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About

The Journal of the Austrian Association for American Studies (*JAAAS*) is a peer-reviewed gold open-access journal which provides an interdisciplinary space for discussions about all aspects of American studies. The journal functions as a forum for Americanists in Austria and the global academic community. Published twice a year, the journal welcomes submissions on a wide range of topics, aiming to broaden the multi- and interdisciplinary study of American cultures.

Aims

Interrogating the notion of "America" and looking at the U.S. within its transnational and (trans-)hemispheric interconnections, JAAAS seeks to challenge disciplinary boundaries by bringing together original and innovative work by scholars who focus on topics as diverse as literature, cultural studies, film and new media, visual arts, ethnic studies, indigenous studies, performance studies, queer studies, border studies, mobility studies, age studies, game studies, and animal studies. Apart from offering insights into trans- and international American literary and cultural studies and offering European perspectives on America, the journal also solicits scholarship that deals with history, music, politics, geography, ecocriticism, race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, law, and any other aspect of American culture and society.

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Obstructing the Hungry Gaze: Poetics of Refusal in Indigenous Futurisms

Marie Krebs

ABSTRACT

Failure can be a productive experience, particularly in the process of reflecting on reading practices with regard to the (post)colonial gaze. In this article, I engage with literary and artistic manifestations of Tuck and Yang's "pedagogies of refusal" (812) in the works of Anishinaabe poet Liz Howard and A:shiwi/Zuni beadwork artists Farlan and Alesia Quetawki. I interact with the xwélmexw/Stó:lō sound studies scholar Dylan Robinson's concept of "hungry listening" (shxwelítemelh xwélalà:m) to contextualise reading as a colonial-extractive enactment. With this as a theoretical background, I approach Howard's poetry and the Quetawkis' artworks to hone a practice of "care-ful" (Whyte and Cuomo 235) dialogical reading that is attuned to acts of refusal (as opposed to construing them as "difficulty"). This is specifically situated as an examination of Eurocentric/settler reading practices and attempts to theorise why and how Indigenous literature and art might be thematised in the context of European humanities as a form of "aesthetic education" (see also Spivak 2). Ultimately, I attempt to deconstruct, at least partially, what Robinson calls the "Western demand for complete accessibility" (22) or the probing ethnographic eye within literary studies, and advocate for a reading of care, which can help to address some of the inadequacies of how Indigenous literatures and cultures are studied within European/settler spheres.

KEYWORDS

Indigenous literature, poetry, postcolonial studies, reading practices, Indigenous art, beadwork

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Failure is very often a productive experience in academic contexts, as it prompts an examination of the mechanisms that caused it in the first place. In literary and cultural studies, reading, listening, and watching are the most important mechanisms, meaning that a failure to engage in them "successfully" may be caused by an underlying issue in their application or, even more fundamentally, in their position as the most important tools of creating and distributing knowledge. This article reflects on what a "failure to read" may indicate in the context of Indigenous literatures, primarily relating it to extractive epistemologies that, while certainly not uncritically continued, undoubtedly form the historical basis for academic inquiry in a "Western" humanities context. It further suggests a potential way to rethink mechanisms of reading through the lens of Indigenous studies to avoid replicating and reenacting harms inflicted by settler colonial epistemologies and histories, with Dylan Robinson, Robin Wall Kimmerer, and Eve Tuck as guides toward a reflection on failure as a thoroughly generative process.

A potential site of failure for the "Western" literary gaze, for instance, is situated within the works of Anishinaabe-Canadian author Liz Howard, whose poetry is characterised by high linguistic and structural complexity. Her work is generally placed in the art and literary movement of Indigenous Futurisms, which comprise a vast complex of texts, art works, and other cultural practices engaging with futurity and speculative storytelling from Indigenous perspectives (Fricke 108). Although the term itself has been criticised because it tends to subsume all Indigenous futurisms under one umbrella term – for this reason, Chelsea Vowel, for instance, prefers to speak of "Métis futurisms" (*Buffalo* 16) – in this essay, it is used as a provisional label for works that challenge settler colonial epistemologies and reassert Indigenous presence both in the past *and* the future (Dillon and Marques 1). The futurity of Liz Howard's work is articulated through, among other features, a self-situation somewhere between Indigenous histories and a movement from the terrestrial to the extraterrestrial, the planetary, the cosmological. Her poetry is also defined by opacity and complexity and thus potentially constitutes a site of failure of, or at the very least, resistance to a certain way of reading and a certain set of epistemological expectations – namely those of accessibility, legibility, and factual density.

These epistemological expectations, as argued below, are inflected by a colonial-extractive or "hungry" gaze, the terminology of which is based on Dylan Robinson's "hungry listening," which has become a vital theorisation not only for sound studies but also for the humanities at large. In his work, Robinson directly addresses and deconstructs the "Western demand for complete accessibility" (22) that ultimately reenacts colonial exploitation through patterns of epistemological violence. This article, therefore, critically examines the colonial "hungry" gaze, which is so often directed at Indigenous cultures and literatures when they are discussed in non-

Indigenous contexts. It also explores how texts might engage in a poetics of refusal, which I theorise with Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang's "pedagogies of refusal" (811). It begins by taking stock of the "hungry" reading practice, a strategy based in the (literal) depletion and abuse of natural resources as well as the (figurative) extraction of meanings from cultural texts. However, the analysis does not end at this descriptive point but instead continues to articulate an attempt to read with care that dialogically approaches Indigenous cultural texts and reflects on its own positionality. This is performed in a fragmentary sample reading of Liz Howard's "Terra Nova, Terraformed" from her 2015 poetry collection *Infinite Citizen of the Shaking Tent* and a brief excursion into the field of visual arts with beadwork artists Farlan and Alesia Quetawki (A:shiwi/Zuni). These texts exemplify only two of the ways in which poetics of refusal might be enacted, and what follows is only one way in which they could be received.

Firstly, however, I pose two important caveats that frame my approach as well as its significance within the field of Indigenous studies. Firstly, it is important to note that the argument presented is situated in a very specific cultural context: I am arguing from the perspective of a white European scholar of Anglophone literary and cultural studies, who is reading Indigenous literatures from across the Atlantic Ocean, operating with considerable geographical distance from the actual lived experiences of Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island. This means that this article's argumentation is defined by a purported distance. Yet my ideas are also fostered in a context of the "Indianthusiasm" of German-speaking countries: Hartmut Lutz et al. trace the roots of this "problematic German infatuation with the Indigenous peoples and cultures of North America" (3) to the eighteenth century and diagnose an ongoing objectification and fetishisation of Indigenous peoples in a German (popular) cultural context. A defining moment for German "Indianthusiasm," they explain, was the publication of Karl May's Winnetou novels in the nineteenth century, which remain at the forefront of cultural narrative-building about the Americas (15). This fascination is, to a degree, echoed in the context of the humanities, where important discussions of Indigenous literatures and cultures are occasionally supplanted by a sense of extractive voyeurism that focuses on narratives of cultural trauma and reduces them to the ethnographic data described by Tuck and Yang (813). At the same time, it would be grossly negligent to teach and study North American literatures and cultures without paying significant attention to the project of settler colonialism and extricating its present-day effects, which is why there must be a way to productively redress gazing and reading practices from the inside out.

Secondly, it should be reiterated this is not an invention or coinage of terminology. The verbiage of "hunger" and "extraction" in the context of the colonial gaze has been used before by many Indigenous thinkers (see, for instance, Kimmerer 306). I levy no

claim to newness but instead seek to let these thinkers guide a re-examination of European readings of Indigenous texts and cultures, geared toward reflection on the colonial implications of "Western" academia as well as an overall meditation on questions of access, difficulty, and refusal within cultural production.

The Hungry Reader

In his book *Hungry Listening*, xwélmexw/Stó:lō sound studies scholar Dylan Robinson uses the term "shxwelítemelh xwélalà:m," which roughly translates to "colonial" or "hungry" listening. This describes a mode of listening that enacts colonial violence through its methodology and articulation: In Robinson's inaugural example, the Canadian settler composer R. Murray Schafer listens to Inuit throat singing with a colonial ear, mistaking familiarity with quality (i.e., assuming that "Western" art music has merit because it is what he knows), and produces a viscerally negative, racist response calling the Inuit people an "astonishingly unmusical race" (qtd. in Robinson 1). In this case, the colonial or hungry listener equates a lack of familiarity and understanding with a lack of quality, an accusation of unrefined banality hardly concealing racist denigration. Robinson connects this to an overall "Western demand for complete accessibility" (22), which originates in the voyeuristic ethnographic exploration of Indigenous peoples that sought to know them by "[l]istening, watching, surveying, penetrating, extracting, studying" and ultimately "owning" their culture (Shorter and TallBear 5). In Robinson's work and subsequent explorations, the consumption of cultural texts and artifacts becomes a site of colonial reenactment and enforcement. Listening and watching are inflected by the project of settler colonialism in settlers and the colonised alike (Clark 5), rendering music – among other art and cultural artifacts – a resource to be extracted from Indigenous communities in a quest to *know* and *own*.

I suggest an analogous terminology of "hungry reading," not just in the context of literature but also referring to cultural texts at large. This process applies the same standards of legibility, accessibility, and purported palatability levelled at music and defined by Robinson (2) to other forms of texts as an enactment of epistemic violence. In hungry readings, judgements of quality are based on access and understanding, which generally saturate "Western" approaches to Indigenous cultural production. For instance, a review criticises the novel *Future Home of the Living God* by Louise Erdrich harshly because of its "failure to explain exactly what's going on" (Schaub par. 9). Of course, the tone of this review cannot be equated with the outright denigration of Murray Schafer's utterance, but it is nonetheless significant that non-intelligibility is faulted in a novel in such an explicit way.

It might be worth noting that, in the context of consuming culture, "hunger" is not an accidental choice of terminology or a word used for illustrative or metaphorical

purposes. In the nineteenth century, during the prime of colonisation, the xwélmexw/Sto:lo word for "settler," *xwelítem*, literally translates to "starving person," as white settlers "arrived in a bodily state of starvation" but also brought with them a desire beyond physical need, "a hunger for gold" (Robinson 2). Similarly, the Lakota term for "settler," *wašíču,* literally translates to "fat taker," referring to settlers who coveted the most "nutrient-rich, energy-dense part of the buffalo" (Hopkins par. 1), i.e., their fat. It furthermore echoes a figure from Cree and Ojibwe winter stories[1] that is driven by insatiable hunger and greed. Interestingly, out of all figures from Indigenous stories, whitestream[2] popular culture has most decisively latched on to this creature, an appropriated form of which is featured as the villain in, for example, the horror television series *Supernatural* (specifically season one, episode two) and the video game *Until Dawn* (2015). The hungry reader is defined somewhere between the helplessness of the settler on land they do not understand and the rapacious greed of the creature. They seek to own Indigenous culture by understanding it and devour and denigrate that which they do not understand.

The hungry reader, in this article, is a fictive entity codified through extractive tendencies within "Western" academia. In my argumentation, they are also defined by their considerable geographic distance to Turtle Island and its Indigenous Nations. The hungry reader is an expressly academic figure, i.e., an entity directly exerting epistemological dominance, whose reading practices simultaneously extract information from texts written by Indigenous authors *and* "stake claims" on the gleaned knowledges (see Tuck and Yang 814). While the aforementioned review of Erdrich's novel was published in a non-academic environment, where the demand for "ease of access" is most explicitly articulated (i.e., things are more easily termed "difficult"), academic discourse frequently expresses its hunger in more implicit ways.

Academic hunger for Indigenous trauma has been well-documented across a variety of disciplines. Tuck and Yang have shown just how much of social science is defined by an imperative of making marginalised communities legible by defining them primarily through their experiences of marginalisation (813). David Delgato Shorter and Kim TallBear have written extensively about the staggering epistemological violence thrust upon them in a natural science context, in which they offered criticism to the unquestioning repetition of colonial vocabulary in discourses around space exploration, and were met with vast indifference, if not outright disrespect (3). "Western" academia as a whole gives structural rewards to hungry engagements with the Other, be this in a natural/social sciences *or* in a humanities context in its

[1] The name of this creature usually appears as an anglicised version of the Cree word for "greedy person" ("Wihtikow").

[2] I use the term "whitestream" in a similar vein as Chelsea Vowel (16), who blends "mainstream" and "white" to indicate the tendency among science fiction literatures (among many other genres) to remain complicit in the reproduction of colonial fantasies. This blended word removes the idea of centrality from the term "mainstream" while acknowledging the racialisation inherent in practices of storytelling.

celebration of new claims, groundbreaking research, or innovative coinage. The goal is to perpetually chart new epistemological territory and make the unknown known.

In its most basic form, a hungry reading can manifest as a direct extension of extractive capitalism which commodifies literature and art to centre its status as a product to be consumed. Instead of literally extracting physical resources in the colonial-capitalist sense (Diamanti 55), a hungry reading mines cultural, philosophical, artistic, and scientific practices for the purpose of monetary gain (Clark 7). While this is not acknowledged as widely as, for instance, the settler-colonial buffalo genocide (Hubbard 29) or the environmentally disastrous economic extraction practices propagated by right-wing and colonial actors (Fabricant and Gustavson 1; Preston 354), it has an equally profound historical precedent in Indigenous contexts. The extraction of cultural objects from Indigenous communities has been practiced since the first points of contact, when items of ceremonial value were commodified and assimilated into capitalist value systems, either through trade or outright robbery (Nixon 336; Pineau 148). To this day, this extraction manifests in practices of cultural appropriation and the deployment of pilfered and distorted aesthetics in the whitestream. For example, narratives of decolonisation have slowly been fed into contemporary whitestream science fiction and appear as distinctively romanticised (Nilges 432–33). Thus, cultural and discursive extraction can be conceived of in a very literal, material sense.

However, on the level of epistemology, extraction occurs as an enactment of hungry reading in which texts are approached primarily with the goal of comprehension. Comprehension refers both to processes and practices of analysis and expectations levelled at texts, which are then either bestowed or refused abstract categories of artistic merit. In the case of the former, comprehension means that analyses – regardless of their medial context, i.e., whether the primary text is a film, poem, narrative, or visual artwork – are sometimes geared towards the project of filtering out theses and themes. These are used as a basis for making statements about an entire text, i.e., not accounting for text-internal slippages and gaps in cohesion, which is frequently criticised by scholars like Barbara Johnson (349). This is, of course, not applicable in every context and also falls short of, for instance, the claims staked by proponents of deconstructivism. Yet it could also be posited that there is an overall structural reward given for providing "clear" thesis statements and works that make a text legible as opposed to complicating it further. This is tied to, in large parts, the centring of "claiming" language in all research disciplines: "To claim something is to mark it as new, and as newly mine. . . . Researchers make claims for a living" (Tuck and Yang 814).

For the matter of expectations, this means that art and literature are often judged based on which information they can convey and how much of it they make experientially salient. In Indigenous literatures, this often refers to the fact that in order to be legible, Indigenous voices need to conform to a preconceived notion of intelligibi-

lity. According to Vizenor, Indigeneity, in the hungry eye, is often conceived of as primarily impacted by loss, pain, and the trauma of being colonised – a positing of the Indigenous subject as primarily defined by their victimry. Texts which do not "deliver" on this expectation of victimry may be perceived as inauthentic or naïve (97). Furthermore, there is considerable pressure placed on Indigenous authors and artists to limit their work to the topics they are granted expertise in – so usually only topics perceived as Indigenous. In other words, Indigenous cultural production is always seen as specific, never universal (Dillon 1). As Spivak explains, texts are expected to provide their readers with an "aesthetic education" and as such, their merit is predicated on their ability to allow readers to encounter a colonial Other and form empathy and understanding (9). However, this is largely formulated on a recognition of the Other as entirely different from the self, an a priori separation that in itself is an expression of Western epistemologies.

Thus, ultimately, the hungry reader enacts extraction through reading practices by centring legibility, accessibility, and purported palatability to reinscribe a version of Indigeneity defined by absence, trauma, and loss. Indigenous artists and writers, however, practice gestures of inoculation, as I argue below, by which the hungry gaze is complicated, if not obscured completely. In this, the text becomes a mirror, and the hungry one must recognise, and grapple with, their own ravenous reflection.

Reading Resistance

An author whose work can be read as an enactment of refusal is Liz Howard, a poet from Ontario of settler-Anishinaabe descent. Her first poetry collection, *Infinite Citizen of the Shaking Tent*, was released in 2015 to great success, winning, for instance, the Griffin Poetry Prize. Her second collection, titled *Letters in a Bruised Cosmos*, followed in 2021 to similarly great success (Griffin Poetry Prize). Howard's poetry is highly complex and innovative, blending the language of cosmology and astronomy with the intergenerational trauma of Anishinaabeg communities dealing with the aftermath (and ongoing process) of settler colonialism – among many other themes. In a 2018 conversation between Howard and fellow poet Armand Garnett Ruffo (Anishinaabe-Ojibwe), Ruffo describes the book as an obfuscation of traumatic realities in a "labyrinthine language fixed in science" (Taylor 33). Anishinaabe through her father's heritage, Howard describes a troubled relationship both with her Indigeneity and her familial kinscapes, narrating her father's alcohol-induced early death, which is thematised extensively in her poem "Letter from Halifax" ("Liz Howard: Indigenous Reconnection" par. 10). She describes the process of writing *Infinite Citizen of the Shaking Tent* as one infused with anxiety and traumatic legacies, going so far as to term it a "disaster of language" (qtd. in Taylor 37), albeit in a markedly tongue-in-

cheek way. A self-described "slippery, in-between, trickster spirit" (qtd. in 38), Howard inhabits an important place in contemporary poetry.

Importantly, her poetry is also notoriously difficult to read, a descriptor which echoes "Western" demands for accessibility of culture. The connotations of difficulty are primarily negative and inflected by colonial gazing practices. That is why I suggest to reframe "difficulty" through the language of refusal and resilience to resituate cultural practices as actively meaning-making as opposed to a passive inaccessibility, as the latter carries connotations of failure on the side of the text as opposed to failures on the side of the reader. Furthermore, Howard's refusals work on a spectrum model as opposed to a yes/no binary. As I argue below, a poetics of refusal does not mean that texts become inaccessible or illegible. It means that they refuse an epistemological framework of extractive reading and that, while the hungry gaze is being subverted, there is undoubted value in the project of trying to read. An alternative practice of reading, then, could be understood within the frameworks of an ethics of care described by Whyte and Cuomo (235): I utilise the term "care-ful" to allude to ecocritical theorisations centring community, responsibility, and mutual caretaking in contrast to the pragmatism of many "Western" philosophical traditions.

