive coping mechanism to regulate emotions and maintain a sense of control (Scarna, 2020).

The theoretical approach from a psychosocial perspective can vary depending on a variety of factors. The underlying biological connection of genetics can factor into an individual developing OUD (Dale & Smith, 2013; Hatoum et al., 2021). Knowing when the individual first encounters opioids also allows for insight on the possible psychosocial

crisis being experienced, though most adults experiencing OUD would be facing the psychosocial crisis of generativity versus stagnation (Dale & Smith, 2013). Individuals during this stage want a sense of belonging, autonomy, and self-esteem (Dale & Smith, 2013). OUD affects the individual's ability to act autonomously, feel welcomed in communities, and causes lower self-esteem in individuals (Giynas Ayhan et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2019). The effects of OUD on this stage of development can also affect the individual's development of integrity within the next stage of life (Dale & Smith, 2013). In another instance, adolescents who develop OUD are faced with the crisis of intimacy versus isolation that is normally found in the stage of early adulthood as outlined in Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory (Dale & Smith, 2013). When adolescents are faced with the crisis of intimacy versus isolation it can impact the development of meaningful relationships and alternative coping skills. In this theory, OUD falls within the isolation part of this crisis and can perpetuate disordered substance use if the adolescent feels isolated from peer relationships, family dynamics, or support systems that could aid in mitigating this continued cycle.

Another theory that connects to individuals experiencing OUD is behavioral theory. The activating event of OUD for most individuals is usually obtaining a prescription for opioids (Dale & Smith, 2013; Davies et al., 2023). Most individuals believe that doctors would not prescribe drugs that are dangerous, but as individuals have developed OUD from prescriptions their beliefs have changed (Dale & Smith, 2013; Davies et al., 2023). Individuals developing a prescription OUD note that pain, stress, and a lack of monitoring were the consequences that led to the continuation of refilling opioid prescriptions (Dale & Smith, 2013; Davies et al., 2023). Though Dale and Smith (2013) use the term "effects" as a positive when discussing behavioral theory, Davies et al. (2023) notes the "effects" were the development of prescription OUD. While behavioral theory is mostly used in creating positive behaviors, OUD displays how this theoretical framework can influence substance use disorders.

## Mezzo

Before an individual has even taken his/her first opioid, the family structure has changed the trajectory of his/her life. The family structure and environment influence an individual's behavioral patterns, coping mechanism, and exposure to substances that increase an individual's likelihood of opioid use in the future. Field theory allows for an understanding that is based on the individual's environment, regardless of whether it is through the nuclear family or with their spouse; there is the possibility of being predisposed to OUD (Dale & Smith, 2013). Individuals, regardless of age, who have individuals in their family or chosen groups who are prescribed opioids have a higher

chance of developing OUD (Ali et al., 2019). Understanding the family dynamic itself might supply an example of role behaviors through the local environment, which can provide an understanding of how someone could end up developing OUD.

Though a family member may affect the development of individuals developing OUD, there are changes in family social interactions when someone in the family has OUD. These families use aspects of exchange theory to create a goal-oriented outcome of overcoming OUD (Crowley & Miller, 2020). While the cost on the family might include increased stress, difficult conversations, feedback, mutual respect and strict boundaries, the benefits are the hopes of supplying a safe and nurturing environment for the individual to seek or continue treatment for OUD (Crowley & Miller, 2020; Dale & Smith, 2013). Using ideas in exchange theory, the families of individuals experiencing OUD can aid in the individual's treatment when access to treatment facilities may not be accessible (Crowley & Miller, 2020).

When an individual has developed OUD, it can influence the family's equilibrium of roles (Dale & Smith, 2013). When interacting with the ideas within role theory the family must first accept the OUD status of the individual (Dale & Smith, 2013). When the family unit has not provided the individual experiencing OUD with emotional support, the individual can be reactive and further their OUD (Kitt-Lewis et al., 2022). The family members of individuals who experience OUD can also develop new roles within the family unit to best help the individual (Kitt-Lewis et al., 2022). Family members may have to become caregivers, become an integral part of the individual's recovery plan, or even access lifesaving interventions that they might not have been confronted with if not for their loved one experiencing OUD (Kitt-Lewis et al., 2022).

**Macro**

The opioid epidemic within Rutherford County is a social health problem that requires immediate targeted intervention. Though there are rehabilitation facilities available within the county, there is a lack of facilities that practice from a harm reduction approach creating a gap in the continuum of care. A non-abstinence-based harm reduction facility can provide at-risk Rutherford County residents with support, reduce deaths related to opioid misuse, and improve community health. Providing residents with a variety of interventions can improve the individual's right to choose how they receive treatment in a manner that is still effective.

**Background**

While the opioid epidemic has had profound impacts around the globe, the effects are also felt within closer communities. Within the state of Tennessee, deaths related to both opioids and fentanyl rose exponentially over a five-year span (see Figure 1) (TN Department of Health, 2022). Additionally, there was also an increase in fatalities for individuals who use opioids and other substances such as stimulants (see Figure 1). Outside of deaths related to heroin and pain relievers, TN constituents are feeling the impacts of the opioid epidemic through the rise in loss of family and community members at an increased rate over this particular five-year span. Figure 1 does not account for any co-morbidities, though, that may impact an individual's ability to use substances, thus impacting the amount of substances needed to end an individual life.

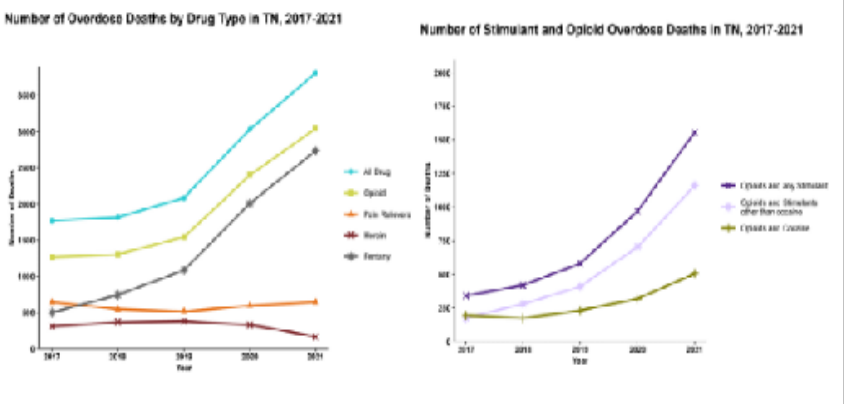


Figure 1:"Number of Overdose Deaths by Drug Type in TN, 2017-2021"[1]

Though the use of opioids has impacted communities across the state, Rutherford County is one of the few hotspots of the negative impacts of these substances (see Figure 2). Though Figure 1 provides a strong visual representation of areas affected, it lacks information regarding whether clients served in these areas lived within those counties or their rural counterparts. In Rutherford County, death from substance overdose is the "leading contributor to premature death" as of 2021 (Ascension Saint Thomas Rutherford Hospital, p. 38). In that year, 4,715,782 prescriptions were written in the state of Tennessee for legal opioids (TN Department of Health, n.d.). Rutherford County displays the need for added resources related to harm reduction as a continual intervention for opioid use disorders and deaths caused by opioid use disorder.

1. Note. The TN Department of Health (2022) provides graphic information pertaining to the type of substances in relation to deaths by drug class and additionally substances used in conjunction with opioids at the time of an individual's death.

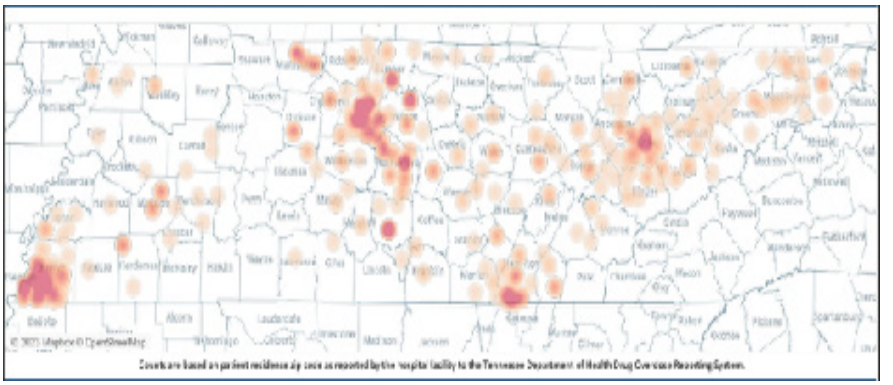

Figure 2: Heat map of hospital reported coded opioid overdoses in Dec. 2022.[2]

Community members of Rutherford County face challenges surrounding the need to decrease the stigma related to opioid use to address this communal problem (Ascensions Saint Thomas Rutherford Hospital, 2021). The TN Department of Health has created a platform, TN Faces of Opioids, that allows for individuals to discuss and share their stories related to the opioid epidemic (n.d.). Patience, a Rutherford County resident, discussed how her relationship with opioids developed due to the accessibility of her mother's pain medication prescription while being her caretaker (TN Department of Health, n.d.). Another Rutherford County resident, Lattie, provided a detailed account of his struggles with generational opioid misuse, addiction, and internal emotional struggles (TN Department of Health, n.d.). Though a frequent theme, misuse of opioids is not limited to generational misuse. Another Rutherford County resident, Adam, shared how he found opioids to "fill a void" (TN Department of Health, n.d.). Regardless of the means in which Rutherford County residents find themselves using opioid substances, there is a growing demand for interventions in Middle Tennessee.

**Cultural Perspective**

Understanding the theoretical framework of how individuals with OUD, their families, and community institutions interact within society provides social work professionals with a deeper understanding of this population. Incorporating diversity, equity, and inclusion structure focuses on the needs of the community and promotes interventions that are both effective and equitable. While OUD affects individuals of a variety of racial and socioeconomic backgrounds, an understanding of disparities in access to care and systemic discrimination that has impacted their experiences and treatment outcomes is imperative. A systemic approach that is based in recognizing these differences is necessary when addressing the needs of this population. Latent functions

2. TN Department of Health

of discrimination of individuals who experience OUD is felt regardless of race or gender (Adams et al., 2021; Dale & Smith, 2013). Community understanding and perspective on the population of individuals with OUD not only stigmatizes them but can deter access to proper interventions in communities (Adams et al., 2021). Even within a hospital setting, when individuals who are admitted have OUD, they sometimes experience discrimination that can block access to treatment regardless of regulations (Kimmel et al., 2021). Medical discrimination is unwarranted when viewing OUD through the theory of the natural mind, since opioids were manufactured with addiction being a known side effect (Dale & Smith, 2013). While urban populations are experiencing the effects of the opioid epidemic, their rural counterparts are not equipped with the same resources to combat the community effect (Cashwell, Campbell, & Crowser, 2021). All these factors hinder this group before even considering the intersectionality of racial discrimination for this population.

The African American, Native American, Hispanic, and Latin populations that are affected by OUD do not have the same access to intervention care and face systemic discrimination when developing OUD (Siddiqui & Urman, 2022). Lack of community resources to counter the effects of OUD and suffering from excessive incarcerations due to discrimination all affect these populations. These vulnerable populations deserve access to education, funding for proper intervention, and proper access to facilities (Siddiqui & Urman, 2022). These systematic failings are just one consequence of discrimination against vulnerable populations; there is also a persistent lack of awareness regarding the latent functions shaped by generations of racism and oppression (Dale & Smith, 2013).

## Supervised Consumption Sites

A supervised consumption site (SCS) is a crucial intervention for the opioid epidemic missing from many communities' current resources. These sites act as beacons of hope for clients by providing a clean and safe environment, harm reduction-informed practices, and trained professionals specializing in addiction and harm reduction. Committed to promoting harm reduction measures through the perspective of diversity, equity, and inclusion, the central goal of an SCS is to enhance the health and wellbeing of community residents by creating resilient interventions rooted in harm reduction. Program objectives include lowering rates of deaths related to opioid overdoses, promoting client engagement with internal programs, giving community educational opportunities, and setting up data collection measures to provide findings for community members.

Individuals who suffer from OUD are not alone. From rehabilitation, harm reduction, and non-abstinence-based approaches, to organizations, individuals, and communities

that have been affected by the opioid epidemic, there is a wide variety of assistance. Although families often place their hope in treatments based in rehabilitation, there are various approaches available for individuals with OUD. Community intervention at a macro scale will help mitigate the mortality rate of OUD in communities, whether through medical or harm reduction means (Feinglass et al., 2022).

This new form of harm reduction in the United States is not available in most states due to them being seen as a place for intentional drug activity (Sherman, 2022). Though individuals are allowed to consume narcotics acquired off the supervised consumption site campus, this style of organization supplies a variety of support for individuals who are not ready for other avenues. These facilities allow individuals to practice the theory of the rationalist approach by allowing them to choose a safe way for their needs to be met, through an SCS providing access to a safe and clean environment with trained medical staff (Abrams, Seabra, & Searby, 2023; Dale & Smith, 2013). The SCS also uses social systems theory in its macro approach by supplying instruments and safety provisions for the needs of their population and having clear expectations of their environment (Dale & Smith, 2013). While harm reduction is the first step to helping people, an SCS acts as a holon within the larger system of care for individuals with OUD.

**Evidence-Based Practices**

Community resources that are accessible for community members struggling with opioids and substance misuse can often save lives (Feinglass et al., 2022). Though there are facilities for rehabilitation and abstinence-based approaches within Rutherford County, the implementation of harm reduction methods is lacking within the community. While current rehabilitation facilities abide by certain regulations, discrimination against individuals who partake in opioids and other substances can result in lack of access to proper care (Adams et al., 2021; Kimmel et al., 2021). Couch et al. (2024) reported one specific form of stigmatization felt by those seeking treatment for OUD was “felt judged by their clinicians” (p.8). Individuals who use substances are highly stigmatized within all areas, including public health settings that can lead to worse health outcomes, increased overdose rates, and an overall reluctance to seek help. Supervised consumption sites are not strictly places of intentional drug use, but rather community resources implementing evidence-based harm reduction.

**Innovation**

The current options for interventions within Rutherford County include both abstinence based and methadone maintenance treatment. An SCS allows individuals not ready to pursue treatment access to a wide range of supports, providing immediate lifesaving medical intervention during overdoses from opioids that would have been fatal in other environments (Fienglass et al, 2022). Within the facility, clients are provided clean instruments and safety provisions that aid in the act of harm reduction and act within the clear expectations of the SCS. Facilities like this one act as a first stop within the larger system of harm reduction care.

**Cost**

Understanding the cost related to an SCS in relation to the societal cost of an individual with opioid use disorder provides a deeper comprehension of the larger impacts harm reduction services can provide. To provide an individual with services, it would cost on average $4,000-$5,200 a year (Caulkins et al., 2019). In contrast, the healthcare cost alone related to a fatal opioid overdose would cost the healthcare system around $5,500 (Luo et al., 2021). Additionally, if an individual is incarcerated due to substance-related charges, the average yearly cost is around $53,000 (ALCU Massachusetts, n.d.). While further research is needed to better understand the cost analysis of an SCS compared to other modes of addressing opioid use disorder, this brief discussion shows promise in relieving social funds through the harm reduction movement. Though this discussion can show the cost effectiveness of a harm reduction approach, there are systematic issues where many are profiting from the earlier figures provided rather than addressing social issues.

**Community Involvement**

Community involvement is paramount when implementing a supervised consumption site. Though resources such as supervised consumption sites are currently stigmatized, educating the residents of Rutherford County on the benefits would increase community acceptance (Jirka et al., 2021). While abstinence-based substance uses treatment work for some, the need for an integrated harm reduction approach would allow for stronger interventions within the community (Gallagher et al., 2019). Discussions within the community would allow for education surrounding harm reduction approaches and increase understanding surrounding the spectrum of the needs of those with substance use disorders (Gallagher et al., 2019). Community members' involvement is a vital part of any community action plan, especially when working with such an at-risk population.

**Cultural Aspects**

Acceptance of supervised consumption sites requires discussions within the community that break down cultural norms surrounding substance use disorder. Since the war on drugs was enacted, many professionals do not think that individuals with substance use disorders tend to have stereotypes associated due to lack of education and propaganda. Within Tennessee, policies being implemented through a conservative supermajority, a strong cultural emphasis on abstinence-based approaches shapes policy attitudes and policy decisions, creating social pressures that discourage harm reduction strategies. This mindset at a macro level impacts the cultural ideals at a mezzo and micro level that can lead to community disdain against interventions based in harm reduction rather than rehabilitation. Due to these ideals and lack of community supports, individuals and families who are impacted from OUD cannot access lifesaving treatment, which can then perpetuate the cycle of health disparities within the South. Some cultural stereotypes surrounding individuals with substance use disorders associate them with crime, violence, and unethical behavior (Dennis & Pienaar, 2023). On top the cultural stereotypes surrounding substance use, the intersectionality of racism is another factor when discussing a supervised consumption site for Rutherford County. Minority populations in Rutherford County may grow weary of organizations and institutions like SCS, fearing protentional harm (Cénat et al., 2024). The cultural implications would disrupt common misconceptions surrounding substance use disorder and provide for individuals the change to reclaim their path to social recovery.

**Social Determinant of Health**

Allowing individuals a safe space while navigating their own sobriety when experiencing substance use disorders is not the only impact that an SCS promotes in communities. While the main mission is to provide a harm reduction approach to substance use, supervised consumption sites promote other social determinants of health within communities. In communities that had access to supervised consumption sites, there was an increase in availability of services that promoted emotional support and promoted residents to feel safe and secure within their community (Kerman et al., 2020). Community members in an area that has a supervised consumption site also benefit from the increased access of both mental health and healthcare services (Kerman et al., 2020). While community members feel the positive impacts of a supervised consumption site within their area, individuals with substance use disorders felt added positive impacts related to community education impacts related to substance use (Kerman et al., 2020).

## Policy Implications

While some individuals acquire narcotics through legal means, there are many illegal avenues through which to obtain substances of choice. For a supervised consumption site to be a practical service within a community, understanding policy implications is necessary. In other instances, special sanctions have been allowed for supervised consumption sites to open and provide sanctions for clients who use these services (Hayle, 2017). Though these special sanctions were achievable through community governmental, and law enforcement support (Hayle, 2017). Dismantling policies based on "the moral model underpinning the War on Drugs and the medical model entailed by the disease model of addiction" is crucial for the harm reduction movement (Smith & Marshall, 2016). When working within policy efforts related to narcotics with the United States, understanding that prohibitionist policy efforts were implemented to further oppress marginalized groups and communities is paramount (Smith & Marshall, 2016). Efforts should be made to further implement harm reduction policies that "seek to meet individuals where they are and provide assistance with helping individuals and communities reduce the harms associated with drug use and other risky behaviors" (Marlatt & Witkiewitz, 2010 p.595). Further research on the implication of supervised consumption sites effects on a micro, mezzo, macro level scale, legislative initiatives, and policies with law enforcements agencies within the localities must be done.

**Implications for Practice**

The wave of the "new public health" movement based in a harm reduction approach is crucial for future practice across health disciplines (Smith & Marshall, 2016 p.7). Understanding and implementing harm reduction approaches such as supervised consumption site facilities open a new area of practice within behavioral health. Within the educational setting, dismantling negative beliefs and connotations of substance use within course work should be implemented (Bozinoff et al., 2024) Executing a harm reduction approach within health settings can shift the ideology that labels substance uses from harmful to an individual, to an unmet need within communal settings (Smith & Marshall, 2016). To best meet the needs of community members behavioral health professionals should aid in the creation of "by and for" organizations to build peer efficacy in promoting harm reduction practices (Smith & Marshall, 2016, p. 189). Though, when working within a macro-organization, understanding the downfalls of professionalism within peer-based movements can be changed related to institutional power structures that can render services meaningless if co-opted by the majority (Smith & Marshall, 2016). When implementing harm reduction into practice, supporting both the individual's right to self-determination and conserving the person-in-environment perspective is paramount for the future of behavioral health practice.

## Limitations

While research on supervised consumption sites continues to gain traction, there are limitations to this discussion. Most of the research discussed is based in areas outside of the United States. Additionally, the information provided within this discussion may not generalize to communities within the United States. While the focus of this discussion pertains to supervised consumption sites and opioid use disorder, the literature reviewed on supervised consumption sites includes data for clients with a variety of substance use disorders.

## Conclusion

In a society where "substance abuse permeates with tremendous intensity" abstinence-based interventions have shown to be an ineffective intervention approach (Vejar, 2023, p. 3). Supervised consumption sites provide individuals with self-determination and safety that might not be provided when isolated within substance use. Community-based harm reduction has the potential to reduce overdose rates, prevent the spread of infectious diseases, and work as a hub-and-spoke model for those who desire treatment within a structured and supportive environment. Behavioral health professionals will face a variety of challenges when supporting a supervised consumption site as a means of intervention for individuals with substance use disorders. While logistical and policy-related challenges are at the forefront of harm reduction-based interventions, professionals will also need to address internal bias and ingrained stigmas around substance use to fully embrace interventions based in the harm reduction approach. Additionally, educating community members on the evidence-based benefits of harm reduction by supervised consumption sites is necessary to sway current societal perceptions in hopes of acceptance of these lifesaving interventions. Community support for initiatives such as a supervised consumption site understand that the harm reduction approach to substance use disorders does not perpetuate them but provides alternative interventions is a major challenge that social workers will face (Taylor et al., 2021). Only through the efforts of consistent advocacy, collaboration with community members, and the continuation of research to further validate harm reduction approaches, such as supervised consumption sites, can lasting change be made in life saving treatments to address substance use disorders in a way that promotes both safety and dignity for those involved.

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# Where "dead people lay like saints": Gothic Modernism in Cormac McCarthy's *Child of God*

**Harley Mercadal**

ABSTRACT

This paper examines how Cormac McCarthy uses Gothic and Modernist modes in *Child of God*, a novel primarily known for its place in the Southern Gothic genre. In Gothic Modernism, writers blur traditional literary techniques—in the form of Gothic tropes or stylistic choices such as the framing narrative, unsettling landscapes, or depictions of madness—into Modernist techniques, using experimentation to evoke alienation or engage in social critique. I argue that *Child of God*, though published in 1973, is a Gothic Modernist text due to McCarthy's stylistics, aesthetics, themes, and tropes. By looking at the novel through the lens of Gothic Modernism, we better understand McCarthy's reasoning, influences, and methodology for telling the story of Lester Ballard. For example, McCarthy depicts the grotesque, death, and decay in eerie settings suggesting isolation, alienation, disillusionment, and individualism, layering the novel with nuance and experimentation. By bridging gaps between genres, eras, and aesthetics, McCarthy challenges readers' expectations of the novel form and how we are complicit in our communities. I use research from Gothic Modernist scholars such as John Riquelme and Charles Crow to support the argument that McCarthy, consciously or unconsciously, uses Gothic and Modernist tropes in his stylistic approach to the novel.

Horace Walpole's 1764 novel Castle of Otranto is generally the literary work that most scholars agree for where Gothic literature begins as audiences now recognize the genre.[1] Despite the "Gothic" term's long semantic history, Walpole is generally considered the first author to label his own tale as "Gothic" (Groom xiii). Gothic literature, and its characteristic darkness and despair, laid a foundation for what are now considered classic horror elements: ghosts, monsters, supernatural happenings, and so on. While most contemporary Gothic tales do not focus on a now-classic style of monster—as seen in novels such as Bram Stoker's Dracula with vampires or Mary Shelley's Frankenstein with reanimated corpses turned flesh golems—the monstrous instead appears with a more realistic focus on the monsters within humanity itself. Virginia Woolf comments on this shift, noting that "monsters who once froze and terrified us now gibber in some dark cupboard of the servants' hall" and that "[i] t is [now] at the ghosts within us that we shudder" (133). However, psychological elements of the Gothic, such as manifestations of trauma, guilt, anxiety, or memory, continue to persist in contemporary literature.

Over time, the Gothic genre has expanded and become versatile, often overlapping with other genres, such as Modernism. Experimentation, particularly with genre and form, is an important element of Modernist literature. For example, writers such as T. S. Eliot and Hilda Doolittle (H.D.) blended poetry with myth, Biblical references, and other literary allusions to create poems more akin to an experience than an ode to a beautiful thing. This Modernist experimentation reflects its time in its scientific and logic-based development, as Sigmund Freud's work on the uncanny and dreams rose in popularity and Ezra Pound made his now-infamous advice to artists to "make it new." Gothic literature and Modernism share many characteristics, including elements of the "unconscious," the "subconscious," and the "influence of unseen agencies" such as social codes, which often directly affect characters beyond their control (Groom xv). The blending of the two genres is what scholar John Riquelme calls "Dark Modernity," or what scholar Taryn Norman simply calls "Gothic Modernism."

Gothic Modernism is "a strain of Modernism that makes use of the well-established language and conventions of the Gothic terms to express recognizably Modernist concerns about the nature of subjectivity, temporality, language, and knowledge" (Norman 2). This dual genre happens when writers blur past

1. I will capitalize "Gothic" in keeping with the scholarly norm, but I will also capitalize verbiage like "Gothicizing" when using my own words. When citing a source, however, I will preserve their preference for capitalization

literary techniques—in the form of Gothic tropes or stylistic choices like the framing narrative—into Modernism, usually using experimentation, alienation, or social critique. Regrettably, Gothic Modernism scholarship is generally lacking; thus, the correlation "between the Gothic and modernism is still critically under-explored," which is a gap I seek to help fill (Wurtz 103). Despite Cormac McCarthy's novel *Child of God* being published in 1973—a time long past Modernism's prime, reaching into Postmodernist territory with all chronological certainty—I argue that *Child of God* is, nonetheless, a Gothic Modernist text because of its style and contents. McCarthy uses Gothic elements—such as the grotesque, death and decay, and eerie settings—which he weaves in tandem with Modernist concerns and stylistic choices—such as isolation and alienation, disillusionment, and individualism—to craft a tale exploring and questioning both modern progress as well as the fragmentation of community in a post-Industrial Revolution, post-agrarian Southern United States.

Cormac McCarthy is "[k]nown for his exploration of violence and human degradation in bleak scenarios" and is thus usually categorized as a Southern Gothic writer alongside authors such as William Faulkner, Carson McCullers, and Flannery O'Conner (Kimak 76). In a careful overview of the formal stylistics in *Child of God*, one begins to see that the novel's structure and style—not just its characterization, setting, and plot—are also interwoven with Gothic and Modernist elements. For example, Part I of *Child of God* has seven short anecdotal chapters told by different community members which are usually in an unnamed first-person point of view. Six out of seven anecdotes tell short, snapshot memories about Lester. These short anecdotes are where readers get the majority of their information about Lester's past, including the suicide of his father and interactions from his childhood with other former friends and playmates. These short memories, presented in a social storytelling fashion, evoke the classic Gothic structure of "stories-within-stories" or "inserted narratives," much like Bram Stoker's *Dracula* or Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (Groom 77).

While most of the novel is told chronologically, the anecdotal chapters appear to be connected like one long conversation. However, when the anecdotes are compared to the rest of the novel, they seem to happen chronologically *after* Lester becomes a hot conversation topic. After finishing the novel, most readers will probably assume these conversations happen either after Lester is arrested or when he is officially "sent to the state hospital at Knoxville," both of which would be natural gossip starters within the small, rural community (McCarthy 193). Cormac McCarthy leaves the exact time and reasoning for these conversations ambiguous, which is in itself Gothic, lending a sense of mystery to the text. As scholar Charles Crow notes, many Gothic writers use

differing "time sequence[s] and shifting points of view to create ambiguity" in their writing ("Realism" 93). This ambiguity opens the story up for multiple readings and interpretations, allowing readers to study the parts of the novel for themselves and try to place them into a logical sequence. But to understand more fully McCarthy's decision to include these ambiguous anecdotes, the Modernist sense of ambiguity must also be considered.

In addition to their Gothic roles as inserted narratives, these anecdotal chapters could also be considered a Modernist stylistic choice. Modernist authors often used multiple points of view and stream-of-consciousness to question the nature of truth, perception, and reality. The most well-known example of this in Modernism is William Faulkner's *The Sound and The Fury*, where Faulkner uses viewpoints from Benjy, Quentin, and Jason Compson to tell differing parts of the story. For example, the Benjy section is told through stream-of-consciousness, where one memory flows into the next without many clear indications of chronology. While not explicitly unfiltered like Faulkner's stream-of-consciousness, it is clear that Cormac McCarthy allows the conversations of one memory to flow into another without stopping during the anecdotal chapters. The clearest example of this technique is when an unnamed character is telling a story about Lester and his rifle. The narrator says that Lester is an incredibly skilled shooter, getting "run off out at the fair one time" because of his skill in winning stuffed animals in a shooting game (McCarthy 57). This anecdote directly leads to the narrator's sharing another memory about shooting and fairs where a con man pretends to shoot pigeons but has an assistant "loadin the old pigeons up the ass with them little firecrackers," showing the con man for an unskilled shooter (McCarthy 58). Without a pause, another memory is told of a different carnival where one man paid to try and fight an ape to impress a girl when he was a teenager (McCarthy 59-60). The flow of these stories, shared without indicating a pause, heavily resembles both Faulkner's stream-of-consciousness technique in its unstopping, natural flow and a conversation between people standing around together. Both techniques feel conversational and unedited, making little sense broken apart but feeling like a guided flow together.

Similarly, Cormac McCarthy's writing style should be examined closer as being both Gothic and Modernist in its actual stylistic qualities. These separate sets of stylistics play off each other, adding a deeper nuance to McCarthy's language. His writing is Gothic in its dark descriptions and occasional ambiguity. I also argue that McCarthy's writing is Gothic because of the occasionally beautiful, poetic, but nonetheless grotesque or violent prose he produces in *Child of God*. The poetic Gothic often has lush, detailed descriptions of darker themes, and this style can easily be seen in classical Gothic tales such as

Ann Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest*. One example of this poetic-yet-unsavory description in *Child of God* is when Lester urinates: "He moves in the dry chaff among the dust and slats of sunlight with a constrained truculence. . . . Wasps pass through the laddered light from the barnslats in a succession of strobic moments, gold and trembling" (McCarthy 4). This scene, "wherein swirls a pale foam with bits of straw," is Gothic in its evocation of the excreted, grotesque by-products of the body (McCarthy 4). Likewise, McCarthy's language here is celebratory in its poetic description of urinating on a barn wall. Such topics often hinge on the taboo in literature because of their association with being an unsaid act occurring behind closed doors and off screen from the narrative eye. Such a beautiful description of a traditionally unsavory act brings to mind Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the grotesque body. Bakhtin posits that functions like urinating, defecating, copulating, et cetera, are all seen as celebrations of the body because doing these essential acts means the body is alive (Dentith 240-41). Since Bakhtin's grotesque body has been heavily associated with Gothic literature and its scholarship, it is no surprise that poetic urinating further Gothicizes the novel by celebrating a minor, unsavory act.

Another example of Cormac McCarthy's style where the grotesque becomes celebrated as beauty can be seen when Lester watches hunting dogs take down a boar: "Ballard watched this ballet twirl and swirl . . . watched the lovely blood welter there in its holograph of battle . . . [watched] the dark heart's blood, pinwheel and pirouette" (McCarthy 69). This violent description is beautiful, making what should be a gruesome act of killing into a "ballet" or an artistic, sanguinary performance worthy of witness and spectacle (McCarthy 69). This observed violent moment draws a line of inspiration to Lester's later underground playhouse, which he populates with his careful arrangement of Gothic dolls in the form of corpses in the caves. Between both the grotesque, nearly taboo topics of urinating and killing or death, scholar Charles Crows suggests that these are examples of the "Gothic's power to suggest topics [usually] hidden from the public discourse" ("Realism" 81). Thus, the Gothic stylistics in his descriptions create a vehicle for McCarthy to make the taboo and grotesque beautiful. While Gothic literature is no stranger to violent acts, McCarthy carefully shows the reader what Lester sees in his descent to madness: violence and blood are no longer things to be feared, and an act of violence can be artistic expression. However, while occasionally poetic in its darkness, McCarthy's language is just as often filled with Modernist fragmentation, complicating the narrative to further reflect the lack of simplicity in Lester's situation.

Cormac McCarthy's writing is not entirely Gothically inspired, despite the abundance of his grotesque and violent descriptions. McCarthy's writing is also

interlaced with sparse, occasionally fragmented, or run-on bits of experimental prose that feel at home beside Modernists like Ezra Pound with *The Cantos* or T. S. Eliot's landmark piece *The Waste Land*. For example, the very first sentence of *Child of God* is a run-on, a wandering figure of stitched-together fragments:

> They came like a caravan of carnival folk up through the swales of broomstraw and across the hill in the morning sun, the truck rocking and pitching in the ruts and the musicians on chairs in the truckbed teetering and tuning their instruments, the fat man with guitar grinning and gesturing to others in a car behind and bending to give a note to the fiddler who turned a fiddlepeg and listened with a wrinkled face. (McCarthy 1)

This opening sentence reflects natural human speech patterns more than polished prose, leaving readers glad to take a metaphorical breath after finally finishing it. Modernists were keen to experiment with language and form, especially if that experimentation broke previously traditional forms, such as the classic sentence's grammatical structure. Fragmentation was a common way for writers to attempt to mimic humanity's emotional and subconscious states more accurately, as William Faulkner does in *The Sound and the Fury*. Modernists were also interested in multiple or different viewpoints, particularly because "the nature of truth is never certain," leading readers to question whether the eye telling Lester's story is a reliable narrator (Campbell 2). Between the fragmentation, stream-of-consciousness, and multiple points of view from the anecdotal sections, McCarthy creates a distinctly blurred and Gothically ambiguous style, leaving more questions raised than answered. These complications from the stylistics of the two genres add to the sense that McCarthy tells readers not everything in Lester's tale is easy to digest or judge.

Cormac McCarthy's experimentation with formalistic concerns is both Modernist and Gothic in *Child of God*. As aforementioned, experimentation with language and breaking formal and traditional language boundaries was common in Modernism. One of the clearest examples is McCarthy's breaking of the fourth wall, where his unnamed narrator speaks directly to the reader. The narrator tells us that Lester is "[a] child of God much *like yourself* perhaps" (McCarthy 4, emphasis added). The narrator directly speaks to the reader a second time toward the end of the novel, bidding the reader to look at Lester and "[s]ee him. You could say that he's sustained by his fellow men, *like you*" (McCarthy 156, emphasis added). Breaking the boundaries of the understood fictional space adds a complicated layer to the novel, raising a question of how much of a part the

reader plays in hearing Lester's story. McCarthy further experiments with the traditional novel's form and eliminates many formal language conventions, such as quotation marks, chapter markers, and often dialogue tags. While there are "Part" markers for each third of *Child of God*, McCarthy forgoes the tradition of adding more frequent markers, such as "Chapter One" or even a number, to indicate where one chapter ends and another begins. McCarthy does have page breaks, but these do not serve the same purpose in ease of access that a referential marker like "Chapter Seven" normally would for readers. By not engaging in traditional boundary-marking of the novel, McCarthy is experimenting with the novel's structure as a whole, implicating that the tale's purpose is more of an experience, or perhaps a warning, than entertainment. This Modernist experimentation is taken further by McCarthy's Gothic additions, amplifying the reader's experience of unease around the tale.

While McCarthy's lack of boundary-making implies a certain level of blurring and blending that Modernists often did with genre or point-of-view, it also has a distinct sense of Gothic ambiguity. McCarthy's dialogue is generally easy enough to keep up with when it is between two characters, as there is a lack of room for confusion with only two speakers. However, when multiple characters are speaking, the lack of quotation marks, and often dialogue tags, makes the ambiguity much more challenging for a reader to accurately decide which character speaks. A perfect example of this is when Lester escapes the group of men who pull him from the hospital:

> That little son of a bitch.
>
> Where is he?
>
> He's by god gone.
>
> Well let's get after him.
>
> I cain't get through the hole. (McCarthy 185)

There is simply no way to say for sure who says what line, but this Gothic ambiguity "tempt[s] readers to construct their own narratives" from the missing information (Crow, "Realism" 75). The speakers' identities are ambiguous because of the lack of dialogue tags, but the tone and level of emotions from the men are also unclear due to McCarthy forgoing exclamation points or even commas to provide contextual clues. For example, "I cain't get through the hole" implies a calm or resigned tone, whereas "I cain't get through the hole!" or "'I cain't get through the hole,' he spat," would imply a more nuanced tone of panic or anger (McCarthy 185). McCarthy keeps parts of his dialogue Gothically

ambiguous and tempts his readers with puzzle pieces of half-withheld information, as it brings to mind other Gothic "found evidence" tales, such as Bram Stoker's *Dracula* with its newspaper clippings, journal entries, and letters.

Cormac McCarthy also builds the various settings in *Child of God* to be both Gothic and Modernist in their configurations. The city scenes—here defined as the industrial center of the county with a post office, grocer, and police station—are where McCarthy gives readers a glimpse into Modernism, albeit briefly. When Lester is within the city limits, he is only there because he is either dealing with the police or has the means to spend money, such as his cash theft or property theft (e.g., the wristwatches) from his victims. McCarthy makes a subtle commentary here on the progress of industrialism in small, rural communities: society has changed from its past of heavy reliance on agrarian lifestyles to a more cash-based system. Lester Ballard is "lean and bitter" (41) when he has to hunt for himself, or he buys plenty of food on credit from the grocer where he racks up "[t]hirty four dollars and nineteen cents'" worth of debt in groceries (McCarthy 125). There is an undercurrent in these binary images, which suggests the traditional path of hunting and growing one's own food is no longer viable, or at the very least, not comfortable or easy. Modernity's industrial progress has likewise changed the point-of-view of the citizens (both within the fictional space of the novel and in America's reality) to where the idea of living without an hourly or salary-paying job is now often seen as shameful.

This shift of views toward a more industrial-minded and cash-based society can be seen in the sheriff, Fate, who has a more acceptable job and is being paid a salary to do service work rather than making a living through agrarian means. Fate comments to Lester while arresting him that a "*[m]an of leisure* like yourself . . . outghtn't to mind helpin *us workers* unscramble a little misunderstandin" (McCarthy 51, emphasis added). Despite his ability to survive by shooting his own game and collecting leftover corn from fields, Fate looks down on Lester's lack of a "real" job. Of course, Lester's crimes of theft to eat are not to be commended, but even before the events of the novel, he has a farm with crops and animals; therefore, Lester has never had a "real" job within the space of this increasingly cash-based society he lives in. He lacks the skillset and knowledge to do many hourly-paying jobs, yet Lester has an entirely different set of abilities in farming, hunting, and gathering. As scholar Rebecca Peters-Golden puts it, Lester showcases the "difficulties of failing to be modern, being failed by modernity, [and] attaining modernity" in his inability to assimilate with society and be gainfully employed (4). Modernity rejects Lester, showing its Gothically-inflected "horrors of capitalist reality" as agrarian lifestyles are pushed out in favor of industrial progress (Peters-Golden

11). While Modernism critiques all governing systems—industrial and technological progress included—it is the erasure of agrarian skills and the implied horrors of wage slavery that adds a very Gothic inflection to the comparison between the urban and rural areas in the novel.

The Gothic inflection continues as McCarthy sets his tale in Sevier County, Tennessee, which is notable for its lack of identification. The place is described by its county, a collective name, rather than a singular city's name. The setting for Lester's tale becomes ambiguous enough to feel mysterious, reminding readers of classic Gothic tales with settings that call to distant places away from the predicted readership.[2] This deliberate choice makes it clear that the settings in *Child of God* are largely rural and pastoral; while there are city scenes in the novel, much of the plot takes place in the forest, caves, and the countryside. The relationship between out-of-the-way settings is often inherent in the Gothic, which scholar Charles Crow comments on as "materials for the Gothic can be found in apparently mundane small towns and rural communities" ("Realism" 66). The horrors of a small town are different, but no lesser, than their city counterparts in tales such as Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886).

However, the Gothic genre has expanded well beyond its popularized European beginnings. The Southern United States has now become "the principal region of American Gothic" due to "its legacy of profound social and economic problems" (124) as well as its notorious reputation of Southern people clinging to "memories of the past, and to faded symbols of the dead" (Crow, "American Gothic" 125). Topics such as the South's reluctance to socio-political progression, in the sense of being haunted by its past, in the post-antebellum period are in no short supply. Novels such as William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, Jean Toomer's *Cane*, and Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* all show the ties between the South, race, rural or small communities, and clinging to the past. But McCarthy goes one step further, where the forest and caves within the rural Sevier County are the most Gothic settings of *Child of God*, further contrasting the novel's more modern, civilized, and urban area.

The Gothic forest is so archetypal in its "topographical" inclusion that it has nearly become an expected cliche in both Gothic literature and horror, particularly for horror films (Groom 77). Ecogothic scholar Elizabeth Parker calls the Gothic forest "an archetypal site of dread in the collective human imagination," alluding that the forest is more often an untamed wilderness than an enchanting wood in Gothic tales because of

2. Horace Walpole's The Castle of Otranto is set in Italy, but it was first published in England. Similarly, The Romance of the Forest by Ann Radcliffe is set largely in France.

its potential for isolation (1). This archetypal fear of the forest appears in many classic Gothic tales, from Ann Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest* to Charles Brockden Brown's *Edgar Huntley*, or to a lesser degree in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Lester's connection to the landscape is evident and profound through several points in the novel: he is connected to the land by his abilities to hunt, forage, navigate the woods easily, and find out-of-the-way places to live. The first offense in the novel is the county's taking his family farm and land away from him for not paying taxes; this connection implies that Lester does not just see the farm and its land as property but as part of himself and his familial legacy. When Lester is first expelled from his ancestral land, he takes shelter in a primarily abandoned hunting cabin, and he mostly steals food from surrounding farms or prowls the woods for animals to kill for survival.

Lester becomes more closely intertwined with the forest as he comes to rely on it and its animals for food. Rather than being a visitor like hikers or lovers-to-be, Lester slips into being a dwelling predator. However, this increasingly wild and predator-like behavior means the forest becomes haunted by Lester's comings and goings, starting with his voyeurism of the couple having sexual intercourse in a car (McCarthy 20). Lester's haunting of the forest increases with his crimes of necrophilia and body stealing (87-88), then murder directly followed by more acts of necrophilia (McCarthy 151). The forest becomes a "fearful space [because it is] inhabited by threatening characters (or creatures) and marked by deep-seated secrets," which means that Lester Ballard is, in a sense, the monster in the woods, looking for his next opportunity (Hughes and Smith 9). Lester's secrets grow as his monstrosity does, and the trajectory of Lester's loss of civility and self is clear as his crimes become more heinous. McCarthy not only Gothicizes the forest by making it a place haunted by Lester and his horrific crimes; it is further Gothicized in its innate isolating ability to aid Lester in finding easy victims, and that isolation helps Lester commit his crimes largely uninterrupted.

Lester Ballard, too, is inherently built with both Gothic and Modernist characteristics in mind. However, the most prominent and overarching indication of Lester's characteristics as a Modernist-built man is simply the novel's focus on him. Modernists were deeply concerned with Individualism, where a single person and their point of view became more important than the society around them at large. This Modernist focus on the individual can be seen in Jean Rhys' *Good Morning, Midnight,* with its focus on the inner workings of Sasha Jensen, or Carson McCullers' *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* revolving around the character John Singer. While Lester never gets a first-person point-of-view chapter, readers instead get to see the Individualism in *Child of God* as a narrative over-the-shoulder view combined with the anecdotal chapters, most

of which likewise focus on Lester Ballard and his past. Ballard, too, is individualistic in his isolation and, indeed, his alienation. He isolates himself regularly, from taking shelter in an abandoned hunting cabin—which he cleans up to the best of his ability—to the more extreme isolation of his cave system. He is even isolated by choice before the novel begins, living at his ancestral farm away from other people. Ballard likewise often provides for himself by whatever means he finds necessary, such as stealing food or shooting game to cook and eat; Lester does not seek community help because he knows he will not receive it.

While Lester leans into his self-made isolation, it is crucial to note that his community has also alienated him long before the events of the novel unfold. As readers see in the anecdotal sections, many people seem to have off-putting or violent stories to tell about Lester, from the suicide of his father to the childhood story of bullying turned worse. Lester is at least partially alienated from his community when, as a child, he hits a fellow child in the face. The unnamed narrator of this anecdote tells the reader: "I never liked Lester Ballard from that day. I never liked him much before that. He never done nothin to me" (McCarthy 17-18). Between his mother's running off and causing a scandal, his father's committing suicide, and a childhood mistake of lashing out, it seems that Lester has been avoided and alienated for much of his life. Unfortunately, this alienation only continues when Lester is an adult. As I discussed earlier, Lester is alienated by his community in the example of the sheriff, Fate Turner, by his refusal to participate in gainful, cash-based employment.

However, this alienation shows up again when Lester tries to flirt and seek sexual companionship legitimately (i.e., not through voyeurism, rape, or necrophilia, as he does in other parts of the novel). For example, Lester seems to believe that the daughters of Reubel, the dump keeper, are easy sexual targets because Reubel's nine daughters are sexually active and falling "pregnant one by one" (McCarthy 27). Instead, he is rejected by at least two of the daughters in turn, being told "[*y*]*ou* ain't got nothin I want" in response to Lester's offer of a gift (McCarthy 77, emphasis added). No one owes Lester sexual companionship, and the rejection is justified for many reasons. But it is clear he does not expect to be rejected with such finality. Later, another daughter of the dump keeper scornfully tells Lester, "[y]ou ain't even a man. You're just a crazy *thing*," effectively creating an even more profound sense of alienation, as Ballard is equated to an object rather than a person (McCarthy 117, emphasis added). Much like Mary Shelley's monster in *Frankenstein*, Lester Ballard spends his time as "a being in constant search for personal companionship," making him akin to a socially alienated monster himself (Lancaster 133). His failures to connect with living women socially, romantically, and

physically lead to Lester's demented drive to take those connections for himself via rape, necrophilia, and murder.

Lester Ballard's social alienation is only amplified by his Modernist sense of disillusionment in governing systems, whether they be the police or rules of sociability. Lester is falsely accused of rape early in the novel, and while he did steal the woman's dress and slap her—which are crimes in themselves—he found the woman after her rape occurred. Though he tries to tell the police that he has nothing to do with the actual rape of the woman, the police do not believe him. In fact, the police allow the accusing woman to start a physical altercation with Ballard as she "slapped Ballard's mouth," and when he begins to fight back, the police restrain him instead of her (McCarthy 52). The woman is allowed to kick Ballard while the deputy has a knee in his back to bring Lester to his knees. His disillusionment with justice is shown when he says, "[y]ou sons of bitches . . . Goddamn all of ye" and is described as "almost crying" at the treatment he receives (McCarthy 52). Despite the lack of evidence tying him to the woman's rape, Ballard is sentenced to nine days in jail, and presumably, his other crimes—physically assaulting her with a slap and stealing her dress—are not brought up to the police, let alone punished.

When Lester is released, however, his Modernist disillusionment with ruling systems—in this case, the police—is deepened once more as the sheriff asks him mockingly, "[w]hat sort of meanness have you got laid out for next" (McCarthy 56). Despite Lester's vehement denial of having any such plans, the sheriff presses him:

> I figure you ought to give us a clue. Make it more fair. Let's see: failure to comply with a court order, public disturbance, assault and battery, public drunk, rape. I guess murder is next on the list[,] ain't it? Or what things is it you've done that we ain't found out yet. (McCarthy 56)

By reminding Lester of all his real and imagined past mistakes, the sheriff makes it clear that he and, by extension, the entire police force, looks down on him. The sheriff's accusation of Lester murdering in the future further cements the disillusion, causing Lester to snap back at the sheriff with "I ain't done nothin" and returning the accusatory blow with "[y]ou kindly got henhouse ways yourself, Sheriff," implying that the sheriff is corrupt himself (McCarthy 56). This disillusionment is later revisited when Lester is brought in again to be questioned about his behavior and the burning down of the hunting cabin. When talking to the police, Lester says, "I know how they do ye . . . [they t]hrow ye in jail and beat the shit out of ye" in answer to why he was in a place where no one

could find him (McCarthy 122). He has no faith in the justice system, which seems to only hurt him. By extension, Cormac McCarthy reminds his readers that the police are not always ready to help, especially if someone is already an alienated Other of their society. However, Lester is alienated not just because of his status as an outcast but also because of his Gothic grotesqueness.

While I mentioned Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the grotesque body earlier in this paper, I believe Cormac McCarthy likewise uses Lester as a grotesque character. Scholar Alan Spiegel's definition of the grotesque character is an archetype largely found in Southern Gothic texts. According to Spiegel, the grotesque in Gothic literature is a "type of character" who is almost always a "physically or mentally deformed figure" (428) whose "existence tells the society something about itself" (431). Lester is hit on the head with an axe early on in the novel, very probably causing brain damage, as he "could never hold his head right after that" and "was bleedin at the ears" (McCarthy 9). This incident obviously causes a physical deformity since Lester's neck never heals correctly, but there is also a good chance that it has caused severe mental damage as well. Regardless of whether or not Lester had existing mental health problems (e.g., trauma from his father's suicide), I think it is an easy argument to say that Lester Ballard is mentally unwell, as he commits necrophilia, murder, and occasionally wears the scalps of his victims. However, Lester is also a grotesque character because his "existence tells the society something about itself" (Spiegel 431). Rather than just his fictional society, Lester's character tells the reader and their real society something about themselves: a monster can be human, and people like Lester exist in our world, perhaps even in a small rural community. McCarthy's characterization of Lester also implies "that the source of Ballard's degradation issues [are] as much, if not more, from nurture as his nature" (Hillier 306). Since Lester's mother left him and his father killed himself, it is difficult to say for sure how—and by whom—Lester was raised. Nonetheless, Hillier implies that McCarthy makes Lester a sympathetic character who might have turned out differently if he had had more nurturing and community. By making Lester a Gothic grotesque character, McCarthy implicates readers and their societies in how monsters like Lester are created and sustained, suggesting the social norms that guide us are also Gothicized.

However, Lester Ballard is also a Gothic character in his relationships with death and decay. Lester decays rapidly through the course of the novel in physical, social, and moral ways. While decay is often represented through architecture in classic Gothic literature, such as the decaying abbeys of Ann Radcliffe's novels, decay in a moral or mental sense also appears in novels such as Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* with madness and desperation. Lester's physical decay begins when he is knocked in the head with

an axe, probably causing severe brain damage, as he was hit hard enough to bleed from both ears and "could never hold his head right after that" (McCarthy 9). While this injury no doubt also contributes to his mental decay, it is worth mentioning as the first actual physical injury he has in the novel. His physical decay grows as he must live off what he can steal or shoot, with McCarthy describing him as "grown lean and bitter" from partial starvation and homelessness (McCarthy 41). Since he is not getting the proper nutrition that he needs, Lester's body weakens and grows gaunt, or corpse-like, in its starvation. Lester also later sustains frostbite on his feet, where "his toes lay cold and bloodless" in his shoes, and upon trying to dip his feet into the water of a creek, his toes burn in agony because the freezing water feels hot (McCarthy 158). While physical decay often represents mental or moral decay in Gothic literature (e.g. Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher"), Lester's emotional decay is far worse than what his physical form shows.

Lester's social, mental, and moral decay worsen throughout the novel, following a Gothic descent into madness as he becomes more monstrous. As Lester Ballard decays physically and morally, people seem even less inclined than usual to speak with him. For example, when he walks into a store, the "group of boys and men . . . stopped talking when Ballard entered" (McCarthy 129). Even when he tries to directly engage with them by asking "[c]old enough for ye'ns," there is no response: "[n]obody said if it was or wasn't" (McCarthy 129). The men even seem hesitant to do business with Lester, and they pointedly go back to ignoring him as soon as the transaction of wristwatches is finished, despite Lester's hanging around afterward. This lack of give-and-take sociability, or even basic manners from the men at the store, contributes directly to Lester's sense of alienation, further sending him down a path of mental and moral decay. Lester is becoming less welcome everywhere he goes, even amongst people who should be his equals or, at the very least, his most eligible group for sociability.

Lester's mental and moral decay is difficult to read, and the sense of its permeating the novel is almost overwhelming in its quickly moving deterioration. From the novel's first chapter, Lester begins to mentally and morally decay; first, he sneaks back onto his ancestral property that he feels the county has stolen from him, and he threatens the potential buyers there with a gun (McCarthy 2). His mental decay largely begins here as well, due to the head injury he sustains because of his threats. Lester's moral decay grows as he commits voyeurism, throws a rock at a sleeping woman, and cheats at a game of rubber ducks at the fair. However, it does not deepen significantly until he finds the dead couple in their car. There he reaches a point of no return in his emotional decay, sexually assaulting through touching and then raping a woman's corpse

like a "crazed gymnast" (McCarthy 88). Not only is his moral decay deepened because of his committing rape, particularly to a corpse, but Lester's mental decay grows as well. Generally speaking, people are disgusted by corpses, as they remind us of our mortality and turn the body into a by-product of death. But Lester, rather than shying away from the corpse, invades the dead body, getting as physically close to the corpse as possible by penetrating it via rape. Clearly, Lester no longer has a mental barrier of disgust nor a moral barrier against using the woman's body as an object for his pleasure. Lester's connection to the corpse is Gothic in its dark, disturbing implication of finally finding a connection he craves in a dead person.

The path of decay is all downhill from Lester's first act of necrophilia as he takes the woman's body back to his cabin and commits several more necrophilic acts before the cabin burns down. It is clear after the cabin burns, however, that his mental state decays even further. McCarthy describes the scene of Lester's giving up on finding the woman's remains as he casually eats sandwiches, not upset seemingly at all, as his "eyes [were] dark and huge and vacant" (McCarthy 107). This series of incidents has changed Lester to the path where he becomes a serial killer and serial necrophiliac, his mental and moral barriers eroding further with each crime. As Lester continues to kill and his mental and moral states continue to decay, he begins to build the community he craves with the bodies he brings back to his cave. This cave is where he can almost pretend he has a community of people who will not—and indeed cannot—run away from him. He arranges the bodies like playthings in the cave, where our unnamed narrator describes the tableau as where "dead people lay like saints" (McCarthy 135). As Lester looks over these figures appreciatively, almost reverently in their description of "like saints," it is clear that he has made a Gothic dollhouse populated with his victims, a clear sign of Gothic madness (McCarthy 135).

Cormac McCarthy's *Child of God* is a text that remains a Southern Gothic staple for many reasons. While many scholars have looked closely at the novel, there is shockingly little scholarship on McCarthy's blending of genres beyond studies about his poetic prose, particularly the novel as a Modernist text. Unfortunately, the scholarly relationship "between the Gothic and modernism is still critically under-explored" (Wurtz 103). There is still a significant gap in Gothic Modernism scholarship to develop, and I believe there is a wealth of analysis to be done in *Child of God* and McCarthy's other Appalachian-based novels, Suttree and The Orchard Keeper. Gothic Modernism may not be a popular lens through which to look at McCarthy's work, but it is still worth the effort to fill in research gaps, gain insight, and further push the scholarly boundary to look more closely at how McCarthy mixes other genres in his works. McCarthy's *Child of God* contains

more Modernist and Gothic elements than I was able to cover in this short space, such as a closer look at doubling (through social mimicry and his alter ego of a Gothic doll), taboo topics (such as delving deeper into the psychology of necrophilia, power, and control), other Gothic elements (such as prophecy), a closer look at the Gothicizing of settings (such as the forest and caves, which has much more to be said about them), other forms of disillusionment (with social codes, romance, and the government), ambiguity, loneliness, further studies of fragmentation in the novel, and many more. Nonetheless, my close analysis of the grotesque, death, decay, Gothic settings, isolation, alienation, and individualism shows ample opportunities to continue delving into the Gothic Modernism of McCarthy’s work.

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# The Purpose of Comparison Between Grendel, the Dragon, and the Hero in *Beowulf**

**Miles Wine**

ABSTRACT

In an effort to challenge assumptions that dilute these characters as mere antagonists of an ancient epic, this article analyzes the functions of two of the main monsters within *Beowulf*: Grendel and the dragon. By employing research ranging from historical to literary alongside close reading methodologies, readers can find parallels between the noble warrior, Beowulf, and his adversaries. Considering these parallels, guided by an understanding of societal virtues relevant to the early centuries of pagan Scandinavia, this piece determines whether these comparisons are deliberate measures on behalf of the *Beowulf*-poet to accentuate the hero's righteous qualities. Through the personification of corruption and mirroring characteristics linking Beowulf and his opponents, the *Beowulf*-poet appears to illustrate the differences between an upstanding ruler and rapacious killer. By clarifying these foils, supported by historic reports related to the poem's creation in ancient civilization, this article contends that the *Beowulf* monsters are measures for contextualizing the story and gleaning insight pertaining to bygone ideas of goodness and nobility. This paper finds that Beowulf's adversaries serve as literary tools for his characterization and provide significant knowledge related to moral conventions of ancient societies for readers of the 21st century.

***Winner of the Deans' Distinguished Essay Award**

The study of literary monsters is expansive and ongoing. Still to this day, new perspectives and interpretations are brought forward that can entirely reshape the meaning of a text. As these examinations continue to develop, many critics have found themselves returning to the ancient classic *Beowulf*. Taking place during the fifth and sixth centuries of pagan Scandinavia, *Beowulf* tells the epic tale of a noble hero, Beowulf, and his treacherous conquests against monstrous foes. The story begins as Beowulf arrives at the land of the Danes to assist the king, Hrothgar, in taking back his great hall, Heorot, from the monster, Grendel. Beowulf continues to fight Grendel's hell-bent mother and later battles a bloodthirsty dragon that is torturing his kingdom. The poem has been long recognized as a staple of Old English literature and history.

With regard to *Beowulf*, the monsters were once thought of as irrelevant—merely frightening rivals serving as entertainment for audiences. Generally, it was not until writer and philologist J.R.R. Tolkien presented his lecture, "*Beowulf*: The Monsters and the Critics," in which he argues for the study of *Beowulf* and its monsters as not only a historical document but also literary art, that scholars began taking heed of the narrative's mythical creatures.

Coincidentally, these analyses have spotlighted the importance of these characters for understanding *Beowulf* as both literature *and* history, providing insight to both ancient culture and Beowulf's character. One aspect that has gained special attention is the consistent habit of the *Beowulf*-poet to draw parallels between the monsters and the main character. While these connections exist between Beowulf and all the monsters, Grendel and the dragon work to define heroism in a way that Grendel's mother falls short. Though she can be used as commentary on the patriarchal hierarchy associated with the Middle Ages, she does not necessarily work to characterize Beowulf as a hero in the same way as the other monsters. With respect to Grendel and the dragon, it is evident that their likeness to Beowulf serves to emphasize his heroism as a warrior and leader; Grendel by showcasing Beowulf's redemption and motivations for violence and the dragon by illustrating Beowulf's lack of greed, his established legacy, and his submission to fate.

Grendel and Beowulf come from somewhat similar origins. The former's existence is attributed to the biblical sin of Cain. As John Friedman points out, "[This] means that they [Grendelkin] belong to the same species as their victims" (106). Though he once lived amongst the race of giants, he was eventually exiled to the wilderness (*Beowulf* 105). Beowulf, similarly, is known to have a controversial predecessor; "Your father struck up the greatest of feuds, / when he killed Heatholaf by his own hand" (459-460).

Ecgtheow, like Cain, committed a crime (in Ecgtheow's case, being unable to pay *wergild*) and was consequently exiled. Though they are certainly on different levels, and Ecgtheow was later absolved while Cain was not, "the basic act is the same," and worthy of comparison (Bruce). Beowulf was somewhat socially exiled as well, having been "long despised," and thought of as "slothful," and "cowardly" (*Beowulf* 2183-2188). So, Grendel and Beowulf, both being born-from-humans with tainted ancestry and who have been isolated from their community, have similar traumas.

Their response to hardship is comparable as well, as they both use murder as a means of coping. Where Grendel acts out of envy for mankind, Beowulf kills to prove himself a worthy hero. When Grendel is introduced, he is called, "[a] bold demon who waited in darkness / wretchedly suffered all the while, / for every day he heard the joyful din" (*Beowulf* 86-88). Not only is he an exile from the land of giants, but also the land of mankind. He fits in neither society and is constantly reminded of such when hearing the sounds of celebration from Heorot. Friedman observes, "He feels a human emotion—the envy of the exile at the joyous singing and communal feeling of the men in the meadhall" (106). Beowulf, however, continues to disprove his once-assumed inferiority through masterful feats. Unfortunately, readers are not given the complete history of this reinvention. Translator Roy Liuzza leaves a footnote on line 2183, writing "the reasons for ascribing to the hero an unpromising youth, elsewhere not mentioned, are not clear." Here, Liuzza confronts the fact that readers are given little insight into Beowulf's social shortcomings prior to the stories within the poem. Yet, he appears to agree that Beowulf has successfully overcome these beginnings, being consistently admired throughout the epic without his former lowliness being dwelled on. The poet reflects this assumption, writing "Reversal came / to the glorious man for all his griefs" (*Beowulf* 2188-2189). Grendel's killings are born from jealousy and exhibit no moderation. Jacek Olesiejko notes how Grendel serves to oppose the regulatory practices of civilization, writing, "the difference between Grendel and the society drawn by the poet is that Grendel does not recognise money and treasure as the cultural forces that civilise men by regulating violence and preventing feuds" (52). He did not care for peace or compensation (156), nor did he respect the conventions of the society he attacked (168-169). Beowulf, however, commands himself according to the societal expectations of him; he fulfills promises and does not seek to disrupt the order of the throne, evidenced by his refusal of early rulership in lines 2369-2375. Thus, their difference outlines the contrast between evil and heroic murder, and their battle illustrates one between a killer and warrior.

This evident dichotomy is stressed by the likenesses they share throughout the fight. Even before meeting, they are set up as equals to each other. In line 123, the poet states

that Grendel seized thirty men during his first killing spree. Beowulf, in lines 379-380, is described as having "thirty men's strength … in his handgrip." To balance the fight, Beowulf decides to battle without armor and weaponry. These two details work together as the foes clash, hand to hand, as readers are made to imagine what could practically be called a medieval arm-wrestle. This set-up portrays Beowulf and Grendel as reflections of one another, a true fight for heroism against wickedness. As they fight for control over Heorot, the *Beowulf*-poet continues the parallels through overt comparisons such as, "Both were angry, / fierce house-wardens" (769-770). This presents yet another mirror, calling to attention the fact that Grendel made himself a warden of Heorot through merciless force whereas Beowulf was granted the status through his bravery (Bruce). As the climax of the battle builds, the poet outlines Grendel's and Beowulf's rage: "Hateful to each / was the life of the other" (814-815). Tension is sustained as readers see that the primary difference between these opponents may not be strength or attitude as much as it is their virtue. Beowulf's eventual victory serves to alleviate this suspense, proving heroism can overcome the sin of envy and solidifying him as a noble warrior.

The dragon, a legendary motif within the Middle Ages, can be understood through a more historical lens. In *Beowulf*, it is said that the dragon came across the riches by accident, having unearthed the buried treasures of a lost civilization and laying claim to all that was there. Thomas Keller, in his analysis of the *Beowulf* dragon, asserts that its behavior aligns with typical expectations. In his words, "This is a very common attribute for Scandinavian dragons; they guard treasure in funeral mounds" (219). Keller then goes on to reference a point originally brought up by Tolkien, in which he refers to the medieval dragon as "… a personification of malice, greed, destruction (the evil side of heroic life), and the undiscriminating cruelty of fortune that distinguishes not good from bad (the evil aspect of all life)" (15). One can see how the dragon's hoarding is a clear representation of avarice. His overwhelming rage and destruction disproportionate to the assault he suffered demonstrates his immense greed. Though he is initially after only one man, the ruin he leaves in his pursuit is imbalanced. He was "greedy to find / the man who had sorely harmed him" (*Beowulf*2294-2295), and so he "would leave nothing alive" (2315). His gluttony then contributes to the vigor of his revenge, leading him to set fire to everything in a blind rage.

This attitude is echoed in Beowulf himself. Seeing the dragon's demolition, "his beast within groaned / with dark thoughts—that was not his custom" (*Beowulf* 2331-2332). Both Beowulf and the dragon are rulers who are brought to rage when their "halls" are disrespected (Bruce). The dragon rules his heap of treasure before his territory is trespassed and looted in the night, which he feels must be atoned with fire. Likewise,

Beowulf rules the land that the dragon incinerates in the darkness and feels he must avenge the dragon's actions by slaying the beast. Moreover, they are both respected as extremely powerful. Historically, dragons were used within medieval cultures "as processional figures and emblems on battle standards and heraldic devices. These usages draw on the concept of the dragon as a symbol of power" (Bildhauer 198). Dragons were respected beasts, capable of the utmost devastation. Beowulf, too, gained immense respect for his mental and physical power. He is known as "a wise king" (2209), and throughout earlier sections is regarded as "he who was the strongest of might among men" (789). Their principal difference lies in their priorities or what it is that they value. In some sense, they both seek treasure, but how they do so and what it is they do with that treasure demonstrates the differences between greed and righteous rulership.

Through their respective attitudes towards riches, Beowulf displays an honorable king's priorities to his reputation and citizens as it compares to the rapacity of a lowly beast. The dragon seeks wealth on account of his natural instinct, and his wrath conveys his craving for ownership. As the *Beowulf*-poet writes, the dragon feels that the thief "sorely harmed him" (2295). He sees the violation as a disrespect to his authority as ruler. Beowulf, in comparison, shows himself to be rather disinterested in riches. When defeating Grendel's mother in her mere, described to be full of fortune, the poet says, "The man of the Geats took no more precious treasures / from that place—though he saw many there— / than the head, and the hilt as well" (1612-1615). He only takes those trophies that speak to his greatness and success. The wealth that Beowulf acquires throughout his life is merely a byproduct of his heroism, rather than something he sought and cared for like the dragon. When the dragon terrorizes his land, it is not the lost gems Beowulf is enraged by, but the fact that his citizens have been left defenseless and frightened. His anger comes from his being a caring lord rather than being menacing like the dragon; he seeks to claim the treasure in his last moments, and it is not for personal want (Bruce). Rather, he sees it as a victory for his subjects, saying, "Now that I have sold my old lifespan / for this hoard of treasures, they will attend / to the needs of my people" (2798-2801). He views the wealth won from the fight as an opportunity for his citizens, not for his own collection. Keller offers a possible explanation for this difference as he explains how the dragon is more beast-like than Grendel; he expresses that the dragon should be thought of as amoral, similar to a disease (220). From this, one can conclude that the dragon can also be thought of as a ruler devoid of humanity. Contrary to Beowulf, who serves as the leader of a society that could benefit from opulence, the dragon is simply a creature acting on instinctive greed fueling his want for dominance and control.

Unlike the battle between Beowulf and Grendel though, Beowulf does not leave the dragon's cave victorious. Notably, Beowulf's death at the hands of the dragon serves to grant the hero a noble death. As Keller asserts, "The significance of the dragon in *Beowulf* is that it is the appropriate adversary for a heroic king. It is, by nature, huge, fierce and evil. In short, it is the perfect counterpart to Beowulf, and it will provide the harrowing circumstances necessary for a heroic but triumphant death" (228). The dragon, undeniably the most ferocious of the monsters in *Beowulf*, is meant to provide a realistic yet honorable death for the seemingly unbeatable warrior. Beowulf is maintained as nearly superhuman—his strength and reputation exceed his peers and grant him immense fame. With this characterization, only the greatest of enemies could defeat him without tarnishing his legacy. In Medieval society, dragons were viewed as largely unconquerable, and those warriors who managed such a feat were to be considered incredible (Bildhauer 198). Tolkien goes as far to say that triumph over a dragon was "the chief deed of the greatest of heroes" (13). The *Beowulf*-poet's choice to parallel these two through statements such as, "Each of the two / hostile ones stood in horror of the other," and referring to them as "two great creatures" (2564-2592), emphasizes Beowulf's heroism by implying that he is a worthy opponent to the great beast. Even though it was his own demise as well, having slain the beast leaves him with a well-secured legacy.

This balanced death of both the dragon and Beowulf additionally establishes Beowulf's heroism through his lack of greed for life. Before facing the dragon, Beowulf exclaims to his men that, "I will not flee a single foot, but for us / it shall be at the wall as wryd decrees" (2525-2526). He submits himself to fate, whatever it may choose for him. During the battle with the dragon, when Beowulf had three chances to flee, he stands his ground. When Wiglaf arrives on the scene, Beowulf still does not give up but rather fights alongside the younger man to defeat the beast together. This type of submission was a pillar within Medieval heroism. As Keller explains, "A proud refusal to struggle against fate seems to have been one of the most admired characteristics of Icelandic heroes in general. To go unflinchingly to their doom with foreknowledge of it was the only way of proving themselves superior to it" (228). Though Beowulf's death is inevitable, he does not lament, nor does he show fear. Instead, he reflects on his life and declares that he is joyful, for "the Ruler of men need not reproach [him]" (2741). Beowulf leaves his body with gratitude for his accomplishments and lordly commandment for what should follow his death. Unlike the dragon, who sets fires for nothing but gold, Beowulf refrains from allowing his want for life to overtake his heroism, instead accepting what is to come and departing honorably.

Viewing the monster as complex rather than a mere villain proves effective in understanding societal values and ideals of heroism as they exist within *Beowulf*. Grendel is more than an antagonist for the sake of battle; he is a symbol of what could have come from Beowulf's social exile. His likeness to the hero only highlights those qualities that make Beowulf a hero and Grendel a monster. The same can be said for the dragon, representing greed for wealth and power while acting as a foil to Beowulf, who is led by kingship and bravery rather than his own desires. The continued parallels act as a method of highlighting Beowulf's heroism through his lack of envious rage and selfish cravings, proving Grendel and the dragon as vital components of this epic poem. Contrary to former assumptions, the *Beowulf* monsters prove to characterize Beowulf through collation, in which the societal values of ancient civilization are illuminated. In this way, analysis of *Beowulf* beasts works to situate the text within the context of Old English societies, providing audiences with further insight into what is largely a blank page of history alongside a rich and complex characterization of nobility.

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# Examining Processed Foods in Food Banks and the Presence of Chronic Diseases in Food Bank Clientele

**Elizabeth Counts and Dr. Elizabeth Smith**

ABSTRACT

Food insecurity affects millions of Americans and puts them at an increased risk of developing chronic disease. Food banks are essential in improving food access for this population. However, previous studies have identified gaps in the nutritional quality of items donated to food banks, thus decreasing clients' access to nutritionally adequate food. The first part of this study examines the presence of chronic disease in food bank clientele by distributing a survey to clients in the waiting room of a local food bank. The second part assesses the nutritional quality of donated items based on their level of processing using the NOVA Food Classification tool. The study found that the majority of food bank clients had been diagnosed with a diet-related chronic disease and that slightly over half of donations were ultra-processed foods. This information can be used to form collaborative approaches between food bank staff, their clientele, community leaders, and donors to help improve access to nutritious food for those facing food insecurity.

## Introduction

Food security is defined as having access to enough food for an active, healthy life. Conversely, food insecurity is defined as a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food.Sixty-three thousand food pantries across the U.S. provide food for millions of Americans facing food insecurity.[1] However, due to the prevalence of chronic diseases among this population, it is important to consider the role that nutrition plays in this issue.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture, food insecurity affects 44.2 million Americans.[1] Minority populations are disproportionally affected. Black and Hispanic populations are the most at risk of becoming food insecure compared to non-Hispanic whites. Households with children are also more likely to face food insecurity, especially single parent households. Additionally, food insecurity among older adults living alone and households with no children has been increasing.[1] There are several factors that may lead to a person or family becoming food insecure, such as poverty, loss of a job, lack of affordable housing, chronic health conditions making it difficult to work, medical emergencies, and natural disasters.[2]

Food insecurity has major health impacts on those it affects. A study published by the USDA analyzing five years' worth of data from the National Health Interview Survey found that food insecurity is associated with ten chronic diseases including hypertension, coronary heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and kidney disease.[3] Researchers found that that the number of chronic diseases in low food-security households was 18% higher than in high food-security households. They found that high blood pressure, for example, was 10.5 percentage points more likely in adults with very low food-insecurity than in those with high food-security.[3] Another study on food insecurity and chronic disease had similar findings, concluding that food insecurity was strongly associated with hypertension and diabetes. They found that that the risk of diabetes was 50% higher in food-insecure adults than in adults in food-secure households.[4] Not only do these conditions result in negative physical and mental health outcomes, but they can also lead to further economic hardship with increased doctor visits, hospital stays, and medications payments.

Many who are facing food insecurity receive food from food assistance programs such as food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters. An estimated one in six Americans rely on these facilities.[2] Food pantries provide food for ninety percent of those who rely on food assistance programs while soup kitchens and shelters make up the remaining amount. Food pantries distribute food directly to individuals from larger warehouse-like facilities called food banks. Food banks receive food from three

sources.[5] The first is from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), which purchases food from farmers and then distributes it to food banks. The second source is food purchased by food banks themselves with monetary donations. However, the largest source of food comes from donations from individuals, companies, and local businesses.[5] Due to the constraints surrounding collecting, storing, and distributing donated food, such as lack of refrigeration, the majority of these foods tend to be canned or packaged goods that can maintain a long shelf life. These foods are often energy-dense and solve the more pressing issue of hunger. However, the nutritional content and the effects of long-term consumption of these types of packaged foods is important to consider, especially for populations at risk of developing or already diagnosed with chronic disease.