Many of Liz Howard's poems and, in this case, particularly "Terra Nova, Terraformed," purposefully elicit contributions from its readership to ensure that reading is a slow and mindful process which requires considerable research beforehand. Specific terms from geology ("shale," "pyroclastic dust," "terraformed"), chemistry ("peptides," "plasma"), and astronomy ("aurora borealis") are used frequently. References to the large and diverse Anishinaabeg territories ("creek," "river," "roe") evoke a sense of locatedness while being interspersed with the language of cosmology ("stars birthing themselves"), which places the poem somewhere between the terrestrial reserve and outer space. In a bid to appeal to integrated, non-Cartesian ontologies, the poem also conjoins differently textured vocabularies, specifically the organic and the inorganic ("injured transistors," "venous highway"). All of these are properties more or less frequently ascribed to movements of Indigenous Futurisms, a move away from a strict separation of mind and body and toward an emphasis on kinship and holistic world views (Dillon 10–11). The complexity of its referential fields, the density of its linguistic innovation, and the specific situatedness of the poem are not necessarily markers of difference between Howard's work and that of other contemporary poets writing particularly expressive poetry. However, the inclusion of such elements, which require a slower, more care-ful reading, certainly constitute part of Howard's poetry's refusal of extractive readings by encouraging readers to confront epistemological difference head-on.

The most prominent acts of refusal in "Terra Nova, Terraformed" could, moreover, be found in its serpentine evasion of stabilisation and stereotyping, both in terms of

form and content, ultimately utilising a sense of interrupted mobility to challenge settler colonial epistemologies and complicate attempts at extractive reading. In the context of Indigenous refusal, this means that "Terra Nova, Terraformed" does not adhere to the static stereotypes of Indigeneity. It does not portray a "drunken" or "vanishing Indian" (Vowel, "The Stereotype" par. 1; Mihesuah 24). It does not provide voyeuristic accounts of Indigenous pain (Tuck and Yang 813) as is so often required for Indigenous literatures to be deemed authentic. It does not allow an extractive reader to glean any facts or tribal secrets, which means that it does not satisfy the ethnographic gaze. Of course, this is not unusual for poetry, which very seldom conveys any specific factual information. However, the expectations of poetry labelled as "Indigenous" are expressly racialised. Indigenous literatures are so often expected to speak to an abstract sense of Indigeneity (Dillon 1) and by refusing to do so, "Terra Nova, Terraformed" already resists the hungry gaze.

This is, of course, not to suggest that the poem does not have a "message" in an abstract sense or that it does not speak to Indigeneity in some way. "Terra Nova, Terraformed" engages with the extremely real and visceral experiences and trauma of being colonised as well as the aftermath of the North American nation-building project, which has not become any less determined to conquer new territory since the sixteenth century. One need only look at US President Donald Trump's inaugural address, in which he promised that the US will "pursue [its] manifest destiny into the stars, launching American astronauts to plant the Stars and Stripes on the planet Mars" (Trump). Howard's poem alludes to the residential school system and the discovery of children's remains ("you pack bits of bone away within a system / of conservation the site was discovered"; see also Woolford 2), it mentions mental and physical illnesses disproportionately affecting North America's Indigenous population ("fetal alcohol syndrome," "overdose;" see also Vowel, "Stereotype" par. 24) and explicitly addresses the environmental degradation brought on by nation-building projects ("oil drums sunk / to the bottom of every lake"). However, the poem decisively does not project an individual standpoint; it does not distinguish a speaker as a particularly individualised figure. The lack of an individualised "I" obfuscates easy identification and thus does not provide a cohesive storyline of Indigeneity that can be assimilated into a self-affirming logic of victimry. Instead, the poem changes rapidly between the first-person singular personal pronoun and the first-person plural personal pronoun, although the latter appears slightly more often in different variations. The self is constantly in tension with the collective; the boundary between individual story and collective is suspended and never resolved.

This refusal of immobility is also enacted on the level of form, as the poem appears to be constantly caught between rapid bursts of movement and more or less static-ekphrastic elements. The poem, it appears, halts in unexpected places and flutters

away the moment it is close enough to grasp: Through frequent enjambments, "Terra Nova, Terraformed" articulates a sense of almost discordant interruption. For instance, noun phrases are often separated by verse breaks ("river / delta," "venous / highway", "five / minutes"), which introduce stops and gaps, moments to take unexpected breaths. At the same time, however, the poem very punctually deploys mobile verbs, indicating movement sporadically yet extremely poignantly: After a relatively stative first stanza, which paints a picture of a boreal region ("Spent shale, thigh haptic fisher, roe river"), the second stanza introduces a spurt of movement away from the forest and into the "Cartesian floral pattern / of heritage," which functions on the plane of kinship ties and epistemology. In the stanza following this, the poem leaves earth altogether for outer space, referring to "venous / highways for stars birthing themselves," which relocates the text's scale from a terrestrial to an interplanetary one. These forms of (im)mobility suggest not just that the poem is mobile in its meanings and its refusal to cater to the ethnographic eye, but also that it does not stay in one place for too long, that it cannot be pinned down to a specific situatedness. This refusal to be immobilised can be read as a formal reflection of an overall displacement of methods of comprehension: Understanding requires a certain degree of stasis, and Howard's poetry does not stay in one place for too long.

What "Terra Nova, Terraformed" does evoke very clearly, though, is a tangible sense of pain – not in the sense of a voyeuristic, detailed account of a personal testimony that provides a factual basis for understanding colonial violence but through a verbalisation of an I/we that blurs the boundaries between individual fate and collective trauma. "Terra Nova, Terraformed" transports a deep sense of mourning: It layers images of mental illness and substance abuse ("fetal alcohol syndrome") with those of environmental decay ("an overdose along the magnetized pole"), articulating the lasting effects of colonisation on Turtle Island. In the final stanzas, the poem begs for a moment of peace before an apocalyptic event: "let me sleep five more minutes just five / minutes before we default on / eternity." The poem thereby ends on a note of mourning that is not tied to any figures of a tragic "vanishing Indian" but instead evokes a sense of deep empathy. At first, it speaks to a sense of individualised longing that, presumably, most readers will be familiar with (begging for five more minutes of sleep) but then immediately breaks the illusion of the individualised self, scaling up to the collective once more ("*we* default on / eternity"; emphasis mine). Ultimately, this facilitates readings that do not extract anything – no facts, no voyeuristic pleasure – but requires a base level of empathy, to feel the poem's pain at an oncoming caesura (i.e., defaulting on eternity).

Ultimately, none of the characteristics I have described are unprecedented in poetic texts in isolation: Densely packed, ambiguous language as well as personifications of inanimate objects or a conjoining of disparate semantic fields have been

utilised at the very least since modernism, if not well before that in metaphysical poetry. Uneasy relationships between the self and the Other, shifting subjectivities and dynamic relations between stasis and mobility – all of these properties can likely be found in many other texts. Howard's poetry is, rather simply, extremely complex and dense, highly evocative and imaginative, but this alone does not generate acts of refusal. Instead, refusal is generated out of the very specific situatedness of the poem as Indigenous Futurist literature, a generic marker that emphasises its position outside the whitestream and explicitly rejects notions of simplified, stabilised, and stereotyped Indigeneity. Its refusal is a response to expectations of hungry reading, which fall short of a nuanced reading of Indigenous literatures because they approach them with an expectation of meanings, tribal secrets, stereotypes to be mined. "Terra Nova, Terraformed" obstructs the hungry gaze because it masters forms of refusal innovatively and requires a care-ful reading that ultimately feels what the poem feels.

Beadwork and Experientiality

The second analysis of this article moves off the page and toward the visual arts, exploring a very differently structured aesthetics of refusal of the hungry gaze. Specifically, I engage with beadwork, which is a deeply important cultural and material practice among many Indigenous communities. It has a long history in pre- and post-contact eras as a community-building artistic practice. Despite attempts to frame it as an art form on the decline by settler colonial anthropology, for example, in Ketchum's (89) work, it remains a vibrant practice of cultural production that, to a degree, serves to establish economic self-sufficiency in Indigenous communities: The A:shiwi/Zuni beadwork artists Farlan and Alesia Quetawki, who create a variety of artworks, sell their work in a self-described "Souvenir Shop" in Santa Fe, California, which offers a variety of Indigenous artworks, from jewellery to folk art and fetish carvings (Sun Country Santa Fe). This is, of course, not an unburdened discourse. Elyse Lamm Pineau states that to her, the bartering of Indigenous-crafted art "echoes every scene stretching back to First Contact in which a 'noble savage' and 'wealthy white' sat in a circle of trade goods and bartered the buying and selling of Ojibwe culture in the currency of the time" (148). There is more than a backpack full of cultural trauma associated with the practice of selling cultural artifacts to settlers, which is also echoed, to a degree, in the language associated with Indigenous arts. To this day, the language of romanticisation and fetishisation is levelled at beadwork, for instance, through statements which posit that "handmade indigenous arts and crafts offer a refreshing antidote to the grinding homogenization and standardization of capitalism" (Carruthers 359). This indicates the presence of a hungry gaze levelled at these art works, one that suggests a sense of nostalgic longing, an internalised "Indianthusiasm."

What is more, Alesia and Farlan Quetawki's beadwork has also been featured in a variety of museums, which further exposes them to a hungry ethnographic eye which views them as testaments to their Indigeneity. The beaded figurines they make depict whitestream pop cultural icons such as the *Star Wars* characters Princess Leia, Han Solo, R2-D2, and C-3PO (Weltmuseum Wien), superheroes such as Spider-Man (National Museum of the American Indian), and Anglo-Christian imagery such as Christmas trees and, particularly delightfully, Christmas cacti (Sun Country Santa Fe). These art works were respectively displayed in the ethnology museum of Vienna, Austria, in 2023 and 2024 in the exhibition "Science Fiction(s) – If There Were a Tomorrow," which explicitly focussed on Indigenous Futurisms among other forms, and in the National Museum of the American Indian as an item in their permanent catalogue. Again, the featuring of Indigenous beadwork in ethnographic museums significantly echoes historical practices of colonial pilfering and immobilising, through stripping items of their ceremonial value and displaying them in museums. This discourse of the museums' complicit role in an extractive economic and academic model has been amply thematised by Indigenous scholars (Nixon 334) and even in fictional works such as Devon A. Mihesuah's *The Hatak Witches* (2021). However, I argue that Farlan and Alesia Quetawki's works engage in a visual poetics of refusal to inoculate their art works against a hungry gaze.

Their works, very much in contrast to Howard's poetry, may not provoke outright accusations of difficulty or unintelligibility: The figurines depict well-known, easily recognisable characters from pop cultural franchises that have become global phenomena. However, in other contexts, they engage in similar tactics with regards to expectations of legibility, accessibility, and Indigeneity. For instance, they, like Howard's texts, do not allow any exposure of secrets to satisfy a hungry gaze that mines for meaning. They do not purport to portray images of ritualistic importance. They do not explain themselves as tokens of Indigenous identity and thus refute the expectation that Indigenous art works have to reveal a secret in order to be worth the hungry gaze's attention.

They do, however, reveal an experiential quality that facilitates an engagement with the *practice* of beadwork. One may ask, for instance, in seeing the miniature beads that are lined up so perfectly, whether the artists work in silence or whether they chat about their days while they work. A care-ful reading would allow viewers to think about the significance of beading in Farlan and Alesia Quetawki's days – do they bead to wind down, does either of them have carpal tunnel syndrome? There is an experiential quality to viewing these art works that, once again, discourages a quick and easy reading, as with Howard's poetry. They depict popular cultural icons which could be manufactured, quickly and cheaply, in overseas factories. However, their 'slow' materiality is one that allows a non-extractive reader to gain an under-

standing of the process of making something without unmasking an inherent truth of the process.

All these texts – "Terra Nova, Terraformed" as well as the beaded figurines – embody strategies of refusal, of resilience, and of obstruction in the face of a hungry gaze. Their particular methods and rituals of refusal may differ, but ultimately they are both not useful to an extractive project of mining information, Indigenous trauma, and immobilised stereotypes. An obstruction of hungry reading can thus be conceived of in a variety of ways which may foster a different mode of reading, a reading "otherwise" (see also Vowel, *Buffalo* 13). To a care-ful eye, they offer experiential knowledge, build empathy, and facilitate an understanding of difference and sameness not as mutually exclusive categories but as entangled entities.

Reading (with) Refusal

It should ultimately not be the duty only of the marginalised, the exposed, and the hyper-visible to practice refusal against exploitative practices. It is of equal importance that epistemologies of gratitude, care, dialogue, and respect are introduced into non-Indigenous spaces and that hearing refusal becomes just as important as enacting it. Instead of revisiting the bone-grinding vampirism of extractive colonialism by continuously reenacting it through acts of hungry reading or of positing a mythologised incommensurability, it may be worth looking to an in-between space that centres an empathetic understanding of Indigenous poetics (see also Vizenor 9), a way of hearing refusal and acknowledging failure while not abandoning the project of trying to read. As Robin Wall Kimmerer states, "[g]ratitude plants the seed for abundance" and presents an "antidote" to extractive hunger (376) – thus, greed can be mitigated at the source.

Essentially, the artworks and poetry discussed in this article engage in acts of refusal by way of unsettling expectations that are levelled at them by a colonial-extractive gaze. They do not expose a sense of familiar, immobilised, and stereotyped Indigeneity or satisfy the ethnographic eye through voyeuristic recapitulations of trauma. Instead, they reframe the epistemological expectations levelled at Indigenous literatures and cultures. They do not only recount or reflect but look onward as well as forward and enable non-Indigenous readers to confront their racialised expectations and epistemologies. This could be read as a key component of their futurity and part of what aligns them with Indigenous Futurisms. It could even be posited that poetics of refusal are in themselves a vital part of Indigenous Futurist movements in that they destabilise established ways of gazing at, speaking about, and reading art.

I do not want to suggest that these two texts, "Terra Nova, Terraformed" and Alesia and Farlan Quetawki's beadwork, should be singled out as engaging more or less actively in acts of refusal than others but rather aim to explicate that they are only

two fascinating texts among many. This essay has attempted to demonstrate how, on the one hand, difficulty and inaccessibility are sometimes used as ciphers for an epistemological hunger and should thus be reformulated as a more active stance of refusal and, on the other, how refusal can be enacted in a variety of ways and cannot be reduced to a simple act of "saying no" or "being difficult." This article is a passionate call to read refusal productively by acknowledging the limits of a "Western"/European/settler gaze without attempting to mine texts for immaterial commodities of meaning while not falling into the trap of mythologising Indigeneity and ending the journey of meaning-making at a point of final, irreversible incommensurability. A white European perspective on Indigenous literatures and arts will always necessarily be impacted by its colonial history and a voyeuristic gaze, and great care needs to be taken not to revisit extractive violence upon Indigenous texts by utilising them like an ethnographic report. At the same time, mythologising difference may ultimately promote a world view of incommensurability, a sense of "why try reading something different at all?" Neither of these extremes are particularly useful. Instead, I advocate for a sense of empathetic and care-ful reading, a recourse to an aesthetic education that – while no doubt deeply flawed and inflected by colonial and Enlightenment vocabulary, a fact which is critiqued in Spivak (9) – helps foster a sense of care and curiosity. The purpose of reading Indigenous literatures, studying Indigenous artworks, and encouraging students to do the same should never be to gesture at points of incommensurable Otherness. The goal, really, is to shape a future and practice in which, instead of reading *out of* a text, we approach it with care to read *with* it.

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For All Mankind: Gendered Representations of the Astronaut in Contemporary US Television

Eren İleri

ABSTRACT

This article examines shifts in representations of masculinity in the figure of the astronaut by analyzing the Apple TV+ series *For All Mankind* (2019–present). Representations of astronauts have been an important cornerstone of US science fiction television. In recent years, the traditional twentieth-century image of the astronaut has been destabilized by broader cultural developments, both in fiction and real life. *For All Mankind* exemplifies this shift in the image of the gendered figure of the astronaut. The alternative history science fiction series sheds light on the relationship between white masculinity and the cultural production of outer space travel. In *For All Mankind*, the astronaut becomes a negotiating ground for the rearticulation of masculinity while enabling a revisionist, imagined US history.

KEYWORDS

Television series, space travel, masculinity, outer space, gender roles, alternate history fiction

Introduction: The Changing Face (and Little Else) of the Space Race

The cultural figure of the astronaut has been and continues to be one of the defining keystones of American popular culture. Starting in the late 1950s, and becoming more prominent throughout the Cold War and the Space Race era, the predominantly white male image of the astronaut persisted and became a key element in the construction of US national identity. With the end of the Space Race, discourses

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around space exploration and the figure of the astronaut received less attention. As we are witnessing currently a renewed interest in space exploration, both in reality and in the cultural imaginary, a new wave of representations of the space-faring human has emerged across various media, especially within the last decade, destabilizing conventional masculine representations of the astronaut (Keeler 128).

For All Mankind (2019–present) is a prominent example of a recent influx of television shows centering on astronauts and spaceflight representing the renewed interest in revived space exploration narratives in television and film. Netflix's *Away* (2020), National Geographic's *Mars* (2016–2018), Syfy's *The Ark* (2023–present) and *Ascension* (2014), and Apple TV+'s *Constellation* (2024) provide further examples of this phenomenon. In the alternative history universe of *For All Mankind*, the Soviet Union manages to outpace the United States in the race to land humans on the Moon. The pilot episode begins with the image of the disappointment and collective trauma of US television viewers as they watch the fictionalized version of the (real) cosmonaut Alexei Leonov planting the Soviet flag on the Moon and saying: "I take this step for my country, for my people, and for the Marxist-Leninist way of life, knowing that today is but one small step on a journey that someday will take us all to the stars" ("Red Moon" 00:05:27–06:21). The series focuses on the United States' efforts to defeat the Soviet Union in the race to establish a settlement on the Moon and later on Mars. The alternative history of *For All Mankind* is predicated on another early moment in the show's first season when the Soviet Union catches the United States off guard when the (fictional) Soviet cosmonaut Anastasia Belikova (Rita Khrabrovitsky) becomes the first woman to set foot on the Moon. This makes the US public and the government rethink the male-dominated image of the US astronaut, prompting NASA to inaugurate an all-female astronaut class. In reality, NASA's first female astronaut and the first US-American woman in outer space, Sally Ride, traveled into Low Earth Orbit only in 1983, twenty years after the spaceflight of Soviet cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova (Uri). *For All Mankind* depicts an alternative US (and Western) history of the 1960s to 1990s. Civil rights and social emancipation movements advance faster and more successfully, achieving early victories in legislative fights against gender and race-based inequalities. These social changes are catalyzed by the popular and inspiring image of the women in outer space in the program. Representational wins – such as including people of color and women in the selection process for astronauts, as well as for women holding executive positions at NASA and elsewhere within the US government – are indicators of a symbiotic techno-social progress. This includes the widespread use of electric cars by the 1990s and the deployment of Helium-3, a Moon-mined resource, as fuel for advanced nuclear fusion reactors. In the world of the series, these developments are made possible by the continued Space Race (and Cold War) between

the United States and the Soviet Union, with a sustained emphasis on human spaceflight as well as lunar, and eventually interplanetary, colonization. In *For All Mankind*, the public's trust in technology and science persists, resulting in social and technological progress.