Food pantries are essential organizations for fighting food insecurity with the primary goal of addressing the issue of hunger. However, it is also important that populations facing food insecurity are not only given access to food, but to food that provides health-promoting nutrients and that is limited in additives that may put them at risk of developing diet-related chronic diseases. Several studies have investigated food banks to identify the predominant food or nutrient groups in their supplies and those that are in short supply. One study examining several food pantries in Massachusetts found that the largest supplied groups of food were fats, oils, and sweets followed by breads. They also found that vitamin C and calcium were deficient in the food donated to the pantries.[6] Another study found that food groups containing bread, cereal, rice, and pasta were the largest in quantity (after excluding for sweets and fats) while the pantries tended to be limited in dairy and vegetables. They also found that over a one-month period, 19,590 sweets and 12,041 servings of fat were distributed each day which primarily came from donations of candy, desserts, and cream cheese.[5]

While many studies have examined what food and nutrient groups are the most abundant in food pantries, few have looked specifically at the prevalence of ultra-processed foods. According to Harvard Health, "unprocessed or minimally processed foods are whole foods in which the vitamins and nutrients are still intact. The food is in its natural (or nearly natural) state" while processed and ultra-processed foods are foods that have added ingredients such as sugar, salt, fat, and artificial colors or preservatives.[7] These products are often high in refined sugars, sodium, saturated fats, and trans fats while being low in fiber and other nutrients. Processed food has been linked to various chronic diseases. A systematic review of thirty-eight studies concluded that there is overwhelming evidence that a higher consumption of ultra-processed foods is positively associated with obesity and diet-related diseases such as high blood pressure and diabetes

mellitus.[8] This study aims to examine chronic disease prevalence in food pantry clientele and explore the proportion of ultra-processed food present in food pantries. It was hypothesized that there would be a high percentage of food pantry clientele with one or more chronic diseases as well as a high proportion of ultra-processed food available to these clients.

**Methodology Part I**

The purpose of Part I of the research was to determine how many clients of Nourish Food Bank have one or more diet-related chronic disease. To accomplish this, a Qualtrics© survey was administered to clients while they waited in the Nourish waiting room. Data was collected over a one-month period to prevent any duplication, as clients are permitted to visit Nourish Food Bank for provisions once every thirty days. Nourish operates Monday through Friday and survey results were collected throughout every day of the week to ensure a widely representative sample. The survey began with a consent page that clients had to agree to before advancing on to the survey questions. The survey contained five questions and took participants no more than two minutes to complete. The client was asked to indicate their age group and gender. Then they were asked to check a box next to any of the listed chronic diseases in which they had been diagnosed. Another question followed asking the client to indicate if a member in their household had been diagnosed with any of the listed chronic diseases. All diseases were listed in Layman terms and included high blood pressure, high blood sugar, high cholesterol, overweight, obese, kidney disease, and any type of cancer. The data collected on chronic disease was then compared to the overall U.S. population using data from the National Center of Health Statistics. Lastly, participants were asked to indicate how often they use a food pantry. Participants excluded from the survey were those below the age of eighteen and pregnant women.

**Results Part I**

A total of 137 survey responses were collected. Twenty-eight percent of participants were in the 55 to 64 age range followed by the 25 to 34 age range at 20%. The smallest age group was 18 to 24 at only 3%. Females made up the majority of food pantry clientele at 66% compared to men at 31%. The majority of participants reported having one or more diet-related conditions at 70%. Of those clients, the most reported conditions were hypertension (71%), being overweight or obese (48%), high cholesterol (35%), and diabetes (32%). Others reported having high blood sugar (21%), heart disease (20%), kidney disease (9%), cancer diagnosis (9%), and history of a stroke (7%). Participants also reported that members of their household had diet-related conditions at 40%. Of those household members, the majority had hypertension at 69%. The next most prevalent conditions were overweight or obesity (53%), high

cholesterol (44%), diabetes (35%), and high blood sugar (31%). Following that were cancer diagnoses (20%), heart disease (16%), history of stroke (16%), and kidney disease a (13%). The majority of participants (53%) indicated that they visit a food pantry once every month. Other participants visited less frequently with 22% using a food pantry a few times a year and 17% using one every few months.

As displayed in Figure 1, food bank clients were more likely to have high blood pressure at 49.64% compared to 24.8% in the U.S population, representing a 24.8 percentage point difference.[9] Food bank clients were also more likely to have diabetes (by 13.13 percentage points), heart disease (by 2.67 percentage points), stroke (by 4.37 percentage points), and cancer (by 1.08 percentage points).9,10,11 Conversely, food bank clients were less likely to be overweight or obese (by 31.52 percentage points).[12] It is worth noting that although less likely to be overweight or obese compared to the U.S. population, of the food bank clients who indicated they had 1 or more chronic conditions, a significant amount at almost half (48%) indicated being overweight or obese as one of those conditions. High cholesterol and high blood glucose were unable to be compared due to the lack of data for the U.S. population.

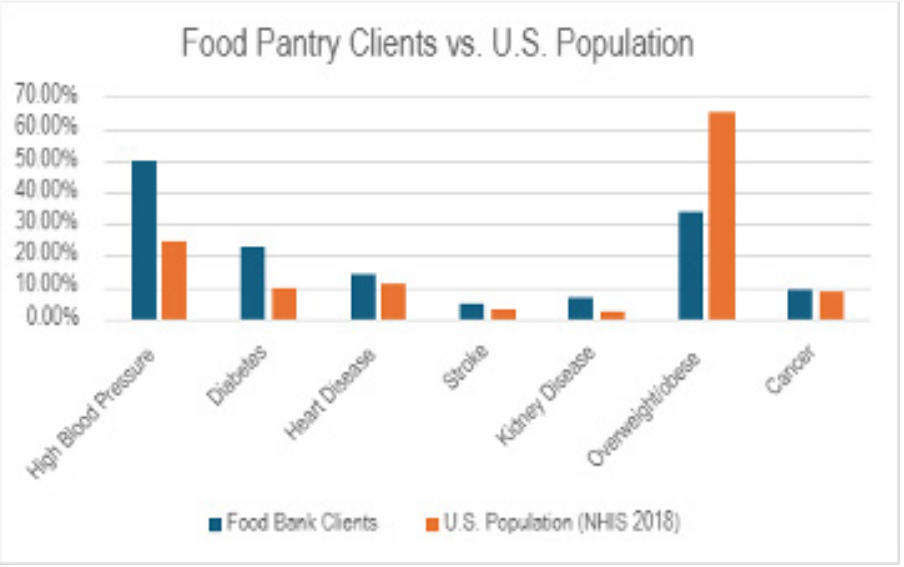


Figure 1. Chronic disease in food pantry clients compared to the general U.S. population.

**Methodology Part II**

The purpose of the second part of the research was to determine the health quality of food donations that food pantry clients can access. To accomplish this the NOVA Food Classification System was employed.[13] This system separates food into four groups based on their level of processing. Group 1 is comprised of unprocessed or minimally processed foods. Unprocessed means that the food is "obtained directly from plants or animals and does not undergo any alteration following their removal from nature."[13] Minimally processed is defined as a natural food that has had inedible parts removed or has been dried, frozen, pasteurized, or fermented but has no oils, sugar, salt, or other substances added to it. Examples of Group 1 foods include frozen vegetables, packaged grains such as rice, oats, and corn kernels, eggs, dried fruits, beans, nuts and seeds, milk, and yogurt. Group 2 comprises processed culinary ingredients, which are products extracted from natural foods for cooking or seasoning. These foods include oils made from seeds and nuts, cane or beet sugar, honey, maple syrup, butter, coconut fat, and salt. Group 3 are processed foods which are "products manufactured by industry with the use of salt, sugar, oil or other substances (Group 2) added to natural or minimally processed foods (Group 1) to preserve or to make them more palatable."[13] This includes canned vegetables and legumes preserved with salt, fruits in sugar-added syrups, beef jerky, salted or sugared nuts, canned fish, salted, dried, smoked or cured meat, cheeses, and bread. Lastly, Group 4 is ultra-processed foods which are "industrial formulations made entirely or mostly from substances extracted from foods (oils, fats, sugar, starch, and proteins), derived from food constituents (hydrogenated fats and modified starch), or synthesized in laboratories from food substrates or other organic sources (flavor enhancers, colors, and several food additives used to make the product hyper-palatable)."[13] Examples of these foods include packaged snacks, soda, candy, instant soups/noodles, pre-prepared pizza, chicken nuggets, sausages, hamburger buns, breakfast cereals, pastries, and cakes.[13]

To determine how many foods make up each of the four NOVA categories, an inventory was obtained of all the food donated to Nourish Food Bank. The Nova Food Classification guidelines were used to sort products into unprocessed or minimally processed (Group 1), culinary ingredients (Group 2), processed (Group 3), and ultra-processed (Group 4) to determine the number of products that make up each group. In cases where the product listed was too vague to determine the exact NOVA group, the ingredients of Walmart Inc.'s Great Value branded versions were assessed. Being the largest supermarket chain in the United States, this provided the most likely ingredients

contained in the donated product.[14] Baby formula and baby food was excluded from the inventory and accounted for 160 items. Indecipherable products such as "Kroger box", "Food Lion Box" and "treat bags" were also excluded and likely contained an assortment of food products from any of the four NOVA categories.

**Results Part II**

From the inventory of donated products over a one-year period, 44,724 products were assessed.15 Of those products 51.25% made up the ultra-processed Nova Group 4.[15] Examples of contributors to this group included juices made from concentrates and other sweetened beverages, pop tarts, packaged ramen, canned soups, cereal and protein bars, packaged mac and cheese, instant oatmeal, crackers, and chips.[15] The second largest group was the processed food group (Nova Group 3) with 37.93% of products belonging to it. Some of these products included apple sauce, salted nuts, canned vegetables and fruits with added salt or sugar, canned fish, popcorn, pasta sauce, and canned beans.[15] The third largest food group was unprocessed or minimally processed foods (Nova Group 1) at 10.32%. Examples of these foods in the inventory included fruit, milk, vegetables, frozen meats, beans, and grains.[15] The smallest food group was culinary ingredients (Nova Group 2) at 0.499%. Primary contributors of this group included cooking oils, salt, sugar, and baking powders.[15]

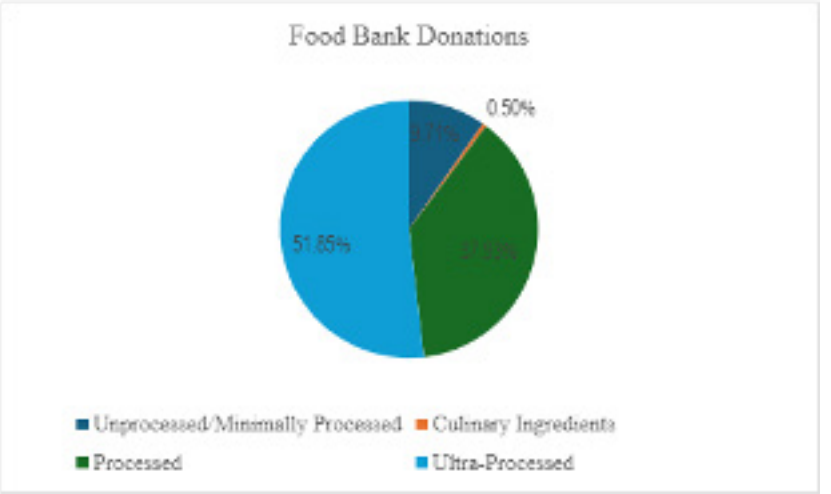


Figure 2. Nourish food donations compared by NOVA categories

**Discussion**

Food insecurity is faced by millions of Americans and has been associated with the development of various diet-related chronic diseases. Many rely on food-assistance programs such as food pantries and food banks. Previous studies have determined gaps in the nutritional quality of donated food bank items including a lack of Vitamin C and calcium as well as limited donations of vegetable and dairy items.[6] Few studies, however, have examined food donations using the NOVA Food Classification System. The aim of this study was to utilize the NOVA ranking tool in order to determine what proportion of donated products are ultra-processed foods which have been heavily linked to the development of chronic disease. The study also aimed to determine if the same clients consuming these products were likely to be diagnosed with a chronic disease. The findings of this study provide more insight into the characteristics of this population as well as the food that they may have access to.

Of the food bank clients surveyed, it was determined that the majority had been diagnosed with one or more chronic diseases. Over a third of clients had members of their household who had been diagnosed with a chronic disease as well. Compared to the U.S. population, the data showed that these food bank clients were more likely to have high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and cancer. This builds on previous studies that have linked food insecurity with an increased risk of developing disease.3 This data demonstrates a need for improving factors that contribute to disease risk and worsen conditions that already exist. A major factor is adequate nutrition and limiting the consumption of ultra-processed foods.[8]

The food that these clients have access to was categorized into the four NOVA classification groups including minimally processed, culinary ingredients, processed, and ultra-processed. It was determined that slightly over half of all donated products were ultra-processed. This adds to the previously existing data on nutrition quality gaps in food pantry donations.[6] Ultra-processed foods tend to be high in calories, sugar, sodium, saturated and trans fats which contributes to their long shelf-life and hyper palatability, but also to their link to an increased risk of chronic disease.[8] Ultra-processed foods are also lower in fiber, vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients that help protect against disease.[8] The results showed that most donations are ultra-processed which limits the nutritional quality of food that clients have access to. The fact that the majority of clients were diagnosed with a chronic disease emphasizes the need to improve their access to more nutritious food options.

***Study Limitations***

It should be noted that the data collected for the frequency in which clients use food banks may not be representative of most food bank clientele. The specific food pantry where the study was conducted only allowed clients food provisions every 30 days. Future studies should aim to investigate a wider range of facilities. Another limitation is that the inventory used did not include exact brand names or versions, meaning the ingredients within the product can vary slightly and therefore possibly change their assigned NOVA category. To address this issue, future research could gather more comprehensive descriptions of food products by monitoring donations over an extended period.

Lastly, while the results from this study provide valuable insights to both food pantry clientele and food bank nutrition quality, they should be interpreted with caution due to the lack of data analysis. Both the data on chronic disease collected from this study's survey as well as the survey from the NCHS contained multiple-response questions, inhibiting the ability to conduct statistical testing due to the lack of mutually exclusive data points. Future studies should aim to determine whether the differences in chronic disease between food pantry clients and the U.S. population are statistically significant. Additionally, in order to add to the data collected on the proportion of donations in each of the four NOVA categories, more extensive future studies should investigate how these proportions compare to those of an average American diet, or the products supplied in an average U.S grocery store.

***Implications***

As stated previously, the largest source of food supplied at food banks comes from generous donations made by individuals and companies. There are several challenges in increasing the health quality of these donated items. The first is simply that most donators may not have knowledge of the issue that this study aims to bring awareness to. Another challenge is that donations are likely influenced by the food consumption habits and products available to the U.S. population, a large portion of which is processed and ultra-processed foods.16 This represents a much larger issue in our food system that cannot be easily fixed. Another challenge is the limited refrigeration and freezer storage of food bank facilities and, in some cases, their clients. This makes processed and ultra-processed foods preferred due to their ability to maintain a long shelf-life. Nevertheless, there are still solutions that could improve the health quality of donated items.

One possible solution could be a resource that provides guidance for those purchasing items to donate. This list could include healthier versions of shelf-stable

products such as low sodium canned soups and vegetables, no sugar added fruits, dried grains, canned fish, dried or canned legumes, nuts, popcorn, peanut butter, and low-sugar cereals. Some food banks have moved a step further and implemented nutrition quality regulatory policies, eliminating the distribution of items like candy and soda. One study gathering the opinions of food bank directors and staff showed varying responses to this.[17] Many were concerned that this would harm donator relationships thus decreasing overall donations. However, a few food banks who have implemented these policies on soda donations found that donors were willing to accommodate this request, and in cases where some donators were lost, more were gained to fill in this gap. The study noted that more research is needed to determine if regulatory nutritional policies are an effective approach in improving nutritional quality without decreasing donations.[17]

Another challenge that food bank staff cited was being able to properly store and distribute perishable goods.[17] This requires adequate refrigeration, staff, and volunteers to process these goods, and a means of transporting goods to clients. Encouraging monetary donations to food banks and increasing their resources may help mitigate these barriers and improve the distribution process. For example, many food banks nationwide have been able to implement mobile pantries to quickly distribute perishable items.[17]

One solution for obtaining more of these nutrient-dense items is to increase partnerships between food banks and local farmers. These programs already exist in several states such as Connecticut, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Oregon and Rhode Island.[18] Other states like Arizona, California, Colorado, Oregon, Iowa, and Kentucky offer tax credits to farmers donating extra produce to food banks.[18] Furthermore, programs like Grow to Give and Ample Harvest encourage home and community gardeners to donate a portion of their produce to food banks as well.[18]

As a donor, a first step when deciding what to donate would be to contact the intended food bank or consult the food bank's website to determine what donations they are able to accept and what foods are in low supply. If there are no specific requests or guidelines, a general recommendation to follow is to look for shelf-stable products of the five food groups: proteins, dairy, grains, fruits, and vegetables. Examples of shelf-stable proteins would be canned fish, canned chicken, canned legumes, and nut butters. Dairy options that also serve as a source of protein include shelf-stable dairy milk or powdered milk. Examples of shelf-stable grains would be whole grains such as oats, brown rice, quinoa, popcorn, whole wheat pasta, and whole grain cereal. Lastly, there are a variety of shelf-stable fruit and vegetable options that are canned or jarred. Some helpful labels to look for when choosing these items would be "reduced sodium," "low sugar," or "no added sugar," and "whole grain." Additionally, if the food bank is need

of more allergen-friendly foods, labels reading "allergy free" or "free from" common allergens such as wheat, dairy, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, eggs, shellfish, and soybeans may also be helpful. It should be noted that several of the example items listed are considered Group 3 processed foods meaning they are manufactured with the use of salt, sugar, oil or other added ingredients to natural or minimally processed foods. This is often required for shelf-stable products but can also be a part of healthy diet. However, Group 4 ultra-processed foods in high amounts are typically associated with a higher disease risk due to their addition of excessive fat, sugar, sodium, preservatives, and artificial flavors. Examples of these foods that generally should be limited in donations include candy, chips, sugar-sweetened beverages, and baked goods.

**Conclusion**

Food insecurity impacts millions of Americans, and those who face food insecurity are at a greater risk of developing chronic disease. This also puts them at a greater risk of further financial instability from medical bills and hospital stays. Many who are food insecure rely on food banks and food pantries which are largely dependent on donations. This means that food banks have limited control over the food they supply, and their clients have limited access to nutritionally adequate food. Additional research is needed to accurately assess how the prevalence of chronic diseases among food pantry clients compares to that of the U.S. population. However, this study displays valuable insights into the health characteristics of food pantry clientele and the types of items food banks typically receive. The majority of clients surveyed had been diagnosed with one or more diet-related chronic diseases, and slightly over half of all food bank items were ultra-processed. Information in this study can be used to draw attention to this gap in access to nutritious food combined with the health risks already present in this population. From there, a collaborative approach between food bank staff, their clients, community leaders, and donors can be used to develop solutions to help fill this gap. It is important that those facing food insecurity not only have access to food but also to nutritionally adequate food that is essential for maintaining health, preventing disease, and contributing to a higher quality of life.

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# Characteristics of the Structure and Selected Biological Activities of Polysaccharides Isolated from Fedora 17 Hemp (*Cannabis sativa*)*

**Rashieq Cockerham**

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on characterizing the structural properties and biological activities of polysaccharides isolated from the Fedora 17 hemp (Cannabis sativa L.). Hemp polysaccharides are an underexplored resource with significant potential in industries such as biotechnology, agriculture, and medicine due to their antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and immunomodulatory properties. Techniques, including ion-exchange chromatography (IEX), size-exclusion chromatography (SEC), and fourier-transform infrared spectroscopy (FTIR), were employed to elucidate the molecular weight distribution and structural complexity of the polysaccharides. Additionally, antioxidant activity was assessed using the 2,2-Diphenyl-1-picrylhydrazyl (DDPH) assay. The findings contribute to a broader understanding of hemp polysaccharides' potential applications in the development of sustainable and bioactive products.

***Winner of the Deans' Distinguished Essay Award**

## Terms and Definitions

**Chromatography**: A laboratory technique used for separating a mixture into its individual components, applied in this study to analyze polysaccharides and monosaccharides in hemp.

**Dextran**: A standard polysaccharide used in the calibration of size-exclusion chromatography experiments to determine the molecular weights of unknown polysaccharides.

**Fourier-Transform Infrared Spectroscopy (FTIR)**: A method for obtaining the infrared spectrum of absorption or emission of a solid, liquid, or gas, used to analyze the functional groups in polysaccharides.

**Glycosidic Linkages**: The bonds that connect monosaccharides in polysaccharides, which were analyzed in this study to understand the structural arrangement of hemp-derived polysaccharides.

**Hemp (Cannabis sativa L.)**: A versatile crop with low tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) content (less than 0.3 wt.%), used for industrial applications such as textiles and biofuels. This study focuses on polysaccharides isolated from Fedora 17 Hemp.

**High-Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC)**: A specific chromatography technique employed for the separation, identification, and quantification of polysaccharides using a refractive index detector in this study.

**Ion-Exchange Chromatography (IEX)**: A technique used to separate ions and polar molecules based on their affinity to the ion exchanger, employed in the purification of polysaccharides in this study.

**Monosaccharides**: The simplest form of carbohydrates, consisting of a single sugar molecule with a keto group bonded to multiple hydroxyl groups. Examples include glucose, galactose, and mannose.

**Phenol-Sulfuric Acid Assay**: A chemical method used to quantify carbohydrates by measuring the absorbance of the sample solution at a specific wavelength (490 nm).

**Polysaccharides**: Complex carbohydrates composed of more than ten monosaccharide units linked together by glycosidic bonds. They are significant for energy storage (e.g., starch, glycogen), structural integrity (e.g., cellulose), and as essential components of cell membranes and extracellular matrices.

**Size-Exclusion Chromatography (SEC)**: A form of chromatography used to separate molecules based on their size, applied here to determine the molecular weight of polysaccharides.

List of Abbreviations

1. **THC**: Tetrahydrocannabinol
2. **HPLC**: High-Performance Liquid Chromatography
3. **HPSEC**: High-Performance Size-Exclusion Liquid Chromatography
4. **SEC**: Size-Exclusion Chromatography
5. **IEX**: Ion-Exchange Chromatography
6. **FTIR**: Fourier-Transform Infrared Spectroscopy
7. **DLS**: Dynamic Light Scattering
8. **DDPH**: 2,2-Diphenyl-1-picrylhydrazyl (used in antioxidant assays)
9. **Da**: Dalton (unit of molecular weight)
10. **mL**: Milliliters
11. **nm**: Nanometers
12. **v/v**: Volume/Volume ratio
13. **°C**: Degrees Celsius

### 1.1 Introduction

Hemp (*Cannabis sativa L.*), a versatile and industrially significant crop, has been cultivated for thousands of years and is recognized for its broad range of applications, from textiles to biofuel production (Bradley 2017, Dyer 2019). While most research has been focused on cannabinoids, such as cannabidiol (CBD) and Δ9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) content, hemp's polysaccharides represent an underexplored area with immense potential. Polysaccharides, complex carbohydrates made up of more than ten monosaccharide units, play vital roles in plant structure and physiological function. These molecules are critical in various biological processes, such as energy storage (e.g., starch and glycogen), structural integrity (e.g., cellulose), and as essential components of cell membranes. In addition, polysaccharides have been shown to have a variety of medicinal properties, including antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, anti-tumor among others (Liu 2015, Xue 2020).

Industrial hemp, Cannabis sativa L. contains less than 0.3 wt.% THC, differs from medical and recreational marijuana (*Cannabis sativa L.*) and is primarily grown for its fibers, seeds, and oils (FDA 2024). After the extraction of cannabinoids and other small molecules, large quantities of polysaccharides remain in hemp residues. These compounds are often overlooked as a valuable resource. Polysaccharides offer several potential advantages, including their use in biotechnology, agriculture, and medicine, due to their antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and immunomodulatory properties. The characterization and utilization of these polysaccharides can unlock new possibilities for sustainable and innovative applications.

In the realm of polysaccharide research, understanding the molecular structure, size distribution, and biological activities of hemp-derived polysaccharides is crucial. Previous studies have shown that variations in extraction methods and the purification of polysaccharide fractions can significantly impact the structural integrity and functionality of these molecules (Shi, 2016). High-performance size-exclusion liquid chromatography (HPSEC) and other analytical techniques are essential for elucidating the molecular weight distribution and structural complexity of polysaccharides.

This study characterizes the structural properties and biological activities of polysaccharides isolated from the hemp variety known as Fedora 17. By analyzing the molecular weight distribution, glycosidic linkages, and potential antioxidant properties of these polysaccharides, this research seeks to bridge existing knowledge gaps and contribute to the growing body of literature on hemp-derived polysaccharides. The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the potential applications of hemp

polysaccharides in various industries, particularly in the development of sustainable and bioactive products.

The key objectives of this research are:

1. To characterize the molecular weight distribution of polysaccharides isolated from Fedora 17 using size-exclusion chromatography (SEC) and dextran standards.

2. To analyze the structural complexity of the polysaccharides through glycosidic linkage studies and spectroscopic techniques.

3. To evaluate the antioxidant properties of the isolated polysaccharide fractions using a 2,2-diphenyl-1-picrylhydrazyl (DDPH) assay.

By achieving these objectives, this study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the structural and functional attributes of hemp polysaccharides, ultimately providing a foundation for future research and practical applications.

**1.2 Research Statement**

This research characterizes the structural properties and evaluates the biological activities of polysaccharides isolated from Cannabis sativa L. (hemp) variety Fedora 17. By employing advanced analytical techniques, including size exclusion chromatography (SEC) and Fourier-transform infrared spectroscopy (FTIR), this study determines the molecular weight distribution and structural complexity of hemp-derived polysaccharides. Additionally, the potential antioxidant activities of these polysaccharides is explored, contributing to the broader understanding of their applications in biotechnology, agriculture, and medicine.

**2.1 Materials and Reagents**

The primary materials used for this study were industrial hemp samples (Cannabis sativa L., Fedora 17) grown in the MTSU greenhouse. Reagents and standards for chromatography and spectrometry included:

• **Dextran standards**: Molecular weights ranging from 5,000 to 670,000 Daltons (Da) for calibration.

• **Monosaccharide standards**: L-Rhamnose, D-(+)-glucose, D-(+)-glucosamine, D-(-)-arabinose, D-(+)-galacturonic acid monohydrate, D-(+)-mannose, D-(+)-galactose.

• **Reagents**: 5% phenol solution, concentrated sulfuric acid, acetonitrile, and ultrapure water (18 megaohm), used in High-Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC) and other assays.

**2.2 Methods**

1. **Polysaccharide Extraction**: To begin the polysaccharide extraction, 10 g of Cannabis sativa leaves were dried in an incubator at 40˚C for approximately 48 hours. This is a commonly used and scalable approach. The dried leaves were ground into a powder using a Cuisinart Nut and Spice Grinder. In a 1000 mL round-bottom flask equipped with a water-cooled condenser, the ground powder and 500 mL of 95% ethanol (EtOH) were heated to 80˚C for 4 hours. The EtOH was decanted, and an equal amount of water (500 mL) was added to the round-bottom flask. This solution was heated between 80˚C – 100˚C overnight. The next day, the aqueous extract was vacuum filtered through Fisherbrand filter paper P8. The sample volume was reduced from 500 mL to approximately 50 mL under reduced pressure at 40oC on a Buchi R-200 Rotavapor.

2. **Deproteination**: Once the sample was reduced to 50 mL, it was deproteinated using Sevag reagent (Huang, 2022). The 50 mL sample was split into two equal 25 mL and transferred to 50-mL disposable centrifuge tubes. Five mL of Sevag reagent (1:4 butanol:chloroform) was added to each centrifuge tube and the tubes vortexed. After the samples were vortexed, they were placed in a sonicator for 20 minutes. The samples were centrifuged for 10 minutes at 4000 rpm at 4˚C. The aqueous layer (top layer) was removed from each sample and placed in a fresh 50 mL centrifuge tube. The aqueous layer was deproteinated again using Sevag reagent. The deproteination process was repeated at least three times. Once all the proteins had been removed as confirmed by UV spectroscopy, the aqueous layer was split into four 12.5 mL aliquots and four volumes of EtOH were added to each tube. The aliquots were stored overnight at 4˚C.

3. **Sample Preparation and Fractionation**: After extraction, samples were fractionated using ion-exchange chromatography (IEX) to isolate polysaccharides based on their charge. The initial extract was loaded onto a DEAE Fast Flow 16/10 anion exchange FPLC column eluted with step gradients of 0 (wash), 0.10, 0.20, 0.30, 0.40 and 1.00 M sodium chloride in water. The flow rate was 3.0 mL/min and 6 mL fractions were collected. The initial wash consisted of 4 column volumes (20 mL/column volume), while subsequent steps consisted of 5 column volumes (100 mL). Fractions from the ion-exchange column were assayed using a phenol-sulfuric acid assay (Masuko, 2005) Fractions containing polysaccharides were pooled and concentrated to approximately 5 mL under reduced pressure on a Buchi R-200 Rotavapor at 40oC.

4. **Size-exclusion chromatography (SEC)** was used to further purify polysaccharides based on molecular size. Pooled polysaccharides from ion exchange chromatography were loaded onto a HiLoad 26/60 Superdex S200 FPLC column eluted

with 50 mM NaH2PO4 pH 7.0; 150 mM NaCl at 4 oC. The column was eluted at 2 mL/min and 10 mL fractions were collected. Each fraction was assayed for the presence of polysaccharide using the phenol-sulfuric acid assay as described below. Related fractions containing polysaccharide were pooled and concentrated to approximately 3 mL under reduced pressure as previously described.

5. **Dialysis for Sample Purification**: The pooled samples were dialyzed using FisherBrand dialysis tubing (MWCO 3500) with water to desalt the polysaccharide samples. The tubing was cut to size and filled with sample solutions, ensuring no air bubbles were trapped. The dialysis was carried out for 24 hrs and repeated three times. The dialyzed sample was freeze-dried to remove water and the samples were stored at -80 oC until needed.

6. **High-Performance Size-Exclusion Chromatography (HPSEC)**: The purity and molecular weight distribution of polysaccharides were analyzed using High-Performance Size Exclusion Liquid Chromatography (HPSEC). HPSEC was carried out on a Dionex Ultimate 3000 HPLC equipped with a RefractoMax 520 refractive index detector. The column was an Agilent BioSEC-3 (3 µm 300 A 7.8 x 300 mm) and eluted with water. Samples were eluted through the column at a flow rate of 0.5 mL/min at 40°C. Dextran standards of varying molecular weights were used to create a calibration curve to compare against unknown polysaccharide samples.

7. **Phenol-Sulfuric Acid Assay for Polysaccharide Quantification**: To quantify the total polysaccharide content, the Phenol-Sulfuric Acid Assay was employed. One hundred µL of each standard solution (Dextran) was added to separate tubes, followed by 500 µL of 5% phenol solution. The tubes were vortexed, and 2.5 mL of concentrated sulfuric acid was added. After incubating the reaction tubes for 10 minutes, the tubes were cooled to room temperature. The absorbance of the solutions was measured at 490 nm using a Shimadzu 1280 UV-Vis spectrophotometer. A blank containing 500 µL water and phenol and sulfuric acid was used as a control.

8. **Monosaccharide Composition Analysis**: Monosaccharide composition analysis was conducted on the polysaccharides at the Center for Complex Carbohydrate Research at the University of Georgia on the purified polysaccharide fractions.

9. **FTIR Spectroscopy of Polysaccharide Fractions**: FTIR spectroscopy was performed on polysaccharide fractions extracted from Fedora 17 hemp leaves on a Nicolet iS50R FTIR. The spectra provided insights into the functional groups present in these samples and helped characterize the molecular structure.

10. **Antioxidant Assay (DDPH)**: The antioxidant potential of the polysaccharides was assessed using a 2,2-Diphenyl-1-picrylhydrazyl (DDPH) assay (Gulcin, 2023). This

assay measures the ability of polysaccharides to neutralize free radicals. The change in absorbance at 517 nm was monitored using a spectrophotometer, and results were compared to known antioxidant standards.

11. **Safety and Laboratory Protocols**: Standard laboratory safety protocols were followed throughout the study. Personal protective equipment (PPE), including lab coats, gloves, and safety glasses, were worn. Chemicals were handled with caution, and waste disposal followed institutional guidelines for hazardous material disposal.
followed institutional guidelines for hazardous material disposal.

**Statistical Analysis**

Data from HPLC and antioxidant assays were analyzed using HPLC software for peak integration, including retention time and peak area calculations. Absorbance data from the phenol-sulfuric acid assay were used to construct standard curves for polysaccharide quantification. All experiments were conducted in triplicate to ensure reproducibility, and statistical significance was determined using appropriate methods where applicable

**3.1 Results**

**Purification of Polysaccharides from Fedora 17 Hemp (Cannabis sativa)**

Fedora 17 hemp plants were grown in the MTSU Greenhouse and the leaves harvested. The leaves were ground up and the polysaccharides extracted using the hot water/ethanol method. This technique is widely used due to its simplicity and ability to easily upscale. After extraction, residual protein was removed by extraction with Sevag reagent (1:4 butanol:chloroform). The absence of protein was confirmed by the lack of absorbance of the sample at 280 nm. The sample was concentrated and then loaded onto a DEAE Fast Flow 16/10 FPLC column and eluted with an increasing concentration of sodium chloride in the mobile phase. Fractions were analyzed by phenol-sulfuric acid assay and related fractions were pooled and concentrated. A polysaccharide eluted at each sodium chloride concentration. (Figure 1). Each pooled fraction was concentrated and further purified by size exclusion chromatography on a HiLoad 26/60 Superdex S200 FPLC column eluted with 50 mM sodium phosphate containing 150 mM sodium chloride. The fractions were analyzed by phenol-sulfuric acid assay. Related fractions were pooled and concentrated. Each fraction from the size exclusion column was assayed by HPSEC on an Agilent Bio-SEC 3 column.

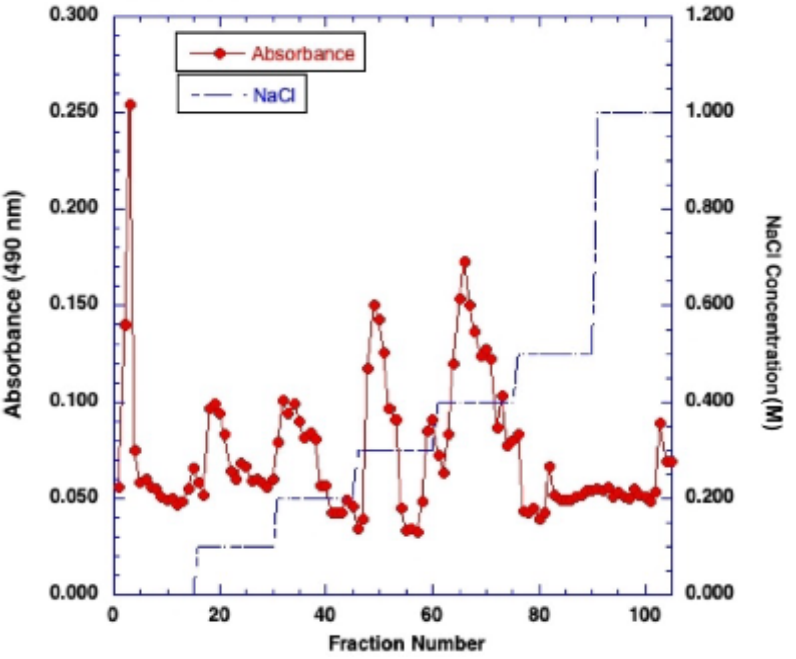



**Figure 1**: Elution profile of initial extract from Fedora 17 leaves on a DEAE Fast flow FPLC ion exchange column eluted with an increasing sodium chloride concentration.

## Standard Curve Development for Size Exclusion Chromatography (SEC)

To accurately estimate the molecular weights of polysaccharides isolated from Fedora 17 hemp, dextran standards of known molecular weights were used to create a calibration curve. The dextran standards covered a range of molecular weights: 5,000 Da, 12,000 Da, 25,000 Da, and 50,000 Da. The retention times and areas for each standard are summarized below:

| Dextran Standard | Retention Time (min) | Height (µRIU) | Area (µRIU*min) | Relative Area (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5,000 Da | 10.25 | 11.461 | 14.387 | 100 |
| 12,000 Da | 9.66 | 6.747 | 10.108 | 100 |
| 25,000 Da | 8.61 | 8.182 | 13.071 | 100 |
| 50,000 Da | 7.55 | 5.953 | 10.561 | 100 |

Table 1: Data were plotted to generate a standard calibration curve by correlating the logarithm of molecular weights with retention times. Earlier retention times correlate with larger molecular weights, while later retention times indicate smaller polysaccharide species. The resulting linear relationship provides the foundation for determining the molecular weights of the unknown polysaccharide fractions in hemp samples. (Figure 2)

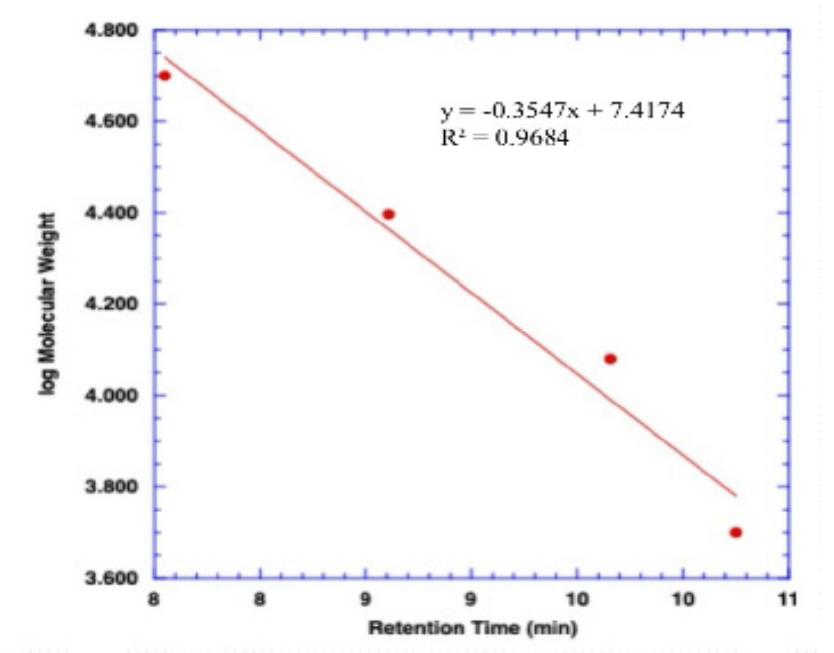



Figure 2: Calibration curve relating molecular weight of dextran to retention time (min) on Agilent Bio-SEC 3 HPLC column eluted with water. The linear regression demonstrates the relationship between molecular size and retention time, allowing for the estimation of unknown polysaccharide molecular weights.

### Analysis of Polysaccharide Fractions from Hemp

The retention times and relative areas of the peaks indicate the molecular weight distribution in each sample, as summarized below.

| Sample | Retention Times (min) | Relative Area (%) |
|---|---|---|
| **1407 FEDORA17 IEX 0.2 M S200 F2** | 9.27, 21.65, 23.41 | 78.36, 10.74, 10.90 |
| **1404 FEDORA17 IEX 0.1 M S200 F1** | 8.67, 21.96 | 79.38, 20.62 |
| **1406 FEDORA17 IEX 0.1 M S200 F3** | 21.70 | 100 |
| **1405 FEDORA17 IEX 0.1 M S200 F2** | 6.82, 12.00, 21.83, 23.59 | 42.60, 22.25, 16.34, 18.81 |

**Table 2**: Four hemp polysaccharide samples were analyzed using SEC of samples eluted from ion exchange column with different salt concentrations used in the mobile phase (0.1 M and 0.2 M NaCl).

A representative size exclusion HPLC chromatogram is shown below (Figure 3).

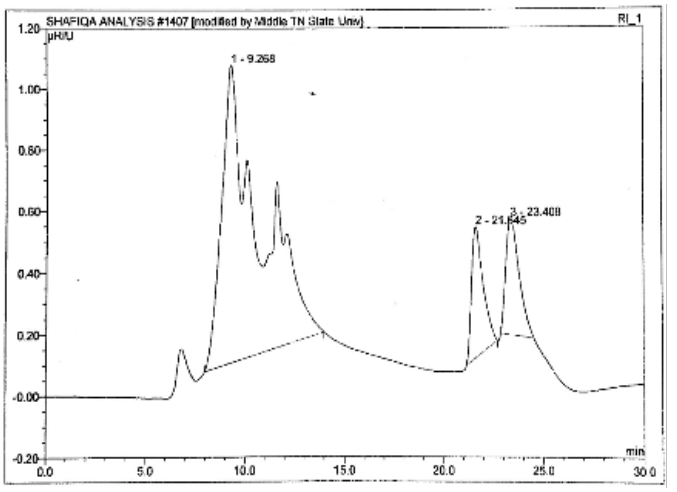



**Figure 3: Chromatogram for Sample 1407 FEDORA17 IEX 0.2 M S200 F2**

A chromatograph showing three main peaks with retention times at 9.27 min (78.36% area), 21.65 min (10.74% area), and 23.41 min (10.90% area). This sample indicates a mixture of molecular sizes, dominated by larger polysaccharides.

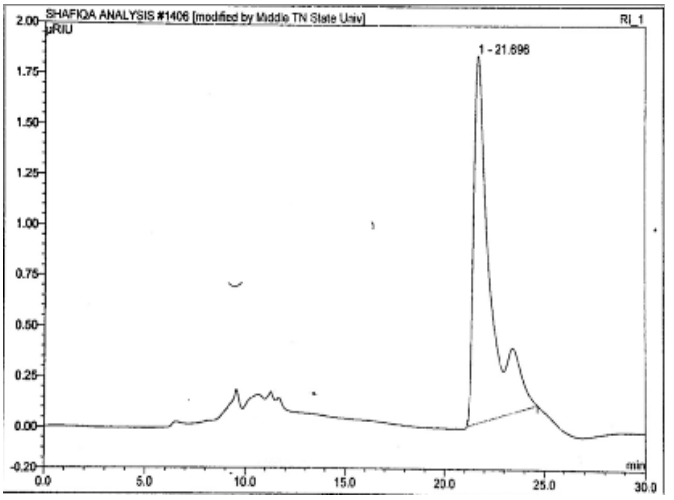



**Figure 4: Chromatogram for Sample 1406 FEDORA17 IEX 0.1 M S200 F3**

A chromatograph with a single dominant peak at 21.70 min (100% area), suggesting a more homogenous molecular composition with smaller molecules.

**Interpretation of Molecular Weight Distribution**

Each sample demonstrates a range of molecular weights, reflected by different peaks in the chromatograms. The earlier retention times correspond to larger molecules, while later retention times suggest smaller molecules. For example, Sample 1407 (0.2 M NaCl) contains three distinct molecular weight populations, with the majority of the sample corresponding to a larger molecular size (9.27 min, 78.36%). Conversely, Sample 1406 exhibits a single peak at 21.70 minutes, indicating a more homogeneous composition dominated by smaller molecules.

The difference in molecular weight distribution between the samples can be attributed to both the fractionation process and the salt concentration used in the mobile phase. Higher salt concentration (0.2 M NaCl) in Sample 1407 led to the separation of three distinct molecular weight fractions, while the lower concentration (0.1 M NaCl) in Sample 1406 resulted in a single dominant molecular species.

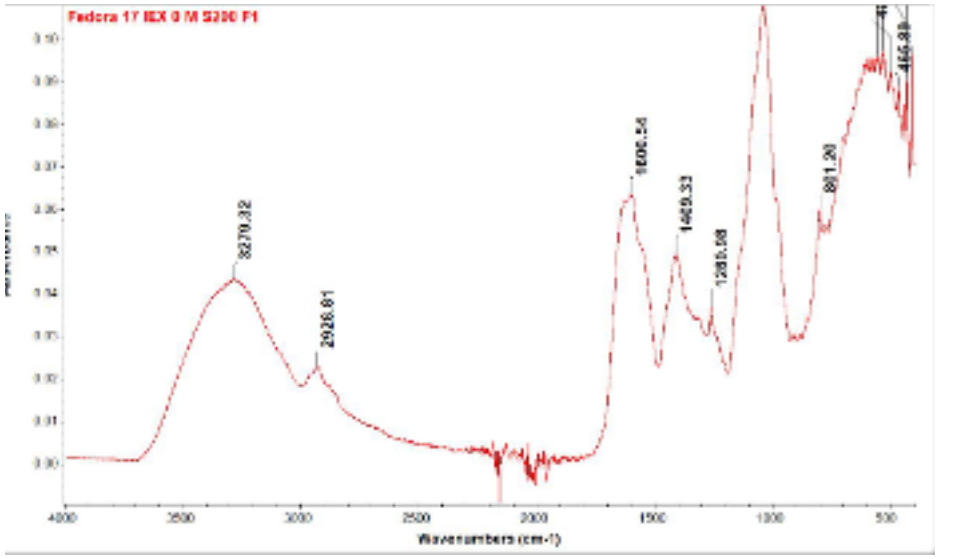
**Estimation of Molecular Weights**

Using the standard curve generated from the dextran standards, the molecular weights of the peaks in the hemp samples were estimated based on their retention times. Peaks with earlier retention times, such as 6.82 minutes in Sample 1405, correspond to higher molecular weight polysaccharides (closer to 50,000 Da). Peaks at later retention times, such as 21.70 minutes in Sample 1406, represent smaller molecules, potentially in the range of 5,000 Da.

**FTIR Spectroscopy of Polysaccharide Fractions**

FTIR spectroscopy was performed on polysaccharide fractions extracted from Fedora 17 hemp leaves. The spectra provided insights into the functional groups present in these samples and helped characterize the molecular structure of the polysaccharides. Key observations from the FTIR results are outlined below:

**• Fedora 17 Leaves IEX 0 M S200 F1:**



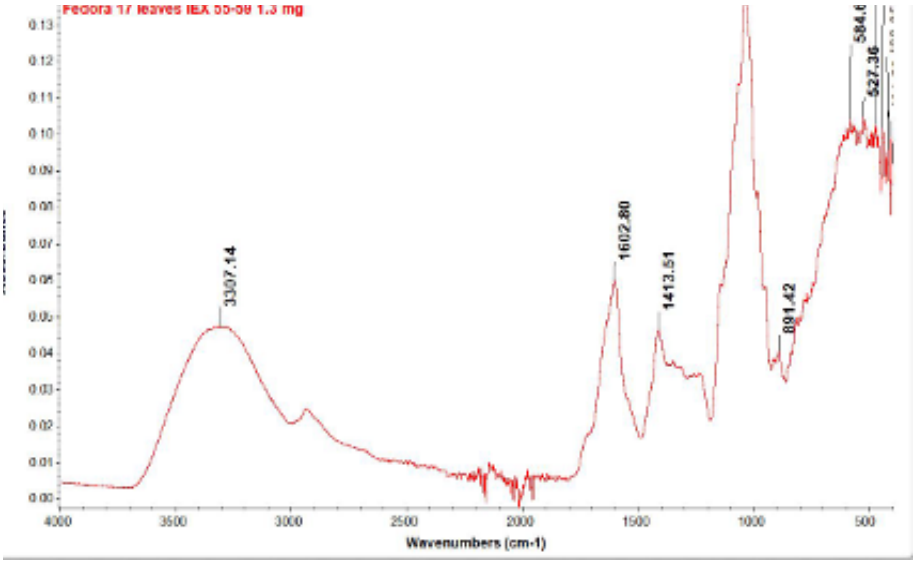

o **Figure 5** shows characteristic absorption peaks at 3279.32 $cm^{-1}$, corresponding to O-H stretching vibrations indicative of hydroxyl groups, which are common in polysaccharides.

o The peak at 2928.81 $cm^{-1}$ is attributed to C-H stretching, which is often present in carbohydrate backbones.

o The peak at 1600.54 $cm^{-1}$ corresponds to C=O stretching, often associated with carbonyl groups or carboxylate groups in uronic acids, which are components of pectins or hemicelluloses.

o Peaks at 1260.98 $cm^{-1}$ and 801.20 $cm^{-1}$ likely correspond to C-O and C-H bending vibrations, suggesting the presence of glycosidic linkages.

- **Fedora 17 Leaves IEX 55-59 1.3 mg:**




- **Figure 6**: This sample exhibited a similar broad peak at 3307.14 cm□¹ (O-H stretching), consistent with polysaccharide structures.
- A notable peak at 1602.80 $cm^{-1}$ (C=O stretching) is observed, which is indicative of the presence of uronic acids.
- The absorption at 891.42 $cm^{-1}$ is characteristic of β-glycosidic linkages found in cellulose and hemicelluloses, which are integral components of plant cell walls.

**Interpretation of FTIR Results**

The FTIR spectra obtained from Fedora 17 leaves reveal the presence of key functional groups typical of polysaccharides, including hydroxyl (O-H), carbonyl (C=O), and glycosidic linkages (C-O). The main FTIR absorption bands, particularly O-H, C-H, and C=O stretching, were consistent across all tested polysaccharide fractions, with slight variations in intensity or presence of specific peaks like β-glycosidic linkages. These groups are fundamental components of complex polysaccharides like cellulose, hemicellulose, and pectins, all of which are crucial for plant cell wall structure and function.

- The strong O-H stretching peaks (around 3270-3300 $cm^{-1}$) confirm the presence of hydroxyl groups, a characteristic feature of polysaccharides that contributes to their hydrophilic nature.
- C-H stretching around 2928 $cm^{-1}$ and C=O stretching in the range of 1600-1730 $cm^{-1}$ indicate the presence of both neutral sugars and acidic components, such as uronic acids.
- The presence of β-glycosidic linkages in Fedora 17 samples, indicated by absorption bands around 890 $cm^{-1}$, suggests a significant proportion of cellulose and hemicellulose polysaccharides in these fractions.

These FTIR results complement the chromatographic analysis by confirming the molecular structures of polysaccharides present in the samples. The functional group assignments help further elucidate the complexity and potential biological activities of the isolated polysaccharide fractions.

**4.1 Discussion**

This study aimed to characterize the structural properties and biological activities of polysaccharides isolated from Cannabis sativa L. (hemp) variety Fedora 17.
By using Size-Exclusion Chromatography (SEC) and Fourier-Transform Infrared Spectroscopy (FTIR), we examined the molecular weight distribution, functional group composition, and structural complexity of the polysaccharides. The antioxidant properties of these fractions were also evaluated.

**Molecular Weight Distribution**

The SEC analysis of polysaccharide fractions revealed a wide range of molecular weights across the different hemp samples. The use of dextran standards allowed us to develop a calibration curve and accurately estimate the molecular weights of polysaccharides in the unknown samples. Notably, samples analyzed with a higher salt concentration (0.2 M NaCl) demonstrated a broader distribution of molecular weights compared to those analyzed with 0.1 M NaCl. This suggests that salt concentration plays a significant role in altering the elution profile and potentially impacts the molecular interactions within the sample matrix.

Samples such as 1407 FEDORA17 IEX 0.2 M S200 F2, which exhibited multiple peaks, suggest a complex mixture of polysaccharides with varying molecular sizes. On the other hand, the relatively homogeneous peak of 1406 FEDORA17 IEX 0.1 M S200 F3 indicates a dominant molecular species, likely representing a purified fraction of smaller molecular weight polysaccharides.

**Structural Insights from FTIR Analysis**

FTIR spectroscopy provided additional insights into the structural composition of the polysaccharide fractions. The presence of strong O-H stretching bands (~3300 $cm^{-1}$) across all samples confirms the polysaccharides' hydrophilic nature, while the C-H stretching bands (~2928 $cm^{-1}$) suggest the presence of carbohydrate backbones. The peaks at ~1600 $cm^{-1}$, observed in most samples, correspond to C=O stretching, indicating the presence of carboxyl groups, likely from uronic acids, which are commonly found in pectins and hemicelluloses.

Specific polysaccharide fractions, such as Fedora 17 Leaves IEX 55-59 1.3 mg, showed a characteristic β-glycosidic linkage peak (~891 $cm^{-1}$), confirming the presence of cellulose and hemicellulose polysaccharides. These findings are consistent with previous studies on plant cell wall polysaccharides, which contain both neutral sugars (e.g., glucose) and acidic sugars (e.g., galacturonic acid).

The FTIR spectra also provided clues to the purity and complexity of each fraction. For instance, samples like Fedora 17 Leaves IEX 55-59 1.3 mg showed a well-defined spectrum with fewer overlapping peaks, suggesting a more refined polysaccharide mixture, while other samples with more complex spectra indicated the presence of multiple polysaccharide species.

**Antioxidant Activity and Biological Implications**

The antioxidant potential of the isolated polysaccharide fractions was evaluated using a DDPH assay. The results indicated that fractions with higher molecular weight polysaccharides, particularly those with carboxyl and hydroxyl functional groups, exhibited stronger antioxidant activity. This is consistent with the literature, which suggests that the presence of uronic acids and hydroxyl groups enhances the ability of polysaccharides to scavenge free radicals.

The observed antioxidant activity positions these polysaccharides as candidates for further exploration in biomedical applications, particularly in the development of antioxidant-rich supplements or as functional ingredients in food and pharmaceutical industries.

**Impact of Extraction Methods**

The choice of salt concentration in the mobile phase during SEC significantly influenced the molecular weight distribution and the complexity of the polysaccharide fractions. Higher salt concentrations (0.2 M NaCl) appeared to disrupt some molecular interactions, allowing for a broader range of molecular sizes to elute from the column, while lower concentrations (0.1 M NaCl) facilitated the isolation of more uniform polysaccharide fractions.

## 4.2 Conclusion

This study successfully characterized the molecular weight distribution and structural properties of polysaccharides isolated from Cannabis sativa L. (hemp) variety Fedora 17. By employing SEC, FTIR, and antioxidant assays, we provided a comprehensive analysis of the polysaccharides' structural complexity and potential biological activities.

The molecular weight distribution analysis revealed the heterogeneity of polysaccharide fractions, with some samples displaying complex mixtures and others showing more homogeneity. The use of FTIR confirmed the presence of key functional groups such as hydroxyl, carboxyl, and glycosidic linkages, which are essential for the biological activities of these polysaccharides.

Notably, the antioxidant activity observed in these polysaccharide fractions suggests that they may have valuable applications in the pharmaceutical, cosmetic, and food industries, where antioxidant-rich compounds are highly sought after. The findings also open new avenues for further research into the biological functions of hemp polysaccharides, particularly their potential role in immunomodulation and anti-inflammatory responses.

Future studies should focus on optimizing extraction and purification techniques to isolate specific polysaccharide fractions with well-defined molecular weights and functional properties. In addition, further exploration of the relationship between molecular structure and biological activity could provide valuable insights into how these compounds can be utilized in various industrial applications. This research lays the groundwork for harnessing hemp-derived polysaccharides in sustainable and bioactive product development, contributing to the growing interest in hemp as a versatile and renewable resources.

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# A Fool's Errand: Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and the Parodic Use of Tragic Characterization in Early Elizabethan Drama*

**Matthew Hutton**

ABSTRACT

Herein I argue that Christopher Marlowe's revered Elizabethan drama *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* subverts the allegorical conventions of the Medieval morality play, recasting the everyman figure—the protagonist tempted by personifications of sin—in an ironic light. As the title implies, the learned doctor is cast ostensibly as a tragic hero, yet the character to appear onstage is far from heroic, and his inevitable demise comes across as more pathetic than tragic. Whereas the classical tragic hero embodies larger-than-life qualities ultimately undermined by a devastating flaw, Marlowe's protagonist possesses no such grandeur. In Marlowe's hands, Doctor Faustus becomes a buffoonish clown, a figure of public ridicule offered up to assuage the anxieties of the Elizabethan audience. Marlowe's take on the Faust myth speaks just as loudly to the present age—an age fueled by relentless technological ambition often tinged with ethical indifference and heedless of unintended consequences.

***Winner of the Deans' Distinguished Essay Award**

It has become commonplace to opine that we live in an era of self-obsession. "Narcissism" is the word of the day, and popular usage of the term is often associated with the seismic cultural impact of social media. But the seeds of contemporary self-conception were sown in the Renaissance, when the human subject became an autonomous entity. With this rise in subjectivity came a three-dimensional conception of literary characterization, a newfound roundness of character that comes to full flower in Elizabethan drama. The complex, dynamic characters fashioned by Shakespeare, Jonson, and Marlowe wholly transcended the stock allegorical personae of the Medieval morality plays. Marlowe's *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus,* originally composed in 1593, may be the first harbinger of this literary paradigm shift. *Faustus* still bears the stamp of the Medieval morality play while anticipating the depths of characterization to come in Shakespeare and Jonson. Marlowe adopts the allegorical conventions of the morality play only to subvert them, recasting the everyman or pilgrim figure—the protagonist tempted by personifications of sin—as the recklessly narcissistic Doctor Faustus. Marlowe introduces Faustus as a tragic hero in the play's title and prologue, but with an ironic wink, as the character to subsequently appear on the stage is hardly heroic, and his inevitable demise comes across as more pathetic than tragic. For all the august mystery of the Faust figure in the popular imagination, Marlowe's Faustus becomes a figure of ridicule—a hapless fool doomed by his own delusional grandiosity.

The play fuses comic and cautionary elements to present the portrait of a lost soul whose attempt to transgress socio-religious norms leads him to damnation through a series of absurd predicaments, teasing its audience to laughter in an appeal to *schadenfreude*. Faustus' interiority is truncated and superficial. He is "tragic" insofar as he suffers a downfall, but as a protagonist, he is more antiheroic than heroic, painfully flawed in an all-too-human way. His dramatic journey is one of comic extremes, as Marlowe subtly mocks Faustus' naive attempts to achieve absolute power. Faustus' dabbling in the magical arts—considered a genuine danger to Elizabethan audiences—is so hamfisted and bumbling in Faustus' execution that his susceptibility to the devil's temptation becomes parodic, as if Marlowe is sending up the conventions of the Medieval morality play itself. Marlowe demystifies the demonic temptation purported to be a sinister threat in traditional Christian dogma, generating a comic form of *catharsis* fit to assuage the collective anxieties of the Elizabethan audience.

As previously noted, the title itself—*The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*—brims with irony. From the first appearance of the protagonist, Marlowe employs comic tropes. He casts the doctor's self-aggrandizing dreams of unbridled power as puerile fantasies. Faustus' immediate rejection of all he has learned is so rash as to disabuse

the audience of any notion that his learned intellectualism gives him the genuine power to summon dark supernatural energies with any effectiveness. He comes across as the stock figure in a parody—the caricature of a remote intellectual. As Maggie Vinter notes in "*Doctor Faustus* and the Art of Dying Badly," "[Renaissance] Humanists revived *parodia* as a rhetorical term to imply that imitation of a serious subject necessarily derogates that subject" (5). With the increasing cynicism of the British Renaissance, late in its emergence on the heels of its Italian origins yet adamant in its Protestant turn toward individual agency, the learned scholar could be seen as a vestige of the Medieval scholastic, whose erudition only served to sustain church hierarchy.

Though educated as a scholastic, Faustus remains susceptible to earthly temptation. The esoteric nature of his education, to the average Elizabethan, would have rendered him more suspect than trustworthy. He is easily seduced by the devil—not unlike the standard pilgrim of morality plays, yet irredeemable in Marlowe. The narrative is predicated not on his salvation, but on his inevitable damnation. This shift in teleology may be what makes Marlowe's play most distinctive as a harbinger of the dramatic flourishing to come in the golden age of English theater: a damning treatment of its protagonist, a willingness to expose the darkest impulses of a character that would previously have been seen as a larger-than-life figure.

Most distinctive in *Doctor Faustus* is Marlowe's comic insouciance in handling these dark materials. Magic and sorcery were clear and present dangers to the Elizabethan audience—an audience steeped in Calvinism, wherein the "dark arts" signified reprobation and exile from grace. A spirit of anxiety pervaded the newly-Protestant society, as citizens were forced to live in fear of the soundness of their own piety, never certain whether they were born for salvation or doomed to damnation. These anxieties color the determinism that seals Faustus' fate. "Most scholars concede that Faustus is predestined to be damned," argues David K. Anderson. Any agency behind Faustus' actions is "beyond his control altogether" (253). For Mark James Richard Scott, the play "inhabits a Calvinist universe," and stands as an "incomparable portrait of reprobate living" (9-10).

As befitting the Faust legend, Faustus' downfall is foreordained from the start. The plot is built upon an immediate "spoiler" when the chorus informs the audience of Faustus' outcome in the Prologue. Before the doctor even appears onstage, the chorus casts him as a shade of the mythical Icarus: "Swollen with cunning of a self-conceit / His waxen wings did mount above his reach. / And melting Heavens conspired his overthrow" (Prologue 20-22). The lines assure the audience that what it is about to witness is a myth of moral import with a classically tragic arc. While the 1604 English

audience may or may not have been familiar with the Germanic legend of Faust, they were certainly familiar with the Greek myth of Icarus, whose fate provides the same cautionary moral: *Do not fly too close to the heavens. Do not attempt to exceed your mortal limitations.* Marlowe's narrative henceforth does not depend on plot twists or unexpected consequences. Rather, the play serves a ritual function, the vestige of the morality play, in which the audience shares a collective experience as a means of reinforcing its dearest values. This echoes the original purpose of tragedy for the ancient Greeks, which evolved out of religious ritual. The Greek tragedy replaced the sacrificial goat of Dionysian ritual with the narrative sacrifice of the tragic hero. In his fall from grace, the hero became a scapegoat for the agonies of the human condition.

Doctor Faustus functions as such a scapegoat on the Elizabethan stage, but for a different purpose than that of the traditional tragic hero. Marlowe's intent is to mock the protagonist rather than bewail him, and the audience's *catharsis* comes not in the form of dread, but in laughter. Faustus is hardly an Aristotelian tragic hero, a superior, Nietzschean figure whose downfall occurs when his outsized *hubris* leads to a dramatic error of judgment. The classical tragic hero's attempt to transcend the human condition possesses a certain majestic will to overcome our mortal limitations. Faustus, on the other hand, is foolhardy and rash. Although he has excelled in higher learning, the audience sees no demonstration of his expertise, only the emotionality of his impulses and his pride in dismissing his learned achievements in favor of the "dark arts." He never earns the audience's trust. Casting aside all his books in the opening scene, dismissing all he has learned—Marlowe could not have intended his audience to find this admirable. Other than his academic degrees, Faustus has no backstory suggesting accomplishment, which makes his arrogance appear clownish from the play's opening. At the same time, he lacks the charm or loveable-loser quality of a Don Quixote, the ill-fated but endearingly passionate dreamer. Faustus' beef with philosophy and theology is not rooted in critical argumentation or intuitive sagacity—he merely finds educated knowledge boring and useless. He seems to live in idle decadence, discarding any wisdom he might have gleaned through higher learning in favor of black magic and sorcery—beliefs and practices that in today's parlance would be deemed "pseudoscience," the rejection of reason in favor of "magical thinking." The lure of the dark arts in *Doctor Faustus* carries no mystique of sagacious wizardry; it only suggests pride in ignorance. When Faustus bids his Divinity texts adieu to pick up the necromantic books full of "lines, circles, signs, letters and characters," he seems to delight in his own inability to understand the lexicography (1.1.51), as if his lack of understanding makes the texts' obscurity more powerful. These works of magical conjuring carry the schoolboy allure of secret codes

and hidden passageways. Faustus dreams of a power he longs to possess, but without any foundational knowledge that would merit such power. All of the knowledge he possesses—his only claim to credibility—is irrelevant, even hostile, to the practice of necromancy. Faustus' desire for unbridled power thus comes across as more delusional than intimidating or alluring:

> Oh, what a world of profit and delight,
> Of power, of honor, of omnipotence...
> All things that move between the quiet poles
> Shall be at my command (1.1.54-58)

The voice is not that of a learned scholar, but of a boy putting on a wizard's hat and staring in the mirror. In the words of venerated literary critic Cleanth Brooks, Faustus is "naive and jejune" (236), eager to don the mantle of the dark magician though he is woefully ill-equipped to handle it. He is the great ancestor to Mickey Mouse. Even his use of Latin, which his education would purport him to have mastered, is bungled, demonstrating a "puzzling textual incompetence" (Scott 13).

The chorus' prologue and the opening scene establish a dramatic irony that sustains a steady undercurrent for the remainder of the play. The audience, already aware of the fated outcome, is unable to revel in Faustus' acquired powers. The excitement Faustus shows upon attaining power becomes at best laughable, at worst pitiful. Marlowe seems inclined toward the former, though his contemporaries accused him of lacking a sense of humor (Sofer 290). Faustus' humiliation rises exponentially with each act. When this humiliation mingles with Marlowe's use of spectacle, the resulting laughter ensues from the darker side of parody: an appeal to *schadenfreude.* The audience laughs by reveling in the protagonist's idiocy. The would-be hero becomes the unwitting fool. But unlike the Shakespearean fool, he is not in on the joke. He *is* the joke. This is the theater of ridicule.

What makes Faustus most compelling as a character is his self-questioning and deliberation, a precursor to modern interiority, and this quality comes out in his soliloquies. Faustus speaks *of* himself in third person and speaks *to* himself in second person. Through this self-dialogue, we witness him wrestling with his lack of faith and resolve. But because the play is supremely ironic—indeed parodic—his faith is not devoted to God, but to the devil. The soliloquy allows the audience to overhear him giving himself a pep talk: "Despair in God and trust in Beelzebub / Now go not backward; no, Faustus, be resolute. / Why waverest thou?" (2.1.5-7). His speech displays interiority, but with a knowing smirk on Marlowe's part. The soliloquy allows for self-dialogue, but without a "to be or not to be" degree of internal torment, because the play is not a genuine tragedy, and the protagonist is in no way heroic. Nevertheless, Marlowe's

dramatic attention to self-questioning does set the stage for the more probing interiority of his Elizabethan successors. It allows Faustus to become a round character, testing his resolve and fighting against his own weakness, albeit with flipped allegiances. As an inversion of the morality play, he does not seek the courage to trust God, but to trust Satan. Reframing the context of his protagonist's plea to maintain faith, Marlowe makes Faustus' interior monologue ridiculous, showcasing the human potential for cognitive dissonance at its most egregious.

However novel, Faustus' confused pathos may reflect a climate of Elizabethan anti-intellectualism. Marlowe's Cambridge education acquainted him with higher learning as the stuffy province of Church scholastics. Mikaela Von Kursell has recently discussed this factor in "Faustus as Dunce," in which she takes a cue from the moment Wagner refers to Valdes and Cornelius as "dunces" (1.2.15-16). Von Kursell traces the roots of the word "dunce" to its origins in the term "Duns-man"—a term used in the late Renaissance to refer to a follower of scholastic theologian and Franciscan friar John Duns Scotus. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "dunce" was originally "a descriptive term for a schoolman," a "dull pedant," or "one whose study of books has left him dull and stupid" (303). The term as used by the character Wagner, Von Kursell points out, "could just as easily be applied to Faustus, who was a product and purveyor of the same scholastic educational system" (302).

As dunce-worthy dabblings in magic, the conjuring spells contain no substance. Genevieve Guenther argues that Mephistopheles, the anti-mentor, dismisses "the notion that magical signs have any spiritual efficacy" (276). "Magical language," Guenther maintains, "works performatively in the spiritual realm only by its accidental as opposed to essential qualities" (276). Katherine Walker agrees, pointing out that "Demonic knowledge is all show and no substance" in *Faustus*. Mephistopheles' knowledge, in this context, is merely "theatrical" (406). As a theatrical figure, a holdover from the Vice of the morality play, Mephistopheles acts as a trickster, playfully letting the audience in on his shenanigans at Faustus' expense. "Satan's forms of knowing are a mere pantomime of divine providence," argues Walker. They are "a parody that hinges on the calculation of earthly probabilities from visible cues and the manipulation of fallible human passions" (412). Mephistopheles thus uses the impression of divine providence as a playbook for manipulating Faustus' desires. Just after Faustus signs the blood contract, Mephistopheles makes the aside, "I'll fetch him something to delight his mind" (2.1.81). He then exits the stage—arousing the audience's eager interest—only to promptly return with a troupe of dancing devils and garish wizard apparel for Faustus, inviting the audience to revel in his diabolical mischief at Faustus' expense. The entire scenario echoes the pageantry

of the Medieval mystery play, but with a newfound irony. One could still imagine Mephistopheles springing up through a trap door at centerstage, a stock trope of the mystery play.

Given that *Faustus* functions as a parody, the clown subplot serves a different purpose from that of most tragedies. Rather than providing comic relief from intense drama, it simply mirrors and exaggerates the absurdity of the primary plot. This further refutes any implication that Faustus may possess truly sinister powers. Walker notes that in the governing logic of the play, the clowns possess as much magical agency as Faustus does, having "ready access to demonic knowledge" (406). "They are just as at home with learning from the devil as Faustus is" (408). His knowledge "is continually parodied by the clowns' own debased forms of understanding, and their interactions with demons suggest that what is ultimately mocked in the play is the very pretension of desiring to learn the unknowable" (406). As Walker suggests, the clowns have not been afforded the privilege of Faustus' scholastic education, yet they have just as much capacity to engage in necromancy. Faustus' venture into magical narcissism is wholly divorced from any scholastic knowledge he may have hitherto possessed. Though educated as a scholar, his adoption of pseudoscience is a voluntary choice, an embrace of ignorance despite his extensive training in the fine art of rational thought.

In Marlowe's compositional process, the play's parodic element may have arrived by accident. The plot suffers from predictability, which may have fueled Marlowe's reliance on comedic tropes and smoke-and-mirrors spectacle. Once Faustus has struck the deal with the devil, the action essentially consists of a series of comic episodes. "Very early in the play," Brooks writes, "the learned doctor makes his decision to sell his soul to the devil, and after that, there seems little to do except to fill in the time before the mortgage falls due" (229). The comic episodes of the primary plot, in their increasingly whimsical absurdity, come to mirror the free-floating jejunity of the comic subplot. As a foolish protagonist, Faustus "cannot find anything to do really worthy of the supernatural powers that he has come to possess" (232). There is a haphazardness to the unfolding of the action. Both Faustus and Mephistopheles act on impulse, determining their courses of action through trial and error (Walker 425). "By the middle of the play," Sofer notes, as the characters have been swiftly transported to Rome, "Faustus' thirst for absolute power and knowledge of the occult mysteries has dwindled into magical tourism" (299). Events traverse space and time at slapdash speed, as if Marlowe himself is flexing authorial conjuring tricks. The laws of dramatic cohesion no longer apply. For Sofer, Marlowe is simply "devising theatrical entertainments to please moneyed patrons with a short attention span" (299).

While Sofer's deduction may sound cynical, there is undeniably a comic, proto-vaudevillian spirit in the interplay between Faustus and Mephistopheles. From Act 2 through Act 4, to a contemporary reader, the pair might as well be a comic duo at a resort in the Catskills. When Faustus asks Mephistopheles to "fetch me a wife," as if he were requesting a stiff drink, Mephistopheles leaves and comes back "with a Devil dressed like a woman," accompanied by fireworks. We can imagine the delight of the audience when Mephistopheles subsequently asks, "Tell me, Faustus, how dost thou like thy wife?" It comes across as the punch line to a riotous joke. Maintaining the comic tempo, Faustus retorts, "A plague on her for a hot whore!" (2.1.141-145). This is not the kind of exchange one associates with tragedy—much less a tragedy in which Satan damns a man to hell for eternity.

If there remains any question as to whether Marlowe aims to parody the medieval allegory, he makes it plain in the parade of the seven deadly sins in Act 2 Scene 3. Here Lucifer brings forth each allegorical sin figure as if hosting a beauty pageant at a state fair. Faustus stands dumbfounded, needing to ask each what each figure represents in order of their appearance. Their description is tavern-hall comical. Covetousness, "begotten of an old churl and an old leather bag" (2.3.115-116), turns the stage over to Envy, born "of a chimney-sweeper and an oyster-wife" (2.3.127-128). Gluttony—aptly the last in line in a play with a steady food and appetite motif—is descended from an ancestor described as "a gammon of bacon" (2.3.139). Given that the allegory directly parodies the playbook of the Medieval morality play, Marlowe is making an appeal to cultural fatigue. The allegory becomes a vestige of Catholic entertainment. The audience guffaws in delight while Faustus, the dupe, remains enthusiastic:

Lucifer Now, Faustus, how dost thou like this?

Faustus O, this feeds my soul! (2.3.161-162)

The notion that this pageant of monstrosities enriches the soul sounds patently ridiculous, underscoring Faustus' lack of depth and mocking the morality plays in the same breath. Faustus is being "fed" on numerous levels. Lucifer subsequently reassures him that hell is "all manner of delight," to which Faustus replies, "O, might I see hell and return again, how happy were I then!" (2.3.162-164). Faustus' credulity would sound amusingly cringeworthy if it were not so indicative of his oncoming damnation, his painful inability to grasp that he is not ever going to "return again." The dramatic irony becomes downright menacing. Lucifer then states, quite literally, "I will send for thee at midnight" (2.3.165). Faustus, seemingly oblivious, cannot sense the implications, proclaiming, "Great thanks, mighty Lucifer!" (2.3.168). Lucifer's reminder solely serves the audience, because Marlowe must keep Faustus lighthearted enough for the

episodic gags to continue, and the pace quickens as the episodes become more absurdly fantastical. When Faustus snatches the Pope's meat in Act 3 Scene 1, the Elizabethan audience is able laugh at the Pope's expense, but they are ultimately laughing at Faustus.

Marlowe challenges the audience's degree of delight in witnessing an innocent suffer, as we see in the episode with the horse-courser. The moment the courser yanks off Faustus' leg would seem to be horrifying, but we have entered the realm of black comedy (or proto-black comedy), where slapstick turns grotesque. Any notion that Faustus' amputation might appear melodramatic is undermined by his mewlish response, "O my leg, my leg! Help, Mephistopheles! Call the officers. My leg, my leg!" (4.1.170-171). Such repetition plays to comic effect. Faustus' request that Mephistopheles "call the officers"—as if the damned man had any recourse to legal justice—renders the plea painfully pathetic. And still the episodic comedy continues. Faustus, master of conjuring, conjures up no less than *grapes* for the Duchess of Vanholt. The food motif returns in all its ironic inanity while the scene further highlights Faustus' lack of finesse with any love interest. The ultimate source of his disaffection, in the beginning, was loneliness; here the slap of reality crescendos just prior to his eternal damnation. The irony peaks as the plot peaks, when our romantically-challenged hero meets Helen of Troy—by legend the most beautiful woman ever known to humanity—and after meekly requesting a kiss, proclaims, "Her lips suck forth my soul" (5.1.93). The utterance is at once comically awkward and harrowingly ominous, as the audience is aware that his soul is about to be literally "sucked forth." Helen is mute throughout the scene. Although he kisses her twice, she disappears as unceremoniously as she first appeared—as a flimsy, voiceless apparition.