This article argues that *For All Mankind*'s revisionist space narrative simultaneously challenges and reinscribes astronauts' traditional masculinity, using the crisis of white male relevance as a vehicle for renegotiating US national identity in the twenty-first century. While the series appears to progressively diversify the astronaut corps, it ultimately reanimates colonial space-faring myths by centering the emotional and existential struggles of its white male protagonists – Ed Baldwin (Joel Kinnaman) and Gordo Stevens (Michael Dorman) – as the primary perspectives through which to understand social change. Rather than simply replacing old masculinities with new ones, the show reveals how white masculinity adapts and persists even within ostensibly progressive narratives of inclusion.

The series depicts an alternative Cold War history beginning in the 1960s and extending into the early 2000s through its fourth season. Throughout this reimagined timeline, the sentiments behind two popular slogans from opposing political sides from recent US history merge: "Make America Great Again" and "Trust the Science." Together, these slogans create an imaginary history of the United States that is both "great again" and simultaneously grounded in a trust in science and technology. *For All Mankind*'s engagement with contemporary political anxieties through alternative history aligns with its creator's broader body of work. The show's main creator, Ronald D. Moore, is known for using science fiction to comment on present-day politics; his work on *Battlestar Galactica* (2004–2009) has been the focus of many scholarly articles that explore his reinterpretation of the politics of the post-9/11 War on Terror portraying various tensions related to race, gender, and reproductive biopolitics (Kustritz; Hellstrand). *For All Mankind* represents a step further in his efforts to use science fiction as explicit commentary on contemporary US culture and politics by deploying the genre to represent alternative history. In recent years, streaming platforms have seen a surge of alternative history series such as *Loki* (2021–2023), *Watchmen* (2019), *The Man in the High Castle* (2015–2019), and *Bandersnatch* (2018), which provide revisionist perspectives on aspects of Western history (Osur 157). This interest in alternative history parallels a general trend towards creating contemporary television shows with nostalgic elements (Niemeyer and Wentz 129) that offer reinterpretations of the twentieth century and, more specifically, Cold War history such as *Chernobyl* (2019), *Stranger Things* (2016–present), and *The Americans* (2013–2018) (Knewitz). The astronaut figure in *For All Mankind* also reflects a broader societal sentiment in contemporary US society associated with the slogan "Make America Great Again," i.e., longing for a supposedly

better era of US history. This crisis of identity is expressed by the series' male astronauts' lament that being an astronaut is "not what it used to be." Beyond providing a glimpse into the imaginary "great" era of the United States, *For All Mankind* gives the (US) viewer the ability to take pleasure in rereading and re-imagining their history, a history represented with fewer problems and less conflict, with more unity and social harmony as compared to its non-fictional counterpart. The show utilizes "deepfake" video and audio material depicting past US presidents and historical figures, including a "recording" of a phone call between Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger, in an effort to present a convincing image of an alternative Cold War timeline, one not limited to spaceflight but also in other political and social aspects of the time.

To demonstrate its argument concerning the show's representations and positioning of masculinities, this article proceeds through three interrelated analytical sections. First, I examine how *For All Mankind* positions Ed Baldwin and Gordo Stevens as figures of white masculine crisis, analyzing how their characterizations embody the tensions between settler colonial ideology and versions of contemporary masculinity while simultaneously exploring the disembodiment and corporeal anxieties inherent in spaceflight. Second, I examine the series' fundamental status as a narrative about US-American suburbia, demonstrating how domestic spaces and nuclear family structures become the primary sites where masculine relevance is negotiated and where the show's nostalgic vision of national identity coheres. Finally, I analyze how the series' ostensibly progressive representation of women and people of color ultimately reinforces individualist narratives that depoliticize collective struggle, while the emotional interiority and existential crises of white male astronauts remain narratively privileged. Through close textual analysis across these three dimensionalities – embodiment and colonial masculinity, suburban domesticity, and the tension between collective and individual progress – I reveal how *For All Mankind*'s revisionist history maintains white male centrality even as it superficially diversifies the identities of the astronaut corps.

Two of the central male characters of *For All Mankind* are Edward Baldwin, one of NASA's early astronauts, and his closest friend, Gordon "Gordo" Stevens. They represent the masculine, traditional twentieth-century image of the astronaut archetype – yet their narrative dominance in a diversified space program reveals the show's deeper ideological tensions. In the context of the series' broader engagement with nostalgia and historical revisionism, Ed and Gordo become focal points for exploring contemporary anxieties about the role and relevance of masculinity and how such anxieties are managed through narratives that appear progressive while maintaining white male centrality. The show's first three seasons predominantly focus on the stories of Ed and Gordo, encapsulating their conflicts and crises as the series attempts to define the relevancy of twenty-first century American masculinity.

The Astronaut: Crux of Crises of Masculinity and Empire

The cultural portrayal of the astronaut in the twentieth-century United States reflects a deeply embedded narrative of national identity and idealized masculinity. According to Dario Llinares, the astronaut counts among the most prevalent symbols of twentieth-century US national identity and is closely tied to the construction of an idealized middle-class suburban masculinity. In *The Astronaut: Cultural Mythology and Idealized Masculinity*, Llinares argues that during the Cold War era, the image of the astronaut was first mostly constructed via the intense coverage of *Life* magazine and, later, through Hollywood cinema which mediated an image of an idealized "breadwinner" family man, reconstituting the rules of the renewed colonial relationship between man and nature. This image reinforced the dichotomies of public-versus-private and human-versus-nature as mediated through the portrayal of the US space-farer – in the real world and in fiction (36).

The figure of the astronaut serves as a contested symbol of masculinity, evolving from a technocratic ideal to a site of cultural renegotiation around gender and race. Llinares points to an emphasis on technical control and mastery in representations of the astronaut and the shift of the astronaut's characterization from an active pilot to a more passive *passenger*, who, to some extent, becomes mere payload inside the spaceship: "[T]he astronaut is passive, yielding, objectified, vulnerable and disembodied by the technology around him" (140). The militarized ideal of the skilled fighter pilot coupled with the fetishization of technical expertise constructs a dominant form of idealized masculinity – one in which manhood is inextricably tied to technological mastery. Nevertheless, the astronaut witnesses a destabilization of this patriarchal configuration:

> Space flight, from the training to the journey itself, essentially removes the body as a reference point for masculine experience. When one considers the journey into space, the astronaut is strapped in, unable to move, while all piloting and guidance are controlled remotely from the ground. The entry into zero gravity is another stage in the disembodiment with weightlessness nullifying strength and the pressure suit facilitating all "normal" bodily functions. The very definition of an astronaut at this point was an "experienced zombie" who would lie there and do nothing while his rectally inserted biomedical sensor relayed the fact that he was still alive. (Llinares 141)

In earlier films such as *The Right Stuff* (1983) and *Armageddon* (1998), these contradictions, and the various ensuing crises of masculinity, are examined through the figure of the astronaut. In contemporary film and television, the depictions of astronauts have been increasingly focused on their negotiating of contemporary tensions related to gender and race. Through its inherent destabilization of constructs related to the embodied forms of gender tied to strength and ability, the figure of the astronaut – on and off screen – inhabits discussion around the cultural tensions linked to existing heteropatriarchal and racist formations that have emerged since

the mid-twentieth century. Films such as *Ad Astra* (2019) and *First Man* (2018), and series such as *The Astronaut Wives Club* (2015), *Away* (2020), *Mars* (2016–2018), and the 2018 remake of *Lost in Space* show the astronaut at the intersection of multiple debates around gender and race. *For All Mankind*, however, stands out as the one tackling a palette of issues related to twenty-first-century political instabilities through a revisionist narrative of the previous century. The show's portrayal of the astronaut sets the ground upon which popular – and predominantly US-American – cultural debates occur. At its most visible level, the show tells the story of women and people of color who have been historically excluded from spaceflight – joining the ranks of the astronauts earlier and in greater numbers than in actual history. Through this media representation, it imagines a more just United States in terms of gender and racial (in)equalities. Nevertheless, this progressive surface narrative obscures a contradictory image of the masculine astronaut, who navigates and negotiates his new role within reconfigured social structures. What is striking is that even within a storyline where women appear to take the lead, it is men's attempts to rearticulate their identity and relevancy that ultimately take center stage. Through the conflict-ridden and crisis-laden portrayals of Ed's and Gordo's masculinities, *For All Mankind* strives to reposition the US explorer figure on the final frontier, offering broader representations that still perpetuate the same masculine ideology, albeit occasionally detached from its traditional white male embodiment and performed by women and people of color.

In his analysis of the image of the astronaut, Llinares reacts to Jack Halberstam's argument about masculinity's hegemonic power. As Halberstam argues in *Female Masculinity*:

> If what we call "dominant masculinity" appears to be a naturalized relation between maleness and power, then it makes little sense to examine men for the contours of that masculinity's social construction. Masculinity . . . becomes legible as masculinity where and when it leaves the white male middle-class body. (2)

According to Llinares, the understanding of masculinity for men is a corporeal experience of the self, this is an understanding that is central to the configuration of his identity: "Representations of an 'essential' interrelationship between male identity and the male body links modes of idealization across historical or contextual shifts" (45). Although the "essential" link between the male body and masculinity is central to the construction of the traditional astronaut figure, an important instrument in shaping US heteronormative national identity and idealized masculinity, current representations of the astronaut serve a different purpose. In times of culture wars, the astronaut becomes a site for negotiating a masculinity in crisis.

The novel images of spaceflight on screen correlate with Halberstam's argument about the disembodiment of masculinity. The post-Cold War and – more crucially –

the post-9/11 astronaut figure is no longer necessarily embodied. Instead, colonial masculinity strives for universalization, becoming rearticulated through its performance by subjects of diverse races and genders. *For All Mankind*'s revived image of the astronaut and its depiction of spaceflight-driven alternative historical politics seek to decouple the Western view of the final frontier, as well as its brave explorer, from the male body, if not from masculine archetypes. It also celebrates the inclusion of previously marginalized groups in this process while selectively dismantling some hegemonic gender and race structures. Whereas the traditional astronaut figure symbolized masculine potency, strength, and bravery, *For All Mankind* positions the male astronaut as its focal point for illustrating challenges to the patriarchal and racist structures of the status quo. The Space Race era's monolithic image of the astronaut was closely tied to the construction of a dominant national identity and the heteronormative nuclear family. Today, however, the figure is fundamentally contradictory: First, it serves as a vessel for narratives to depict a crisis of masculinity; second, and more crucially, it operates within a framework where Western moral values of colonial expansion and imperialism are both universalized and diversified.

In the postcolonial era, the language, imagery, and representations of colonialism partially sublimed into or were recuperated within the imaginary of outer space (Kerslake 23; Kilgore 168), finding a new haven: "Space offered the prospect of a renewed form of settler colonization, this time into a zone safely free from human difference" (Redfield 792). In this reinvented and reimagined colonial domain, disembodied masculinities operate as a bastion for Western morality, imperial expansion, and conquest. They also safeguard the anthropocentric values of humanism, where space exploration affirms the hegemonic conception of "mankind" (Ganser et al. 283).

For All Mankind's early episodes characterize male astronauts as reckless, almost childish adventure-seekers. Significant emphasis is also placed on their disregard for both their own safety, and that of others, through scenes, for example, of them racing their sports cars on public roads. The series starts with the premise that the United States needs to be put "back on track," as the United States' decision not to land the Apollo 10 mission results in the Soviet Union becoming the first country to land humans on the Moon. The failure also makes the astronauts, including Ed and Gordo, question the "culture of safety" at NASA, claiming that the calculated agenda of scientists and engineers has stopped them from "being on the bleeding edge of things" ("Red Moon" 00:21:11–21:49). Ed, disgruntled by the Soviets gaining the advantage in the Space Race, tells a journalist: "We don't have guts at NASA anymore, since the fire. The Apollo 1 fire . . . Good men die in test planes all the time. But we don't change the whole culture of flight tests 'cause good men die . . . We

stopped taking risks at NASA" ("Red Moon" 00:22:07–23:40). The dissatisfaction of the original, all-male class of the Mercury astronauts with NASA not only signals a crisis within a masculinity defined by risk-hungry characteristics, but the depiction of the "safety first" culture as a failure also speaks to a broader crisis in US national identity. "American exceptionalism" legitimizes the taking of risks, even to the point of endangering one's life – and almost needless to say, those of subaltern others – in defiance of established rules in order to combat dangers framed as external and originating from the Other. This "trailblazer" narrative, which is appropriated from US settler colonialism, strives to find its home in outer space. For Ed and like-minded characters in *For All Mankind*, the reality of the Soviets becoming the frontrunners in space exploration implies a deeper crisis in US identity: Once they stop being "the greatest," they surrender, and "that's why [the US] lost the Moon" ("Red Moon" 00:22:07–23:40). This image of the US empire in the twenty-first century resembles how *For All Mankind* portrays the failure of NASA to fulfill John F. Kennedy's promise of making the United States the first country to land humans on the Moon; the patriotic message is that, in the face of setbacks, "we pick ourselves up and go back to work" ("He Built the Saturn V" 00:43:38–52).

In contrast to how *For All Mankind* portrays its female characters, the series explores the crises of its male characters on a deeper level. Except for one of the main characters, Karen Baldwin (Shantel VanSanten) – who we see transitioning from an astronaut wife and homemaker to, at first, a bartender then a bar owner, and then, later still, to an entrepreneur and executive of a private spaceflight company – most of the female characters' storylines only tangentially explore the contradictions and dilemmas of their psychological complexity. Characters of color, such as Aleida Rosales (Coral Peña), an undocumented immigrant who later becomes a high-ranking engineer at NASA, and Will Tyler, a Black astronaut who comes out as gay in a live-streamed message from Mars, are mostly depicted through reductive narratives focused on identity markers rather than psychological depth, giving the impression that they are only present to illustrate diversity among the astronauts and engineers.

While renegotiating some traditional gender roles, the show employs certain more recent gender stereotypes in characterizing the astronauts and their partners. The show presents a common gendered astronaut trope at the beginning of the first season's fifth episode. The male members of the Apollo 15 crew propose an impromptu alteration of the landing site on the Moon during the mission, a decision opposed by Molly Cobb (Sonya Walger), the first US woman who walks on the Moon in the series. This dynamic reflects a recurrent motif in contemporary media, as seen in the films *Interstellar* (2014) and *Gravity* (2013), where a cautious and risk-averse female perspective contrasts with the risk-taking, impulsive, and daring be-

havior typically coded as masculine. In high-stakes scenarios such as space exploration, men are often characterized by reckless bravery that defies logic, akin to adventurers and explorers. Meanwhile, women are portrayed as scientists or engineers embodying calculated risk-aversion and responsibility. This enduring imagery positions men as adventurous test pilots and women as methodical scientists in speculative space exploration narratives, reflecting a broader pattern in post-2010s film and television (Brassett, Heine 765; Palmer 30).

The series, with its strong emphasis on the family lives of the astronauts, juxtaposes Ed's wife, Karen Baldwin, with Molly Cobb's husband, Wayne (Lenny Jacobson). Karen exhibits a composed and restrained demeanor, refraining from expressing emotions; she even claims she never dreams. In contrast, Molly's husband easily shares his most intimate feelings. Over time, as the friendship between Karen and Wayne evolves, Karen begins to undergo noticeable emotional changes, a transformation further intensified by the tragic loss of her son. Her dedication to her domestic role and commitment as a wife is repeatedly emphasized through her assertion that her daily rhythm aligns with her husband's activities on the Moon. However, Karen's interactions with Wayne reveal a complex emotional undercurrent. Karen's visit to Wayne's apartment – where she is confronted with his marijuana use and unsettling paintings of Molly depicted as dead on the Moon – elicits her visible discomfort and disapproval, revealing her deeper rejection of his lifestyle, coping mechanisms, and emotional vulnerability. This moment complicates Karen's self-image and raises questions about whether her simmering anger undermines the ideals she associates with her domestic role. This frustration later surfaces in her interactions with others, such as Tracy Stevens (Sarah Jones), an emancipated housewife turned astronaut, and suggests a form of internalized sexism and self-rationalization. While such traits might be realistic for a character like Karen, they come to dominate her portrayal in the narrative, only to be challenged later. Wayne's criticism of Karen's attempt to maintain control – "you can't control things with positive thought" ("Into the Abyss" 00:29:04–30:07) – functions as an intervention that destabilizes her role as a housewife.

In episode nine of the first season, Karen Baldwin highlights the implicit connection between spaceflight, societal and technological progress, and US-American identity through the experience of her marriage: "My parents were Irish immigrants. And Ed was very different than them. So American. You know, obsessed with cars and airplanes and rockets. All of the fantastic machines that were gonna whisk us off to a great big, beautiful tomorrow" ("Bent Bird" 00:27:05–35). Ed embodies two crucial aspects of the astronaut figure: his "Americanness," which contrasts with Karen and her family's heritage, and his focus on mobility and technology, which was supposed to lead everyone to a brighter future. However, that promised future

proves disappointing, signaling that the "better tomorrow" has never truly materialized. In the image of the astronaut, Ed represents the contemporary shortcomings of the US experience. Karen's cynicism about her marriage and the space program becomes clear in a rare moment of introspection when she admits: "I guess I just wanted to be a part of the adventure." Molly's husband Wayne responds: "Like he is the pilot, and you are his copilot," to which Karen then adds with resignation: "Yeah, only somehow, over the years, I became part of the ground crew" ("Bent Bird" 00:27:35–48). At this point, Karen acknowledges her transition from housewife and Ed's passive supporter to feeling detached from these roles. She continues: "I know things have to change. I don't even know what my life is anymore" ("Bent Bird" 00:28:00–08). Following the death of her son, Karen undergoes a significant transformation, emerging as a fully realized character. This marks a significant rupture with the traditional "housewife narrative" that had previously defined her character. Karen now feels an aversion toward the seemingly "perfect" and "content" housewives of the other astronauts she encounters. They evoke in her a sense of discomfort and alienation. She finds solace in the company of Wayne, with whom she shares an intimate moment of rebellion as they smoke marijuana. He symbolizes a form of masculinity that is less toxic and which serves as a counterpoint to the conventional suburban lifestyle, for example, by living in an apartment rather than a suburban home. His personal narrative of breaking free from societal constraints profoundly influences Karen, further catalyzing her character's development.

Gordo's experiences in the fifth episode of the first season further explore the theme of masculinity under threat. He is affronted when the military veteran husband (Edwin Hodge) of Danielle Poole (Krys Marshall), NASA's first Black astronaut, makes light of Gordo's decision not to serve in the Vietnam War. Gordo's sense of self is undermined by his lack of military service and spaceflight experience and further shaken when he is replaced by a female astronaut on the Apollo 15 mission. Much like Karen, Gordo's characterization emphasizes his failures in the traditional social roles; he perceives himself as being insufficient in fulfilling both the strong masculine role of the astronaut and the role of the suburban father.

Compared to the multiplicity of representations and the complexities of the astronauts' gender and racial identities, *For All Mankind* ultimately focuses on the crisis of the white American male. Molly says to Ed during their stay on the Moon: "Face it. We are egomaniacal narcissists. I bet Columbus was. And Magellan. And they had to be to do what they did. I say here's to selfish pricks. 'Cause we move the ball forward for mankind" ("Into the Abyss" 00:42:25–48). In the same episode, she crosses out the "man's" and "his" in her Moon mission patch, replacing both with "our." In Molly's references to Columbus and Magellan, which correspond with the failures in her and Ed's family lives, the justification for colonial exploration is

reimagined through disembodied masculinity channeled through the central character of a female astronaut. When she gender-neutralizes the pronoun on her mission patch but still chooses to use the word "mankind" to designate all humans, she implies that although the renewed narrative of space exploration and conquest shifts the white man from the center and partially replaces him with women, the axiomatic colonial values of "man" remain unchanged. Patriarchal masculinity is (pro)nominally rejected through her linguistic revision, but the colonial ideology embodied by figures such as Columbus and Magellan remains intact and is actively preserved.

The initial problematization and subsequent restoration of the status of the male colonial explorer are also aspects of Ed's storyline. Throughout the first three seasons, Ed repeatedly loses and regains his relevance as a top-performing astronaut. For example, Ed's passing on of his position as the Chief of the Astronaut Office to Molly is highlighted by an interesting detail: When he vacates his office, he is shown taking down a *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962) film poster, which signals the transition to Molly stepping into his former role. This scene suggests a rearticulation of the image of the male explorer, negotiating his place in the renewed power structure. The significance of Ed's reverence of *Lawrence of Arabia* not only evokes a connection to "old-fashioned" masculinity but also underscores the colonial foundation of his character, as represented by his admiration of a particular filmic depiction of an imperial colonial officer. In the early episodes of season three, Ed's advanced age is emphasized. He is divorced, unhappy, and injects himself with steroids in order to stay in shape. Unable to find a job at NASA, he starts exploring opportunities in the private sector. Despite multiple challenges and pitfalls, Ed is narratively positioned as the hero who saves the day at the end of numerous events. The deprecated, but nevertheless still persistent, heroism of Ed is contrasted with the conflicted masculinity of the younger astronaut Danny Stevens (Casey W. Johnson). Danny's chaotic and destructive actions, such as deliberately causing the deaths of fellow astronauts on Mars, as well as his agitated and reactionary nature and immaturity illustrate a counterpoint in contemporary masculinities. Danny's destructive and, at times, misogynistic behavior symbolizes the struggles of the "new" hegemonic formation. In *For All Mankind*, no new generation of men seems to be up to the task of grabbing the (literal) flag from the older generation of astronauts. A viable new model of the masculine astronaut fails to emerge.

Another way in which *For All Mankind* explores the crisis of American masculinity and its entanglement with colonial mythology is through Gordo's psychological unraveling on the Moon. In the seventh episode of the first season, Ed, Gordo, and Danielle are stranded on the Moon, unable to return to Earth on their scheduled return mission. This situation causes psychological distress, especially for Gordo,

who embodies the self-destructive troubles of contemporary American masculinity. As his mental health deteriorates in the confinement of the base, he starts to take voluntary walks outside. These unscheduled "extravehicular activities," which he calls "apartment hunting" in reference to his soon-to-be ex-wife's search for an apartment back home, help him cope. During these walks, as he wanders through the uncharted territory of the Moon, he reminds himself that he is the first person ever to see these views. In one scene, while Gordo and Ed are out "apartment hunting" after a stressful situation at the base, Gordo complains about his lack of joy in his work as an astronaut:

> Davy Crockett, Daniel Boone. Pioneers. Going out into the wilderness and blazing a trail to where no man has gone before. That's why I like it out here. No man's gone here. No man. Just me. But that's not the job anymore. Not really. Now it's just homesteading. Build a cabin, plow the field. Put up fences to keep out the neighbors. I mean, look around you, Ed, we're on the edge of the known universe. The frontier starts right here. A whole universe just waiting to be explored, and what are we doing? Playing house. That's not what I signed up for. Not what I signed up for at all ("Hi Bob" 00:42:48–43:40).

This monologue is a crucial moment that embodies the tensions between the militarist, settler colonialist ideology and contemporary American masculinity. The decline of the risk-taker military pilot as the model for astronauts and the idealization of bravery, curiosity, and pioneering qualities as inherently masculine are posited against the reality of the mundane spaceflight experience, at times putting the astronauts in a mere passenger or caretaker position. Gordo's gendered language juxtaposes his view of the traditional masculine risk-taker/explorer tasks of the astronaut with his idea of feminine-coded work of "homesteading" and "playing house." In this moment, the series lays bare the astronaut's symbolic status as a site of masculine crisis – where the mythology of frontier conquest is both mourned and reanimated – revealing how spaceflight narratives remain tethered to colonial fantasies even as they gesture toward progress.

Later in the aforementioned episode, Ed directs his son to "start acting like a man" during a video call, which encapsulates a recurring theme in his characters' interactions: relationships defined by rigid masculine hierarchies and emotional repression. This problematic, masculine-coded behavior extends to his relationships with both his son and Gordo. His simultaneous decision to ground his son and place Gordo under house arrest at the Moon base illustrates a form of toxic masculinity that harms those around him. Ed remains oblivious to Gordo's deteriorating mental state. Unlike Danielle, who becomes aware of Gordo's struggles, Ed believes that the confinement will help. Similarly, he perceives his punitive approach toward his son as a form of discipline, failing to see its harmful consequences. When Danielle voices concern about Gordo's health, Ed dismisses her by saying, "Gordo's

tough, he'll be fine," ("Hi Bob" 00:30:29–58) before launching into an account from his time in the Korean War. His story about surviving in a forest, confronting a colonel, and later indulging in whiskey at a hotel evokes the quintessentially masculine tropes of resilience and self-reliance. It also includes the gendered myth of whiskey-fueled emotional repression, a staple in representations of troubled male heroism. The anecdote not only reinforces Ed's adherence to models of conventional masculinity but also draws attention to the series' male-centered narrative. Danielle's immediate reference to her husband's struggles, too, centers a secondary male character rather than the main female characters. It also juxtaposes the psychological trauma experienced by her Black husband with Ed's wartime experiences and emphasizes the contrast between their trajectories. The war veteran archetype, a recurring motif exemplified by the male astronauts of the series, serves as a representation of dysfunctional masculinity in need of restoration (Theweleit 434).

Gordo undergoes a significant change when he is metaphorically and literally saved by the self-sacrificial efforts of a Black woman, forcing his masculine identity into wholesale crisis. Danielle jeopardizes her astronaut career by deliberately injuring herself to trigger a rescue mission back to Earth, with the aim of freeing Gordo from his psychological distress. This can be interpreted in two ways: a clever engagement with contemporary diversity dynamics, or deeper symbolic undertones that ultimately reinscribe traditional hierarchies. Danielle's self-sacrifice risks functioning less as a progressive intervention and more as a narrative device that upholds the labor of a Black woman in service of restoring broken white masculinity. Gordo's lament over not only his personal failures but also the broader decline of test and military pilots lies at the heart of the narrative of broken masculinity. It serves as a poignant commentary on the representation of male astronauts in film and television, showcasing the fragility behind the facade of heroism.

The relationship between Danielle and Ed reflects a clear contrast in their perspectives on space exploration. Ed frequently references his experience in the Korean War and exhibits a military mindset in his practice as an astronaut, and he emphasizes "our part" on the Moon, in opposition to the territory that "belongs" to the Soviets. His outlook aligns with a territorial approach, marked by a divided and competitive vision of lunar exploration. This mentality clashes with Danielle's disapproval of such division and hostility. Ed attempts to justify his perspective by asserting that "whoever plants the flag first, owns it . . . Ask the pilgrims," drawing a parallel between space exploration and settler colonialism. Danielle responds incisively, "And what if I ask the Indians," ("Hi Bob" 00:18:20–48) challenging Ed's conquest-based mindset and underscoring her stance towards transnational cooperation in space exploration.

This exchange exemplifies the series' broader narrative about the decline of patriarchal hegemony and the "problematic" dimensions of the American experience. *For All Mankind* invites its viewers to grieve in response to the decline of the familiar values associated with the "old" America. This grieving is experienced through the narrative of the decline of the male astronaut; it becomes the site where issues regarding the nuclear family, American identity rooted in settler colonialism, as well as structural racism and sexism are entangled. The male astronauts' personal struggles and fraught relationships to their work culminate into a narrative of a foiled American experience of masculinity, one rooted in the twenty-first century but psychically situated in the twentieth.

Outer Space and US-American Suburbia: Dual Peripheries

For All Mankind is, at heart, a series about US suburbia. Despite its space exploration premise, the show devotes substantial screen time to the domestic spaces of suburban single-family homes, where the series' central interpersonal conflicts and gender politics play out. The show revisits the 1960s' image of the astronaut, idealized as the breadwinner/family man of the US-American suburban nuclear family. The show's nostalgia lies not only in its revisionist account of the Space Race. It is also a homage to the history of television, especially of the 1960s and 1970s. The first human-piloted flights to the Moon were televised events with large audiences. Approximately 600 million people around the world watched Apollo 11's first Moon landing live (Hsu). According to Lynn Spigel (114), Kennedy's promise to land US astronauts on the Moon by the end of the 1960s also became US television's promise to its viewers. In the late 1950s, television networks were seeking new avenues for reinvention, as the family sitcoms of that decade had begun to feel outdated to viewers. This sense of obsolescence reflected a profound crisis related to the suburban American Dream's social and economic limitations. As Spigel argues, the Space Race provided the television networks with what they were looking for: a cultural space where suburban "anxieties about everyday life could be addressed, albeit through a series of displacements and distortions" (117), and where the fantasy and the reality of the new space-faring agenda of the United States merged. US television in the 1960s was eager to deliver a new future to its viewers. With the advent of the space program, it also rejoiced in the new futuristic prospect of the "final frontier." The already well-established connection between US suburbia and television ascended to outer space and to other fantastic locations in the 1960s, and "presented critical views of contemporary suburban life by using tropes of science fiction to make the familial strange" (122). Further, in the 1950s and 1960s, the distinct subgenre of science fiction literature described as "Galactic Suburbia" accommodated a critique of the post-war technological landscape of US suburban life, as

well as of the role of women concerning domestic labor, which was going through a process of mechanization that could be described as the industrialization of home (Yaszek 8). Galactic Suburbia fiction shed light on how technological advancement might intensify, rather than eradicate, traditional gender roles (Church). According to Spigel, the outer space family dramas of the 1960s, such as *Lost in Space*, *Men into Space*, *My Favorite Martian*, and *I Dream of Jeannie* concealed a layer of critical reflection on suburban life inside fantastic narratives of space travel. *For All Mankind*, however, has a more complicated and contradictory relationship with its idea of the revisionist past and contemporary present. It promises the viewer a renewed, emancipated, or revolutionized imaginary world – an alternative historical setting in which certain long-desired societal changes are portrayed as having already occurred. Yet conversely, at its core, *For All Mankind* delivers a nuclear family drama in which heteronormative, traditional middle-class suburban values fight for their survival within the fantastic veneer of space travel and/or alternative history fiction.

The Fall of Collective Emancipation and the Rise of Individual Success

By depicting the inclusion of women and people of color in spaceflight in the 1960s and 1970s, *For All Mankind* presents the advancement of spaceflight and technology alongside the progress of the era's social movements. The show includes archival footage of actual historical events, such as the fight for gender equality by the proponents of the Equal Rights Amendment and other progressive struggles of the time. For example, episode three of season one, features a short, fast-paced montage of various images from the 1970s, including a brief glimpse of the Association of Communist Workers from the UK demonstrating with their banners. Images of the working class and women's rights movements are only deployed within the individual success stories of the characters as part of the aspirational narratives of their career advancements. Ellen Waverly (Jodi Balfour), whose story is shaped by her closeted sexual identity and who advances her career from being in the first class of female astronauts to becoming a Republican president of the United States, as well as the stories of Tracy and Karen, who both transition from astronaut-wives to an astronaut and to a successful businesswoman, respectively, exemplify *For All Mankind*'s central narrative of women's emancipation. Karen's emancipation story is closely linked to the loss of her son and her detachment from her role as a mother. Similarly, Tracy's narrative centers on her transformation from housewife to celebrity astronaut, representing emancipation through individual professional success rather than collective structural change. Other characters, such as Margo Madison (Wrenn Schmidt) and her protégée Aleida Rosales, also take advantage of changes at NASA. Margo's rise from engineer to NASA Director heavily draws on

tropes of capitalist individual success narratives. In the beginning, she is a mid-level NASA engineer and the protégée of a fictionalized version of the German rocket scientist Wernher Von Braun (Colm Feore), a former member of the Nazi regime who worked in weapons development in Nazi Germany before moving to the US to work for the US government. Margo ambitiously climbs the career ladder, becoming the first woman at mission control and eventually the director of NASA. Along the way, she appears to adopt traditionally masculine values, employing ruthless tactics such as blackmailing and other forms of corruption, methods portrayed as part of the status quo within NASA's internal power dynamics. The show implies that Margo's ambition to rise to the top at NASA is driven in part by the influence of her mentor, von Braun, and also by her father, a scientist who worked on the Manhattan Project. Her troubled relationships with her father and von Braun do not prevent her from taking career lessons from them. In the first season's sixth episode, which shapes Margo's narrative, von Braun gives her career advice during a heated and emotional discussion. He suggests privately using important information to help her career instead of leaking it to the press – which could benefit the public good. Margo follows his advice despite the ethical implications. The show largely overlooks the moral dilemma arising from blackmail and other questionable actions. Instead, it portrays Margo as a successful, career-driven woman who decides to play the game.

A similar progression is also present in the story of Aleida, who starts her journey as an undocumented immigrant crossing the Mexico-US border and later becomes a successful engineer at NASA. In both characters' stories, the challenges of their personal lives are set against their professional ambitions. For both characters, the presence of their fathers, or lack thereof, plays a crucial role in the development of their individual success stories (Ganser 156). The men of the "old order" remain present in *For All Mankind* as diminished, yet persistent, figures, not entirely superseded but rather partially sustained by women in positions of power who reproduce hegemonic structures even as they appear to challenge them. Instead of offering an alternative history, revised to include a more just society, the show decontextualizes the collective and social struggles of the real world 1960s and 1970s working-class and leftist movements. It uses their revolutionary image to amplify the individual achievements within a capitalist society, reducing emancipation to a matter of personal aspiration while downplaying collective potential. The show's focus on individual success stories of women – emphasizing personal emancipation as professional advancement within a seemingly homogeneous society that obscures class contradictions – constitutes a form of the idealized post-feminist businesswoman (Calkin 24). The individualist feminism of *For All Mankind* neither aims to destroy the specter of hegemonic masculinity nor challenges the gender binary.

As Mari Ruti writes, through neoliberal ideals of relentless self-improvement and cheerful conformity, gender stereotyping remerges under the guise of empowerment, with women themselves sometimes reclaiming the very stereotypes they once resisted:

> If we take gender stereotyping as a sign of heteropatriarchy's strong grip on our culture, it seems like things are actually sliding backward in our so-called postfeminist world in the sense that women, who a few decades ago tended to complain about gender stereotypes, are now sometimes on the front lines of arguing for their resurrection. (Ruti 94)

In *For All Mankind*, this idea seems to apply to stereotypes of both women and men. The 1960s American masculine image of the astronaut is partially resurrected to become a disembodied tool of capitalist domination that allows crisis-ridden white masculinity to be rehabilitated and recuperated. In the show's universe, the ideological formations of the structural positions of gender and race in US society are not fundamentally threatened, only slightly altered to accommodate an appearance of diversity. The new – but aged – astronauts strive to conserve vestiges of the twentieth-century US astronaut in themselves. As summarized by the fictionalized version of NASA's Chief of Astronaut Office, Deke Slayton (Chris Bauer), when he addresses the fictional queer astronaut Ellen Waverly: "I always knew you had a bit of John Glenn in you. I mean, yeah, you were quiet, a little hard on yourself, but when you walk into a room, people pay attention. When you speak, people listen" ("A City Upon a Hill" 00:28:30–50). In actual history, John Glenn, one of the original Mercury Seven astronauts and the first US-American to orbit Earth, had a troubling record of sexism and was initially against the inclusion of women in space travel, a stance he openly expressed during his speech at the US House Space Committee in 1962:

> I think this gets back to the way our social order is organized, really. It is just a fact. The men go off and fight the wars and fly the airplanes and come back and help design and build and test them. The fact that women are not in this field is a fact of our social order. (qtd. in Neufeld ch. 9)

This statement reveals the deeply entrenched gender assumptions of the era. By integrating Glenn's real-world views, *For All Mankind* signals how contemporary portrayals of diversity are haunted by historically exclusionary discourses. The persistence of these legacies complicates the show's attempt to present a progressive narrative. While new figures arise to challenge old norms, the shadow of mid-century masculinity remains firmly rooted within the institutional framework of space exploration.