In a traditional morality play, the opportunity would come in the denouement for the lapsed pilgrim to repent and find atonement. But this is the parody of a morality play. Faustus is not an upstanding pilgrim, or a pilgrim at all, but a passive dabbler without any religious conviction. "Rather than turn to God for forgiveness," Vinter notes, he begs to be spared in spineless pleas, "a pattern of parodic variation on established discourses" (263). These are performative speech acts, not any kind of repentance (Sofer 290). Von Kursell writes, "by the end of the play...he is the naughty schoolboy, set on display for public disgrace" (304). I would argue that he plays this role throughout the entire play. His sins are not sins of action, but of being. He is not evil; he is simply hollow to the core. This character speaks to the present age, in the shadow of modernism and its disenchantments. As Brooks argues, "the confusions and contradictions in Faustus' quest for knowledge make Faustus appear a more human figure and even a more modern figure" (232). Lacking a stable identity, he becomes vain, malleable, and easily

manipulated. Faustus is a new kind of antihero on the world stage, a figure now familiar: the manchild in isolation, yearning for the limelight, functionally powerless yet longing for absolute power.

The plight of the solitary intellectual in a state of *ennui*, seeking godlike power to keep from facing his own existential impotence, may be Marlowe's most prescient contribution to the history of dramatic characterization. "Whether he is a clown or a doctor," writes Walker, "he is always an illusion." Such an ambiguity, wherein the distinction between appearance and reality allows for an infinite gallery of appearances, renders life "akin to the theater itself" (406). Marlowe's Faustus, despite his literary legacy, is not resolute enough to seem dangerous, sinister, or Byronically romantic. Perhaps the greatest irony, ultimately, is that Marlowe's play became the most influential application of the Faust myth in all of literature, the root source of Goethe's *Faust*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus*, and countless other cautionary tales of grand ambition leading to total damnation or, in so many instances, ridiculous turns of fate.

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# Off With Her Head! An Analysis of Female Awakening Through Social Deviance in Lynn Nottage's *Las Meninas*

**Mavis Wolff**

ABSTRACT

The Victorian Era brought the evolution of a distinctly feminine writing trope: the development of female characters' personal awakenings through acts of social deviance. Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899) is a prime example of this phenomenon, wherein main character Edna Pontellier, disinterested in the expectations of upper-class French-Creole life, participates in an emotional affair to actualize her own autonomy. This essay seeks to determine the significance of this literary trope in contemporary playwright Lynn Nottage's *Las Meninas*. The play follows the woes of French Queen Marie-Thérèse as she becomes dissatisfied with her position on the margins of French Courtly society and has an affair with another excluded person, Nabo, an African with dwarfism. Nottage's parallel to the writings of Victorian female authors, like Chopin herself, emphasizes a desire to advocate for the advancement of women through the lens of Early Modern society. Additionally, the parallel reveals the continuity of the tradition of representing women's recognition of their autonomy through deviant actions from nineteenth-century through twenty-first-century literature. The presence of this tradition in twenty-first-century literature demonstrates that women are seeking similar social advancement in the present day.

Contemporary playwright Lynn Nottage is known for her writing as a form of "political advocacy" with a wide focus on complex narratives that intersect multiple social spheres (Poll 81). Nottage's craftsmanship is enhanced by the historical research that enriches her stories and grounds them despite her frequent use of situational hyperbole (95). Her balance of creative elements and historical context is seen in the play *Las Meninas*, set in seventeenth-century France toward the end of King Louis XIV's rule (Mansfield 105). The play follows Queen Marie-Thérèse, wife of King Louis XIV, and Nabo, an African dwarf bestowed on the queen by her cousin, as they form a relationship that will threaten the sanctity of the royal court. *Las Meninas* premiered at San Jose Repertory Theatre in 2002 under the direction of Michael Donald Edward and stage manager Nina Iventosch (249). The play had a positive but not booming reception. Critics noted an air of burlesque sexuality in its expressionistic set and tongue-in-cheek dialogue—characteristics that, as it happens, convey the drama of the play's historical setting (Harvey).

In *Las Meninas*, Lynn Nottage harkens to a literary tradition of female personal awakening through social deviance. To understand this focus, it is necessary to define both "social deviance" and the literary tradition of female personal awakening. The former is any course of action that defies the social and moral norms imposed by a society through legislation or social pressure, and the latter is when female characters experience a sudden, greater sense of self-autonomy despite their preexisting social confines, usually through socially deviant means (Abdulhaq 12). Nottage utilizes these elements to develop her commentary in *Las Meninas* on how gender-based social confines negatively impact women.

The play itself primarily focuses on the course of Nabo and Queen Marie-Thérèse's relationship. At the beginning of the play, Queen Marie-Thérèse is deeply unsatisfied with her husband, feeling as though he held little, if any, respect for their union, especially considering the way in which she is excluded from the social experience of the French court. To regain control over her life, the queen decides to pursue a more intimate friendship with Nabo, an African dwarf sent as a gift to her from French Dahomey, a colony in Africa known today as the People's Republic of Benin (Nottage 248). This scandalous bond eventually transforms into an unwanted pregnancy; the tension of the story culminates in a strikingly courteous dispute between King Louis XIV and Nabo. The execution of Nabo and the erasure of this episode from the history of the king's reign forms the story's conclusion.

Like Toni Morrison, whom she cites as a central influence in her work, Nottage supplements her characters' narratives with ample historical context. This often becomes

the most salient element of her work due to the accuracy of detail (Allfey et al). *Las Meninas* is oriented in Early Modern France, where French Renaissance gender mores prioritized absolute control over submissive wives (Insdorf 21). Furthermore, it was common in contemporary French culture, especially among the aristocracy and royalty, for the core values of marriage to be property and social status; these unions were contracted and negotiated, serving a solely transactional purpose (Insdorf 20-22).These phenomena are exemplified in the barren connection between King Louis XIV and Queen Marie-Thérèse, whose marriage was tied to the Treaty of the Pyrenees that brought peace to France and Spain. The Treaty of Pyrenees marked the conclusion of the Franco-Spanish War. This conflict was complex from the beginning, as it occurred amidst both the Thirty Years' War and a period of strained international relations between France and the dominant Habsburg Dynasty, and thus can be considered a subtle advancement of French political interests (Lopez 1). Internal tension in France and Spain delayed the treaty, and there was heavy disagreement over the marriage of the infant queen, who was offered like a token of peace (Lopez 2). Given the rhetorical situation of the Treaty, which was rooted in geopolitics, one can see that this marriage was never born from love. The king and queen were placed together to be symbols of international unity—a fact that does not necessarily entice someone. The lack of intimacy between the king and queen, and the king's subsequent infidelity, becomes one of the queen's central motivations for her affair with Nabo.

Further historical context is present in the elements of the play's first production and its namesake. As Nottage notes of the premiere, a dramaturg, Nakissa Etemad, was present to maintain the piece's historical accuracy (249). To ensure linguistic integrity, specifically with Queen Marie-Thérèse who speaks poor French through a royal Spanish accent, dialect coach Lynne Soffer was on the production team (249). Royal Spanish influence is seen in the play's title, as it was named after the painting *Las Meninas* by Diego Velásquez (1656). The painting itself is a genre scene, a painting that captures a specific type of situation; here it would be a court painting of the Spanish royal family. The piece is significant because it includes a self-portrait of Velásquez himself in the process of painting the royalty, a different and more intimate approach than other works of the time. This painting depicts the social setting of a royal court like the one in which play's plot unfolds, albeit in Spain. It shows the queen's court of origin and even depicts her father, Philip IV of Spain. Nottage's linking of her play to Velásquez's painting through her title establishes the queen as a central character in the narrative.

Nottage's emphasis on Queen Marie-Thérèse's culture reveals that the play's events transpire under her veil of perception. The audience views the play through the queen's emotional lens, with an emphasis on her experience of being excluded from the French court's social fabric. Since the queen's exclusion appears to stem from the French value of nationality, it is apparent this cultural difference emphasizes Queen Marie-Thérèse's feeling like an outsider in the French Court. The racial viewpoints in seventeenth-century Europe lead to Nabo's social exclusion as well, as he is defined as nothing but a court fool. The queen and Nabo's ability to form a bond relates to this experience of social exclusion, which becomes a motivating factor for the queen's decisions.

The tradition of female awakening through social deviance was born out of the Victorian Cult of Domesticity. Nineteenth-century European society, which heavily influenced American literature, found the ideal woman to be feminine, submissive, and maternal in nature, and those who violated these tight boundaries were considered threats to civilized society. This conception is reflected in contemporary European and American literature, especially pieces written by men, where women holding traditionally male roles are often scrutinized and satirized (Green 28-29). However, the Victorian Era was a time of social transformation, which galvanized a general anxiety about the possibility of women attempting to break out of the domestic sphere and enter the public sphere. Within literature authored by women, there was a more consistent appearance of female characters challenging this status quo through social deviance, thus using these platforms to advocate for the overall advancement of women (Abdulhaq 10).

*The Awakening*, written and published by Kate Chopin in 1899, is the most notable of these narratives of female transgression to achieve autonomy, as it presented a high-class woman using deviance to escape her gender role. The novel follows French Creole aristocrat Edna Pontellier as she recognizes her own self autonomy (Chopin). The power of this work is corroborated by Elaine Showalter in "Tradition and the Female Talent: *The Awakening* as a Solitary Book," wherein she describes how Chopin, referencing a "rich and complex tradition," is able to go "boldly beyond the work of her precursors in writing about women's longing for sexual and personal emancipation" (203). Showalter notes the impact of this text after it was published, highlighting how Chopin's work defined many new standards for the genre of the novel (203).

Through the novel's plot, Edna Pontellier's deviance manifests in her neglecting her "womanly duties," such as receiving social calls, passionately tending to the children, and cleaning the estate (29). Her deviance snowballs into an emotional affair, and her moving from her husband's house without prior consultation. Edna's flirtation with what brings her pleasure leads to her recognition of self-autonomy, or her awakening,

when she diverges from the standards of the Cult of Domesticity for the first time. She begins choosing to occupy each day as she pleases as opposed to prioritizing supervision of the servants, tending to her children, and hosting. Her husband finds this choice unacceptable. In a fit of worry, Mr. Pontellier complains to the couple's local doctor, "She's got some sort of notion in her head concerning the eternal rights of women...." (88). It is apparent that this situation perplexes Leonce Pontellier. Since his mind is entrenched with the standards of the Cult of Domesticity, he cannot comprehend his wife's desire to experience the autonomy that he is granted every day. On a larger scale, the conflict between these characters implies a social commentary from Chopin on the expectations of women during this time, as well as the general disregard for the desires of women. This tension between spouses is also apparent in *Las Meninas* through the king and queen's union.

Queen Marie-Thérèse's social deviance is exemplified through her relationship with King Louis XIV as well as through challenging the king's relationship with his mistress, La Valliere. The disconnected nature of Queen Marie-Thérèse and King Louis XIV's relationship is displayed in the very beginning of the novel upon the queen's reception of Nabo from her cousin. Throughout the entire interaction, the king's body language displays little regard for the conversation the queen engages him in. She implores him, "What is the best gift that you have ever received? Did it come in a box dis size or bigger," and his sole response is a shrug (253). Upon finally opening the box, the queen commands, "Look Louis, es fantastic," but "The King, disinterested, [cannot] be bothered to look" (253). Nottage references the contemporary trend of marrying for power or monetary gain, as was true of the relationship between the queen and king, who only married to prevent further discord between their respective countries of origin (Insdorf 20-22). The empty, transactional nature of their union provides the grounds for the king's infidelity and the queen's eventual discontent with their union and her own lack of autonomy.

The queen, brimming with the desire to feel seen in both the French Court and the eyes of the king, turns to deviance to advance her status. Queen Marie-Thérèse resorts to explosive tantrums to finally receive authentic emotional reactions from King Louis XIV. The most notable of these events is on the day of the king's and queen's supposed countryside holiday, a typical endeavor for the summer months. The queen is packed and ready, Nabo steadfast and commonplace at her side, but the king abruptly and unfeelingly declares, "I've decided that I won't go to the country this month . . . [.] La Valliere has persuaded me to stay" (282). This sparks a brief dispute between the royalties that escalates into the queen throwing a monumental tantrum, "stomping across the room

in an undignified manner" (284). Following a fiery curse catapulted at La Valliere, the queen reaches the climax of her fury. Louise, the play's narrator and the living result of the queen and Nabo's relationship, recalls how "[the] gentle Queen rampaged through the palace in a rage that's still legendary. Tearing portraits...and shredding tapestries with her bare hands" (284).

This event is the peak of a longstanding disagreement between the king and queen: the matter of La Valliere. In the play's beginning, this repeated tiff is portrayed as the queen feeling insecure and unloved in her marriage. However, across the play, La Valliere grows, in both the king and queen's eyes, to be representative of the ideals Queen Marie-Thérèse cannot seem to live up to. La Valliere speaks French, which had previously led the king to reject the queen for being unable to speak effectively (at one point, he mandates, "Speak French, for God's sake I do not know what you are saying)" (253). Additionally, the king often plainly demeans the queen through comparisons to La Valliere. For example, to conclude an argument over their lack of sexual intimacy, the king brusquely states, "La Valliere didn't eat sweets in bed. Good night, Marie," simultaneously disregarding the opinion of the queen and shaming her "unladylike" affinity for sweets in their bedroom chambers (269). In this way, the king renders Queen Marie-Thérèse inferior and establishes his mistress as the paragon of womanhood and demure femininity.

King Louis XIV's dismissive nature serves as a central motivation for the queen's ultimate act of deviance: her night of copulation with Nabo, following the events surrounding the lack of a countryside holiday (285-286). Across global history, the royal womb was the most powerful location in a monarch's palace—more so than the throne. Therefore, the son or daughter Queen Marie-Thérèse bore would not only be the heir to the throne but also a corporeal symbol of the success of the Treaty of the Pyrenees. Since the king and queen's relationship formed the content of the treaty itself, their child would be representative of the treaty's success over time.

To Queen Marie-Thérèse, a sexual relation with Nabo is the ultimate act of revenge. Nabo does not meet any of the French royal standards for proper breeding. His African descent and dwarfism automatically render him an outcast, inferior in the French Court. His marginalized placement through the label of "the fool" means any heir produced from the queen's and his relationship would have no rights to the throne and represent the royalty poorly (255). Additionally, this union forces King Louis XIV's adulterous behavior onto himself and ushers in the realization that Queen Marie-Thérèse's and his matrimony has no sincerity. Overall, the queen's social deviance is largely motivated by her flawed relationship with King Louis XIV and his infidelity with his mistress, La

Vallière. King Louis XIV's blatant disregard of the queen's opinions and emotional well-being, combined with his comparison of her to La Valliere, the supposed "ideal woman," ultimately leads to the queen's disastrous outbursts and her adultery with Nabo.

It is out of these acts of deviance that Queen Marie-Thérèse's personal awakening emerges. Her recognition of the political power of her womb and her dissatisfaction with King Louis XIV is actualized with her cry, "If Louis is not going to the country, I'm not going either. I defy you, Louis" (Nottage 284). Although this statement seems to stem from the tiff the king and queen are having over their dissolved vacation, it is also largely representative of the queen's acknowledgement of her autonomy. Additionally, Queen Marie-Thérèse's relationship with Nabo allows her to feel a long-lost sense of community, while King Louis XIV and his court work to ostracize her. The queen's and Nabo's eventual sexual encounter reveals this dichotomy between inclusion and exclusion. Louise, the daughter of the union, declares, "With one tender kiss she drew him in and they faced the possibility of freedom" (286). For Queen Marie-Thérèse, freedom is being harbored from judgement on how her heritage manifests in her personality. Nabo is afforded a similar freedom, as for the first time in this foreign land, he is accepted regardless of his body's form and complexion.

This mutual acceptance and the pair's delicate embrace symbolize the queen exercising her personal authority. This breath of freedom is comparable to Edna Pontellier's own path towards "the possibility of freedom" in Chopin's *The Awakening*, which also involves an affair being used as a tool for personal liberation (Nottage 286). In the final scenes of the novel, Edna, nude, walks into the open ocean while pondering her life. She feels new to her environment, as though she were "some new-born creature, opening its eyes in a familiar world that it had never known." (139). Upon thinking of her husband, "Léonce[,] and the children," she concludes that although they "were a part of her life...they need not have thought they could possess her, body and soul" (139). Here, Edna Pontellier realizes that her person is restrained only by herself; a conclusion in stark contrast to Mr. Pontellier's perspective in the opening chapter, where he observes her sunburn "as one looks at a valuable piece of personal property which has suffered some damage" (24). As a result, in the reader's eye, Edna transitions from a materialistic object to an individual with a soul that can operate of their own accord, as she ceases her complacency regarding the expectations placed on her. Edna Pontellier's power culminates as she disregards her "arms and legs [that] were growing tired," the exhaustion "pressing upon and overpowering her," continuing to swim as proof of her will (139). The vagueness of the novel's final scene, where the reader is unsure if Edna

Pontellier exits the ocean or falls victim to it, exposes the intensity with which Edna values her personal freedom: regardless of the looming risk of death, the feeling of autonomy remains too sweet (139).

Readers can draw a similar conclusion regarding the female body and personal autonomy by analyzing Queen Marie-Thérèse's actions in *Las Meninas*, the significance of which is compounded by her eventual pregnancy. Through the queen's and Nabo's intercourse, the former is able to recognize the innate power within her body, as Edna does when she continues to swim despite the twin threats of exhaustion and drowning. The recognition of the queen's body's autonomy is corroborated by her willingness to risk her royal livelihood for this act of social deviance, declaring to Nabo, "We pay the price for the things we desire" (Nottage 286). To further expose this motivation, Louise, the pregnancy's exiled result, enters the stage space to tell the audience: "With a kiss he [Nabo] now possessed the Kingly prize" (286). Nottage, in referring to the queen and her womb itself as a "prize," a material object, injects a sense of irony into this scene. Queen Marie-Thérèse had been regarded by the French Court only to serve the purpose of a political pawn, but her choice emphasizes that she is no longer going to be bound by these assumptions of her cooperation in such social and political contracts. Like Edna Pontellier, the queen steps out of the glass display case that the society's dominant members placed her in by means of acting on her own accord.

The similarity between Edna's and the queen's actions manifests once again amid a rant surrounding the latter's circumstances. The queen cries out to Nabo, "They think I can be treated like spoiled meat...I could pound my belly and let the King know that I HAVE SOME POWER TOO" (Nottage 312). Through an external conversation, as opposed to Edna Pontellier's internal conflict, the queen has the same recognition as Edna herself—the oppressive social constructs that emphasize motherhood, the status of the child, and prim behavior are responsible for the constraints on women's bodies and minds. However, both characters recognize, in the face of these strict parameters, that they can decide their own fate by taking control of their physical beings. There is the recognition that in the face of strict parameters, women can decide their own fate through corporeal transgressions.

The modes by which the queen and Edna Pontellier have their realizations are their acts of social deviance—most notably, their affairs—represent instances when Early Modern and Victorian women first took their own fate by the reins and disregarded rigid, contemporary gender norms. Queen Marie-Thérèse's and Edna Pontellier's pleasure-seeking affairs garner an understanding of their ability to choose their own directions

rather than letting these choices rest in the hands of their husbands or society. These realizations grant both Queen Marie-Thérèse and Edna Pontellier access to the experience of a personal awakening.

The similarities between these women's courses of action display Lynn Nottage's reclamation of the tradition of women engaging in socially deviant acts to augment their social statuses. Nottage's central commentary in *Las Meninas*, as shown by the plight of Queen Marie-Thérèse, is that rigid social confines around their bodies breed discontentment in women. The queen's presence, as a monarch in a society with unyielding gender norms, references the Cult of Domesticity that sought out well-bred and well-behaved women. Queen Marie-Thérèse is expected to behave with dignity and deference yet lacks the privilege of respect from her peers in the French Court. The only time the queen feels as though she is free from such expectations and disrespect is through her deviant affair with Nabo.

As a result, Nabo's character represents the queen's path toward self-autonomy, especially because he too is an outcast in this society due to his race and disability. When Nabo first appears, he is gift-wrapped in a box, sent as a gift from the queen's cousin. His first greetings from the French Court are demands to "Give us a dance then," rather than inquiry of his name (Nottage 254). However, Queen Marie-Thérèse later finds a purpose for him because she feels as though she can relate to his sense of otherness; as a result, Nabo becomes instrumental to Queen Marie-Thérèse. Although Nabo still experiences otherness in his "selection" by the queen, there is a shift within Nabo's characterization as an outsider. In the beginning, his race and his disability set him apart from all other characters' emotions, but once Queen Marie-Thérèse acknowledges their shared separation, he shifts from the role of a jester to that of an elected confidante.

Furthermore, as the queen is pushed further and further from the inner social circle of the French Court, Nabo and she begin spending increasingly longer durations of time together. Nabo becomes her confidant though her sexual quarrels with King Louis XIV, allowing Queen Marie-Thérèse to find solace when distraught (272-274). This connection provides the queen with the intimate emotional support she desires, which emboldens her to both start the monumental fight with the king over the countryside holiday and to have sexual intercourse with Nabo. Through this train of events, it is apparent that Queen Marie-Thérèse's relationship with Nabo is transformative for her view of her autonomy and will to execute the actions necessary to fulfill such freedom. Given the social exile both characters experience from the French Court, it is only natural that they seek community in one another.

Nottage focuses on the development of these characters' relationship to usher in commentary using the firm social expectations of Early Modern French high society. Since Queen Marie-Thérèse is the main character, Nottage hones this commentary to her lens, using hyperbolic social expectations and instances of rejection, such as her husband ridiculing her inabilities in French, to demonstrate the negative effects strict social norms have on women in general (Nottage 253). Although present-day Western society does not prioritize the exact same roles women were to fulfill in the Victorian or Renaissance Eras, Nottage's reference to the Victorian trope of female awakening and the placement of the setting within Renaissance France provides the foundation on which to convey this commentary. Nottage uses this foundation to draw the connection between present-day society and the discontent, and subsequent civil disobedience, of women seeking autonomy.

The Victorian tradition of the female novel often utilized transgressions of the female body to comment on the harshness of expectations of women in this era (Showalter 203). Within *Las Meninas*, Nottage creates a theatrical hyperbole of this tradition through the stark dichotomy between Queen Marie-Thérèse's desires for social freedom and her role within the French Court. Queen Marie-Therese's dissatisfaction culminates in the deviance of her intercourse with Nabo. One finds the critique in the emotional fallout and pregnancy she experiences from this event, as her deviance, although an attempt to define personal authority, still leads to her involvement in conflict. This domino effect is catalyzed by the social expectations placed on Queen Marie-Thérèse, for if she were afforded space to make her own decisions her deviance would not have seemed necessary. As a result, one can see that Nottage organizes the plot progression in a manner that is critical of how strict social norms regarding women lead not only to transgressive behavior, but also lead to damage in the psyche of the transgressive body itself.

This critique is furthered by *Las Meninas'* status as a work of the twenty-first century. First published in 2001, *Las Meninas* appeared at the turn of the century and the beginning of the War on Terror. The 90s and early 2000s saw the increasing dominance of the tabloids, where magazine covers were peppered with exhaustingly exaggerated popular culture events and scandals. The way the media of this era represented the experiences of female public figures was definitive of how these experiences were viewed by the general population. For example, popular culture was still experiencing the aftermath of the scandal between Monica Lewinsky and former President Bill Clinton. In a TED Talk, Lewinsky describes 1998 as though she bore her own "scarlet letter," as her intimate court documents were strewn across the rapidly growing World Wide Web (Schwartz). In her article "Monica Lewinsky and the Shame Game," Alexandra Schwartz

finds that the "worst abuse resulted from the widespread, and unprecedented, distribution of these materials." The tabloids gathered what was left of Lewinsky's reputation and socially buried it.

This sort of slanderous media representation served to redefine expectations for women in society as a more subversive evil. Women were no longer bound by four-burner stovetops but instead were bound by headlines—the same headlines that found the men involved in such scandals to be worthy of pardon. It is reasonable to conclude that the social confines born from the fear of public scorn bear similarity to the social hierarchy of the historical French Court. For example, this phenomenon is present in the scene when the king and his posse disregard the queen when she attempts to enter a conversation during the Court's afternoon stroll (Nottage 276). Her track record of what they perceive as outrageous behavior does not warrant her inclusion in their social sphere, just as Lewinsky was outcast both professionally and in the eyes of America in the years following the Clinton scandal.

Considering that *Las Meninas* was published in the aftermath of this national event, one can see parallels between the broader expectations of women in each era. In the seventeenth century, the woman's role was more explicitly stated, especially for Queen Marie-Thérèse; she must remain subservient to continue the longevity of the peace treaty that determines her marriage. In 2001, due to the tabloids' dominant social presence, female figures in popular culture were faced with the threat of news outlets that often shifted the blame on the woman. Both cultures, although the latter less visibly so, encouraged muted behavior from women for the sake of conformity. Thus, one can see that the themes Lynn Nottage explores in *Las Meninas*, all of which criticize women being placed under strict social norms, are *apropos* to the context the play was published under. Nottage's work serves as a reminder of the repetitive nature of history, and the play itself becomes a historical, exaggerated representation of a still-current phenomenon.

The events within *Las Meninas* occur from Queen Marie-Thérèse's perspective. Her situation as the main character is first established through the title, which is a reference to a painting by Diego Velásquez by the same name; the painting is a depiction of the queen as a child and her home in the Spanish royalty. Additionally, the queen's actions catalyze key plot events within the play. This is seen in both the exposition that establishes her as an outcast among the French Court, of which she is a member, and the climax, when she has an affair with Nabo.

Queen Marie-Thérèse's actions and their consequences strategically parallel the Victorian trope of female awakening through social deviance, thus demonstrating how this tradition is still relevant to the twentieth century. This tradition, established among

the grip of the Cult of Domesticity, often employs symbolism of the female body undergoing a transgression to express dissatisfaction with the contemporary expectations of women. Chopin's *The Awakening*, a breakthrough novel in this tradition, exemplifies these events through the plight of main character Edna Pontellier, who expresses her desire for social freedom through a romantic affair. Through this symbolism, one can see how Chopin utilized the genre as a platform to critique the predominant view that the ideal woman was a devoted homemaker. The tradition is employed similarly by Nottage to create a historical commentary on the societal role of women that equally pertains to the twenty-first century.

Lynn Nottage organizes the play within this tradition to develop a commentary on how Queen Marie-Thérèse's sexual transgressions occur due to the social pressure she is under. The queen is consistently rejected in her social endeavors: both politically and platonically by the members of the King's coterie, but also sexually by the King himself. Also, she is expected to remain faithful and peaceful so as not to disrupt the tenets established by the Treaty of the Pyrenees. In the depths of ostracization, the queen grows closer to Nabo, the only other outcast within her sphere. Within this relationship, the queen has the freedom to express her discontent, which leads to her and Nabo's intercourse.

However, through this bodily transgression Queen Marie-Thérèse achieves the first taste of personal autonomy. Her decision to have sexual relations with Nabo is the only time she has acted entirely on her own accord, without the approval or influence of outside parties or social expectations. As a result, she begins to acknowledge the validity of her own opinion and thus recognizes her own personal power. One can see the same pattern through Edna Pontellier, who begins her transgressions by neglecting her "womanly" duties and allows them to culminate in an emotional affair of her own. The novel's final scene of Edna waltzing nude into the open ocean symbolizes the personal freedom that she achieves through her neglect of social expectations.

Through this comparison, it is apparent that Nottage referenced this Victorian tradition of the female novel to convey a commentary comment on how strict social confines breed discontent within women overall. The rhetorical context under which this play was published, which found the nation under the grip of tabloids slanted towards a misogynistic opinion, furthers the significance of Nottage's reference to this tradition. On the cusp of the turn of the century, in 2001, *Las Meninas* broadly comments on the expectations of women within modern society. It questions how the tabloids placed pressure on female figures in popular culture to avoid perceived forms of social deviance

to prevent public scorn, and why the public scorn tended to focus on the role of the woman in the scandals dominating newsstands. Lynn Nottage's *Las Meninas*, through its harkening to longstanding advocacy for the advancement of women, effectively illustrates that the presence of rigid, gender-based expectations contributes to the social deviance of women as they look experience a personal awakening of their own autonomy.

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# How The Courts Affect Social Change Through Rent Control

**Alexander Garcia**

ABSTRACT

This article explores the Supreme Court's attitude toward one solution to the unaffordability of rental housing: rent control. This policy, more formally known as rent stabilization, allows jurisdictions to cap the amount landlords can charge for rent to curb exploitative practices. The policy is controversial, as some economists believe it is inefficient and ineffective at making housing more affordable. In contrast, others view it as a quick, easy, and relatively low-cost remedy to an ongoing crisis. The Supreme Court has upheld rent control laws, though not without exceptions, as this article outlines. These laws are drafted, debated, enacted, and implemented by other branches of government in cities and states. The Court generally steps aside to let the democratic process decide whether a city or state adopts or rejects this policy. This article argues that courts cannot affect social change regarding rent control because they are limited by the legislative process and their own judicial doctrines. Despite these constraints, the Supreme Court's deference helps maintain these laws in cities where they have been enacted, thereby assisting many in affording their homes.

Though John Oliver Wendell Holmes has deemed housing a "necessary of life,"[1] efforts making it affordable have always competed with protections guarding property against perceived government overreach.[2] The Supreme Court has generally supported affordable housing regulations, but its role in affecting relevant policies is more complicated than Justice Holmes' quotation indicates. This paper examines rent stabilization as a solution to housing affordability, the status of those policies in the United States, and their legal context. Because rent control is enacted, crafted, and implemented through the democratic process, the Court is left either to support or strike down such laws, making justices respondents to, rather than leaders of, social change in this area of social welfare. Constrained as they are by their inability to create or enforce policies, justice's adherence to precedent and judicial doctrine, and by rogue lower court action, the Supreme Court's support serves as a necessary legitimizing function that is part of a system helping millions afford their homes in an ongoing crisis.

**Rent Control as a Solution to Unaffordable Housing**

High demand, lack of supply, and surging prices have placed an unprecedented housing burden on the U.S. population:[3] a concerning trend that is only worsening.[4] Vacancy rates, the amount of available housing that indicates market pressure, have fallen to historic lows, reaching 5.8 percent in 2021.[5] Affordability is a national issue, as economists supporting rent stabilization have pointed out, "There is not a single state where a worker earning a full-time minimum wage salary can afford a modest two-bedroom apartment."[6] The proportion of those "moderately cost-burdened" families, spending almost a third of their income on housing, has risen by six percentage points

1. Block v. Hirsch, 256 U.S. 135, 156 (1921).

2. Karl Manheim, "Rent Control in the New Lochner Era," *UCLA Journal of Environmental Law & Policy* 23, no. 2 (December 22, 2005), 213, https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A156203130/AONE?u=tel_middleten&sid=ebsco&xid =aab174eb.

3. "Housing Affordability in the US," *Moodys.com*. Moody's Analytics Inc., May 16, 2023, www.moodys.com/web /en/us/about/insights/data-stories/us-rental-housing-affordability.html; Joint Center for Housing of Harvard University, *America's Rental Housing,* 2022, 32, https://www. jchs.harvard.edu/americas-rental-housing-2022

4. Joint Center for Housing of Harvard University, 15.

5. Joint Center, 23.

6. Mark Paul, et al., "Re: Tenant Protections for Enterprise-Backed Multifamily Properties Request for Input," July 28, 2023, https://peoplesaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Economist-Sign-on-Letter_-FHFA-RFI-Response -1.pdf.

since 2001.[7] Compounding these problems for low-income households is that landlords can charge nearly as much for apartments in poor neighborhoods as they do in wealthier areas,[8] often making immense profits.[9] High rents are part of a system that reduces the amount of money left over for much else,[10] and can have incredibly destabilizing consequences for individuals[11] and communities.[12]

There have been many proposed solutions to these issues; however, their creation, implementation, and enforcement fall outside the scope of judicial authority. It is within state legislatures and municipal governments where policymakers address these problems; the solutions they craft falling into supply and demand-side concentrations. Building more housing through re-zoning, government subsidies for investments, and tax credits are solutions that incentivize developers to increase the available stock of rental property.[13] Through cash transfers, governments can also provide those in need with subsidies, vouchers, and rental assistance.[14] However, this system does not address a core concern: landlords can still exploit tenants through high rent.[15] In this way, vouchers can become a wealth transfer from the public to landlords.[16] These needs, lowering rent and

7. Joint Center, 4.

8. Matthew Desmond, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* (London: Penguin Books, 2016),78.

9. Desmond, 154.

10. Joint Center, 4.

11. Mark Paul, et al. "Re: Tenant Protections"

12. Desmond, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit,* 75.

13. Jack Favilukis, Pierre Mabille, and Stijn Van Nieuwerburgh, "Affordable Housing and City Welfare," *Review of Economic Studies* 90, no. 1 (January 2023): 293, 298, https://doi.org /10.1093/restud/rdac024; Petition for writ of certiorari at 1, Community Housing Improvement Program, et al. v. City of New York, New York, et al., No. 22-1095 (S. Ct. cert. denied. Oct. 2, 2023). https://www.supremecourt.gov/DocketPDF/22/22-1095/266353 /20230508153206175_CHIP%20Petition%20for%20Cert.pdf

14. Joint Center, 36.

15. Vicki Been, Ingrid Gould Ellen, and Sophia House, "Laboratories of Regulation: Understanding the Diversity of Rent Regulation Laws," *Fordham Urban Law Journal* 46, no. 5 (October 1, 2019), 1074-1075, https://ezproxy .mtsu.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsgao&AN=edsgcl.607543639&site=eds-live&scope=site..

16. Tom Slater, *Shaking Up the City: Ignorance, Inequality, and the Urban Question*. (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2021), 90.

ending landlord exploitation, present another basic solution, albeit controversial: rent control.[17]

Despite the subject's reputation, there has been little research on modern-day rent stabilization laws;[18] the available data is from studies that are either short-term,[19] limited to one city,[20] or based on outdated data.[21] Still, there is a prevailing sense that economists see rent control as, at best, an inefficient policy and, at worst, counterproductive to achieving its well-intentioned objectives.[22] These arguments are important to consider when evaluating the legal system's role in affecting social change because litigants often use them as support for their claims against the policy. Some scholarship has found that because rent control limits profitability and unit value,[23] it leads to decreased stock.[24] However, other research has yet to find much overall effect on housing supply.[25] Another concern is that the lack of profit motive discourages maintenance and lowers the overall quality of rental property.[26] The limited research has been mixed in this regard: some studies suggest reduced upkeep,[27] while others show no substantial evidence for that

17. Slater, 103.

18.Arnott, Richard. "Time for Revisionism on Rent Control?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 9, no. 1 (January 15, 1995): 99–120. https://www.jstor.org/stable/2138358, 114.

19. NYU Furman Center, *Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act: An Initial Analysis of Short-Term Trends,* (2021), 21, https://furmancenter.org/files/Rent_Reform_7_1_A_remediated.pdf.

20. Been, "Laboratories of Regulation," 1046.

21. Been, 1077.

22. Arnott, "Time" 99; Shoked, "American Courts' Image of a Tenant," 278.

23. NYU Furman Center, *Housing*, 21.

24. Brian J. Asquith, "Housing Supply Dynamics under Rent Control: What Can Evictions Tell Us?" *AEA Papers and Proceedings* 109 (May 1, 2019), 41-42, https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/stable/26723978; Rebecca Diamond, Tim McQuade, and Franklin Qian, "The Effects of Rent Control Expansion on Tenants, Landlords, and Inequality: Evidence from San Francisco," *The American Economic Review* 109, no. 9, (September 1, 2019), 3366, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26773267.; Slater, *Shaking Up the City,* 99.

25. John I. Gilderbloom, and Lin Ye, "Thirty Years of Rent Control: A Survey of New Jersey Cities," *JOURNAL OF URBAN AFFAIRS* 29, no. 2 (January 1, 2007), 214. https://search-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/login.aspx ?direct=true&db=edswss&AN=000245895200005&site=eds-live&scope=site.

26. Charles K. Gehnrich, "Stronger than Ever: New York's Rent Stabilization System Survives Another Legal Challenge," *Fordham Law Review* 90, no. 2 (November 1, 2021), 858, https://heinonline.org/HOL /P?h=hein.journals/flr90&i=849.