This tension is exemplified in the final episode of the first season. Ellen, who has just ordered a stubborn Ed to step down as commander of the Moon base, addresses the nation as its sole occupant. Before the broadcast, she recalls the actual as-

tronaut Gene Cernan's remark: "[He] once told me that in space, even a girl can toss a football like Joe Namath" ("A City Upon a Hill" 00:58:58–59:16). This moment underscores a subtle yet persistent acknowledgment of traditional gender dynamics in a context that only partially seeks diversity. This sentiment reflects the broader cultural shift depicted, a nostalgic farewell to outdated models of masculinity, which are gradually being refined and reaffirmed rather than entirely dismantled. This dynamic is stressed in Ellen's eulogy for Deke Slayton, during which she praises him, despite his homophobic behavior towards her, and characterizes him as a product of a bygone era, subtly problematizing his traditional masculine-coded values. The timing of this speech, delivered during the season finale, further amplifies its thematic weight. While embodying a shift in the gender representation of the astronaut, Ellen's defense of space exploration derives its core beliefs from US space exploration myths. It is emblematic of settler colonial ideology, framing space exploration as an endeavor that necessitates sacrifices. This mirrors historical narratives such as the westward expansion of US settlers and the crossings of the Atlantic Ocean. Her justification draws attention to the deeply ingrained connections between US space exploration and colonialist rhetoric.

Ultimately, the conclusion of Ellen's speech aligns seamlessly with the motifs explored in scholarship on the intersections of suburban ideology and outer space narratives in television, as it is broadcast on television screens with the entire families of the astronauts gathered around. The portrayal of space travel as a vehicle for hope and progress reinforces the idea that societal advancement is intrinsically tied to space exploration, a recurring theme throughout the series that inextricably links social emancipation to space-faring ambitions. Ellen's white, queer femininity becomes a symbol of progress, partially discarding the problematic values associated with traditional masculinity – marked by a funeral for the "old-fashioned" Deke Slayton and her assumption of command at the Moon base from Ed. At the same time, however, she inherits, reinforces, and revitalizes the disembodied colonial explorer traits of the astronaut archetype.

Conclusion: From the Earth to the Moon and Back

The present-day figure of the astronaut represents a nexus for negotiations of contemporary masculinities and their crises as well as the grounding for the rearticulation and reinvention of US national identity. Among recent series with outer space narratives, *For All Mankind* emerges as a paradigmatic example of late 2010s and early 2020s streaming shows in its negotiation of the tensions surrounding the rearticulation of outdated (white) masculinities. Astronaut characters such as Ed Baldwin become vessels of many political and cultural debates related to US identities, embodying the contemporary US-American white man's attempt at conserving

his relevance and hegemony via the heteropatriarchal social formation. Space travel's inherent threats to the human body as well as its strong relationship to the construction of American identity in the twentieth century form the conditions for the astronaut figure to re-emerge as a cultural image that is contested and yet survives. Against the backdrop of renewed interest in space exploration and exploitation today, *For All Mankind* revitalizes the astronaut figure – not as a straightforward analogue of its previous status but as a multifaceted site of cultural crisis, masculine anxiety, and national reinvention. In doing so, the show reanimates the colonial myths of twentieth-century spaceflight, subtly reinforcing the ideological scaffolding it seeks to revise. Through a revisionist look back at Western history, *For All Mankind* partially exorcises "problematic" aspects of the dominant national narratives of twentieth-century US space travel. A new image of the astronaut appears with an identity that is more diverse, albeit integrally accompanied by the disembodied ghost of the traditional white male figure from the original mid-twentieth century iteration.

About the Author

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A Network of Ecologies in J. A. Bayona's *Society of the Snow* (2023)

Elaine Erwin Casero

ABSTRACT

Society of the Snow (La Sociedad de la Nieve, 2023), directed by J. A. Bayona, is the third film production that portrays the Andes plane crash of 1972. It differs from the two earlier film renditions in significant ways. Seen through an ecocritical lens, Bayona's version raises questions concerning the shifting ecological network, presenting the environment as an essential part of human experience. While the two previous film adaptations, *Alive* (1993) and *Survive! (Supervivientes de los Andes*, 1976), focus on a heroic narrative and a shocking, sensational narrative, respectively, *Society of the Snow* tells a story of ecological awareness, social responsibility, and collective (cultural) consciousness. This article explores the ecological network of Bayona's film and, in doing so, will draw on Félix Guattari's principles of the three ecologies as a theoretical framework.[1]

KEYWORDS

Ecocriticism, ecocinema, environment

Introduction

On October 13, 1972, a plane crashed in the South American Andes on its flight from Uruguay to Chile. Out of forty-five passengers, primarily young men in their first years of university, many of whom were members of the Uruguayan Old Christians

[1] All translations in this article are mine.

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rugby team, only sixteen survived after spending seventy-two days in the snow-covered Valley of Tears. A complete change of environment required them to rethink everything and reevaluate known facts and values if they wanted to survive in the mountains.

The "Tragedy/Miracle of the Andes" is an event that has reached international attention since its occurrence. It has been depicted, discussed, analyzed, and represented in and through countless media, including two feature-length films: *Survive!* (*Supervivientes de los Andes*, 1976) and *Alive* (1993). Most recently, the survival story was adapted into a new drama film, titled *Society of the Snow* (*La Sociedad de la Nieve*, 2023), directed by J. A. Bayona, which is based on Pablo Vierci's book of the same name. The repeated reprocessing of this tragedy/miracle across different media over the last fifty years not only shows a persistent interest in such a survival story but also allows us to study changes in the shifting perception of this event. This approach makes it possible to trace dominant narratives of the incident over the years and, as Robert Geal points out, to analyze how conceptions of human-environmental relations change over time (6–7). Particularly from an ecocritical perspective, it becomes relevant to study the varying representations of the same story through film, as, according to Stephen Rust and Salma Monani, cinema can shape how we perceive the world and how we act in and towards it (2). Bayona's film adaptation offers a new cinematic view on the plane crash's aftermath – one that moves away from past (sensational and heroic) representations of the story to one that allows the viewers to see the environment, in this case the mountains, as an essential part of human experience.

By comparing the environmental, social, and mental relations portrayed in the first two films of the plane crash, *Survive!* and *Alive*, with the ones in Bayona's film rendition, I will argue that Bayona frames the story in a way that can be seen as an effort to highlight the transactional processes that occur between the (snow-covered) environment, the (new) society the survivors formed, and the mental shift of perspective that accompanies the characters throughout the story, thus displaying the importance of environmental, heterarchical, and collective thinking. It presents the viewers with a model of society in which a group of individuals is able to broaden their (mental) ecologies and permeate the barriers imposed by an anthropocentric view of the world towards a more ecocentric point of view. The foundation for this analysis will be Félix Guattari's "ecosophy", which proposes an ethico-political framework to confront the ecological imbalance that the planet was, and still is, facing (19). He achieves this by introducing a transactional approach that considers environmental, social, and mental relations within a heterarchical rather than a hierarchical model (19–21). Guattari's philosophical theories can thus provide a productive ana-

lytical framework for studying the power of (eco)cinematic storytelling in Bayona's *Society of the Snow*.

The first part of the article will focus on a general framing of the story as a survival narrative and outline how it was presented in public discourse over the last fifty years. It will also include relevant ecocinematic studies, such as Paula Willoquet-Maricondi's book *Framing the World: Explorations in Ecocriticism and Film* and Stephen Rust et al.'s introduction to ecomedia, to help conceptualize and situate the three films within an ecocritical frame. Guattari's principles of the three ecologies, however, will be the main literary reference upon which this article will be based. The second part will center on analyzing selected scenes from the three films that demonstrate the varying portrayals of Guattari's three ecologies and, consequently, how Bayona's *Society of the Snow* presents the Andes story as one of ecological awareness, social responsibility, and collective consciousness towards the environment.

Moving Ecologies: (Eco)cinematic Storytelling

The Andes survival story has been portrayed and discussed across a range of media since the survivors' return in December of 1972. Various periodicals, memoirs, nonfiction books, documentaries, (the already mentioned) narrative feature films, as well as interviews with the survivors on radio and television shows have since documented the events of the plane crash's aftermath from various perspectives. However, these adaptations, particularly the three cinematic representations of the incident, do not only adapt the content or idea of a story but, according to Gary R. Bortolotti and Linda Hutcheon, also "evolve with changing environments" (444), i.e., adapt to what surrounds them. This aspect becomes especially relevant from an environmental and ecocritical perspective, as adapted stories reflect how the understanding of human-environmental relations changes over time (Geal 6–7). These processes can be observed in survival films, among others, where adapting (to) a new environment can become a form of survival or living.

These survival stories often portray a person or group facing extreme adversities (usually in a challenging environment) and eventually achieving the (humanly) improbable to overcome them. Oftentimes, they highlight the best and/or worst of the human species, portraying people reverting to their most basic instincts of survival or rising to the occasion by accomplishing an almost supernatural deed. More importantly, however, these stories raise questions about what human beings consider necessary for survival, what they need to achieve it, and what they require to call it living. These deliberations are fundamental in a world where the consequences of climate change affect us in unprecedented ways, putting us in positions where we might have to reevaluate the meaning of survival and living. It becomes necessary to tell (survival) stories that foster a transactional understanding of the environment,

including all its members: humans, non-humans, and everything in between. Donna Haraway proposes to look beyond traditional (heteronormative) relationships and "make kin," i.e., form relations with and within the environment that do not necessarily have ancestral ties (102–03). Put differently, and as maintained by Ursula K. Heise, nature and culture are (and should be seen as being) interconnected; they influence and shape each other and surpass local and national (human-defined and imaginary) borders (21) – and more of these stories should be shown to create a deeper (environmental) awareness.

Regarding the Andes survival story, public discourse has varied in its narrative focus over the years. Constanza Moncada M. gives an overview of early newspaper headlines that presented it as something tragic and miraculous, highlighting the unlikeliness of sixteen people surviving a plane crash in the mountains after spending seventy-two days enduring extreme conditions. At first, there was uncertainty over how the survivors had been able to endure for such a long time without proper nutrition (Moncada M.). However, when the information came out that they had survived by consuming the remains of the deceased during their time in the Andes, it became one of, if not the most elevated features of the survival story's public rhetoric. This framing of the story primarily highlighted the sacrifices the survivors had to make to endure on the bare minimum in extreme and unforeseeable conditions. They had to abandon their previously known habits and transition to a stage of mere survival, satisfying their need for food by ceding their civility to the circumstances of the situation. As Fran Chico points out in an article for *Fotogramas*, a particularly sensational headline in this regard read "May God forgive them! Justified cannibalism" ("¡Que Dios los perdone! Canibalismo justificado"). In a *BBC* article, Enzo Vogrincic, the actor playing Numa Turcatti, one of the passengers who died, in Bayona's film, comments on this view, saying that "[p]eople who don't really know the whole story will probably know this particular part of it" (qtd. in Jones). This statement suggests that previous (film) adaptations of the Andes story had given particular attention to the anthropophagic aspect of the event, leaving other issues in the background or omitting them altogether.

Another approach within the public discourse of the Andes crash was that of telling a story of heroes who were not just able to survive but to (sur)pass what it means to live by acting beyond what is considered humanly possible. They managed to save themselves by walking out of the valley where they were trapped. In an article published six years after the crash, Charels A. Krause outlines how the media attention the survivors received after their spectacular rescue mission turned sixteen young men into overnight heroes and saints, whether they wanted or felt this way or not.

Drawing a connection to the existing narrative films and their ways of telling the Andes story, the first rendition of the plane crash's aftermath mirrors this

"cannibalistic" discourse of the survival story. *Survive!*, a Mexican production, was released only four years after the crash. It can be read as an exploitation film, propagating the shocking and morbid aspect of anthropophagy by explicitly showing a long sequence of how the bodies were cut. Coinciding with one side of the public discourse, this film raises questions about what sacrifices must be made to survive and satisfy basic human needs, and whether those sacrifices are justifiable. The second rendition of the Andes crash, a US-American production, was directed by Frank Marshall. His film *Alive* mainly puts the narrative within the heroic survival frame, which aligns with the "culturally dominant way of imagining disaster" in Hollywood, as Simon R. Troon explains (36). Especially from the 1990s onward, disaster films portray (environmental) threats that affect the whole planet, reflecting current anxieties about climate change (Troon 45–46). Troon argues that these films usually present male heroes who possess the physical strength and expertise to overcome these adversities (47–48). If we link these deliberations to adaptation studies, the two narrative films can be seen as cultural and historical reflections of their respective time periods (Geal 7): *Survive!* highlights the shocking revelation of anthropophagy, whereas *Alive* represents a more conventional Hollywood survival film that tends to avoid dealing with the moral or ethical issues associated with the disaster and instead focuses on men's triumph over nature (Troon 48).

Obviously, how a story is told influences the way it will be perceived. The same (survival) story, as described above, can be told from different perspectives and be mediated through different media, consequently making the receivers reflect upon certain norms, values, and ideals, depending – in a cinematic context – on the vision of the filmmaker(s). All three cinematic adaptations, including Bayona's *Society of the Snow*, have the same premise as a baseline argument, as they are all grounded in the same (real) survival story. However, Bayona's film contributes to a discourse that neither focuses on the anthropophagic aspects nor on presenting the survivors as heroes. Instead, he frames the survival story as a (mental) process the characters go through by showing what it means to rethink society and communal living under such extreme circumstances as well as to live within and learn from a new environment. It remains a survival story, a reflection and testimony of how humans function under extreme circumstances. However, this time, it is a film where the environmental, social, and mental dimensions interact with each other, offering a new frame to tell a different (survival) narrative.

As Rust and Monani point out, "[c]inematic texts . . . affect our imaginations of the world around us, and thus, potentially, our actions towards this world" (2). In other words, cinema can be a powerful storytelling tool that not only represents particular points of view and conveys an array of possible messages but that also constitutes a means of transmitting these idea(l)s to the world outside the screen and transforming

them into actions. The authors particularly refer to this phenomenon in an ecocritical context, emphasizing cinema's role as a negotiator and mediator within the environment, which encompasses both the physical and cultural worlds (Rust and Monani 1). Eco-trauma cinema, as described by Anil Narine, also offers a gateway to engage with ecological disasters, presenting different relations between humans and the environment that can help "[map] contemporary eco-traumas" (9).

Telling stories that highlight an ecocentric instead of an anthropocentric view becomes increasingly relevant in the context of climate change. Particularly (eco)cinema, as Paula Willoquet-Maricondi argues, "can offer us alternative models for how to represent and engage with the natural world; . . . [and] foster a healthier and more sustainable relationship to that world" (44). These (alternative) stories, told through film, can heighten the awareness of our dependence on and interconnectedness with the environment and, as Rust and Monani argue, alter our perception and behavior towards the ecological and environmental crisis in the world (2). Such an alternative ecological model moves away from viewing the environment and its resources in hierarchical relations, in which they are either perceived as strange and abstract, opposite to humans, or as subservient and instrumental to human needs. Instead, the environment and all its components should be viewed as elements of a single network, in which no one stands above or below anyone. Various scholars attempted to formulate theories and frameworks that should help understand the transactional processes between humans and the environment and which, in a further step, could serve as a tool to view different narratives (in our case Bayona's film *Society of the Snow*) through an ecocritical lens, thus fostering a more ecocentric view of the world.

Guattari's framework of the three ecologies can help us understand and see *Society of the Snow* through such an ecocritical lens. He repeatedly stresses that the three ecologies – environmental, social, and mental – do not conform to rigid and hierarchical structures. Instead, he argues that their continuously moving and evolving strands produce an open, heterarchical assembly of perspectives that allow for a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness, mutual influence, and dependency of the three ecologies (35–36). As Gary Genosko explains, they should not be viewed in isolation from one another, as alterations in one ecology can lead to significant changes in the other (104), making a more profound understanding of their transactions necessary to grasp and eventually alter the ecological imbalance Guattari describes (19). Gregory Bateson argues, in line with Guattari, that one element of "any biological system" cannot be modified without exerting an impact on the other components that make the system whole (501). Furthermore, he indicates that the environment does not stand in opposition to humans and society but once even served as a source of inspiration to structure and organize our society and culture (490). This so-called "totemism" also worked the other way around, namely by projecting

our own culture onto the environment, which Bateson identifies as "animism" (490). These notions underscore the interconnections between the environment and humans, suggesting that isolating the two realms is a counterproductive endeavor in addressing the ecological imbalance. Gilles Deleuze and Guattari's description of a rhizome in *A Thousand Plateaus* also furthers the notion to think and see by departing from a network in which everything is (inter)connected, instead of deriving everything from a single center or fixed point, thus following a traditional and hierarchical structure of things and beings (5–6).

Guattari links the principle of the first ecology, the environmental ecology, which studies the interrelationship between humans and the environment (43), to Bateson's discussion of civilization's relationship with the environment that has become successively unstable due to the constant development of new and potentially exploitative technological advancements (499–500). The second ecology outlined by Guattari – comprising the social dimension – is mainly concerned with rethinking established societal structures, wherein their components are entangled and influenced by each other, as well as by the constant interactions with their surroundings. They form a collective that shifts the focus of the individual to the processes that happen between them, within the collective (24–25). Finally, the mental ecology focuses on the processes and changes that (need to) happen in people's minds concerning the environment. This ecology implies that not only should the physical and social environment be taken into account when attempting to tackle the ecological crisis, but also the interior processes, including "sensibility, intelligence and desire" (20), should be recognized and validated. Put differently, the principle of the mental ecology intends to focus attention on the necessity to shift the current (cultural) values, beliefs, and knowledge that are deeply ingrained in people's minds and that shape how people interact with their surroundings (33), towards a transactional, non-hierarchical, and collective understanding of the environment as a whole.

Besides the theory of the three ecologies, media itself, particularly the medium of film, presents a tool through which a shift in the mental ecologies, as described by Guattari, can be incited. Seen from an ecocritical understanding of media, as advocated by Rust et al., cinema can demonstrate how the three ecologies (can or could) interact with each other, highlighting the transactions that occur between humans and the environment, thus fostering a more ecocentric worldview (2–3). As an environmentalist medium and mediator, cinema essentially makes the connections between the three ecologies apparent, functioning as a filter and negotiator that helps us understand our reality through symbolic counterparts detected on screen. To view films through an (eco)critical lens thus becomes significant to determine whether a movie perpetuates an anthropocentric view (Rust and Monani 11), or if the medium manages to frame a world in which an interconnectedness between all three ecologies

exists. In their introduction to ecocinema, Rust and Monani emphasize that every film can potentially be viewed through an ecocritical lens (3). This approach means that not every movie has to center on an environmental concern but rather that it can be analyzed based on how cinema, or the film in particular, represents the interconnectedness between ecologies (Willoquet-Maricondi 45). Consequently, it is possible to say that cinema, as an art form and medium, can be a crucial mediator in bringing about a change in people's mental ecologies and in fostering a relationship with the environment that is fluent, where neither literal nor figurative barriers limit people's perceptions of it.

Mapping the Ecologies in *Society of the Snow*

The representation of the manifold relationship between humans and the natural world and, as a result, the portrayal of the environmental ecology can be traced throughout the three film renditions of the Andes plane crash, particularly in relation to the mountain landscape. The mountains may be portrayed as an isolated and desolate entity, opposite to humans, as an imminent obstacle that humans need to overcome, or as an ally, where a functioning relationship between humans and the environment becomes essential for living and surviving. Depending on how it is represented, it will tell the audience a different story.

As outlined by François Jullien, one of the earliest and still dominant ways of viewing and representing a landscape is through a subject-object relationship (5). This traditional Western view marks a distance between the part of nature that is visually framed (the observed) and the humans (the observers) who look at the landscape (Jullien 5). In the first film portrayal of the Andes plane crash, *Survive!*, it is possible to detect such a distance between the representation of the characters and the mountains. The panning shot of the snow-covered Andes from the plane that will crash only minutes later, while the voice-over narrator comments on the hard facts of the journey, creates a first visual dichotomy between the observer and the observed. The film repeatedly shows similar shots from planes and helicopters when the search parties look for survivors after the crash. This portrayal of an untouched landscape, shown from the point of view of airplanes/helicopters – i.e., a human-centered perspective – among others, highlights the subject-object relation between the two entities in the first rendition of the Andes crash. Besides panning shots of the landscape, repeated zoom-ins of the mountains also visually mark the distance between nature and humans in this film. The narrative context is particularly relevant to establishing this distance, as the zoom-ins are applied when the perspective switches from showing the rescue efforts to the situation of the survivors in the mountains. The characters trapped in the Andes are framed as the object of the people on the rescue team, i.e., something or someone different, strange, and even inhuman, just like nature. By

extension, the perspective of the rescuing team can be seen as a mediator between the people in and outside of the mountains, including the viewers at home, underscoring the isolation the survivors are withstanding and the sacrifices they must make due to their distance from civilization.

The film's cinematography, particularly during scenes featuring the survivors, further supports the distance between them and civilization. We are constantly confronted with white, foggy, and snowy images (partly impairing our ability to see the survivors in sharp focus), an oftentimes undecipherable background, and a continuous blowing of the wind. In other words, the presented effects of the environment on the characters and the viewers, among others, put nature in the menacing position of a stranger. Unlike *Society of the Snow*, this film frames the environment as threatening, pulling the characters away from civilization and, consequently, their (civilized) habits and norms. Thus, this portrayal also contributes to a distance between the characters and the viewers, creating less intimacy and greater distance as they slowly seem to be swallowed by the wild and unknown nature. The audience does not empathize with the characters as much as in *Alive* or *Society of the Snow*, because they learn relatively little about them. Viewers primarily perceive how events, such as the avalanches or the explorations, affect the survivors on the screen without being able to form a compassionate connection with them – the audience becomes a witness to the series of challenges the survivors must undergo, looking at them from both a visual and emotional distance.

Alive follows a similar approach in representing the relationship between humans and nature. However, this film focuses more on the heroic portrayal of the survivors, who manage to overcome the challenges imposed by the environment, driving them to unprecedented extremes that demonstrate their physical and mental abilities. One is reminded of mountaineer Reinhold Messner, who discusses these aspects in the context of extreme mountaineering (14). The continuous search and urge to find a new (personal and physiological) limit to surpass puts human capabilities into focus, seeing the mountains as something fascinating, extreme, challenging, and primarily as something that is defined in relation to humans (Messner 16–19).

In one of the first attempts to explore what lies beyond the valley, a few survivors are confronted with cracking snowpacks, the loss of oxygen, and the need for food, which is further dramatized by the near fall of one team member. The environment here is framed as an entity that is dangerous for human beings and that challenges the survivors in ways that seem to exceed the humanly possible: "It'll take more than a map to get out of here. We just tried to climb a little hill, and it kicked our asses. Climb one of those mountains? Who's going to do that, Superman?" (*Alive* 00:48:00–07). The reference to Superman and the attitude of "anything is possible" concerning their capabilities align with Messner's description of continuously trying to surpass

what is physiologically possible up until that moment (16–19). "You know what it is that we've lived this long, the way we have? Seventy days? That we climbed this mountain? You know what it is? It's impossible. It's impossible, and we did it. . . . I'm proud to be a man on a day like this – alive!" (*Alive* 01:49:26–50). This quote from the end of the film summarizes the portrayal of a hierarchical relationship with nature in a single scene. Nando and Roberto have reached the top of the mountain and are about to descend to the next valley – they have not only achieved the humanly impossible but also get to contemplate the beauty of what they have conquered.

This scene contrasts with the one presented in *Society of the Snow*, which shows Nando and Roberto in close-up shots, focusing on their emotional states as opposed to the medium and full shots in *Alive* that highlight their (bodily) and physical feats. In Bayona's film, Roberto, though convinced they are going to die, unquestioningly trusts his friend's judgment as he asks whether he sees the green valleys on the horizon. In *Alive*, Roberto is also reluctant to continue walking. However, Nando finishes the conversation by referring to what their expedition means to them both physically and spiritually: "We're going to die, you know?" – "Maybe. But if we die, we're going to die walking" (*Alive* 01:50:46–58). The continuous references to the unlikeliness of overcoming the mountain's obstacles, dramatized through scenes where the characters come perilously close to death, create a power imbalance between humans and the environment that perpetuates an anthropocentric view of nature, as well as a hierarchical relationship between the two entities.

Compared to *Survive!* and *Alive*, *Society of the Snow* presents a story of a relationship in which the characters learn from and with the environment, fostering an ecological and ecocritical view of their interactions and behaviors towards one another. The survivors make (good) use of the freezing temperatures to store the food and accumulate water but simultaneously need to be conscious of the extreme nightfall temperature drops that could lead them to freeze to death. The awareness of their situation leads to an intent to organize their needs based on what the environment can provide. This intention aligns with Bateson's concept of totemism, which proposes adapting societal structures according to examples set by nature (490). Notably, the adaptation process is not framed as a fight against or a struggle to overcome the limits imposed by the mountains. It is about finding a way to learn from, live in and with the environment – a process that is ongoing.

A scene that demonstrates this precarious learning path is when Numa, who also serves as the voice-over narrator, and two other team members wander off to search for the missing plane tail, which contains a battery that could help them send an SOS transmission. The imprudent decision to depart without considering how the environment might impact them leaves the explorers stranded in the middle of the night, exposed to the freezing temperatures. This scene can serve as a warning that there

is no room for individual heroism or superhuman explorations: "The greater the effort to get out, the harder the mountain hits back" ("Cuanto mayor es el esfuerzo por salir, más fuerte golpea la montaña") (*Society of the Snow* 00:55:59–56:06). It is a reminder that humans do neither stand above nor below the environment but are forced to make ends meet living with it, even though it might seem impossible at the beginning of the film: "It is a place where living is impossible. We are the strangers here" ("Es un lugar donde vivir es imposible. Lo extraño acá somos nosotros") (*Society of the Snow* 00:25:36–46). Notably, it is not nature that is referred to as strange but the humans themselves. This portrayal seems to indicate a shift away from an anthropocentric view.

Cinematographically, the two mentioned scenes also support the presentation of an ambivalent and transactional relationship between the characters and the mountains. As Numa awakes after surviving the freezing night, the viewers first see an extreme long shot of the Andes, showing the morning sun just peaking over the top of the mountains. Various close-ups and extreme close-ups of the explorer's hands and feet breaking out of the ice, very slowly, after surviving the freezing night outside, are followed by a medium shot of Numa bathed in the morning sunlight (*Society of the Snow* 00:55:07–56:02). The precarious relationship here is shown by contrasting the (negative) effects the low temperatures had on their bodies through the extreme close-ups with the image of the Andes that shows a hopeful, calm, and bright sunrise. By presenting the different layers the mountains can have, the landscape is not just a background to the story but becomes an active character in it. As Jean Epstein argues, the representation of landscape in cinema should not merely serve as a picturesque background but should be something more than that (11). He particularly discusses how nature can be framed through close-ups that allow the viewer to experience it from a different perspective, revealing previously unknown aspects about it (10). The intimacy and proximity created through the close-up of a landscape or other things and beings in general allow us to see the tiniest movements that would have been denied to us otherwise (10–13). This movement is what he identifies as the essence of the close-up (9). According to Epstein, "[t]he close-up limits and directs the attention" (13), leaving the viewers with "neither the right nor the ability to be distracted" (13). The emotions that are transmitted are thus all-encompassing (13).

In the expedition scene described above, the bodies of the three characters shown in close-ups and extreme close-ups become part of the face of the landscape. First, they are set against a stormy environment that clouds their vision and makes it hard to advance through the snow that swallows their bodies with every step. The close-ups reveal faces, hands, and body parts that struggle to move, as they attempt to maintain blood flow in the freezing temperatures. The proximity to the characters conveys and intensifies the anxiety felt by them directly to the viewers, culminating

in the release of tension when the film cuts to the extreme long shot of the quiet mountain range at sunrise. The viewers then see how the characters have become part of the landscape itself, buried in the snow and slowly starting to move hands, feet, and faces again. The landscape reveals its many faces, with its heavy and treacherous snowstorms as well as its bright and majestic sunrises. By showing movement in close-ups and calmness in long shots, viewers experience the interplay between the environment and the characters at the closest cinematic level possible, seeing up close how the three bodies merge into a new face on and of the snowy landscape. *Society of the Snow* thus portrays the environment as one more character in the film, highlighting a diverse and complex relationship with the (human) characters that at one point also (visually) become part of the environment. It emphasizes an interconnected and transactional understanding of the processes that occur between both realms, moving away from an anthropocentric view of the environment.

These processes cannot only be observed in the portrayal of the human-environment relationship but also in the changing (societal) relations that start to surface among the characters after the plane crash. The perceivable shift in preestablished (cultural) values and norms aligns with the principle of Guattari's social ecology, wherein the focus is on how members interact with and influence each other and their surroundings to form a collective that is based on corresponding exchanges between humans and the environment (24–25). Portraying the formation of a society based on altered values within a new environment that incites these changes promotes a more ecocentric perspective. It demonstrates how the environment, as well as its (human) components, depend on and are interconnected with each other.

Society of the Snow, unlike *Alive* and *Survive!*, embraces a portrayal of Guattari's social ecology, one in which hierarchical structures are dissolved and where each member plays a crucial role in building a new society. Particularly, the representation of heroism (or lack thereof), as well as anthropophagy and the religious beliefs of the group members, exemplify how *Society of the Snow* presents a more ecocritical approach within Guattari's social ecology, moving away from a pure anthropocentric view. In Bayona's film, the rugby team captain – unlike the corresponding portrayal of the character in *Alive* – does not declare himself group leader but instead is presented as a reference for the others when they seek advice or need to make a group decision. By contrast, the captain in *Alive* is repeatedly shown standing opposite the rest of the group, giving instructions, scolding the members when they disobey, and making decisions regarding organization and procedures. The hierarchical structure maintained in *Alive* is not only reflected in the captain's role but also in how the rest of the group is framed in relation to the "protagonists" and/or "heroes" of the film. Roberto and Nando, the two men who set out to find the green valleys of Chile, are the ones who overcome the extreme adversities and save the group in the end.

Throughout the film, both Roberto and Nando, along with the captain and Carlitos – one of the film's staunch believers in God and a consistent source of comic relief – draw most of the camera's attention. They are often in the center of the frame, shot from a low angle to signify superiority or standing in front of the other members, among others. These cinematographic choices visually foster the hierarchical structure that exists within the group. *Survive!*, as already mentioned above, does not assign this level of prominence to a particular member, as the characters' personalities are only secondary compared to the shocking events unfolding before the audience's eyes. Changing the survivors' real names to fictional ones further underlines this film's focus on the catastrophe itself rather than on the development and portrayal of potential relations between the characters and the environment.

Telling a story of individual heroes, as Willoquet-Maricondi asserts, only reveals one side of the story – the side of the survivors – ignoring or setting aside that of the victims (49–50). The whole narrative thus centers on only a few individuals, shifting the focus away from the underlying cause or aim that the characters are fighting for and concentrating on their individual stories and capabilities (Willoquet-Maricondi 50). In Vierci's book, one of the survivors criticizes that heroism was artificially introduced to the (cinematic) portrayal of their story: "Who are the heroes? I ask myself, what heroes? What are they talking about? This was a story of unfortunates, and in that framework, there was no space for heroes or show-offs. That concept belongs to the conventional society . . ." ("¿Quiénes son los héroes? Yo me pregunto, ¿qué héroes? ¿De qué me hablan? Ésta fue una historia de desgraciados, y en ese marco no había espacio para héroes ni lucimiento. Este concepto pertenece a la sociedad convencional . . .") (135). This quote not only discards a heroic presentation of their story but also emphasizes the necessity to start telling stories that do not comply with the "conventional society."

Bayona's film takes the first step in doing so by naming his film *Society of the Snow*, highlighting the importance of forming new social relations and interactions in and with a new environment. This title stands in contrast to the other two film titles, *Alive* and *Survive!*, that maintain a heroic narrative of the Andes crash. They focus on man's extraordinary survival story in an environment in which it seems impossible to live. Shifting the narrative to the formation of a new society, portraying all its members (including the environment) as being essential in the process – be they dead or alive – allows to highlight the transactional processes that occur between all members of the (new) society, which concords with Guattari's notion that all ecologies are intricately interconnected. Roberto Canessa summarizes the group's newfound philosophy in Vierci's book as follows: "What remained in the mountains was the commitment we made to each other not to let ourselves be contaminated by the pride and vanities of the conventional society we came from. . . . What remained was

the philosophy of the men from the mountains, that muleteer's code of giving one another a hand even if it meant that they were risking their own lives" ("Quedó en la montaña el compromiso a no dejarnos contagiar por los orgullos y las vanidades de la sociedad convencional de la que proveníamos. . . . Quedó la filosofía de los hombres de montaña, ese código de los arrieros de darse una mano aunque en ello se jueguen la vida") (49). This statement not only deviates from the conventional way of telling a hero-centered story but restates the importance of every member in the society of the snow – a way of thinking that breaks with the hierarchical structures of the "society of the plains" ("sociedad del llano") (Vierci 10).

The characters' relationship with anthropophagy in *Society of the Snow* further highlights a significant shift in their societal thinking and adaptation to the new environment. Compared to the previous two film versions, Bayona's rendition attempts to portray the group's decision to resort to anthropophagy as an act that is part of living within this new environment. The depiction chooses to include the narrative of the victims, in Willoquet-Maricondi's words, trying to incorporate the oftentimes forgotten side of the same story (49–50). Cinematographically, this is achieved by avoiding showing how the flesh is cut, only hinting at it through reflections, and by showing the backs of the survivors who cut the bodies. The idea that the role of the dead should at least be as important as the role of the living in the society of the snow is supported by Bayona himself when he states: "If you make it, I make it" ("Si tú llegas, yo llego") (Zurro and Bayona 00:15:53–55). Essentially, this means that eating the bodies of the dead meant that both were able to continue living: The dead helped the living to survive by allowing them to eat their bodies and simultaneously kept on living in the survivors' bodies as an extension.

By contrast, the first two film versions explicitly show how the bodies are cut, portraying it as something sensationally repulsive and shocking. When the first bodies are cut in *Alive*, a large group of survivors stands in the background of the frame, waiting and looking at what Roberto is about to do. We see up close how the flesh is cut and then eaten, dramatically announced by Roberto himself in front of everybody: "The meat is almost frozen. I am going to eat this piece" (*Alive* 01:01:08–13). The dramatic and sensationalist portrayal of anthropophagy in *Alive* frames it as something unimaginable yet necessary to gain strength and overcome the limits imposed by the environment. *Society of the Snow*, however, frames the decision as something rational and spiritual – something that allows everyone to continue living in the new environment, even if it only means living through someone else. Numa, the survivor struggling most with this decision, ultimately sees that he needs to eat in order to help and contribute to the collective good of the group, as encapsulated in the quote "If you make it, I make it," an idea that reflects the importance of the collective to build a working society (of the snow).

The importance of the collective becomes apparent not only through the changed perception and presentation of anthropophagy but also in how the characters' shifting values concerning their religious beliefs are portrayed. In *Society of the Snow*, religion is no longer presented as something that is imposed by an external entity or as something that is (God-)given. Instead, a new concept of religion evolves through interaction with the environment and the group's members. From the very beginning of Bayona's film, the viewers see that the group is religious (they go to church, pray, etc.). However, these conventions are questioned in the mountains – not necessarily by every character but through the voices that do see the need to shift their thinking in the mountains, Bayona starts the conversation of questioning preestablished (religious) values. The key scene in the film that articulates these processes is when Arturo and Numa start to discuss faith. Arturo tries to explain to Numa very delicately why his faith has not faded but has shifted in the mountains: "that God tells me what I have to do at home but not what I have to do in the mountains" ("ese Dios me dice lo que tengo que hacer en mi casa, pero no me dice lo que tengo que hacer en la montaña") (*Society of the Snow* 01:15:42–52). He further outlines that his faith now lies in the people who surround him and contribute to making the society of the snow work every day, including the dead.

In the film *Alive*, the influence of religion on the group's members is also rather apparent. They pray as they feel the plane will crash; they pray when they feel hopeless in the plane fuselage, etc. In contrast to *Society of the Snow*, *Alive* insists on maintaining traditional religious values characteristic of a conventional society. In *Alive*, Carlitos, the survivor who (wistfully) makes allusions to old conventions (birthday celebrations, for instance), repeatedly insists on praying as a group. After the avalanche hits the plane fuselage, he presses the agnostic group member to pray with them as well, even though he had refused this several times before. As the menacing sound of another possible avalanche approaching the plane reaches the group, the agnostic decides it is time to pray after all. The continuous references and allusions to the values and conventions of the "society of the plains" ("sociedad del llano") (Vierci 10) hinder the portrayal of a collective that changes with and learns from its new environment. It maintains the ideals that were left behind in the plains, reiterating an anthropocentric view of the world.