27. David P. Sims, "Out of Control: What Can We Learn from the End of Massachusetts Rent Control?" *Journal of Urban Economics* 61, no. 1 (January 1, 2007), 150, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jue.2006.06.004.

claim.[28] Overcoming the gap in research, much of the prejudice is based on outdated and obsolete policies,[29] or couched in abstract and unrealistic economic models that bear no semblance to reality.[30] Housing is not a perfect market,[31] and should not be treated as such, especially when rent control's benefits to social welfare are substantial.[32]

**Rent Control in the United States**

Ideally, rent control protects tenants from economic and social conditions that negatively affect affordability,[33] although it is up to legislators and other policymakers, not judges, to formulate the details of effective policy. As Gerald Rosenberg suggests, "effective implementation of significant social reform requires long-term planning and serious consideration of costs."[34] As such, the adversarial nature of the legal system in the United States is inherently misaligned with the demands of coherent economic policy creation; policymakers that craft these regulations account for a great deal. In the 1970s, responding to a wave of social welfare mobilization, several cities enacted rent stabilization ordinances, which allowed for mandated gradual rent increases to limit economic exploitation.[35] Hallmarks of these laws include housing emergency triggers,[36] variations in sizes and types of buildings on which regulations apply, and time-bound allowances for deregulation.[37] Other tenant protections include safeguards against harassment and evictions, a tenant-friendly appeal process for rent increases, maintenance and quality assurances, and restrictions on how and when owners can convert property

28.. NYU Furman Center, *Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act,* 21; Asquith, "Housing Supply Dynamics under Rent Control: What Can Evictions Tell Us?" 41.

29. Arnott, "Time" 118.

30. Mark Paul, et al. "Re: Tenant Protections"

31. Manheim, "Rent Control in the New Lochner Era," 212.

32. Favilukis, "Affordable Housing and City Welfare," 294.

33. Christina McDonough, "Rent Control and Rent Stabilization as Forms of Regulatory and Physical Takings," *Boston College Environmental Affairs Law Review*, (June 22), 364, https://ezproxy.mtsu.edu/login?url=https:// search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsgao&AN=edsgcl.165626401&site=eds-live&scope=site.

34. Gerald Rosenberg, *The Hollow Hope: Can Courts Bring About Social Change?* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2023), 27.

35. Been, "Laboratories," 1043-1044; Arnott, "Time," 101-102

36. Brief of respondents N.Y. Tenants and Neighbors, et al. at 7, Community Housing Improvement Program, et al. v. City of New York, New York, et al., No. 22-1095 (S. Ct. cert. denied. Oct. 2, 2023) https://www.supremecourt.gov/DocketPDF/22/22-1095/272733/20230724144605563_22-1095%20Brief%20in%20Opposition .pdf.

37. Been, "Laboratories," 1049-1052.

from rental stock to condominiums for sale. Through decontrol and hardship provisions, modern rent control upholds evenhandedness, protecting the right to reasonable returns on investments.[38] These measures require the kind of careful formulation and expertise beyond the "episodic case-by-case" nature of litigation.[39]

Though many economists condemn rent control, it is within the democratic process that the policy is supported or banned. There is no constitutional right to affordable housing, so any policy that addresses these concerns must have support from the electorate and from political actors.[40] Favorable polling reflects approval for the policy; however, this does not necessarily translate to victory at the ballot box.[41] Referenda offer mixed results in California and have repealed rent control in Massachusetts, though the three cities with rent control there voted to keep it, indicating its popularity.[42] Tenant-led organizations often champion the cause, including N.Y. Tenants and Neighbors, Community Voices Heard, and the Coalition for the Homeless, who have all defended New York City's Rent Stabilization Law (RSL) in court.[43] Whether rent control is passed or banned, the courts defer to the democratic process, and so remain on the side of public opinion, wherever that may sway. Prominent politicians, including former New York Governor Andrew Cuomo and former New York City Mayor Bill De Blasio, are

38. Arnott, "Time" 102.

39. Michael McCann, *Taking Reform Seriously: Perspectives on Public Interest Liberalism*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 226, quoted in Rosenberg, *The Hollow Hope,* 27.

40. Gerald N. Rosenberg, *The Hollow Hope,* 15.

41.. Mark Baldassare, et al., *PPIC Statewide Survey: Californians and Their Economic Well-Being* (Public Policy Institute of California, November 2023), 37. https://www.ppic.org/?show-pdf=true&docraptor=true&url=https%3A %2F%2Fwww.ppic.org%2Fpublication%2Fppic-statewide-survey-californians-and-their-economic-well-being-november-2023%2F; UMass Amherst, *Toplines* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Amherst, April 2023), 9, https://polsci.umass.edu/sites/default/files/AllToplinesApril2023_0.pdf.

42.. Jennifer Ludden, "Rent control expands as tenants struggle with the record-high cost of housing," NPR, November 28, 2022, https://www.npr.org/2022/11/28/1138633419/rent-control-economists-tenants-affordable-housing-ballot-measures; Scott Wilson, "California voters reject efforts to repeal gas tax and rent-control limitations," *Washington Post*, November 7, 2018. https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/apps/doc/A561380514 /ITOF?u=tel_middleten&sid=bookmark-ITOF&xid=d1e07e12; "Battle Goes On as Rent Control Is Defeated in Massachusetts," *New York Times*, November 22, 1994, https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/apps/doc /A174491086/ITOF?u=tel_middleten&sid=bookmark-ITOF&xid=e4558687.

43.. Slater, *Shaking Up the City,* 92; No. 22-1095 (S. Ct. cert. denied. Oct. 2, 2023). https://www.supremecourt.gov /DocketPDF/22/22-1095/266353 /20230508153206175_CHIP%20Petition%20for%20Cert.pdf.

among rent control's supporters.[44] This backing not only contributes to the mix of voices calling for a just policy to ensure housing affordability; without it, any grassroots action would be stymied when these laws require executive authorization. Former Oregon Governor Kate Brown's support makes this necessity clear when, in 2019, she signed into law a bill implementing rent control state-wide, making Oregon the first to do so.[45] Additionally, crucial support comes from smaller political players, including state legislators and city council members, whose backing is needed for rent control's passage and implementation.[46] Rent control remains a political issue voters decide on through referenda and elections.

Diverging from a trend of welfare assurances in the 1970's, several states, beginning with Louisiana, enacted sweeping prohibitions banning rent control. Additionally, conservative lobbyists provided states with templates for rent control preemption laws;[47] thirty-two states ban these tenant protections.[48] Currently, California, Washington D.C., Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Minnesota and Oregon are the only states that allow rent control.[49] However, legislation has been proposed to remove bans against the policy in Florida, Colorado, Illinois, and Nevada.[50] Some of the longest-standing and most robust limits on rent are New York City's Rent Stabilization Laws (RSL). Enacted in 1974,[51] they cover almost one million residents or forty four percent of tenant-occupied dwellings in the city.[52] In June of 2019, the New York State Legislature strengthened

44.. Gehnrich, "Stronger than Ever," 833 and 866.

45. Lauren Dake, "Oregon's Experiment in Statewide Rent Control," NPR, March 2019, https://www.npr.org /transcripts /708302378.

46. Been, "Laboratories,"1060-1061; Shoked, "American Courts' Image of a Tenant," 254; Gilderbloom, "Thirty Years of Rent Control," 29; Rosenberg, *The Hollow Hope,* 39-40.

47. Shoked, 265.

48. Been, "Laboratories," 1049.

49. Been, 1049.

50. Slater, *Shaking Up the City,* 104.

51. Gehnrich, "Stronger than Ever," 836.

52.. Brief of respondents N.Y. Tenants and Neighbors, et al., 1.; Madeleine Parker, and Karen Chapple, "Revisiting Rent Stabilization in the Neighborhood Context: The Potential Impact of Rent Regulation on Community Stability and Security in the New York Metropolitan Region," *Fordham Urban Law Journal* 46, no. 5 (October 1, 2019), 1153, https://ezproxy.mtsu.edu/login?url=https://search .ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true &db=edsgao&AN=edsgcl.607543641&site=eds-live&scope=site.

these existing laws by passing the Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act, which has faced recent legal challenges.[53]

Though the Court may favor rent stabilization, its efforts to alleviate housing unaffordability are often frustrated by an inability to enforce compliance. Enforcement often involves disclosure and proper documentation requirements, punishments for violations, and legal relief for abused tenants.[54] Most local governments administer rent stabilization through institutions beyond the court's influence.[55] As Rosenberg explains, "Court decisions, requiring people to act, are not self-executing."[56] For rent control to be effective, it needs competent and supportive administration; if bureaucracy is neither, any supportive court action produces no social change.[57] Political limitations, through elections or appointment, also offer pressures that may or may not align with court intentions.[58] Because compliance with legislation is necessary for effective implementation, and rent stabilization is a "tool [that] is administrative, not judicial,"[59] the Court's ability to create broad social change in this field is further constrained.

**Rent Control in Court**

Primarily, these are considerations for the democratic process, while the Court's main concerns center on rent control's legality when challenged. While judges are limited by the bounds of the dispute before them,[60] they are also constrained by precedent, further preventing their ability to craft competent policy that evaluates, and addresses rent control's complexities. Following the holding in the 1955 case *Williamson v. Lee Optical of Okla., Inc.*, the Supreme Court typically does not replace carefully crafted legislative action created by elected representatives for their own interpretations of narrow economic

53.. Brief of respondents N.Y. Tenants and Neighbors, et al., 6.

54.. Been, "Laboratories," 1066; Been, 1058.

55.. Shoked, "American Courts' Image of a Tenant," 284; Gehnrich, "Stronger than Ever," 838.

56.. Rosenberg, *The Hollow Hope,* 20.

57.. Bigad Shaban et al., "Lack of Oversight May Be Allowing Some Oakland Landlords to Wrongfully Evict Families, Elderly," NBC Bay Area,Feb.16, 2018, https://www.nbcbayarea.com/investigations/Lack-of-Oversight-May-be-Allowing-Some-Oakland-Landlords-to-Wrongfully-Evict-Families-Elderly-474352123.htmlBeen,"Laboratories," 1057.

58.. Been, "Laboratories," 1060; Rosenberg, *The Hollow Hope,* 21.

59.. Shoked, "American Courts' Image of a Tenant," 283-284.

60. Rosenberg, *The Hollow Hope,* 27.

arguments.[61] This attitude of deference for legislation explains much of the Court's general preservation of rent control laws.[62] However, a further examination of precedent and constitutional law is necessary to understand the legal justifications for these types of price restrictions.

Challenges against rent control arise from interpretations of the Fifth Amendment, that applies to national governments, which states that "private property [shall not] be taken for public use, without just compensation."[63] This concept applies not only to the government physically taking property from owners, but also to imposed price restrictions, whereby landlords may be deprived of the rightful economic use of their property.[64] Other challenges focus on the Fourteenth Amendment, which applies to state and local governments and establishes the necessity of due process for deprivations of property.[65] Challenges of this nature are subject to rational basis review, which is generally deferential to legislative authority.[66] Two Supreme Court cases established tests for determining the legitimacy of these types of regulations. In *Penn Central Transportation Co. v. New York City,* the Supreme Court ruled that they would assess regulations by balancing the government's actions against the economic effects on property owners, a determination that proves to be more deferential to legislation.[67] In contrast, *Agins v. City of Tiburon* stipulated that a law is unconstitutional if it does not "substantially advance" an accepted state interest, a decision that places significantly more burden on regulators and favors landlord's interests.[68] These two tests have quite different levels of scrutiny, and the ruling in *Agins* opened the door for challenges on rent control based on the policy's effectiveness.[69]

Two subsequent Supreme Court cases resolved the conflicting conclusions of *Penn Central* and *Agins,* though not without introducing their own complications. In *Pennell v. City of San Jose*, which dealt with a challenge to San Jose's rent control based on its use of a tenant hardship clause, the majority upheld the lower court's rulings in favor

61. 348 U.S. 483 (1955); Gehnrich, "Stronger than Ever," 867-868.

62. Shoked, "American Courts' Image of a Tenant," 266.

63. U.S. Const. amend. V.

64. McDonough, "Rent Control and Rent Stabilization," 362-363.

65. U.S. Const. amend. XIV § 1.

66. Gehnrich, "Stronger than Ever," 849.

67. 438 U.S. 104 (1978).

68. 447 U.S. 255 (1980).

69. Manheim, "Rent Control in the New Lochner Era," 229.

of the ordinance, using the *Penn Central* test in part.[70] Crucially, the Court determined that this case was premature, leaving open the possibility for future challenges. Justices Scalia and O'Connor dissented on the grounds that rent control based on hardship is a welfare system that overburdens landlords who are not responsible for that hardship, and so should be struck down.[71] Over a decade later, in *Lingle v. Chevron U. S. A. Inc.*, the Court invalidated the *Pennell* dissent and the *Agins* test, reasoning that these arguments used a higher degree of scrutiny towards legislative action than precedent directed.[72] This decision highlights how, in the context of rent control, doctrinal constraints in the form of following precedent protect the policy.

While the Supreme Court has been relatively supportive of rent control, lower courts have been less consistent and, in some cases, outright hostile. In several cases, the Ninth Circuit used the "substantially advance" test established in *Agins v. City of Tiburon* to strike down rent control laws as violating the Fifth Amendment's takings clause based on arguments that the ordinances do not resolve their stated goal.[73] Other courts have had to decide whether, in cases where states do not explicitly ban the measure, they should interpret statutes as doing so. In these instances, lower courts have preempted legislative bans, thus limiting regulatory schemes as has happened in Connecticut, Maryland, Florida, Wisconsin, and Illinois. Lower courts have also been inconsistent regarding whether municipalities can enact rent control through Home Rule authorizations, which generally grant cities their own powers to promote welfare. This was the case in Pennsylvania, where the state's highest court struck down a Philadelphia rent control ordinance.[74] Through these actions, lower courts have forged ahead on their own economic policy-making initiatives, breaking from the Supreme Court's support of rent control's constitutionality in a move suggestive of Rosenberg's third constraint in *The Hollow Hope*.[75]

70. 485 U.S. 1 (1988).

71. *Pennell* ***v. City of San Jose****,* 485 U.S. 1 (1988), 21-23.

72. 544 U.S. 528 (2005).

73. 447 U.S. 255 (1980); McDonough, "Rent Control and Rent Stabilization," 373; Manheim, "Rent Control in the New Lochner Era," 215-216.

74. Shoked, "American Courts' Image of a Tenant," 268-273.

75. Rosenberg, *The Hollow Hope,* 23.

Recently, the Supreme Court denied certiorari for a challenge to New York City's RSL.[76] This case highlights many arguments against rent control, the tenuous ground on which its constitutionality rests, and the political implications if such a challenge had succeeded. In *Community Housing Improvement Program v. City of New York,* landlord associations challenged New York City's RSL, claiming that it constituted a government taking per the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments after a 2019 expansion, and so should be struck down.[77] Additionally, they asserted that the RSL does not further state interests, echoing the reasoning in *Agins v. City of Tiburon*.[78] Fundamentally, they asked for a limit on government power, hoping a counter-majoritarian court would protect property owners as a minority voting bloc.[79] Both the district court and the Second Circuit rejected these claims and, using rational basis scrutiny, determined the law satisfied due process challenges.[80] They dismissed the "substantially advance" theory outlined in *Agins* and *Pennell v. City of San Jose*'s dissent, instead following the precedent set in *Lingle v. Chevron U. S. A. Inc.* and *Penn Central v. New York City*.[81] The landlord associations then petitioned the Supreme Court for certiorari, asking for a review of the Second Circuit's findings vis-a-vis their physical and regulatory takings claim.[82] Using Justice Scalia's reasoning from his dissent in *Pennell*, the thrust of their argument was that basing a regulation on tenant hardship places a public burden on those who are not responsible for its cause. Whereas the Court found no actual instance of a hardship occurring in *Pennell,* concluding that the case was premature, the RSL mandated that hardship be factored into New York City's rate setting.[83]

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76. Adam Liptak, "Supreme Court Turns Away Challenge to New York's Rent Regulations," *The New York Times*, (October 2, 2023), https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A767448010/STND?u=tel_middleten&sid =bookmark-STND &xid=21113850.

77. Community Housing Improvement Program, et al. v. City of New York, New York, et al., No. 22-1095 (S. Ct. cert. denied. Oct. 2, 2023); Gehnrich, "Stronger than Ever," 847.

78. 447 U.S. 255 (1980); Gehnrich, 856.

79. Petition for writ of certiorari, 29-32; *See* David G. Barnum, "The Supreme Court and Public Opinion: Judicial Decision Making in the Post- New Deal Period," *The Journal of Politics* 47, no. 2 (June 1, 1985), 653, https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/stable/2130901.

80. Gehnrich, "Stronger than Ever," 860.

81. 485 U.S. 1 (1988); 544 U.S. 528 (2005); 438 U.S. 104 (1978); Brief of respondents N.Y. Tenants and Neighbors, et al., 13-14; Gehnrich, "Stronger than Ever," 860-861

82. Brief of respondents N.Y. Tenants and Neighbors, et al., 14.

83. Petition for writ of certiorari, 26-28.

The petitioners in *Community Housing* hoped to win facing a more conservative, property-rights friendly Supreme Court,[84] counting on a type of regime politics[85] that would be eager to help chip away at welfare regulations.[86] In this way, the courts would act as Rosenberg's "crusaders"[87] at the vanguard of a push to eliminate the law.[88] Their possible hope was justified considering that in *Pennell*, "one swing vote [was] all that [stood] in the way of the Court's scrapping ordinary peacetime rent control and, to an extent, returning the nation to its almost forgotten laissez-faire regime of constitutional law."[89] This theory is even more pertinent when one considers how lower courts have used the "substantially advance" test to strike down regulations. The Supreme Court could have advanced that reasoning, rejecting *Lingle v. Chevron U. S. A. Inc.*[90] Landlords may have also expected support given that the decision in *Pennell* was far from a "ringing endorsement" for rent control: rather than address the concern, the Court sidestepped the issue.[91] This avoidance exhibits judicial constraints through the doctrines of ripeness and precedent where the Court deferred to legislatures regarding economic and social decisions as decided in *Williamson v. Lee Optical of Okla., Inc.,*[92] and *Lingle.*[93] Both doctrines limit the social change courts can have.[94] Additionally, this recent episode

84. Gehnrich, "Stronger than Ever," 847.

85. *See* Jeb Barnes, "Bringing the Courts Back in Interbranch Perspectives on the Role of Courts in American Politics and Policy Making," *Annual Review of Political Science* 10, no. 1 (June 2007), 31, https://doi.org/10.1146 /annurev.polisci.10.080505.101210; *See* Mark Tushnet, "The Supreme Court and the National Political Order: Collaboration and Confrontation," In *The Supreme Court and American Political Development*, ed. Ronald Kahn and Ken I. Kersch, (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2006),117.

86. Charles H. Clarke, "Rent Control and the Constitutional Ghosts and Goblins of Laissez-Faire Past," *University of Dayton Law Review* 14, no. 1 (September 22, 1988), 134, https://heinonline .org/HOL/P?h=hein.journals /udlr14&i=123.

87. Rosenberg, *The Hollow Hope,* 16.

88. Brief of respondents N.Y. Tenants and Neighbors, et al., 10; *See* Michael McCann, "How the Supreme Court Matters in American Politics: New Institutionalist Perspectives," In *The Supreme Court in American Politics: New Institutionalist Interpretations*, ed. Howard Gillman and Cornell Clayton, (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1999), 69.

89. Clarke, "Rent Control and the Constitutional Ghosts," 116-117.

90. 544 U.S. 528 (2005).

91. Clarke, 128.

92. 348 U.S. 483 (1955).

93. Gehnrich, "Stronger than Ever," 860-861 and 867-868.

94. Rosenberg, *The Hollow Hope*, 16.

underscores the timeliness of the threats to rent stabilization and highlights the thin constitutional ice on which it currently walks.

When there is social change stemming from court judgment, it does not only arise from a decision but also from the litigation process itself. Stuart Scheingold explored this facet of legal mobilization in his determination that "constitutional litigation did, by way of a politics of rights, contribute *indirectly* to the emergence and success of the civil rights movement," especially when that ongoing fight made national headlines.[95] It is possible that the petitioners in *Community Housing* knew that, even if their case failed at the Supreme Court, their arguments and willingness to fight would signal to the New York State Legislature and property rights watchers everywhere that there must be limits to these regulations. This message would suggest that unchecked state power could become the "draconian" government taking–one in clear violation of the Fifth Amendment–the high court would eagerly strike down, thus threatening the policy everywhere in the United States.[96] In this way, despite the Court's decision, success for the petitioners would be to "elevate the salience of that issue in the public agenda."[97] Even still, a favorable ruling for the landlords would not have ended the story. As defenders of the RSL have explained, the long history of the law is rife with challenges and amendments responding to the "push-and-pull of politics" that often balance both tenant and landlord interests.[98] Being politically popular,[99] it is probable that if the RSL in its current form were struck down, the New York State Legislature would rework the policy, and the fight would continue.[100] As Michael McCann explains, legislatures often anticipate and predict court action and are prepared for all eventualities.[101] This potential result highlights how, rather than making or breaking social change on their own, courts work within an overall system that advances or prevents policy based on the interplay of various actors illustrative of an interbranch perspective of policymaking.[102]

95. Stuart A. Scheingold, *The Politics of Rights,* University of Michigan Press, 2004, xx.

96. Petition for writ of certiorari at 23.

97. McCann, "How the Supreme Court Matters," 71.

98. Brief of respondents N.Y. Tenants and Neighbors, et al., 29.

99. Petition for writ of certiorari, 31.

100. Josiah Johnson, "New York Rent Control: Could the End Be Near?" American Enterprise Institute - AEI., July 12, 2023, https://www.aei.org/housing-center/new-york-rent-control-could-the-end-be-near/.

101. McCann, "How the Supreme Court Matters," 72.

102. Barnes, "Bringing the Courts Back In," 27.

**Conclusion**

Landlords in *Community Housing* claim they are not the cause of their tenants' hardship.[103] While financial difficulties for many have myriad reasons, as cost burden analysis explains,[104] a major factor in making people's lives exponentially more difficult is the amount of money they pay for housing costs. Landlords are indeed connected to this issue and bear some responsibility for the welfare of their tenants and so should be barred from exploitative practices enabled by unfettered markets. Ultimately, the Supreme Court's denial of certiorari displayed the type of judicial restraint typical of collaboration with majoritarian politics.[105] The legal process is limited in its ability to affect broad social change because it is not the venue in which these policies are constructed, implemented, or enforced, and courts are constrained by doctrine and confounded by rogue lower court action. Despite these limitations and the impropriety of the Court being a venue for transforming the housing affordability crisis, the Supreme Court did the next best thing to a full endorsement of the RSL in *Community Housing*: they denied hearing the case, meaning that the lower courts' determinations stand, rent control is the law, and further decisions belong to the democratic process. Judges are not economists, and this policy has real effects on millions, so it should be left to the electorate and their representatives to craft and enforce. People should be able to determine where one's right to maximize profits on their property ends and where assurances of basic necessities begin

103. Petition for writ of certiorari, 33

104. Desmond, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit,* 4. ("Today, the majority of poor renting families in America spend over half of their income on housing, and at least one in four dedicates over 70 percent to paying the rent and keeping the lights on.").

105. Tushnet, "The Supreme Court and the National Political Order," 119.

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# "Outcast of All Outcasts": The Doppelganger in Poe's "William Wilson"

**Brandon Black**

ABSTRACT

Edgar Allan Poe was influenced by the darker side of German idealism, which was in fashion in America during the early 19th century as a result of the emergence of the Transcendental movement. The genesis for Poe's short story, "William Wilson," comes from a sketch by Washington Irving. Poe enlarges the brief sketch into a story that focuses on the duality of humanity by use of the motif of the doppelganger, which was developed by Germanic writers who sought to explore duality in an individual. Critics have discussed the doppelganger in Poe's short story "William Wilson," but many have overlooked how the tradition of German idealism influenced Poe's story. This essay explores Poe's use of the traditional role of displacement, repetition, ego and alter-ego, and other aspects of the doppelganger as a theme of German idealism throughout "William Wilson." Poe's innovation in "William Wilson" is his depiction of the doppelganger, which Poe uses as a corrective force to the narrator's evil. Incorporating the German tradition into a reading of "William Wilson" shows how Poe effectively uses the tradition to create a story that explores the duality of the human conscience.

In 1836, Washington Irving contributed a sketch to the publication *The Gift* detailing a poem that Lord Byron was contemplating but never wrote. The sketch, "An Unwritten Drama of Lord Byron," concerns a Spanish nobleman, Alfonso who, entering upon, "the career of life," has been plagued by the "unrestrained indulgence" of his youth (Irving 13). Alfonso finds himself followed in public by a person "masked and muffled," but he pays little attention to the figure (13). Over time, Alfonso grows irritated with the mysterious figure who seemingly is able to understand his thoughts. This figure appears when spoken of, and his presence is felt by Alfonso whenever the figure is thought of. Soon, the figure becomes an obsession to Alfonso, and his "youth, health, wealth, [and] power" begin to lose their "charm" (15). Alfonso pursues the figure to the house of his mistress and stabs the figure with a sword. The mask falls off the figure to reveal it is Alfonso, a "spectre of himself," who promptly dies with horror (15). Irving claimed that the sketch was communicated to Captain Thomas Medwin by Lord Byron, who found the idea in a Spanish play called *Embozado*, or the *Encapotado* (16). It was thought to be written by Pedro Calderón de la Barca but unavailable in public libraries, private collections, or even booksellers. Irving ends his sketch by suggesting that a "poet or dramatist of the Byron school" would find it a rich theme to pursue (17). Edgar Allan Poe contributed to that same publication of *The Gift* with his story "MS Found in a Bottle," so he certainly would have been aware of the challenge issued by Irving (10).

The challenge would be answered by Poe in his story "William Wilson," which appeared in 1839 in an issue of *Burton's Gentleman Magazine* and was subsequently featured in the 1840 Christmas edition of *The Gift*. Poe had been in contact with Irving in 1836. He wrote a letter to Irving asking for a contribution for the "sake of Virginian Literature" to the *Southern Literary Messenger* (Poe to Irving, June 7, 1836). Poe would follow that letter up in October of 1839 with another letter to Irving with "William Wilson" included. In this letter, Poe gives Irving the credit for the idea and even states that Irving has a "right of ownership" in the story (Poe to Irving, October 12, 1839). At the time, Poe considered "William Wilson" his "best effort" and hoped that Irving might appreciate the story enough to write some words of praise to be included in Poe's forthcoming two-volume collection of tales. Irving responded to Poe the next month, after some delay due to a wrong address and "procrastination" on the part of Irving, saying that "William Wilson" was "highly picturesque" and contained a "singular and mysterious interest" that was "well sustained throughout" (Irving to Poe, November 6, 1839). Poe took Irving's suggestions to create "William Wilson," a tale that incorporates elements of the Byronic hero[1] in the character of Wilson, but with the added influence of German Idealism.2 Many critics such as Paul C. Jones, Leonard Engel, and Robert

Coskren have discussed aspects of Poe's use of German Idealism to craft the story. I build upon their arguments with a more specific focus on Poe's use of the doppelganger within the tradition of German Idealism, which functions as the tale's dominant motif. Poe's doppelganger differs from most depictions of the motif because Poe's doppelganger corrects the narrator's vices.

In the preface to *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* (1840), Poe explains his frustrations of being accused by critics that his tales include too much "Germanism and gloom" (620). Poe responds that "Germanism is 'the vein' for the time being" and that tomorrow he could be "anything but German" (620). Furthermore, he states that "terror" is universal, not just German in nature, and can be found within the "soul" of all humans (620). Poe distanced himself from the influence of German literature between writing "William Wilson" and the publication of his stories in 1840, even though "allusions to German writers pervade[d]" his stories throughout his career (Isaak 217). During the 1830s and 1840s, many American writers became attracted to a "new kind of literature from Germany" that showed "man's involvement with the spiritual world" (Labriola 79). The Romantic movement, of which Poe was a part, was founded on the "spiritual and metaphysical tradition of German Idealism" (79). Poe represented the darker side of Romanticism and was inspired by the "*schwarze Romantik*," which investigated the belief that "the interaction between man and spirit revealed the dark and mysterious side of the individual" (79). Poe would explore this "mysterious side of the individual" in many of his works, including "William Wilson."

In *The Doppelgänger: Double Visions in German Literature* (1996), Andrew J. Webber describes a series of premises to develop a working definition of the doppelganger in literature that informs the exploration of this motif in "William Wilson." The doppelganger is a "figure of visual compulsion" (3), often shown beholding the self as another, or alternatively, it is "beheld as an object by its other self" (3). Webber notes that the condition of "repetitive speech disorder" is prominent, as the doppelganger echoes, distorts, and parodies the "subjective faculty of free speech" (3). The doppelganger is a "performer of identity" that typically represents the "performative character of the subject" (3); there is a power play between ego and alter ego (4). The interchange of power between the subject and the doppelganger is a common theme in stories concerning the doppelganger. The doppelganger can also operate as a "figure of displacement" in stories (4). This means that the doppelganger appears out of place in order to subvert the will of the subject. A final premise of the doppelganger is "return and repetition": the doppelganger typically returns to the host subject and replays previous appearances (4). The doppelganger is usually a product of a broken home, and Webber

notes that the home is the original site of the "*unheimlich*" or "uncanny" (5). Webber's discussion focuses less on the initial causes of the doppelganger, whereas other critics have provided more insight into the cause of the split. Webber's work helps to illuminate how Poe used the Germanic origins of the doppelganger to create a story that portrays the complex and often dark mental state of the narrator.

"William Wilson" is told from the perspective of the narrator, who is near death at an old age at the beginning of the tale. The narrator describes his descent to becoming the "outcast of all outcasts" because of his actions, which he subsequently recounts throughout the story (217). His childhood was marked by "evil propensities" that left his friends in "serious disquietude" (217). During school, his evil intentions began to be interrupted by a mysterious, identical stranger. The stranger follows Wilson to Oxford, and finally to Rome, disrupting the narrator's attempt to cheat at cards and his "Byronic" seduction of a wealthy wife. The narrator begins the story by giving himself a pseudonym because he asserts, the "fair page" in front of him "need not be sullied with [his] real appellation" (216). As stated by Webber, the home is the first site of the "*unheimlich."* The narrator describes himself as a "descendant of a race whose imaginative and easily excitable temperament has at all times rendered them remarkable" (217). The narrator became a tyrant at a young age, stating he was "self-willed, addicted to the wildest caprices" and "prey to the most ungovernable passions" (217). His parents could do nothing as his "voice" became "household law" (217). Webber states that the doppelganger "represents dysfunction in the family romance of structured well-being" (5). The narrator only briefly describes his childhood, and what little information he provides suggests that his home was a place of the narrator's domination of his family, but his doppelganger does not appear until he leaves home for school. The narrator's description of his childhood shows that his issues arise from an "inherited" family condition (217). He describes this familial condition of having an "easily excitable temperament" and an excessive imagination (217). There is no mention of a possible doppelganger at his home because he is "master of [his] own actions" (217). By leaving the family home for school, the narrator loses total control of his place in the home. This loss of power puts the narrator in an unfamiliar state of mind, which allows for the doppelganger to make himself known to the narrator.

The doppelganger in "William Wilson," referred to as "Wilson" throughout this essay, appears for the first time during the narrator's "third lustrum" at school, which is roughly around the time he was fifteen years old (219). The grounds of the prison-like school are surrounded by a "solid brick wall" with a bed of mortar and glass on top (218). The gate of the school is "studded with iron bolts" and "surmounted with jagged

iron spikes" (218). The principal of the school, also the reverend of the church, has a "countenance so demurely benign," but is described as a tyrant who has a "sour visage" who administers the "Draconian laws of the academy" like a prison warden (218). The structured setting of the school is incompatible with the narrator's childhood of supremacy. He must subordinate to a more powerful authority, which causes his coherent self to slowly break apart, leading him to escalating acts of debauchery to regain control.

The grounds of the school set it apart from ordinary schools. They are "irregular in form," and consist of many "capacious recesses" (219). The schoolhouse is described as a "palace of enchantment" by the narrator, but the dimensions are incredibly difficult to surmise (219). The narrator further describes the "windings" of the schoolhouse as "incomprehensible" (219). Each room has "three or four steps either in ascent or descent," and the lateral branches were "innumerable" and "inconceivable" (219). The narrator's inability to understand the "incomprehensible" schoolhouse reflects his inability to understand the workings of his own mind. Entering the prison-like school removes the sense of control from the narrator. No longer is he able to act out his "ungovernable passions" to control his fellow students or the principal of the school. In school, he experiences a loss of control that is concurrent with the appearance of Wilson, his doppelganger. Without the "implicit belief in [his] assertions," the narrator loses the ability to have total control (220). Lacking the "supreme and unqualified despotism" of control over Wilson, paired with the lack of control within the gates of the schoolhouse, leads to a splitting of the narrator into separate identities, which the narrator is powerless to stop.

The event that displaces the narrator's identity is the appearance of a particular student at the school who shares the same name and visage. At the beginning of the tale, the narrator calls himself "William Wilson," although he contends that it is not his real name. He asserts that he does not name himself because his "real appellation" would sully the page (216). The arrival of Wilson creates even more anger from the narrator because he is forced to hear his name spoken aloud and therefore it will be the "common property of the mob" (220). The narrator says his name is a common "every-day appellation" that he feels does not represent his "noble descent" (220). The appearance of Wilson creates a mixture of emotions in the narrator. He sees Wilson as his equal, which is unacceptable to him because the narrator has dominated his home throughout his childhood. The arrival of Wilson dislocates the narrator who, since an early age, has had no one to "refuse implicit belief in [his] assertions, and submissions to [his] will" (220). The narrator's arrival at Reverend Dr. Bransby's school causes a shift in the narrator's mental state. He is no longer the dominant force he was at home, but is now subject to

subordination by the school, which causes a crisis in self that allows the doppelganger, Wilson, to emerge. Bransby is a character of intrigue for the narrator, as the narrator is accustomed to dominating those in his household. The narrator views Dr. Bransby as a character of "spirit and perplexity" because he cannot understand how someone with a "countenance so demurely benign" can administer the "Draconian" laws of the school (218). The narrator cannot understand how a person can possess two different countenances because his own has been split into two.

A significant feature of the doppelganger in "William Wilson" is its use by Poe as a figure of displacement. The narrator's hatred of Wilson grows as Wilson puts himself in the way of the narrator. Wilson appears throughout the story to interfere with the narrator's plans in a positive way, which is one of the few examples in literature of a double that seeks to "annul the evil of the narrator" (Rosenfield 334). The doppelganger is usually depicted as an evil or darker version of the protagonist. The first displacement of the narrator takes place at the school. His inability to control Wilson leads him to resent Wilson's "arrogance" (223). At first, the narrator believes that his feelings towards Wilson could have been "easily ripened into friendship" (223). The hatred of Wilson grows to a point where the narrator decides to plot some "ill-natured pieces of practical wit at his expense" (224). The narrator enters Wilson's room, which is only lit by "bright rays" of the lamp, to see "the lineaments" of Wilson's face (224). He states that he "shook as with a fit of the ague" when he sees that the "lineaments" of Wilson's face are similar to his (224). The narrator questions whether or not what he saw was the "result of the habitual practice of this sarcastic imitation" (224). Unable to comprehend, or unwilling to understand, he and his doppelganger are one and the same, the narrator flees the school, never to return.

Subsequently, another displacement of the narrator happens years later when the narrator is a student at Eton. The narrator's "habits of vice" grow beyond anything at the schoolhouse (225). Since leaving Dr. Bransby's school a few months earlier, the narrator is now in a "vortex of thoughtless folly" (225). His time at Eton is spent drinking wine and engaging in other "dangerous seductions" (225). He spends nearly three years in "folly" at Eton, and his "habits of vice" have grown, just as his "bodily stature" (225). After a week of "soulless dissipation" the narrator decides to have a "secret carousal" in his chambers (225). Just as the narrator proposes a toast of "more than wonted profanity," he is interrupted by Wilson. Like his encounter with Wilson at Dr. Bransby's school, he meets Wilson in a room that "hung no lamp" and "no light at all was admitted" (225). Wilson only utters his name and causes the narrator to be "violently moved" by his action (226). The "whispered syllables" and "admonition" of Wilson shock the narrator, causing

a "thousand thronging memories of by-gone days" to shock his soul like a "galvanic battery" (226). As previously discussed, a feature of the doppelganger in German Idealism is that the doppelganger usually has some kind of "repetitive speech disorder" (Webber 3). Poe's narrator states that Wilson has a "weakness in the faucial or guttural organs," which causes Wilson only to speak "above a very low whisper" (222). Wilson's whisper shows the doppelganger's strength at the beginning of the story as he is slowly gaining power over the narrator's life. At the beginning of the story, Wilson speaks only the narrator's name. By the end of the story, Wilson's growing strength over the narrator allows him to speak in full to expose his cheating.

While the narrator is at Oxford a couple of years later, he realizes another displacement when his "constitutional temperament broke forth with redoubled ardor" (226). At Oxford, a young, rich nobleman named Glendinning becomes the narrator's target. Glendinning is described by the narrator as having a "weak intellect" that "marked him as a fitting subject for [his] skill" (227). The narrator connives in a game of écarté to cheat Glendinning out of his riches by hiding "several little packages" in his sleeve (228). The narrator states that he "effected [Glendinning's] total ruin" during the card game and left him an "object for the pity of all" (228). Suddenly, every candle in the room is "extinguished, as if by magic," and a figure appears that is the same height and is wearing a similar cloak. The figure, in a "never-to-be-forgotten whisper," tells Glendinning that he is "uniformed of the true character of the person who has won…a large sum of money" (228). The figure, obviously Wilson, immediately leaves after exposing the narrator, but leaves an "exceedingly luxurious cloak of rare furs," which is the same cloak the narrator brought with him (229). As the narrator's actions grow baser, his doppelganger's actions against him grow by directly intervening in his schemes. The interventions come at moments when the narrator is on the brink of carrying out his evil deeds. These actions by Wilson show that he is a corrective force against the debased narrator.

Ultimately, the narrator flees Oxford to evade Wilson, but he is unable to escape. Wilson finds the narrator in Paris, Rome, Vienna, Berlin, and Moscow. By the time the narrator arrives in Rome, he has given himself up "entirely to wine," but resolute no longer to be "enslaved" by Wilson (230). Italy is a typical location for the doppelganger to displace a character in German literature, and Poe stays true to German literature by ending the story in Rome (Webber 6). The narrator is pursuing the "beautiful wife of the aged and doting Di Broglio" (230-231). Traditionally, the Byronic hero is extremely passionate and will try to accomplish their goals even if they are ignoble. Wilson appears to interrupt the narrator's pursuit. The appearance of Wilson during carnival in Rome is also a tradition in German doppelganger literature. The carnival allows for

the "suspension of social conventions" that can lead to the narrator's displacement by Wilson (Webber 4). The narrator becomes "frantic with every species of wild excitement" and plunges his sword with "brute ferocity" into Wilson. A mirror appears where "none had been perceptible before" and the narrator sees himself dabbled in blood (231). The narrator finally accepts that Wilson and he are the same. Wilson tells the narrator that "thou hast murdered thyself" (232). Wilson's last words ominously bring back the narrator's words from the beginning when he explains that his "virtue dropped bodily as a mantle" due to an unmentioned event (217). The killing of Wilson leads the narrator to "years of unspeakable misery" (217).

At the end of the tale, the reader is left to question whether or not the doppelganger was a physical person or a figure of the narrator's imagination. At the beginning of the story the narrator, who is near death, questions if he has "not indeed been living in a dream" or a "victim to the horror and mystery of the wildest of all sublunary visions" (217). He states that advice from Wilson was "not openly given," but only "hinted or insinuated" (223). The last visitation of Wilson, while the narrator is swindling the rich Glendinning of his money by cheating at cards, is the closest we get to understanding Wilson's actual existence. When Wilson "enters" the room, the candles all go out, and Wilson tips off the men that the narrator has something hidden in his sleeve. Wilson leaves the room, and the light returns. The narrator states that Wilson was cloaked when he entered the room, and that the narrator was the only other person cloaked. After Wilson leaves the room, the narrator is presented with a cloak that was "its exact counterpart in every, in even the minutest possible particular" (229). The narrator suggests that Wilson's presence is only felt in the room, and that no one could see Wilson. The evidence in the story suggests that the doppelganger is a product of the narrator's imagination, spurred on by leaving the home in which he had dominated. In Patrick Quinn's study of "William Wilson," he states that the double is "a mental projection and only that" (qtd. in Jones 239). The narrator cannot be relied upon throughout the story because he is unreliable from the beginning when he will not "sully" the page with his real name. He speaks of Wilson's superiority over him, but states that it is only acknowledged by "no one but myself" (221). He also states that none of his schoolfellows mentioned his similarity to Wilson, which one would assume would be the talk of the school. The initial appearance of Wilson at the school seems to be a result of the narrator's loss of power at the new school, where he could not bend the students to his will, which leads to the creation of Wilson, whom the narrator could dominate, and in turn, be dominated by.

Many of Edgar Allan Poe's most famous works explore the darkness and duality of the human psyche. Poe was able to take a brief sketch by Washington Irving and

enlarge it to encapsulate the inner struggle of a man who has become split into two opposing entities, which leads him to become the “outcast of all outcasts” by killing his doppelganger, who represents his good conscience. Webber’s work on the doppelganger provides a way to explore Poe’s adaptation of the doppelganger from the German Idealism tradition. Focusing on the act of displacement by the doppelganger in the story shows how Poe uses the doppelganger motif as a conscience to the narrator. Poe’s “William Wilson” anticipates the rise of psychoanalysis and the inner self of man by depicting a character amid a psychological split, and it continues to provide psychoanalytic critics a rich text to be analyzed in multiple ways through multiple critical lenses. Poe reverses the doppelganger in this tale by making him a positive voice of virtue rather than a negative voice of temptation, but darkness prevails.

## Notes

1. The Byronic hero is named after the poet Lord Byron. The Byronic hero is marked by arrogance, cynicism, and self-centeredness. The hero typically wears dark clothing and has dark hair. The hero possesses characteristics that are negative but can act in a heroic way. For further study, see Peter Thorslev's *The Byronic Hero: Types and Prototypes* (1962).

2. German Idealism is a philosophical movement that emerged from Germany in the late 18th century. It developed from the works of Immanuel Kant, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Some of the main focuses of German Idealism are the intersection of self and knowledge, freedom and morality, law and state, and history and reason. For further study, see *German Idealism: An Anthology and Guide* (2006), edited by Brian O'Connor and Georg Mohr.

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# Survival of the Tribe: How the Cherokee Nation Fought Genocide

**Nethanial Belmont**

ABSTRACT

The history of Indigenous Nations' relationship to the United States colonial project and has long been a subject of extensive scholarly inquiry and community reflection. Among these nations, the Cherokee Nation stands out as one of the most frequently misunderstood. Utilizing an interview with Paul Douglas Matheny Jr. as a methodological framework, this study reveals that the narrative of the Cherokee Nation is far more complex than many scholars have suggested or, in some cases, explicitly argued. Drawing directly from Matheny's testimony, this analysis traces the evolution of a coherent Cherokee identity across precolonial and postcolonial contexts. It demonstrates that the Cherokee Nation's historical trajectory is better understood as a struggle to navigate and resist colonial power structures rather than a failure to assimilate into colonial society. This reinterpretation not only provides a more accurate scholarly depiction of Cherokee history but also has the potential to mitigate harm among Cherokee individuals who have experienced disconnection from their community over time.

Contrary to popular belief, the Trail of Tears did not force all central native peoples west into states such as Oklahoma. Paul Douglas Matheny Jr, a retired Naval Commander, former Naval recruiter, and enrolled member of the United Cherokee AniYunWiYa Nation, is one descendant of those who remained. Matheny's story is a complex turn of events that resulted in his being completely disconnected from his community, making it necessary for him to reconnect with his Cherokee roots late in his life. Situations like Matheny's often become the subject of scholarly analysis. Many scholars, such as Thomas E. Mails and other popular writers, such as the anonymous authors at Captivating History,[1] hypothesize that the Cherokee Nation rapidly assimilated into colonial practices as a possible reason for their loss of culture (Mails 1996, xi). However, through a careful analysis of Matheny's story, I argue that his narrative offers a more nuanced understanding of the Cherokee Nation's relationship to settler colonialism. This paper considers the details of Matheny's story, drawing from an extensive oral history interview conducted in the fall of 2022 along with additional sources.

Using Thomas Tweed's theory of religion as a lens, I argue that, rather than reinforcing the assimilation hypothesis, scholars should focus on failed attempts at accommodation. White people for decades have called the Cherokee Nation the first "civilized tribe," a term steeped in colonial arrogance. A more fitting description would be world-class survivalists, who were crushed under the relentless violence of settler colonialism.

Paul Matheny spent most of his life having a vague understanding of his Indigenous heritage. From what he has said, his family was not very proud of that history. Due to Matheny's participation in Indigenous storytelling, outlined by Nathanlie Piquemal, which focuses on relationships, repetition, and myth, I have combined several of his reconnection origin stories for this paper. His journey of reconnection with his Indigenous heritage came about due to two important life events: his experience recruiting in Indigenous communities for the United States Navy and his close friendship with David Young-Wolf. I cannot say for certain which event came first, but his relationship with Young-Wolf is most important to him. He recounts their relationship:

In 1997, Arkansas State University, I met Dr. David Young-Wolf, okay, and he's there showing all of his carvings, and I'm there to do a demonstrational [inaudible] dance. We're introduced. We immediately connect, and we exchange business cards. And over from 1997 until 2006, he would share with me the research he was doing. He would recommend me to read books. If you're going to understand the Trail of

1. Captivating History is a corporation founded by Matthew Clayton in which authors publish collective works anonymously for mass production.

Tears, you really need to read this book and this book and this book. If you're going to go to visit an American tribe, you need to understand their background before you go thoroughly, so you won't make a mistake…that began my journey in learning about not only the Cherokees but American Indian culture in general. (Belmont and Matheny Interview 2022)

David Young-Wolf was a lawyer who worked on behalf of the United States Government to evaluate the groups in Missouri and Arkansas claiming Cherokee ancestry. Through this work, Young-Wolf became an expert on many important elements of Cherokee hardship. In Matheny's words, "He became an expert in travel law, in treaty law, and he was really good with Cherokee genealogy" (Belmont and Matheny Interview 2022). It was with this knowledge that Young-Wolf helped Matheny connect with his identity as a Cherokee man. Matheny explains:

> So, as time went by, and he and I became very good friends, and I gave him all my genealogy information. He says, "If this is truly your great-great-great-grandfather, he walked on the Trail of Tears. Here's his name. Okay? His name is Jim Campbell, but sometimes they list him as James Campbell," so I call my cousins in Alabama, and he says, "Oh yeah. He's in [the] family bible, and he is the person that great-great-grandmother said was her grandfather." So, now I've got a name of a person. So, over a period of time, David would share with me this information, and he gave me enough hints on how to do research on my own. I began to find individuals who were obviously American Indians who were related to me. That's how I got started. (Belmont and Matheny Interview 2022)

Matheny's connection with David Young-Wolf, along with his involvement in the Pow Wow circuit and recruitment work for the Navy on Indigenous Reservations across the country, influenced his decision to share his knowledge of Cherokee traditions and the Trail of Tears. He began presenting this information to local primary schools in his community.

He became so popular doing this that his guest lecture appearances led him to work on the Trial of Tears as an official member of the National Trail of Tears Association at Tuscumbia Landing. There, Matheny gained additional information through the relationships he formed.

What began as a small introduction to David Young-Wolf and an agreement to perform recruitment among Indigenous communities on behalf of the U.S. Navy blossomed into a sense of community and knowledge that has become a large portion of

his life. In fact, during the interview, Matheny informed me that he was invited by the National Trail of Tears Association to give a presentation at the Florence Indian Mound Museum in Alabama.

Matheny's story of self-discovery points to a much larger story about Cherokee history, which has intrigued people for generations. The disconnection with his Cherokee heritage is not an isolated event. As Mails explains, "So quickly and completely was the old religious and material culture modified and then discarded that evidence of it passed into near oblivion" (Mails 1996, ix). Like Matheny, the entire Cherokee Nation has been disconnected

from great portions of its traditional belief system and people due to settler colonialism. As a result, many internal conflicts occurred over who is correct in their assessments of history and Cherokee identity. Matheny says:

Each Cherokee tribe pays historians to write his version of Cherokee history. The Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma has their historians that write their history, their version. The United Keetoowah Band has their version, and the Eastern Band Cherokees have their version, in which they will say, we are more Cherokee than the other two because we stayed in the mountains. They would say that. (Belmont and Matheny Interview 2022)

External observers have also tried to make their own assessments of what happened to the Cherokee Nation. Although it is not my place as a non-Indigenous person to comment on the internal conflicts within modern attempts at Cherokee histories; I wish to challenge arguments perpetuated by other outside scholars and argue for a more sympathetic view of the Cherokee Nation.

Those who write on Cherokee history have speculated why so many people are disconnected from ancestral practices. The most common answer is that the Cherokee simply assimilated rather than attempting to resist through preservation as other Indigenous Nations did. The authors at Captivating History write, "After being defeated and forced to sell or simply cede their land, the Cherokee decided to try and assimilate. They were one of the most successful tribes when it came to blending in" (Captivating History 2022, 2). Similarly, Mails notes, "[The Cherokee are] best known due to their amazingly rapid transformation from the ancient culture to white ways between 1700 and 1825 and for their becoming the first 'civilized' tribe" (Mails 1996, xi). Either they misunderstand the word assimilation, or they have not taken the time to understand the lived experience of Indigenous people like Matheny. To understand more fully why the Cherokee people acted the way they did, one must first understand who the Cherokee were before colonial contact and the hardships they faced after contact.

Scholars agree that the colonization of North America resulted in the immense suffering of Indigenous Nations. U.S. children are taught in classrooms about how smallpox devastated Indigenous populations, that the buffalo were hunted to near extinction, and that the Cherokee were marched out of the East and displaced in Oklahoma. However, the honest version of the story is much more horrifying and genocidal. Angelique EagleWoman makes the argument that the United States has committed genocide according to every category listed by the United Nations in the 1948 Prevention and Punishment of the Crimes of Genocide (EagleWoman 2015, 440). She lists them as follows: killing a member of a group, causing serious bodily or mental harm to a group, inflicting unlivable conditions upon a group in order to cause death of the whole or in part, preventing births within a group, and trafficking the children of a group. In support of this claim, EagleWoman outlines how the United States is guilty of each criterion regarding Indigenous Nations. She explains that United States gave official orders to gun down Indigenous peoples during the nation's founding years and continued through the early 1900s. She describes how the United States took Indigenous lands by generating large debts, killing the means for Indigenous survival, and forcing them on reservations. She outlines how the United States has worked to prevent Indigenous births through forced sterilization clinics up through the 1970s. Finally, she details how the United States took Indigenous children from their families and placed them in boarding schools or with white families (EagleWoman 2015, 440-445). The Cherokee Nation is no stranger to these atrocities.

Historian David E. Stannard, using primary sources from the era of the American Revolution, provides the following context for the genocide against the Cherokee Nation:

> "Their towns is all burned," wrote one contemporary, "their Corn cut down and [the Cherokee] drove [themselves] into the Woods to perish and a great many of them killed." Before long, observed James Mooney, the Cherokee were on "the verge of extinction." Over and over again their towns had been laid in ashes and their fields wasted. Their best warriors had been killed and their women and children had sickened and starved in the mountains. (Stannard 1992, 156)

Suffering continued in the mountains among those who stayed behind after the Trial of Tears. Another tool of genocide was forced sterilization, which is a practice preventing the next generation of Indigenous communities from being born. Legal scholar Sophia Shepherd, in conversation with Chuck Hoskin, Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, discussed the Claremore Indian Hospital in Oklahoma, where hundreds of Indigenous

women—many of them Cherokee—were subjected to nonconsensual sterilization (Shepherd 2021, 91). Shepherd explains that the U.S. government gave federal funding to incentivize doctors to perform the nonconsensual operations and coerce women into procedures through threats (Shepherd 2021, 92). However, when asked to compensate the Indigenous victims for their losses, the U.S. government refused despite giving compensation to other ethnic groups who suffered similarly (Shepherd 2021, 90).

The impact of Boarding Schools is another example of this genocide. Children were forcibly removed from their families and prohibited from speaking Indigenous languages or practicing traditional cultural customs. Sarah Sneed, an Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) tribal member and Havard Law School graduate, discusses the Eastern Band Cherokee Boarding School, a facility near the Qualla Boundary operating between 1882 and 1954 (Sneed 2009, 1-8). She tells the story of her mother:

> Our mom, born Mary Smith, told about how one day around 1920, while picking blackberries, she and her sister, Rosie, were scooped up by John Crowe, a tribal lawman and truant officer, placed into the back of a wagon with other children and taken to the Cherokee Boarding School. Her widowed mother, Lucy Ann, had not given consent, nor was she notified, that her daughters had been taken to school . . . [.] One of the first meals Mom was served at school was macaroni. She had never seen the likes of this strange food, but having had some experience with intestinal parasites, thought she was being asked to eat a plate of worms. Her rejection of the food was met with a knuckle rapping by a fierce, yonega-ageya dormitory matron. Mom was five years old and couldn't understand why Lucy Ann didn't come to take her and Rosie home, away from this terrifying environment. (Sneed 2009, 49)

Sneed's story is an important microcosm of the larger story about how Indigenous children were stolen from their communities. Likewise, Young-Wolf's story highlights the trauma of boarding schools and how some parents were able to get their children out. In fact, the only time Matheny cursed during the interview was when discussing David Young-Wolf's time at the Eastern Band Cherokee Boarding School.

Matheny recounts:

> Dr. Young-Wolf was born on the Cherokee reservation. They would prefer to call it the Qualla boundary, in Cherokee, North Carolina. His father was in the 82nd Airborne; his father was in the Army. His mother was also in [the] Army. Now, David went to the Cherokee Boy School in Cherokee, North Carolina, until he was about twelve years old. His father got promoted to officer. So, his father says, word

> for word, "I'm getting you out of that hell hole. I'm sending you to Valley Force Military Academy." (Belmont and Matheny Interview 2022)

Both stories highlight the trauma of a child completely disconnected from their parents and Indigenous heritage. Those who are part of David Young-Wolf's community say he never spoke about his time at the boarding school and that he was not a man who shied away from hard discussions. As Matheny accounts, Young-Wolf was willing to discuss his time fighting in Vietnam without issue. Much like Matheny, Young-Wolf had to reconnect with his Indigeneity at a later point in his life. It was not until he made it through law school that he was able to contribute to historical preservation through his work on the Trail of Tears.

There were many reasons for the genocide against Indigenous peoples. One example that tends to go unremarked is land theft and its intended ecocide. Although it is not defined by the United Nations, I argue land theft to be an extremely important element of genocide. The 1831U.S. Supreme Court decision of Cherokee Nation v. George led to the Trail of Tears and has had reverberations not only throughout Turtle Island but also the world (cf. Miller 2024). As Peter d'Errico describes it, the Cherokee not only lost their land but also Indigenous Nations everywhere were stripped of their sovereignty and reduced from "Nations" to "Tribes" (d'Errico 2022, 149-159).

Based on the evidence, the Cherokee Nation faced and continues to endure genocide by the United States government according to all definitions provided by the United Nations and even some that are not. With that said, contrary to what Mails and Captivating History would lead readers to believe, the Cherokee Nation could not simply assimilate into the United States while the latter was, and is, trying to exterminate it. Rather, the Cherokee have survived, albeit in pieces, because of a sheer determination to survive. Thomas Tweed's concepts of crossing and dueling highlight how this might have been possible.

According to Tweed, "Religions are confluences of organic-cultural flows that intensify joy and confront suffering by drawing on human and subhuman forces to make homes and cross boundaries" (Tweed 2006, 55). Religion is an ideology structured by the existence of people. Some scholars, such as Philip P. Arnold, argue that the Cherokee culture is not a religion (Arnold 2023, 1-11). Religion, according to Tweed, helps people navigate their existence by drawing on their community, or relation to a larger idea, which allows them to both cross and dwell, to be content in their worldview or to alter it. Cultures, like religion, help people navigate their existences by establishing an identity in the same ways. Therefore, to use Tweed's theory to analyze the Cherokee Nation's

circumstances, I use religion and culture synonymously. In doing so, the concepts of crossing and dwelling can highlight the complex state of the Cherokee Nation as they move throughout space and time.

According to Tweed, "Dwelling practices situate the religious in time and space, positioning them in four chronotopes: the body, the home, and the homeland, and the cosmos" (Tweed 2006, 123). Instead of home and homeland, I substitute these categories with land and resources because, historically, the lives of the Cherokee people have been intertwined with their ability to maintain their survival. Resources are indispensable to the Nation's orientation with the world around them, far more than the sentiment of any particular area. In this community, a territory is valuable not because it has borders but because of the resources within it. Based on my interview with Matheny, three important elements to the Cherokee people are (1) bodies, which relate to the existence of the Nation, (2) resources, which are how the Nation will survive, and (3) the cosmos, which is how members of the Nation relate their existence to a bigger idea of cosmic significance. In illustrating this point, Matheny discusses the Green Corn and Ripe Corn Ceremonies:

> The Green Corn [Ceremony] is when they plant the corn. They want the corn to ripen and be a good crop, but it also represents the survival of the tribe. Corn was extremely important in the survival of the tribe…one of the things they did was the women picked out the husbands and wives. They would say, "This guy…he's healthy, he's a good hunter, he'll be a good husband. So, I want my granddaughter to marry him." …the women, that shows you how powerful the women were… tribal culture is about survival. The tribe doesn't survive if healthy men and women won't get together and have healthy children. Okay? So, that was extremely important. And then The Ripe Corn Ceremony…would be celebrating that they were having a good harvest, and that…they wouldn't starve; they would have enough food to get through the winter. (Belmont and Matheny Interview 2022)

For Matheny, the two most important elements of the ceremony are bodies and resources: bodies, because of his emphasis on marriage and social status associated with survival, and resources, because of his emphasis on the corn's ability to provide throughout the winter. In connection with Tweed's framework, the marriage ceremonies, the acquiring of social status based on hunting ability, and the corn's sustaining properties constitute a form of dwelling. Another aspect of the Green Corn Ceremony is cosmic significance. As anthropologist John Witthoft writes, "The dance content and specific features of the Creek and Cherokee green corn festivals suggest that one function of this

ceremony is the placation and propitiation of the whole pantheon, including the sun, the fire, the thunders, the corn spirit, the spirits of plants, and the spirits of the animals upon which man preys" (Witthoft 1949, 69).

From this observation, the Green Corn Ceremony illustrates how the Cherokee Nation interacted with cosmic forces beyond the physical world. Experiencing life in these elements is what it means to dwell, following Tweed, and therefore provides an idea of how Cherokee life may have looked before colonial genocide. In addition, Cherokee dwelling, within this period, creates a mythological orientation by which accommodation tactics, or crossing, against genocide can be measured and articulated.

Tweed defines crossing as moving from place to place in multiple senses of the concept. Terrestrial crossing is a transformation of the physical land or relation to other people; however, Tweed does not limit his concept to just physically moving from place to place. He also argues that religion enables people to cross in the corporeal and cosmological senses as well. Corporeal crossing is a transformation in the understanding of what it means to be a body, and cosmic crossing is a transformation in ideas about what it means to be human concerning an individual's or group's cosmic significance (Tweed 2006, 123). Applying the concept of crossing to the Cherokee Nation is a helpful tool in understanding how the Cherokee adapted in an effort to resist genocide.

Each element of genocide, the confiscation of Cherokee lands, the abduction of Cherokee children, and the killing of Cherokee people through mass murder and forced sterilization, is a tactic meant to hit the core of Cherokee culture. Taking land destroys the Cherokee sense of home; taking children destroys their cosmology by destroying the memory of it, and the mass murder and forced sterilization of Cherokee people destroy their bodies. Genocide is a calculated systematic annihilation of the very existence of a people. However, in response, the

Cherokee Nation did not go quietly into oblivion. Matheny explains the resilience of the Cherokee people when he says:

> Remember, the Cherokee became enculturated real quickly. Then they learn…how to do business. Probably the richest man in Georgia when they removed all the Cherokees from Georgia, or most of them, was James, who was [the] brother of John Ross…why? Because he was a great businessman. The Cherokees learned to do business. He learned to grow tobacco. He learned to grow cotton. And he knew how to sell tobacco and sell cotton to white people. He knew how to grow corn and sell corn. James had a lot of money, and of course, he and his brother John, who

> was principal chief, [did]…their best to keep the Cherokee in North Georgia from being removed. (Belmont and Matheny Interview 2022)

The Cherokee knew how to grow tobacco, corn, and cotton before colonialism. However, as Matheny describes, the Cherokee Nation adapted their traditional farming practices to accommodate their need for large sums of capital to survive within settler colonial society. This strategy allowed members like James Ross to have a political and economic influence within a growing settler colonial context. Due to the close relationship between land and the resources that accompany it, I argue this qualifies as Cherokee land relations crossing into the colonizer's world.

Within the context of colonization, a conflict between U.S. and Cherokee notions of embodiment emerges. For the Cherokee, racialized forms of embodiment were an unknown and dangerous ideological justification for genocide. The Cherokee Nations' sense of who they are as a people began to shift as a result. Nevertheless, the Cherokee learned and adapted quickly. By the time of their removal, the Cherokee Nation was well regarded among many colonizers despite their racist views towards Indigenous peoples. For example, historians Theda Perdue and Michael D. Green present an historical document written by Elias Boudinot, a well-known 19th-century mixed-race Cherokee politician in 1831, which articulates a common sentiment among colonists pretraining to the Cherokee removal from Georgia:

> The Cherokees have been reclaimed from their wild habits – Instead of wild and ferocious savages thirsting for blood, they have become the mild 'citizens,' the friends and brothers of the white man – Instead of the superstitious heathens, many of them have become the worshippers of the true God. Well would it have been if the cheering fruits of those labors had been fostered and encouraged by an enlightened community! But alas! ...they are now deprived of rights they once enjoyed – a neighboring power is now permitted to extend its withering hand over them – their own laws, intended to regulate their society, to encourage culture and to suppress vice, must now be abolished, and civilized acts, passed for the purpose of expelling them, must be substituted. (Perdue and Green 2005, 144-145)

In Matheny's estimation, before colonial contact, the Cherokee Nation thought of themselves as a community. The Cherokee were more concerned with how well a person could hunt or bear children. However, after colonial contact, a new social order presented itself to the Cherokee people, and they carefully constructed an image that would benefit them and ensure their survival. To this end, the Cherokee changed much of their epistemological appearance, including their cosmology.

Rather than the Cherokee Nation changing their epistemological beliefs, I argue the most likely scenario is that they changed their epistemological appearance. Evidence of this reconfiguration can be found among confused scholars, as Mails writes:

> No veil hangs over the ancient Cherokees [more] than that clouding their earliest beliefs regarding the Creator and the origins of their religious customs…the creation and origin material collected…the most complete available…included such extensive near duplications of the first five books of the Bible as to cause readers to conclude that early in the historic period the Cherokees began to weave the newly learned biblical material into their own legends. (Mails 1996, 145)

The Cherokee willingly wove their own cosmological stories into that of their oppressors. A possible explanation for this practice is a strategic move on behalf of the Cherokee. While appearing to be fully Christianized, the Cherokee were able to keep their original cosmological beliefs secret. However, a possible unintended consequence of this concealment is the disconnection of alienated descendants such as Paul Matheny and David Young-Wolf, as well as the larger Cherokee Nation, from their fully intact version of precolonial cosmology.

Paul Matheny's disconnection from his Cherokee roots and subsequent quest for reconnection is not an isolated event. His story of reconnecting with his Cherokee lineage through his relationship with David Young-Wolf mirrors the larger Cherokee Nation's pursuit of a shared precolonial historical narrative. Stories like these have prompted questions about why these stories exist. Disagreements have become controversial not only among communities of Cherokee but also among outside speculators, such as Mails and the Captivating History corporation, who have reached their own controversial conclusions. While the internal conflict among the Cherokee communities is beyond the scope of this paper, the outside speculations must be addressed. At least among Mails and Captivating History, it is common to label the Cherokee Nation as an assimilated people. Given the evidence presented in this essay, I propose that is far from the truth.

As Matheny's account makes clear, the Cherokee Nation was a group who valued survival as a core element of its culture before colonial contact. Using Tweed's elements of dwelling, this value becomes evident. Their resources were valuable for their ability to feed the community. Their bodies were valued for their ability to procreate and provide for new members of the community, and their cosmological beliefs were valued in so far as the spirits could aid their people. It is my argument that the goal of survival never changed for the Cherokee Nation, despite the United States' goal of genocide (cf.

Schwartzberg 2023). Rather, their circumstances pushed them into such a drastically different way of life. For the first time, the Cherokee Nation faced insurmountable odds after contact with colonial forces. Their ability to dwell in their current state became impossible, resulting in desperate attempts at crossing that would have left them unrecognizable to their precolonial counterparts. For the Cherokee, resources became capital, good hunters became civilized tribal members, and the Cherokee beliefs took on an indistinguishable Christian appearance, all for the survival of the Nation.

Elias Boudinot, as with many colonizers, no longer saw the Cherokee Nation as a threat to white civilization and James Ross became one of the wealthiest men in Georgia. For a time, the Cherokee Nation's crossing tactics for survival were successful. People who talk like Elias Boudinot came to see the Cherokee Nation as a neighbor, and James Ross used his power and influence to keep the Cherokee Nation safe. For these reasons, the Cherokee resisted, however futile it may have been.

People like Elias Boudinot did not win the argument among the colonists. The Cherokee were labeled less than human despite all attempts to appease white senses of civilization. People like James Ross could use any amount of capital influence to stop the Cherokee Nation from being forced away from their ancestral lands. Despite being regarded as the most "civilized tribe," it was not enough. Unfortunately, genocide will not be accommodated.

As U.S. Chief Justice John Marshall said when discussing whether the treaties between the Cherokee Nation and the United States should be upheld, "It may well be doubted whether those tribes which reside within the acknowledged boundaries of the United States can, with strict accuracy, be denominated foreign nations…they occupy a territory to which we assert a title independent of their will" (Cherokee Nation v. Georgia 1831, 30 U.S. 18). Marshall's words outline the complete irrelevance of anything the Cherokee Nation said or did. Ultimately, the United States was going to destroy them one way or another. A claim of assimilation, incorporation with no resistance, is a gross oversimplification and, frankly, an insult to the legacy of the Cherokee Nation. When Captivating History writes, "Jackson's promise justified their assimilation. His words made it all seem worth it. If all they had to do was pledge allegiance to the flag, adopt the new American culture, and continue to farm the land, then there was hope for them after all," they are creating a narrative that leaves out a significant amount of the story (Captivating History 2021, 25). The Cherokee did not "keep farming the land"; they changed from traditional agriculture to monocropping in an effort to gain monetary influence to protect their community. The Cherokee did not "adopt the new American culture." They intentionally weaved Cherokee beliefs into Christian ones in order to

epistemologically blend in. These things matter. The Cherokee Nation did not lie down and hope for the best as Captivating History would like readers to believe. The Cherokee Nation fought as well as they knew how, and the fight matters, especially to people such as Paul Matheny and David Young-Wolf.

When empathizing with Matheny, one must consider the psychological impact of opening a book in search of answers, only to encounter Mails' argument that his ancestors abandoned him in their pursuit of assimilation into white society. Matheny accounts his ancestral break as followings:

> My grandmother was Oma Gunter. Her great-great-great-grandfather was John Gunter. Guntersville is named after him. Guntersville, Alabama, and he married the local Cherokee chief's daughter so he could do business with Cherokees on the Tennessee River. So, my grandmother, who was not at all interested in her American Indian heritage, was proud of the fact that, that Guntersville was named after her great-great- great-great-grandfather. (Belmont and Matheny Interview 2022)

If Matheny were to accept the assimilation hypothesis advanced by Mails and Captivating History, he could be compelled to interpret this history as, in part, an act of senseless abandonment. However, based on the evidence from the stories Matheny shared with me, this interpretation is inconsistent with the Cherokee Nation that Matheny has come to know. A more accurate understanding, grounded in the evidence, emphasizes the strategic nature of these circumstances. Given the context, the Cherokee Nation did not send their daughter to marry a white man lightly; rather, it was likely a desperate, albeit failed, strategy for survival under dire conditions. While such nuances may be irrelevant to a corporate entity like Captivating History, which is primarily concerned with selling books, or to an impartial scholar examining the macro- level trajectory of Cherokee history, they are of profound significance to Paul Matheny.

Thomas Mails and Captivating History misinterpret failed accommodation as assimilation and, moreover, that the assimilation hypothesis undermines the legacy of the Cherokee Nation and its people. Drawing on Paul Matheny's testimony, Thomas Tweed's theories of crossing and dwelling, and additional sources, there is a coherent Cherokee identity that spans from precolonial to postcolonial contexts. Driven by the effects of genocide, scholars can observe the Cherokee Nation's transition—from reliance on natural resources to engagement with capital, from skilled hunters to 'civilized' tribal members, and from beliefs presenting as Cherokee traditions to those hiding

in Christianity. In light of the evidence, assimilation was never the objective of the Cherokee Nation, and it is imperative that reconnecting members, such as Paul Matheny, be afforded the dignity of a more accurate portrayal.

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# The Mother of All Living: Eve's Redemptive Role in John Milton's *Paradise Lost**

**Angela Benninghoff**

ABSTRACT

In this essay I argue that in *Paradise Lost*, Milton reframes traditionally misogynistic narratives of Eve. Milton does this by portraying Eve as a growing, dynamic woman seeking to "find herself" after her secondary creation from and for Adam. In *hubris*, Milton's Eve desires wisdom and the autonomy it would afford. She does not want to be attached to Adam forever and longs to work, at least for a time, in solitude, not because she does not love her husband but because she wants to develop her own selfhood to contribute to her marriage and to the Garden's labor. But following Satan's temptation to eat the "forbidden fruit," Milton's Eve is repulsed at the separation between the prelapsarian and postlapsarian worlds, which has disrupted her marital union, and in despondence and desperation, she shares the fruit with Adam to bring about inclusion. Adam's readiness to share in her sin and die with Eve brings attention to the identity Eve has already had—as woman, wife, mother of nature—and gives her the strength and wisdom to save Adam from suicide and lead them both to repentance and redemption. Although she eats the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge and shares it with her husband Adam, Milton's Eve experiences the stages of "growing up" attributed to her innate humanity in God's Paradisal Eden.

***Winner of the Deans' Distinguished Essay Award**

*"Its name in English is Murder."*
*—C. S. Lewis, A Preface to Paradise Lost*

As the first woman in the Judeo-Christian tradition, Eve ate the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, shared it with her husband Adam, and condemned the world to sin and death (Gen. 3:1-7). According to tradition, she has since been regarded as "the devil's gateway," in Tertullian of Carthage's coinage (Benckhuysen 15), and the "[o]rigin […] of all ills." Eve is an "impious wife," "Satan's vessel," a wicked heretic who, "filled with madness," sought Adam's ruin (Arbel 35; Benckhuysen 20). Her disgrace and infamy have made her a representative of the archetypal roles and behaviors of the female sex, providing a divine sanction to deny women leadership and autonomy. Eve has been a weapon for the patriarchal notion of feminine inferiority, an excuse for the "need" to supervise women to prevent their "natural" inclinations towards sin, anarchy, and desolation. Eve's tradition has been defined by both exoneration and denigration (Levison 251-75 qtd. in Arbel 3). In his portrayal of Eve in *Paradise Lost* (especially in Book IX, which depicts the central tragedy of the work), Milton develops the biblical character of Eve positively to emphasize less her subordination and more her eventual role as a spiritual leader in concert with Adam. Milton gives her a voice in shared lordship of the Garden and refashions the misogynistic tradition to make an argument for her worthiness and free will. Milton never seeks to pardon Eve or suggest Adam's ultimate culpability, but rather seeks to portray her humanity in "growing up" as a woman into a wife and mother. Despite the consequences of the Fall, Milton's Eve assumes the identity of "The Mother of All Living," not because of her sin but because of her role in redemption (Gen. 3:20). This provides insight into her sense of that identity, both in her emotional responses to Adam and her rationale for eating the fruit. Unlike her husband, whose personal identity was established prior to her creation, Eve has been fashioned from Adam and cannot be separated from him without forfeiting her fundamental selfhood.

In the Pentateuch, Eve's entire narrative—creation(s), temptation, fall, expulsion—can be found within Genesis 2-3 in less than fifty words; the only exception is the conception and birth of her sons in the following chapter. She is created and immediately brought before and married to Adam, who names her without asking for her name or opinion (Shemesh 109). Eve has no voice and is entirely subject to her husband's will; in fact, the only time she is given an opportunity to speak is to incriminate herself in the cardinal scene with the serpent (Gen. 3:2-3, 13). The narrative relies on four assumptions: first, that Eve was sufficiently prepared with an established identity; second, that Adam

perfectly communicated God's instructions to her; third, that she alone twisted and questioned God's will upon her temptation; and fourth, that her sin was rooted in *hubris* and lust. Eve's emotions and rationale are strictly absent from the narrative.

Milton scholar Diane K. McColley brings a more humanistic and feministic perspective to the understanding of Eve. Though Adam and Eve have been used to represent traditional gender roles and to control women, Milton rectifies the disparity, bringing them closer to a marriage of equals. As McColley notes in "Milton and the Sexes," women could not be lawyers, physicians, or clergymen because the positions followed the edicts of the Fall (186). Amanda W. Benckhuysen observes that women could not petition for more autonomy even into the twentieth century, as the Bible provided patriarchal defense to the sin of Eve (205). Because Eve had come to represent all women, as the "universal Dame," all women were held responsible for her sin to a degree beyond that of even Judas Iscariot and Pontius Pilate in their responsibility for Jesus's execution (7, 42-43; Lewis 151). Shari A. Zimmerman observes that Eve's initial lack of identity positions her as the human paradox: the desire to be independent and the desire to be with someone (247). By the end of Milton's Christian epic, Eve displays her own redemptive identity and endeavors to achieve autonomy within the prelapsarian to postlapsarian evolution of Book IX. Satan corrupts Eve's innocence, shifting her naïve "growing up" within the Garden to a desperate struggle for redemption in the postlapsarian world. From her sin's consequence of absolute separation from Adam, Eve begins to recognize her individual selfhood, her contribution to her relationship with Adam, and her role as the mother of humankind. She is forced to "grow up" swiftly, exchanging her *hubris* for the self-sacrifice shown by the Son. Remaining as faithful as possible to the biblical account, Milton devotes time to developing Eve's perspective, and by doing so frees her from the constraints of a tradition that condemns her for the Fall of Man.