Transcending Memory

The last of Guattari's three ecologies is concerned with the interior, mental processes that occur in people's minds when it comes to altering preestablished societal values and structures, as well as their relationship with the environment in particular. The instance that vocalizes these interconnections in *Society of the Snow* is Numa's voice-over narration. His voice transcends the boundaries of a straightforward narration as

he continues to speak even after he has died. It is one of the central elements that distinguishes Bayona's film from the other two. Even though both films have voice-over narration, in *Survive!*, it primarily serves as a framing commentary at the beginning and end of the film to explain to the audience the hard facts about the flight. This voice-over choice mirrors the film's overall focus on presenting facts and depicting the events, highlighting the emotional distance between the characters and their detachment from the environment. In *Alive*, the narrator, one of the survivors, is shown at the beginning and end of the film. The choice to have the story told by one of the survivors furthers Willoquet-Maricondi's point, as she notes that stories are usually told from the hero's point of view (50). Notably, primarily the characters who survived were named after the actual survivors of the plane crash in *Alive*, whereas most of the dead's names were changed. Bayona's decision to literally give the dead a voice makes the story transcend the narrative boundaries not only by creating connections within the story but also by establishing a relationship with the viewers in front of the screens. The voice reflects, questions, explains, narrates, reads, and addresses the viewers directly, creating a shared consciousness with all members of the narrative, including the environment, as well as the people watching and listening to the story.

Numa draws on the collective cultural memory established in the society of the snow, sharing their (new) values, habits, views, and interactions with everyone who is ready to listen. Just as Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka write, "cultural memory [is] a collective concept for all knowledge that directs behavior and experience in the interactive framework of a society and one that obtains through generations in repeated societal practice and initiation" (126). In other words, by passing on the cultural knowledge they acquired in the mountains, their story can be kept alive for generations to come and influence people's behavior and actions. Numa's voice comes to represent a communal sense that stands in for both the survivors and the medium film, as a mediating figure that reveals the interconnections between environmental, social, and mental ecologies.

The photographs that are taken and shown in the film provide another illustration of this communal sense and the impulse to pass on collective memory: "What happened to them? What happened to us? Who were we in the mountains?" ("¿Qué les pasó? ¿Qué nos pasó? ¿Quiénes fuimos en la montaña?") (*Society of the Snow* 01:41:38–49). These narrative impulses are relevant not only because they contribute to the presentation of the interactions between the three ecologies, but also because they demonstrate that memory is in continuous motion, changing and being changed constantly, depending on who sees, tells, or remembers the story. The narrator makes this notion very clear at the beginning of the film: "One must return to the past, knowing that the past is what changes most" ("Hay que regresar al pasado, sabiendo

que el pasado es lo que más cambia") (*Society of the Snow* 00:01:45–51). It further signifies that it is important to find new ways of telling the same story, as the account of one discourse cannot encompass the entirety of the whole narrative. Consequently, Bayona's choice to incorporate these statements into the film keeps the audience active, attentive, and involved in the story, while reminding them that the events unfolding on their screens also have something to do with them. It depends on us how we treat each other. It depends on us how we treat our environment. It depends on us how we (want to) remember the past. It is possible to change and widen our mental ecology through film. "Memory is indeed the past made present, but with a view to provoking thought about the future" (Kaplan 108). With these words, E. Ann Kaplan summarizes what Bayona captured in his film through numerous scenes, dialogues, shots, and the narrative instance, namely, the resolution of the boundaries between past, present, and future as well as those of the environmental, social, and mental ecologies. He found a way of telling the (whole?) Andes story from a communal perspective by setting aside sensationalism and heroism to make room for the story of a society formed in, from, and with the environment.

Conclusion

Snow is the persistent element in *Society of the Snow*. It reminds us that the environment, as an all-encompassing entity, influences countless aspects of our daily lives – many of which we are not even aware of. It influences and contributes to our society and culture through media representations and materiality but also makes itself present in weather, beauty, and strangeness. The knowledge and images we have of the environment as something external to us are deeply ingrained in our mentalities and, ironically, shaped by media, society, and culture in return. "Old habits die hard," they say, which is why it is important to feed oneself with many little impulses to try and break with those mental patterns and widen our knowledge to include and perceive the environment as being directly connected to us and our daily lives. As already stated, media, in this case films, offer an effective and affective resource to foster such a shift in our mental ecologies towards a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of the environment, society, and our ways of thinking.

Society of the Snow takes an important step towards expanding this understanding and reviewing environmental, social, and psychological relations in narrative forms that support earthly survival. In the film, the mountains become an active part in the creation of the society of the snow and do not merely serve as a background or training ground for the tale of human survival. The group questions the norms they have come to deploy automatically in the society they left, noticing that they cannot be applied in the same way in the Andes. Religion and anthropophagy acquired new meanings, and the society they built, based on those ideas, did not have a hierarchical

but a heterarchical structure, in which the dead played an essential part. Viewing *Society of the Snow* through an ecocritical lens can broaden viewers' awareness and readiness to see and feel that all beings are intricately interconnected and therefore depend on one another. The immersive and intimate experience that Bayona created with his film – aided by (extreme) close-up shots and Numa's voice-over, among other elements – allows viewers to affectively enter this interconnected world and connect it to their own reality. Numa's concluding words in the film highlight this connection and make the viewers resonate with the film: "You are the answer. Keep taking care of each other. And tell everyone what we did in the mountains" ("Ustedes son la respuesta. Sigan cuidándose unos a otros. Y cuéntenles a todos lo que hicimos en la montaña") (*Society of the Snow* 02:09:29–50).

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The *New-York Weekly Journal* and a New (If Brief) Anglo-American Consciousness

Scott Zukowski

ABSTRACT

This article intervenes in a long historiographic tradition of scholarship surrounding the 1735 trial of New York City printer John Peter Zenger, but (unlike most scholarship) it focuses on the larger episode of which the Zenger trial was a part: what I collectively call "The Cosby Affair," named after the imperial governor whose administration in New York caused a populist uprising that threatened the stability of the colony's social and political fabric. For generations, the critical conversation has centered on Zenger's trial, with historians and legal scholars continually debating the trial's causes and effects and its importance in the history of the freedom of the press.

The article's analysis of the Cosby Affair intervenes in those debates by analyzing not just the prosaic essays and letters of Zenger's *New-York Weekly Journal*, which was the mouthpiece of the populist movement, formed in response to Governor Cosby's administration, but a wider array of textual genres and artifacts. In doing so, it connects the poetry of the English Civil War with the politics of 1730s New York, analyzing the *Journal*'s reprinted poetry and other original texts that scholars have typically not considered worthy of critical attention. The article argues that the real importance of the *New-York Weekly Journal* lies not simply in the Zenger trial but in its contribution to the greater public discourse of the mid-1730s New York – the discourse of disgruntled provincialism, of frustrated colonial identities, and of an emerging, if momentarily, provincial American consciousness.

KEYWORDS

Colonial America, newspaper, nationalism

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> Aid me Phoebus, aid me ye sacred nine,
> Exult my Genius, and my Verse refine.
> MORRIS my Theme, MORRIS, my strains shall Grace
> The zealous Patr'ot of his Countries Case
> . . .
> May he succeed in what he's gone to doe,
> And save his Country from Approaching woe,
> Then safe return him, to the Indian Main . . .
> ("On Coll. Morris's going for England," *New-York Weekly Journal [NYWJ]*, 6 January 1735)

These lines, published in the *New-York Weekly Journal* in January 1735, champion Lewis Morris, former New York Supreme Court Justice, as a "patriot" who must travel to England to "save his Country" – not from international enemies but from the "Approaching woe" caused by Britain's own provincial and imperial administration. The poem illustrates tensions between provincial colonists, their local governments, and the imperial government in England, and in it a rift between the Great Britain and its North American colonies becomes especially apparent. Morris's "just cause" is to secure British liberties for the people of New York through the British government in England, but the poem suggests a crisis of identity in which the population of New York recognized itself as significantly disjointed from the center of the British Empire in terms of distance, liberties, and justice. Thus, Morris's country is not the British Empire but instead is North America. This association of North America with Native Americans is not to be overlooked. Native America and Native Americans served as an "immemorial past" upon which early US identity was based, especially through literary representation, and the inclusion of this reference gestures toward an imagined heritage anchored in British colonial North America rather than in London or the British Isles (Anderson 11; Scheckel 8; Colley 134).

At the time of the poem's publication, New York was on the brink of civil war. A movement of popular discontent had been surging forcefully for three years, and its swelling momentum threatened bloodshed, a political revolution, or both. The unfolding events, which this article collectively calls "The Cosby Affair," were significant not just for New Yorkers but for provincial Britons across the Empire. This article argues that the Cosby Affair was instrumental in the development of provincial identity in New York, generating a widespread public discourse about what exactly it means to be British, what it means to have or not have British liberties, and what to make of the increasingly recognizable divide between the colonies and the mother country. This all occurred at a time when perceived differences between mainland Britons and provincial American Britons were already transforming. During the eighteenth

century, it was increasingly sensed that, while "American colonists were the same people as their brethren on the British mainland, . . . they were also very different, set apart by their experiences as emigrants and pioneers in a completely different landscape, not to mention by 3,000 miles of water. For mainland Britons, then, Americans were . . . mysterious and paradoxical people, physically distant but culturally close, engagingly similar yet irritatingly different" (Colley 134). Together, these events and developments of perception reflected "a profound uncertainty" about the "imperial relationship" between provincial Anglo-America and mainland Britain itself (135). And while scholarship has noted that the events were part of a debate over "monarchy's character" and "political culture," this article challenges assertions that the larger Cosby Affair was simply about "the limited places of authority and political patronage.

An essential element of this article's discussion is the newspaper. While colonial newspapers in general and their influence on the public sphere are integral factors in understanding how the Cosby Affair affected provincial identity in the British Empire, this article focuses most specifically on the *New-York Weekly Journal*, a newspaper that emerged in response to the Cosby Affair and indeed shaped its outcomes. First printed in 1733, the *Journal* included letters, opinions, news (both foreign and domestic), ship arrivals, advertisements, and poems. It examines the Cosby Affair from a perspective that has received little serious critical attention over the intervening centuries: literary analyses of the poems and epigraphs of the *New-York Weekly Journal* in conjunction with rhetorical examinations of the paper's less literary genres, such as letters and opinions. It also considers the texts of other contemporaneous newspapers from the British Atlantic.

This approach diverges from most scholarship surrounding the affair. The bulk of recent critical attention has focused on historical and legal analyses, most often concentrating on one well-known, yet relatively small part of the Cosby Affair: the trial of printer John Peter Zenger. While the trial will be important for this discussion as well, it is only one incident in a web of socially, politically, and ideologically important events in New York during the mid-1730s. In fact, in choosing to call this the "Cosby Affair" (after New York's Governor Cosby, who spawned and nourished the nearly five-year era of discontent, and whose death ended it), this article distinguishes its analysis from the bulk of scholarship that terms it the "Zenger Affair," a title that indicates a critical focus on one aspect of a multidimensional historical episode. By taking a more inclusive approach to the history of this period, this article strives for more nuanced conclusions about evolving British provincial identity.

While this study agrees with observations that "colonials on both sides of the dispute were able to invoke the king against their political opponents" and that "[w]riters discussed the tension between liberty and power as part of this debate," it challenges the assertion that the Cosby Affair was centered on competition among elites over

the "limited places of authority and political patronage" (McConville 159–60). While the leading players in the affair were elites who were surely invested in this competition, to frame the Cosby Affair as an episode whose primary concern was a power struggle among elites in a crowded and poorly designed imperial structure would be to ignore the groundswell of popular support that Cosby had from other *non*-elite colonists. Instead, this article posits that the Cosby Affair centered on an emerging consciousness of a North American provincial status grounded in distinctly provincial frustrations.

The Cosby Affair: A Historical Overview

The Cosby Affair began on July 1, 1731, when New York's governor died, leaving Rip Van Dam, a citizen of Dutch heritage, to sit as the colony's acting governor for thirteen months until the new, imperially appointed governor, William Cosby, arrived (Bonomi 108; Finkelman 141). In November 1732, Cosby, who was near financial ruin and acquired his new position through his wife's political connections, called on an obscure law entitling him to demand half of Van Dam's salary. The uncustomary move proved to be an unpopular decision for the beginning governor. Van Dam refused, and in April 1733 Cosby took the issue to the New York Supreme Court, where Chief Justice Lewis Morris dismissed the suit (Katz, *Newcastle's* 65). Cosby's subsequent, retaliatory dismissal of Morris from his position as chief justice propelled New York into a new crisis.

Before moving forward, some historical context on Cosby, Morris, and the political climate leading up these events is necessary. The sixth son in "a gentle Anglo-Irish family" (Katz, *Newcastle's* 32), Cosby found aid in his wife's political connections, had a successful military career, and in 1718 became British governor of Minorca, where he was fined for charges relating to corruption and document falsification. Cosby's unappealing reputation, formed in part by his Minorca dealings, was likely well known to New Yorkers at the time of his arrival in 1732 (Moglen 1504). Cadwallader Colden, a contemporary of Cosby and a later governor of New York, wrote that Cosby had "recv'd [New Yorkers] with all the affected Spanish Gravity" that "he had acquired and practiced at [Minorca], for which reason people began to think that he intended to use the same kind of Government over the English here that he had over the conquer'd Spanyards there" (qtd. in Sheridan 154). Furthermore, popular discourse in New York accused Cosby of using illegal tactics for land gain in the disputed Oblong tract between New York and Connecticut, in which Cosby sided against Morrisite applications to legally secure the land (Katz, "A New York Mission" 440). In many ways, the Oblong case represented Cosby's quest for financial success and a cause of popular distrust of Cosby, whose actions in the Oblong episode stirred fears that "if he succeeded no man's property would be safe" (Bonomi 123).

Cosby's initial lack of popularity was not altogether unusual in the early eighteenth-century British colonies, where colonial governors were often viewed unfavorably by their constituents. In fact, it was a recurring problem that New York governors attained their positions through nepotism and that "the common criterion of selection was 'negative merit,' or the knowledge that a prospective appointee had no demerit severe enough to disqualify him," so that "executive ability was an unanticipated dividend in a colonial governor" (Katz, *Newcastle's* 27, 31). This led to the appointment of governors who were often "inexperienced, ill informed, poorly-motivated, and generally unsuited to hold public office," but who were also bearers of immense, largely unchecked power (31).

The effect of this administrative practice impacted colonists, and even well before the Cosby Affair, such tensions existed in the colonies (see Byrd). Add to this the imperial government's stance of salutary neglect toward the colonies, the lack of any driving goals behind the Duke of Newcastle's administration as the southern and northern secretary, and the board of trade's indifference toward colonial affairs (Katz, *Newcastle's* 10–14), and it becomes clear that there was a significant disconnect between the imperial government in England and the provincial government in the colonies. That disconnect was an important factor in transatlantic relations within the Empire.

New York's economy was struggling in the years leading up to the Cosby Affair. For several years, export prices had been decreasing, trade with New England and the West Indies had been falling, and imports from England had been rising, along with interest rates (Sheridan 155). Shipbuilders, artisans, craftsmen, and shippers were suffering. New York's large Dutch population was bitter about Cosby's treatment of Interim Governor Van Dam, who was Dutch. And landowners in Albany, Long Island, and a tract of disputed land called the "Oblong" between New York and Connecticut, all had gripes with Cosby's manipulative policies and practices surrounding land ownership. In the decades preceding the Cosby years, it was common for colonists to feel frustrated with their governors and administrations, but those frustrations materialized in profoundly new ways in 1730s New York.

Central to this sudden manifestation was Lewis Morris, who acted as an accelerant on the slow-burning flame of New York politics. By the time of the Cosby Affair, Morris had served in the government New York and New Jersey for over thirty years. He was one of the richest men in New York, but his and his family's political popularity had been fading for a decade by the beginning of the 1730s (Katz, *Newcastle's* 73), and the motivations for rejecting Cosby's case against Van Dam may have stemmed from a desire to please the people of New York who opposed Cosby and the colony's history of self-interested abuse of power (Sheridan 149). As acting governor of New

Jersey, Morris also understood that Cosby might demand his salary next, a fear that eventually came to fruition (Katz, *Newcastle's* 73; Bonomi 105).

Finally, given extant scholarship's overwhelmingly favorable view of Morris, it stands as important to point out that Morris himself was indeed a self-interested aristocrat. Eugene Sheridan explains Morris's political view as one in which "only the landed aristocracy possessed the proper blend of wealth, prestige, learning, talent, and public spirit to provide effective political leadership for the people," who could not and should not think for themselves (16). An often-elided detail of the Van Dam trial is Morris's collusion with Van Dam's lawyers before the trial – a serious breach of judicial integrity and law. Yet, as will become evident, Morris skillfully appealed to his fellow colonists' senses of British pride and liberty.

Cosby's 1733 dismissal of Morris was inspired by more than Morris's judgment of Cosby's court case (Bonomi 111). An early indicator of the power wielded by ephemeral print in the colonies, the termination came after Cosby requested a written copy of Morris's opinion on the case, and Morris published and disseminated it in pamphlet form. Following his termination as chief justice, Morris turned his personal contest with Cosby into a public movement. Essential to this article's argument is the prominent *public* investment in Morris's cause. The events that followed reflect the evolving form of the public sphere and public consciousness in 1730s New York. They embody the "confidence" with which eighteenth-century Anglo-American society approached "public opinion," which was seen as "a guardian of liberty, the voice of a sovereign people" (Schmeller 4). However, the same "public opinion" simultaneously produced anxieties (especially for those in power) about a manipulable populace subject to popular "folly" (3).

The main goal of Morris's campaign was Cosby's removal from office, and his personal writings indicate that he also sought wide-scale reform of the structures and procedures of the imperial administration's workings in New York. To accomplish these goals, he and his supporters organized into a "country party" (hereafter referred to as the "opposition"), ran for public offices in hopes of gaining majority control of the New York administration, and petitioned imperial officials in England (Sheridan 153). Morris himself ran against one of Cosby's cronies for a position in the Westchester County Assembly, and the events that unfolded on the day of the election attest to the public support of Morris's resistance to the imperial administration. They also reflect the growing consciousness of provincial inequality and injustice within the context of the British Empire.