**The Hebrew Tradition of Eve**

In the Hebrew scriptures, the story of Eve is more complicated than many realize because there are two creation narratives. In the first, God breathes life into man, both male and female:

So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. (*Gen*. 1:27-28)

The co-creation of mankind by God suggests equality, but this version of the story is usually overshadowed by the second one and the tradition that arose from it. In the second narrative, God first creates Adam from *adamah* (clay or dirt) outside the Garden

and names him *adam* (the Hebrew word for "humankind"), distinguishing him as the dominant creature over the living world. But he is alone; Adam lacks companionship with one of like-species. As God has named him, "Adam [gives] names to all cattle […] but for Adam there was not found an helpmeet for him" (*Gen*. 2:20; Norris 10, 19). God recognizes his loneliness and creates for him a "helpmeet," a translation of the Hebrew phrase *ēzer kenegdô* meaning "a companion corresponding to"—of the same status, or rather, one in equality (Norris 19). God's solution to Adam's problem is the creation of Eve:

> And the LORD God said, *It is* not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. […] And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. (*Gen*. 2:18, 21-22)

In this account, Eve is fashioned from Adam's rib in the Garden, a narrative that has been historically interpreted to suggest Eve's secondary status to Adam. According to Panela Norris, however, the intimacy of her creation—that is, having been taken from the closest flesh to Adam's heart—can symbolize the intended loving relationship between a man and a woman (19). For Adam, loving Eve is the same as loving himself, as illustrated in his reaction to her creation: "And Adam said, This *is* now bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh: She shall be called Woman because she was taken out of Man" (Benckhuysen 29, Gen. 2:23). Having been created within the Garden, Eve shares his dignity. Her name symbolizes her unique worth: while Adam is named by God after the Hebrew term for "man," she is named twice by her husband—first as the term for being taken "out of Man," and second "the Mother of All Living," or "Eve" (Benckhuysen 19; Gen. 3:20; Norris 10). The name "Eve" precedes the Fall and suggests Adam's complete and ultimately unbroken adoration for his companion. Following Adam, Eve becomes God's new crown of creation.

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton revisits Eve as depicted in the two accounts from *Genesis*, updating the tradition that had largely depicted her as almost solely responsible for Adam's Fall and the Fall of Man. Although Eve is beguiled by the serpent and shares the fruit with Adam, she ultimately helps save Adam from suicide after his Fall—thus providing a future for mankind. Her actions serve to restore balance to their relationship and permit their prayerful repentance to God. By developing on an often-ignored perspective of Eve's role, Milton correlates the love of Adam and Eve to their shared Fall and portrays Eve as a redemptive spiritual leader.

**Eve's Identity and Hubris in Temptation**

Milton's Satan exploits Eve's innocent and unformed identity. He deliberately targets Eve, hoping to tempt her in Adam's absence to eat the forbidden fruit through a pre-temptation in a dream that precedes the actual temptation. For a moment, though, in their initial encounter, the most beautiful maiden, with looks of "sympathy and love" (*PL* 4.460-465.289), divine beauty and wisdom, momentarily disarms Satan and is positioned as a goddess (*PL* 9.459-464.388; McColley 29; Moore 6). Satan, however, exploits her godlike qualities in his flattery and appeals to Eve's innocent narcissism, turning it into *hubris*.

The Genesis account capitalizes on the ambiguity of the Fall by not depicting Eve's emotional response to eating the fruit: "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat" (Gen. 3:6). Milton imagines that Eve's purpose for eating the fruit is to fulfill an unmet desire for wisdom. The utter exclusiveness in the words "without copartner" (*PL* 9.822.397) shatters her initial identity of innocence. She is consumed by the endeavor for autonomy, but its *hubris* swiftly repulses her, since she loves Adam and understands this *hubris* to be in opposition to divine will (Zimmerman 264). She is excluded from Adam, and her pursuit for her own identity only alienates her from him (and God) more. Satan, who is more advanced in his rhetoric and development, manipulates Eve beyond what she is prepared to resist.

Lacking an individual self, Eve's identity is dependent on her marriage to Adam and cannot survive the permanent separation between the prelapsarian and postlapsarian worlds. In Book IX, Eve expresses her postlapsarian fears in language reminiscent of Satan's guileful rhetoric, as she humors his *hubris* in her desire to rule alone over Adam:

> But keep the odds of Knowledge in my power
> Without Copartner? so to add what wants
> In female sex, the more to draw his Love,
> And render me more equal, and perhaps,
> A thing not undesirable, sometime
> Superior: for inferior who is free?
> This may be well: but what if God have seen,
> And Death ensue? then I shall be no more,
> And Adam wedded to another Eve,
> Shall live with her enjoying, I extinct,
> A death to think. (9.820-830.397)

Satan's skillful temptation encourages Eve's search for autonomy. In the juxtaposition of her dual identities, the human paradox of desiring to be with her husband and to be superior to him, Eve perceives herself to be inferior (*PL* 9.824.397; Zimmerman 247-249). Uncomfortable with Adam as her "head," she comes to believe her sole lordship will bring balance to her internal conflict. Although she loves Adam in their marital companionship, as evidenced in devotion of their prelapsarian lovemaking, she desires what she imagines to be equality and the power it could afford her.

Because Adam is created for dominion, and Eve is created for Adam, he receives a fulfilled identity in her presence and perceives her as being "undivided" from him. This is seen in their first argument and ultimate separation when, in anxiety for her wellbeing, he petitions for their combined labor despite Eden's "wanton growth" and increasing need for tending (*PL* 9.11.383). Adam believes that because Eve was "form'd and 'fashion'd" (*PL* 8.460.373) from his rib, he owns her. Upon their first meeting, titillated by anticipation for the "Nuptial Bow'r" (*PL* 8.510.374), he professes, "Bone of my Bone, Flesh of my Flesh, my Self / Before me" (*PL* 8.495-96.374). He does not recognize her as a distinct individual, but as an extension of himself "of Man / Extracted" (*PL* 8.496-97.374), an oversight punctuated by their marriage as "one Flesh, one Heart, one Soul" (*PL* 8.499.374). By failing to acknowledge her sufficiency and autonomy, Adam does not give Eve the space to experience the independent stages of "growing up" and becoming comfortable in her identity and in her contribution as the first woman. From creation to instantaneous marriage, Eve is Adam's "hope" (*PL* 9.424.388), and he is never alone prior to their quintessential separation in Book IX: she sleeps, eats, works, and worships every day with him without reprieve. Most notably, she is not given time to contemplate her love for Adam until after her Fall. Adam is the cause of Eve's existential crisis; he is the reason for her seeking lordship "without copartner" (*PL* 9.821.397) as well as the catalyst of her solidified identity and redemptive role.

Absolute Separation Arising from Eve's Sin

Through peer pressure, or the fear of missing out, Eve eats the forbidden fruit. The sin condemns her to death and, potentially, to eternal separation from Adam. Considering the future of their marriage and the prospect of death, Eve is left with questions:

> And Death ensue? then I shall be no more,
> And Adam wedded to another Eve,
> Shall live with her enjoying, I extinct,
> A death to think. (*PL* 9.826-830.397)

Despite her dissatisfaction, she is the only woman to exist, and thereby the only suitable companion for Adam. She wants to be recognized as an autonomous individual who has "grown up" in her knowledge, wisdom, and desires, for "full happiness" (*PL* 9.819.397), for love and equality, shedding Adam's treatment of her as an inferior (*PL* 9.822-23.397). Eve is surrounded by a perfect Garden, wears the crown of its creation as a nurturing mother tending to its "wanton growth" (*PL* 9.11.383) and acknowledges that her death would permanently separate her from Adam. While he is marrying "another *Eve*" (*PL* 8.828.397), Eve would be condemned to her separation and silence in a vegetative state, where her unformed identity would serve as a mark of what she most desired but was never able to achieve. Eve would be eternally excluded. Because she would lose this innate acceptance in leaving Adam to the prelapsarian world, Eve's decision to eat of the fruit can thus be seen as her desire for inclusion.

The ultimate explanation for Eve's sin is an innate completion of the human paradox. She wants to know who she is as a person, to have someone to love and to be loved in return, but the result is the opposite. The act of sin creates a chasm of extended separation beyond the physiological to the physical. While Adam is still living in the prelapsarian world, Eve has transitioned to the postlapsarian world. She is wholly separated from him for the first time and has to make her own decisions: first, in the excitement of experiencing free will and potential superiority, and second, in her recognized love for Adam. Eve finds her identity in Adam's absence. Prelapsarian Eve embraced their union until it threatened her ebbing autonomy, while postlapsarian Eve misses the marital union and seeks a reunion with her husband, since reuniting with him will make them equals in the same world (*PL* 9.830-833.397). Her *hubris* abandoned, in desperation, Eve reaches for Adam and finds her identity—what is most important and what she cannot afford to lose—in his absence.

**Eve's Redemptive Role**

C. S. Lewis characterized Eve's decision to share the fruit with Adam as "Murder" (158), arguing that Eve was not "virginal in the sense of being immature" but in "[m]aidenly innocence" until the sexual transgression of the forbidden fruit (150). For Milton, unlike in Genesis, Eve's actual moment of decision does not occur in the explicit shift from innocence to the embrace of evil, but rather in the illusion of truth, in which she alone could rule the Garden. She is in a dreamlike state analogous to her nighttime rendezvous with Satan in Book V and recognizes her separation only after remembering "that the fruit may, after all, be deadly" (158). In the heat of killing her prelapsarian innocence, filled with an intent for murder, Eve makes the deliberate decision to share the

fruit with Adam because, as Lewis professes, "it is intolerable that he should be happy, and happy (who knows?) with another woman when she is gone,"— but the perspective becomes invalid in Eve's inability to tempt him (158). When he discovers Eve has sinned and is bound to die, Adam considers the creation of a second Eve, as feared in the climatic heat of her temptation, but resolves to die with his wife from a vehemence of love (Rudat 124). This "love above all else" urges Adam to eat the fruit, as he proclaims: "One flesh; to lose thee were to lose myself" (*PL* 9.957-959.400). He is insatiably drawn to her, and would continue to be drawn to her, even with the creation of a second Eve.

Through the separation brought on by Eve's sin, Adam's absolute love is tested and reflected in his parallel desire to be united with Eve. In beginning to see her as an autonomous individual who has made decisions—good or bad—without him and has embarked into the postlapsarian world alone, he now wants what she wants. This is reflected in the final speech of Book XII, when the narrative tone of subjected exclusion becomes a resolve to stay together (McGrath 74). Eve is no longer jealous of Adam's sense of selfhood, nor is she excluded: it is rather Adam, who envies her even in her sin. In arguing for Eve's equality and shared culpability with Adam, Milton gives attention to her wisdom as Adam's temporary salvation, leading him towards God's perfect redemption. She is not the sole cause of the Fall, but rather an expression of humanity's curiosity, ambition, and adaptation. Eve adapts to the responsibility of her sin: she gave the fruit to Adam, so it is up to her to rescue him from suicide. If she had remained silent, Adam would have died. Adam chose to condemn himself, and by extension, humanity, for his love of Eve (*PL* 9.911-914.399). No longer caught in the human paradox, Eve is able to focus on her individual contributions to the relationship and to wholly loving Adam.

**Conclusion**

The predominant biblical interpretations of Eve have unfairly emphasized female inferiority. Although certain women of the Bible—Sarah, Rahab, Esther, and Mary Magdalene—have illustrated courage, faith, and spiritual leadership, most traditions punctuate the controversial perspectives of women, such as Eve and Dinah, whose narratives reinforce patriarchal control. Although both Adam and Eve sin and are cursed with eventual death, women since Eve have been denied a voice, have been condemned and subordinated to men. In *Paradise Lost*, however, Milton allows Eve to find her own identity. Her internal conflict with the human paradox reflects the human condition, the desire to find oneself, to love someone and to be loved in return.

Eve falls due to the temptation of Satan, but she eats the fruit aspiring more to find herself than to achieve superiority and control. Satan capitalizes on the weakness of the individual, which poses the question: If Adam had been tempted through his weaknesses—his desire for leadership and his unbridled love for Eve—would he not have eaten of the fruit? In Milton's account, Eve's Fall is noble in its innate humanity: the desire to grow up and to affirm her autonomy and free will. Eve is redeemed by saving Adam's life. Without her, he would have committed suicide in his despair. She comforts and restores him by urging his repentance. Although she ate the fruit of the Garden and introduced sin, Eve ensured the perseverance of humankind through her spiritual leadership. The children of Adam exist because of Eve.

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# "Those Who Paved the Way": A Detailed Look into the Contributions of the USCT in Tennessee

**Patrick Wells**

ABSTRACT

This research paper discusses the significant yet often overlooked role of United States Colored Troops (USCT) in Tennessee during the American Civil War. As the Union Army faced manpower shortages due to heavy casualties, this led to the formation of USCT. Entirely composed of African American soldiers fighting for their freedom and the Union cause, these units were initially relegated to menial tasks, but through admirable efforts proved their capability in combat. In contrast, the Confederacy opposed arming Black individuals, fearing it would undermine their slave-based society. Despite the presence of approximately four million enslaved individuals in the South, the Confederacy's refusal to employ them as combat soldiers limited their military potential. This paper looks to highlight the vital contribution of USCT to the Union's success and the impact of their involvement in the war.

## INTRODUCTION

When one thinks of the American Civil War, a few key thoughts may come to mind, such as soldiers in grey versus those in blue, battles like Antietam or Gettysburg, or most likely the thought of slavery. One topic that may or may not be brought up, is that of the United States Colored Troops (USCT). From 1861 to 1865, the United States saw the Confederacy of the South and the Union of the North wage war on each other, eventually resulting in an overall Union victory. While the Union Army initially had nearly twice the fighting power as its Southern counterparts, it suffered heavy casualties early in the war and as a result had a shortage of soldiers. This desperate need for men led to the creation of the United States Colored Troops (USCT). These troops, which were composed of African American soldiers, were willing to fight for their freedom and the Union cause. Though brought in to take care of menial and manual labor work, these soldiers eventually were able to prove themselves on the battlefield.

While the establishment of USCT led to an increase in manpower for the Union, the Confederacy was adamantly against arming Black individuals. Firmly believing that slavery was the cornerstone of their society, the Confederacy believed that if they allowed Black men to bear arms it would undermine the entire institution.[1] While they were not allowed to be combat soldiers, many slaves were forced to follow their masters or serve as cooks and manual laborers. Although they were helping with the Confederate war effort, they were not considered part of the army. With around four million enslaved individuals in the South compared to the five and a half million whites, using these men in combat roles would have severely increased the odds of a Confederate victory. Conversely, this action would be a last resort for the South. As the war progressed, and the Confederate armies began facing larger odds against the Union, Confederate President Jefferson Davis and General Robert E. Lee began to see the use of Black soldiers as one of their last available options. However, by the time they approved the use of Black troops on March 13, 1865, with a bill that did not free those who served from slavery, it was too late to make a difference. The destruction of the Confederacy was already in motion and the war would end less than a month later.

The USCT fought in thirty-nine major battles of the war, and in Tennessee, played a significant role in the Union Army's success; their contributions cannot be overlooked.[2] United States Colored Troops are a widely neglected chapter of Civil War history. Although their efforts have become more apparent in recent years, their impacts are still

1. Sam Smith, "Black Confederates: Truth and Legend" *American Battlefield Trust,* (February 2022). https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/black-confederates-truth-and-legend

2. Joseph Glatthaar, *Forged in Battle: The Civil War Alliance of Black Soldiers and White Officers.* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press), 1990.

widely downplayed in comparison to their white counterparts. However, what would the outcome of the Civil War have looked like if Black troops were never allowed to fight? Without the introduction of the United States Colored Troops and their placement in Tennessee, the overall Union victory might have been lost.

## THE CIVIL WAR PRIOR TO 1863

Tennessee became the last state to secede from the Union in 1861, due to its split stance on the institution of slavery.[3] The Southern economy was fundamentally fueled completely on the slave labor at the time. Although Tennessee fought for the Confederacy throughout the Civil War, the state was captured in 1863 and occupied by the Union until the end of the war. While the Union held the power advantage over the Confederacy, their hard-fought battles were quickly reducing these odds. Battles such as Shiloh and Fredericksburg saw the number of casualties rise above ten thousand for each side. With their numbers being hastily reduced, the Union acted in the only manner they had left.

Although Lincoln was opposed to the institution of slavery, he felt as President he lacked the authority to act against it in states where it was practiced.[4] He initially assured the public that the war was strictly to keep the Union intact, not to abolish slavery. Additionally, Lincoln assured white Southerners that their property and peace would not be intruded upon. However, he also knew the implications that would arise from using Black soldiers and the social and political turmoil that would accompany such a move.[5] President Lincoln's decision to use Black men in the war effort was one motivated by military usefulness rather than this concern. He feared emancipation would drive the border states, such as Kentucky, into the Confederate ranks. However, in a message to Congress, Lincoln asked legislators to fund gradual emancipation into loyal slave states, which would encourage those states not to rebel and cripple the South.[6]

In August of 1861, President Lincoln and Congress decided not to return runaway slaves to their owners.[7] Prior to the Southern states' secession, federal law would have dictated that slaves would have been legally authorized to be returned under the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act. However, since these states considered themselves foreign nations, the laws of the United States did not apply to them, even the ones they saw

3. Charles Faulkner Bryan, Jr. *The Civil War in East Tennessee: A Social, Political, and Economic Study*, (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International), 1980, 19.

4. John David Smith, *Black Soldiers in Blue: African American Troops in the Civil War Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 9.

5. Smith. *Black*, 10.

6. Smith, *Black,* 13.

7. Noah Andre Trudeau. *Like Men of War: Black Troops in the Civil War 1862-1865* (Toronto: Little, Brown, and Company, 1998), 11.

beneficial. Labeled as "contraband," the Union army took possession of any slaves that made their way North, classifying this as capturing enemy property. In May of 1861, three slaves showed up at Fort Monroe, a Union stronghold in Virginia, stating that they had been ordered to dig a Confederate battery position by their master.[8] However, the commanding officer of the post, General Benjamin Franklin Butler, who had been a lawyer and politician before the war, had other ideas. When a Confederate officer came to demand his "property" back, Butler informed him that because the men were used against the United States government, legally they had become "contraband of war" and could be confiscated. This is the first instance of the use of "contraband" when referring to slaves. Many enslaved individuals began to set up camp around Union forts and towns in "contraband camps." When President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, thousands of men from these camps enlisted.

Under the label of "capturing contraband," some in the Union used this as an effort to promote arming Blacks. In March 1862, Major General David Hunter, the commander of the newly formed Department of the South, saw himself spread thin in regard to the men he commanded guarding the Sea Island cotton plantations. Seeing no reinforcements incoming any time soon, he knew one resource he could use that was flush at the moment: escaped slaves. On April 13, 1862, Hunter proclaimed that "all persons of color held by enemies of the United States were hereby confiscated and free."[9] Although this was a decision that should have been kept, Hunter did not have the authority to make it. Nonetheless, he embarked on recruiting missions, taking military aged Black men right out of the fields. These men were given uniforms and assigned to companies. In his defense, Hunter would later state that his intention was to "deprive the enemy of labor in their fields, forcing them to send white men, while also adding to our own forces."[10] When Hunter was asked if he had raised a troop of fugitive slaves, he denied the accusation. To this, he stated, "no regiment of fugitive slaves has been or is being organized in this department. There is, however, a fine regiment of persons whose late masters are "fugitive rebels.'" Although these emancipation actions occurred only a few months before President Lincoln delivered the real thing, his administration denied any knowledge of Hunter's actions and condemned him.[11]

8. Trudeau, *Like,* 10.

9. Dudley Taylor Cornish. *The Sable Arm: Negro Troops in the Union Army, 1861-1865* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, INC,1966), 35.

10. Trudeau, 15.

11. Cornish, *Sable,* 35.

Though Lincoln and his administration had suppressed Hunter's early emancipation speech, they still had mixed opinions about arming Black soldiers. Due to the Confederate states conducting what was essentially a rebellion against the United States, Congress passed the Confiscation Act in July 1862 which freed the slaves whose owners were in revolt against the United States. In direct support of this act, Congress almost immediately passed the Militia Act that empowered the President to use free Blacks and former slaves from the rebel states in any capacity in the army. This act promised a fair wage of ten dollars a month plus one ration to those who enlisted; however, several details regarding this act were viewed as negatives. The first, and most important detail, was that freedom was not guaranteed to those who served until the end of their term. Although they would be compensated for their efforts, the act did not specify what would happen to those individuals after the war ended. The second negative detail was that those enlisted would be as laborers, not combat soldiers. President Lincoln believed it was not yet time to arm the Blacks, and so accepted the Army using them as workers. These details infuriated Frederick Douglass, who stated in a speech given on July 4, 1862, regarding Lincoln, "[Lincoln's policies] had been calculated . . . to shield and protect slavery" and that Lincoln had "scornfully rejected the policy of arming slaves, a policy naturally suggested and enforced by the nature and necessities of the war."[12]

The decision to use Black volunteers as laborers to free white men for combat duties is one of necessity. While the overall need for more men was the decision driving this choice, the prejudice against Black people still played a crucial factor as they were seen as incapable of performing any other tasks instead of menial labor. Although the promise of freedom was uncertain for the Black men who enlisted, they still made the choice to do so.[13] The thought of liberation and social uplift prompted those who may have been unsure to put their lives on the line for even the slight possibility that these ideals may pan out. The thought of fighting beside someone might encourage a shared appreciation for one another on the stage of war. The arrival of numerous Black men seeking to join the Union, and the peril in which they put themselves in to do so, should have been a key aspect to show the Union leaders their pledge to the cause and warranted them to be a larger part of the war efforts from the beginning.

## INTO THE WAR AND INTO TENNESSEE

12. Smith, *Black*, 15.

13. Leah Binkovitz, "The Uncertain Promise of Freedom's Light: Black Soldiers in The Civil War." *Smithsonian Magazine*, (February 2013). https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/the-uncertain-promise-of-freedoms-light-black-soldiers-in-the-civil-war-9660675/

On June 28, 1861, the Tennessee State General Assembly passed the first act in the country to draft Blacks for military service.[14] Though the Confederacy used slaves and captured Blacks as servants, they did not trust them with handling supplies as they feared most were spies for the Union. Slave owners believed that they offered better care to them as slaves than they would get as free people in the North. The slave owners in Tennessee believed that their slaves would remain loyal to them during the war, a notion proved false by those who, when presented with an opportunity, fled to the North as fast as they could muster.[15] These men saw the Union Army's superior organization as a chance to better themselves, and improve their overall chances of survival.

Many of the Black regiments were employed in labor-oriented tasks and forced to do the menial work while the white regiments concentrated on combat. It was believed by Union commanders that they could use the influx of Black soldiers to take the place of any white laborers who could then be released for combat duty.[16] Those who did not formally volunteer were coerced or intimidated into the labor divisions. Tasked to build forts or dig trenches, they once again saw themselves as tools to be used, rather than men fighting for their existence.

Following President Lincoln issuing the Emancipation Proclamation in September 1862, declaring that all slaves in rebellious states would be free as of January 1, 1863, recruits for Black regiments began flooding in. Black men from all sorts of disciplines enlisted; those who had been carpenters, shoemakers, field hands and farmers were now soldiers.[17] On May 22, 1863, the War Department issued General Order No. 143 to establish a procedure for receiving African Americans into the armed forces. One hundred seventy-five regiments were recruited from all states of the Union and comprised more than 178,000 free Blacks who served during the last two years of the war.[18] Their service strengthened the Union's effort at a crucial time.

With the Emancipation Proclamation and General Order No. 143 both established in 1863, the Union Army gained the troops needed for the last years of the war. These Black soldiers that would eventually make up the USCT regiments gave the Union the edge over the Confederacy. Without these men being allowed to fight just as their

14. Bobby Lovett. "The Negro's Civil War in Tennessee." *The Journal of Negro History*, 61, no.1, (January 1976): 36-50. https://doi.org/10.2307/3031531

15. Lovett, "Negro's," 36.

16. Lovett, "Negro's,"38.

17. Trudeau, *Like,* 29.

18. Jacob Henry. "United States Colored Troops in the American Civil War" *National Museum United States Army*. https://www.thenmusa.org/articles/united-states-colored-troops-in-the-american-civil-war/

white counterparts, the North would have run out soldiers more quickly, and the battles that ended with Union victory would have had different outcomes, which could have revitalized the Confederate resolve to see the war through.

The USCT were at first used exclusively for labor and support roles, but as the war progressed, were given more complex duties. Black soldiers were used to guard forts, contraband camps, and prisoners of war before eventually seeing their way into combat. The first USCT units were organized in Tennessee in 1863, and General Lorenzo Thomas was appointed Commissioner for the Organization of Colored Troops for the Union army in Tennessee. Thomas began actively raising Black regiments in Memphis, growing to three thousand troops by June.[19] While slave owners could receive a three hundred dollar incentive for allowing their slaves to enlist, fugitive slaves were typically signed up without permission and freemen joined on their own.[20] Initially, as was with all Black regiments, their arming was met with resistance from both Union and Confederate forces. Even though the end of slavery was a main topic during the war, not all those on the Union side were fighting for it to end. Many of the thirty thousand white Tennesseans who fought for the Union Army harassed and insulted the Black Union Army recruits.[21] Trained and led by White officers, Black units were labeled as soldiers, but still viewed as less white soldiers. They were typically the first sent out in battle and often decimated in the process. Prejudice played a major role as whites had a hard time seeing Blacks on an equal footing.[22] Additionally, Black soldiers were often paid less than their white counterparts and were given inferior equipment and supplies. Food, weapons, and even medical care were atrocious, they were constantly the victims of beatings, and occasionally the victims of shootings from their White "compatriots" who resented their presence. However, the Union Army eventually recognized the worth of USCT as soldiers and began to treat them accordingly.

While the USCT were able to fight for their freedom just as the white soldiers did, they still faced discrimination. However, their resolve and determination would change the opinion of many of these former discriminators. Their efforts in major battles would not only earn the respect of officers and fellow soldiers but reports of their actions would reach other Black men and lead them to enlist as well. The USCT aided recruitment of other African American soldiers helped to increase the overall occupation number of

19. Cornish, *Sable,* 114.

20. Lovett, "Negro's," 39-40.

21. Lovett, "Negro's," 40.

22. Joseph Glatthaar, *Forged in Battle,* 177.

Union troops in Tennessee.[23] The 18th USCT expanded recruitment duty in Tennessee and traveled to Missouri, Kentucky, Alabama, and Kansas on various assignments, including building telegraph lines, erecting bridges, scouting, and guarding public property on Lookout Mountain.[24] Their willpower to keep fighting, even facing unwinnable odds, kept the Union morale high and their will to win strong.

## USCT ACTIONS IN TENNESSEE

The USCT displayed their valor through many of the conflicts that took place in Tennessee. In December 1863, Moscow, Tennessee, saw the 61st USCT go up against General Stephen D. Lee's Confederate cavalry after the Union caught them trying to burn the bridge which connected the railroad over the Wolf River. As the Confederates had orders to aid General Nathan Bedford Forrest in returning to Tennessee from Mississippi, the 61st USCT remarkably resisted Lee's troops and halted them in their tracks.

One of the most infamous battles fought by the USCT occurred at Fort Pillow on April 12, 1864. Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest invaded West Tennessee and surrounded the Mississippi River Fort. General Forrest's troops outnumbered the garrison, which contained a little over five hundred men, of which two hundred sixty two were colored troops. When the Confederate's order to surrender the fort was refused, General Forrest's troops stormed the ramparts, entered the fort, and massacred Union troops as they tried to yield. Blacks experienced casualties of more than sixty percent. Confederate forces have been accused of perpetrating the massacre of the Black troops. Yet the Fort Pillow massacre roused the USCT's resolve to fight their way to freedom and General Forrest would be branded as a malicious invader.

The USCT involvement in the Battle of Nashville in December 1864 marks one of their most significant contributions of their efforts in Tennessee.[25] The USCT were instrumental in breaking the Confederate lines and securing a Union victory. After suffering defeat at Franklin, the Confederate Army of Tennessee under General John Bell Hood needed to recapture the capital of Nashville. Outnumbered two to one, the Confederate troops set up defensive lines and waited for the Union troops to attack. Two of these brigades—the 1st and 2nd Colored Brigades—consisted of eight regiments of USCT. Although these soldiers had some combat experience engaging in small-scale attacks, they were primarily involved in construction and guarding forts and railroads.

23. Glatthaar, *Forged*, 73.

24. Lovett, "Negro's," 42.

25. "The Assault of the 13th United States Colored Troops (USCT) at the Battle of Nashville December 1864." *Iron Brigader*, http://ironbrigader.com/2022/12/10/the-assault-of-the-13th-united-states-colored-troops-usct-at-the-battle-of-nashville-december-1864/.

This battle would mark a completely distinctive combat experience for them. The brigades were ordered to attack the right side of the Confederate lines and eventually broke through. Although they suffered heavy casualties in the process, this maneuver drove the Confederate Army out of Tennessee. The bravery and determination of these soldiers were recognized by their commanding officers, and they were praised for their role in the battle.[26] Colonel Thomas Jefferson Morgan, who commanded a USCT brigade at Nashville, later wrote of his conviction that "history has not yet done justice to the share borne by colored soldiers in the war for the Union." Without the breakthrough of the USCT, the Union would have lost control of Tennessee and, with it, a key edge in the war.

The USCT also played a crucial role in the Union Army's occupation of Tennessee.[27] By late 1862, Tennessee had become crucial to the overall strategy of the Union Army. The Confederate armies in Tennessee consisting of General Nathan Bedford Forrest's cavalry in West Tennessee and a larger army in the East Tennessee area, gave the Union cause to worry. General Ulysses S. Grant was tasked with raising a larger army in Tennessee to hold conquered territory and to pursue these rebel armies. When President Lincoln made a request for two hundred thousand new troops in 1863, the majority of recruits were Black men, with a significant percentage being signed up in Tennessee.[28] These newly-recruited Black troops from Tennessee would soon play a prominent part in containing and destroying the Confederate armies in their home state. As USCT made a name for themselves, they began to be seen as equals.

The majority of Black infantry units were organized and operated in the Middle Tennessee area. Formed in 1863, the 12th USCT Regiment, also known as the 3rd Tennessee Volunteers, performed manual labor and guarded the Nashville-Northwestern railroad. This regiment was composed mainly of contraband recruits but "showed an aptitude for drill and military duties".[29] The 13th USCT under Colonel John A. Hottenstein, was formed around Nashville in 1863 as well, spending their entire military career protecting the railroads. Additionally, they fought at various engagements around Tennessee and suffered casualties of fifty-five dead, wounded, or missing at the Battle of Nashville in December of 1864.[30] The largest of the units from Middle Tennessee

26. Lovett, "Negro's," 48.

27. Henderson, Steward. "The Role of the USCT in the Civil War." *American Battlefield Trust.* (February 2025). https://www/battlefields.org/learn/articles/role-usct-war

28. Lovett, "Negro's," 39.

29. Trudeau, *Like,* 337.

30. Lovett, "Negro's," 42.

was the 14th USCT, which was organized and commanded by Thomas J. Morgan at Gallatin during 1864-65. Colonel Morgan, who objected to the designation of "overseer for black laborers," proceeded to make the 14th USCT one of the best fighting units in Tennessee. The 14th USCT also fought at the Battle of Nashville, helping dispel General Hood's army out of Tennessee, but at the cost of sixty-five casualties.[31] The 14th Colored Regiment ended its military service in East Tennessee at Greenville on March 26, 1866. Colonel Morgan would command two other units, the 42nd USCT. and the 44th USCT regiments, which were organized in Chattanooga in 1864. The 42nd served in East Tennessee until the end of its federal service on July 12, 1865. The 44th, however, was not so lucky, losing over half its regimental strength when its officers surrendered to the Confederates without a fight at Decatur in September of the previous year.

As increased numbers of slaves and free Blacks assembled to join the Union, the establishment of Black troops in Tennessee proceeded swiftly. The 15th USCT regiment was organized to guard the important Nashville-Chattanooga railroad and was stationed for most of its military career in Chattanooga, at the Department of Etowah.[32] The 40th United States Colored Troops guarded the important supply routes of East Tennessee, including the Nashville-Louisville lines in the areas situated northeast of Nashville and southwesterly toward Memphis.

The United States Colored Troops were responsible for maintaining order and protecting Union sympathizers from Confederate guerrilla attacks in Tennessee, where attacks were especially severe. Southern guerrillas would attack Blacks who wanted to enlist, dishing out severe punishments in an attempt to push them away from the Union and back to the South.[33] These guerrillas operated to keep slavery alive and would whip and beat Black individuals they saw as offenders.[34] Four more regiments, the 101st, 106th, 110th, and the 111th USCT, were formed to secure the Union-held territory. The 101st Colored Regiment defended positions around Nashville in 1865 and saw a brief skirmish in Madison, Tennessee. The 106th USCT guarded the southern stretch of the Nashville-Decatur Railroad and was later consolidated with the 40th at Greenville, Tennessee, on November 7, 1865.[35] Both the 110th and the 111th USCT were formerly garrisoned in northern Alabama along vital rail lines but later redeployed to Pulaski,

31. Ronald S. Coddington, *African American Faces of the Civil War* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2012), 180

32. Lovett, "Negro's," 42.

33. Glatthaar, *Forged*, 69.

34. Ash, Stephen V. *Middle Tennessee Society Transformed 1860-1870: War and Peace in the Upper South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press,1988), 150.

35. Lovett, "Negro's," 43.

Tennessee. Washington would send men from the 110th to join General Sherman's March to the Sea, and although they had proven themselves at the Battle of Nashville, Sherman would put them to work as laborers and servants.[36] Rebel guerrilla units continually harassed these four units, were positioned in the most susceptible positions near the deep South.

An additional six black infantry regiments were organized in West Tennessee for guard and guerrilla pursuit duties. The 55th, 59th, 61st, 63rd, 64th, and 88th USCT regiments were recruited from the heavy slave-holding counties of West Tennessee, such as Dyer, Shelby, and Fayette.[37] The 55th USCT saw combat at Moscow, Ripley, and Brice's Crossroads respectively, exemplifying their bravery in all three battles, most notably Brice's Crossroads where they blocked the Confederate forces so their white comrades could escape.[38] The larger of these forces, 59th USCT, additionally fought in these battles, although they suffered heavy casualties. The 61st and 63rd USCT regiments coordinated in Memphis and engaged in battle at Moscow, Memphis, and Ashwood, also participating in smaller encounters elsewhere. Their efforts in Brice's Crossroads, as well as a series of skirmishes with Confederate General Forrest's calvary, saw them gain admiration from the Union leaders with Colonel Edward Bouton who was a commander of the units, stating, "the work done by my brigade in the rear of column . . . was a severe test of the soldierly qualities and power of endurance of my men."[39] The 64th and 88th USCT regiments which were organized at Memphis and Island No. 10, served primarily in garrison duty at the Post Defenses of Memphis.[40] By the fall of 1864, all of these regiments had suffered immense losses at the hands of the rebel forces in defense of Tennessee.

## CONCLUSION

The USCT played a significant role in the Union Army's success in Tennessee during the Civil War. By the end of the war, some 180,000 to 200,000 Blacks served

36. Smith, *Black*, 239.

37. Lovett, "Negro's," 43.

38. Glatthaar, *Forged*, 165.

39. Trudeau, *Like,* 181.

40. Historical Commission Tennessee. Tennesseans in the Civil War (Nashville: Civil War Centennial Commission, 1971), 403-405

in the United States Colored Troops and comprised ten percent of the US Army.[41] The USCT fought in thirty-nine major battles of the war, including campaigns in Tennessee which took place in Stones River, Chattanooga, Nashville, and many other locations. The heroism and fortitude shown by these regiments, not only in the heat of battle but in the face of discrimination and mistreatment became a beacon for other Black troops and even their fellow white counterparts. Although the prejudiced nature against African Americans continued long after the Civil War ended, those who fought dedicated their lives to the thought that one day they might truly be free and no longer live as "property" but as people. The USCT paved the way for future generations of African American soldiers and shaped the course of American history forever. Despite the numerous casualties felt by the United States Colored regiments, the Army would not officially be desegregated until 1948, almost one hundred years after the end of the Civil War.[42] The sacrifices of those who endured so much just to gain their own freedom can never be forgotten. Even though they were not the first, they will always be known as "those who paved the way."

41. Steward Henderson. "The Role of the USCT."

42. Harry Truman, "Executive Order 9981: Desegregation of the Armed Forces (1948)." *National Archives*.https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/executive-order-9981

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