Reports indicate that the Westchester sheriff posted papers announcing the date and location of the election without specifying a particular time of day, "which made the Electors on the Side of the late Judge, very suspitious [sic] that . . . Fraud was intended" ("Westchester"). One account (notedly written and published by opposition

supporters) says that fifty men waited at the location of the vote starting at midnight on the day of the election to prevent clandestine votes in the middle of the night. Nothing occurred overnight, but in the morning, the mass of Morris supporters paraded into town: "First rode two Trumpeters and 3 Violines; next 4 of the principle Freeholders, one of which carried a Banner, on one Side of which was affixed in gold Capitals, KING GEORGE, and on the Other, in like golden Capitals LIBERTY & LAW; next followed the Candidate *Lewis Morris* Esq." The account explicates that: "at Sun rising they entred upon the Green of *Eastchester* the Place of Election, follow'd by above 300 Horse of the principal Freeholders of the Country," which it claimed to be the largest turnout for one candidate in Westchester's history ("Westchester"). Exaggerated or not, this account testifies to the popularity of the Morrisite cause and likely added to it.

It also points toward two ideals from which so many New Yorkers felt disenfranchised: liberty and law. The mentioned slogan comes from England's contemporaneous Patriot Coalition, which opposed the Walpolean court party to check the powers of those in office, and the Morrisites and Cosbyites exchanged shouted volleys of the Walpolean and anti-Walpolean slogans (Sheridan 156). Sheridan has explained that, "[j]ust as the Patriots were struggling to preserve the English constitution against the ravages of Walpolean corruption, . . . so also was Morris laboring to protect the rights and liberties of New Yorkers against Cosbyite tyranny" (156). And Katz has pointed out that the opposition "especially imitated Bolingbroke's appeal to 'patriotism' and his faction's evocation of seventeenth-century constitutionalist heroes such as Eliot, Pym, Hampden, and Sydney," also noting that "their appeal was based upon the argument that Cosby, like Walpole, ruled in a corrupt and tyrannical manner which only a return to limited government could prevent" (*Newcastle's* 84). To provincial British New Yorkers, Morris's feud against Cosby represented a symbolic connection to the momentous oppositional party in England. It crystallized the frustrations over their own marginal status in the British Empire and drew attention to the colonial and imperial administrations' disregard for proper legality and justice in the colonies. This pro- and anti-Walpolean rhetoric should also be understood as evidence of New Yorkers' confused desire for a stronger British identity and simultaneous pride and self-consciousness as provincials, concepts revisited later.

The idea of refused liberty arose again on the day of the Westchester election, when thirty-eight Quakers were denied the vote after they refused the sheriff's demand that voters swear on the Bible before voting. This drew the ire of the Morrisites against the sheriff. The public response to the sheriff's actions was framed in terms of liberty, with the same author writing in the *Journal* that "such a Procedure was [contrary] to Law, and a violent Attempt on the Liberties of the People" ("Westchester"). This abuse of religious principles for political purposes was especially

antithetical to values in New York at the time (Moglen 1507). Although Morris may have led the charge against Cosby largely out of self-interest, the rhetoric that surrounded his campaign was laden with the ideology of liberty and provincial consciousness. Morris won the election by a landslide, and soon his oppositional party was entrenched in the New York political system, establishing a majority in the New York City Common Council with only one Cosby supporter remaining in office (Bonomi 121). Yet this was only one of the changes that occurred in post-election New York.

The other major change – perhaps more important than the gains in political power – was the founding of the *New-York Weekly Journal* and its remarkable social power. Morris and some of his leading supporters backed the *Journal*, which was printed by German immigrant John Peter Zenger (Lee 70). Its contributing writers included James Alexander, William Smith, Cadwallader Colden, Lewis Morris, and his son, Lewis Morris Jr. (71), all of whom "wrote pseudonymously to avoid prosecution under the English law of seditious libel and with a flair for satire and invective never before equaled in New York" (Sheridan 157). It was New York's second newspaper, and the first one that was not government-sponsored. The first issue of the *Journal* appeared on November 5, 1733, a week after the Westchester election. For the next three years, it would be the mouthpiece of the oppositional movement, lambasting Cosby and his supporters, discussing ideas of liberty, law, and justice, and sparking penned reactions from other British colonies as far away as Barbados.

The *Journal*'s colorful attacks on Cosby and his administration may have been entertaining to many, but that entertainment also posed an ideological threat to Cosby. The governor responded first by filing an unsuccessful libel suit against the *Journal* and then by ordering the Assembly to publicly burn four purportedly libelous issues, an order that went unfollowed (Bonomi 116). Finally, bypassing the approval of the Assembly, Cosby had Zenger himself arrested for seditious libel on November 17, 1734 (117). The ensuing court proceedings endured until August 1735, when Zenger was declared not guilty by a jury of his peers.

Two days after Zenger's arrest, Morris set sail for England to petition the government for, among others, the removal of Cosby, Morris's own reinstatement, and the restructuring of (and the application of new) guidelines for New York's political administration (Bonomi 123–25). Morris found his ability to enact change in England severely limited. Aside from the financial strain that he endured in England – "Two lawyers wont Stir here to make a motion under ten or fifteen Guineas," he wrote to James Alexander in February 1735 ("Letter," 24 Feb. 1735) – the apathy of Parliament to colonial affairs wore on him: "We have a Parliament & ministry who I am Apt to believe Some of them know that there are Plantations and governors but not quite so well as we do." He continued: "Like the froggs in the fable the mad pranks of a

Plantation Governour is Sport to them tho death to us, and Seem lesse concern'd in our Contests than we are at those between Crows and Kingbirds" ("Letter," 24 Feb. 1735). Put simply, Morris recognized that the imperial government cared very little for colonial issues.

Morris's frustration with the provinces' relegated status and trivialized importance within the Empire is unmistakably clear in his personal writing and letters. His correspondents in New York (most often James Alexander) did not directly articulate Morris's sense of despair in the *Journal*, but the idea that the crown and all its administrative extensions were "unconcern'd at the Sufferings of the People in America" was not lost on the readership of the paper ("Letter," 31 Mar. 1735). This is especially evident in the poetry and other literature in the *Journal*, other provincial newspapers, and Morris's own private collection, all discussed later.

Ultimately, Morris made no significant gains during his year and a half stay in England. He was able to elicit imperial recognition that he should not have been dismissed as chief justice, but no redress was made (Bonomi 128). Only one of his eleven goals was met (Sheridan 175). He left England soon after receiving word of Governor Cosby's death in 1736, returning to the colonies only to find New York in fierce debate and turmoil over who the legitimate successor to Cosby should be. Yet, the Cosby Affair itself was over, and, within two years, Morris would find himself governor of New Jersey (180).

The Literature of the *New-York Weekly Journal*

In addition to employing the rhetoric of liberty in their publications, the Morrisite faction also published original poetry, literary dialogues, and reprints of British and classical poems. While generations of scholars have analyzed the philosophical, legalistic, and argumentative prose of the *Journal*, they have left the newspaper's creative literature virtually unconsidered. The following rhetorical and literary analyses reveal that the Cosby Affair was not simply a landmark event in Anglo-American history of press freedom but a moment of nationalistic existential crisis for New York and other Atlantic British colonies.

The first publicly disseminated text to emerge in response to Cosby's administration was a pamphlet written by Morris and published on April 20, 1733: "Opinion on the New York Supreme Court's Equity Jurisdiction." The pamphlet replied to Cosby's call for Morris's written explanation of his decision in the Van Dam case. Thrusting his argument into the public sphere was a strategic move for Morris, who, at numerous points during his career, had demonstrated an aptitude for mobilizing public support (see Sheridan, chapter 2). The very medium of the pamphlet was important for Morris's aims, since it "represented the material reality of an abstract public" by translating intangible public ideas and sentiments into a physical, readable,

reproducible, shareable, and discussable document (Warner 61). Morris manifested in text the latent frustrations of the public. In turn, the public focused its attention on the pamphlet's content: the corrupt administration of the American colonies. The pamphlet functioned, ultimately, as a common medium for sharing knowledge and creating a sense of connectedness among the many New Yorkers and other provincials who would "never know most of their fellow-[community] members, meet them, or even hear of them," to use Benedict Anderson's words describing an imagined community (6).

Much of the pamphlet itself is dutifully polite and respectful. Even while defending and asserting his legal decision with professional expertise, citing examples of precedence and complicated legal structures and theories, Morris maintains an apologetic tone. The last two paragraphs of the "Opinion," however, demonstrate a shift away from his reserved manner, revealing a more aggressive stance toward Cosby. Morris begins his concluding remarks with "I have no Reason to expect that either this or any Thing else I can say, will be at all gratefull or have any weight with your Excellency, after the Answer I receiv'd to a Message I did my self the Honour to send to you" ("Opinion" 49). Morris suddenly directs the reader's attention to the tactless personal behavior of the governor. He continues: "The Answer Your Excellency was pleased to send" was that the governor "would neither recieve [sic] a Visit or any Message from me: That you could neither rely upon my Integrity nor depend upon my Judgment or Opinion: That you thought me a Person not at all fit to be trusted with any Concernes relating to the King," and "That ever since your Coming to the Government, I had treated You both as to your own Person and as the King's Representative, with Slight, Rudenesse, and Impertinence: That you did not desire to see or heare any farther of or from me" (49). Morris's characterization of Cosby – especially in contrast to Morris's own humility and politeness – paints the governor as an unreasonable and arbitrary ruler.

Morris had an established reputation among the people of New York. He had served as chief justice since 1715, had been involved in regional politics for two additional decades prior to that, and was a respected figure in the public's eye (Sheridan 114). By emphasizing the new governor's contrary opinion and framing it in juxtaposition to his own textual demonstration of honor and humility, Morris succeeded in undermining the authority and judgment of Cosby.

Morris's rhetoric extends beyond the personal, however, when he invokes his public readership itself: "[I]f Judges are to be intimidated so as not to dare to give any Opinion but what is pleasing to a Governour, and agreeable to his private Views, the People of this Province, who are very much concern'd both with Respect to their Lives and Fortunes in the Freedom and Independency of those who are to judge of them,

may possibly not think themselves so secure in either of them as the Laws and his Majesty intends they should be" ("Opinion" 49).

His appeal to the public's sense of moral outrage is potent. Morris accuses Cosby of intimidation for "private" gains, which contradicts the British notions of liberty and justice that were so important to Britons in the colonies. First, fair trials and trials by jury were essential elements of British liberties, especially as "juries provided a constitutional check on executive power," which was "why English people loved juries so deeply" (Moglen 1520). In essence, Morris's rhetoric pitches Cosby's abuses of executive power as tyrannical, triggering an anti-Cosby wave of sentiment that is unsurprising in the context of a colonial ideology that was keenly attentive to the constant battle between power and liberty. Sheridan elaborates on this dichotomy and how Cosby's actions repeatedly jeopardized the balance: "[I]t was this spectacle of power ravishing liberty that Morris and his followers professed to discern in the acts of Governor Cosby . . . Power threatened liberty when Cosby 'unlawfully' set up a court of exchequer to sue Van Dam, 'arbitrarily' dismissed Morris from office, 'wantonly' destroyed the Albany Deed, and 'illegally' approved the summary disfranchisement of Morris's Quaker supporters" (159). Morris makes these ideas clear when he states that the "People of this Province" were invested in protecting the "Freedom and Independency" of themselves and their judges. He reminds them, as well, that, given such circumstances, it was no guarantee that British liberties were "secure" at all in the province (Morris 49).

A final point of intrigue regarding this passage is Morris's specific mention of Cosby's "private views" in direct juxtaposition to the mention of "the People of this Province." The explicit message is clear: Cosby controls the courts through coercion to achieve his own goals. This complex passage, however, taps into another deep-seated value of eighteenth-century British ideology: the privileging of the public good over private interests. It was virtuous for the Briton of the first half of the eighteenth century to selflessly serve the public, and any reversals of this prioritization warranted suspicion (Landsman 155; Katz, "Newcastle's" 1). Thus, Cosby's aim of achieving private goals and the expense of the public good indicates his corrupt virtue and his lack of British values.

It is no wonder that on the same day Morris's "Opinion" was published, Cosby wrote a letter to the Duke of Newcastle requesting Morris's dismissal. The letter is devoted entirely to his personal and professional dissatisfaction with Morris, and he appeals to many of the same ideas that Morris does in the pamphlet: claims of Morris's self-interest over the public good, of flaws of character, and of professional incompetence. Cosby's letter, however, did nothing to rouse public support because it was sent to the Duke of Newcastle alone, who likely was apathetic to Cosby's lengthy rant. It was Morris's *public* strategy that was the key to his success.

The first issue of the *New-York Weekly Journal* on November 5, 1733, introduced a new dimension of public discourse in New York. Previously, the *New York Gazette* was the colony's sole newspaper. It began in 1725 and its owner, William Bradford, was the official government printer of New York (Bonomi 113–14). Thus, much of New York's print discourse had been partial in its perspective on colonial affairs. The *Journal*, however, provided New Yorkers an alternative lens through which to view their provincial situation. More than simply increasing their awareness of the ongoing circumstances, however, the *Journal* indeed *focused* public attention on key issues that had been abstract and nebulous beforehand.

The most immediately recognizable aspect of the *Journal*'s first issue is that the front page is dominated by a poem. While it was not altogether unusual for newspapers in early eighteenth-century British North American to feature poems, it was unusual for a poem to occupy the front page. The poem is called, "On Wisdom," and its author – using the pen name "Philosophia" (likely James Alexander or Lewis Morris) – foregrounds the poem by explaining that wisdom is "the firm Bank that . . . secures us again[st] the impetuous Raging of that turbulent Sea of Passions, which incessantly dash against the Frame of human Nature. It is a Fort impregnable by all Assaults of Vice, Folly, and Misfortunes, and a secure Rock against all the Casualties of Misery" (Philosophia). Aware that the newspaper would be received as a challenge to the Cosby administration, Philosophia assures the reader that the topics and arguments posed in the *Journal* will be logical and unadulterated by passions that eighteenth-century Britons saw as dangerous adversaries of reason. Moreover, Philosophia identifies both wisdom and the *Journal* as an impregnable fort operating in opposition to "assaults of vice, folly, and misfortunes" – in other words, the qualities of Cosby and his supporters.

The poem itself was a reprint, nearly fifty years old at the time of its republication in the *Journal*. The 1687 original was authored by John Cutts (3–6). Cutts, a soldier of English birth, had served under and developed a significant relationship with Prince William of Orange beginning in 1685, and, in 1688, he played a military role in William of Orange's acquisition of the English throne. Cutts also participated in military service against the Turks in Hungary, a struggle contemporaneously understood as "the defence of Christianity against Mohammedanism," and he may have taken part in the failed 1685 invasion of (once-again-Catholic) England under the protestant Duke of Monmouth ("Cutts, John" xvi–xvii). Cutts's later military achievements would include campaigns in Ireland and France, both against Catholic adversaries.

It is significant that the *Journal* published a poem by Cutts in its first issue. For eighteenth-century Britons, the security of British Protestantism was essential for the security of British liberties (Landsman 151–53). Protestantism featured a distinct freedom from enquiry, which Landsman closely links with civic liberty. Meanwhile,

Catholicism epitomized tyranny to Britons – its single ruler wielded power over everyone's private life. Thus, for Philosophia and his readers, Cutts stands as an emblem of anti-tyrannical, and thus anti-Cosby, British virtues.

The rhetoric of Cutts' "On Wisdom" is important as well. Readers of the poem in 1733 New York would have found it meaningful to their own experience, regardless of Cutts's intended meanings in 1687. The poem accomplishes three important tasks for the *Journal*. First, it reinforces the sense of logical ethics that Philosophia first introduces, warning against "the vain pursuit of partial Fame," "pleasure," gain, and "mistaken flattery" and telling the *Journal*'s readers that the newspaper will be guided by the honest, rational pursuit of wisdom and virtue (Philosophia 11–23).

Second, it authorizes a surprisingly democratic individual agency that may supersede that of kings: "Kings will be little Men, compar'd to me; / They, in their own Dominions only Great, / I, Conqu'rour of the World, my Self and Fate" (41–44). By following wisdom and practicing virtue, New York's oppositional party could outrank not only the king himself, but his synecdochic hand in America – Governor Cosby. The power of these lines gives remarkable potential to Morris and his followers who are dissatisfied with the colonial administration, and it bodes ill for Cosby. Further, these lines do not distinguish between class or other typically divisive factors: Everyone has this potential.

Third, "On Wisdom" motivates the provincial New Yorker's engagement with the mission of the oppositional party, urging the virtuous citizen, whether rich or poor, to fulfill his civic responsibility of fighting nobly for justice. The poem explains that, whether "born for Happiness and Ease" or whether "the Weather of my life proves foul," the speaker will choose "virtue" and "Honour" and will not be deterred: "Tho' Storms arise, that make whole Kingdoms rowl, / Yet I must on; and 'spight of all their Force, / I'le steer my Vessel her appointed Course." Finally, "With her firm Beak the Billows she'll divide, / And plow her Passage thro' the foaming Tyde" (lines 47–56). Cutts emphasizes the British obligation to pursue wisdom and virtue. Whatever his station or situation, it is the citizen's civic responsibility to cultivate and protect wisdom and virtue. In the context of 1733 New York, this poem urges each reader to commit to an active role in the pursuit of virtue in the colony's struggle.

"On Wisdom" also takes a pejorative stance toward kings, which is unusual to find in early eighteenth-century publications. This is clear in the characterization of kings as "little Men" who are "in their own Dominions only great," as "King[s] of Terror" who are "Fierce" employers of "violence" (57–58). Thoughts of American independence from English tyranny did not arise until the 1760s, and most American colonists were very proud of their English identity (Landsman 151). Yet, in the context of this poem, there emerges a dichotomy between the individual and the king, between the colony and the mother country. Cutts's original reference may have been toward the

Catholic James II, who held the throne from 1685–1688. Thus, the *Journal*'s inclusion of this poem once again uses the rhetoric of anti-Catholicism and the fear of tyranny to create an association between Cosby's corruption and liberty-threatening tyranny.

The second issue of the *Journal* introduces two new literary aspects. It begins with a brief note written to Zenger signed "CATO" (Cato). Michael Warner explains that *Cato's Letters*, written by Britons John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, were among "the most popular republican texts in the colonies" (65). *Cato's Letters* were published as a series in two British newspapers, and they were known for their outspokenly critical view on the imperial government and their celebrations of "freedom of the press, which they vigorously defended as intrinsic to liberty itself" (Buranelli 174–75). Andrew Bradford's *American Weekly Mercury* reprinted them as they appeared in the 1720s, and Benjamin Franklin reprinted at least one Cato letter on freedom of the press in his brother's *New-England Courant* (Warner 75–76), but such republications of the *Letters* were typically "matter[s] of the occasion, without permanent direction, intermittent, hit-and-run" (Buranelli 174–75).

The *Journal's* use of *Cato's Letters* was different. Following the note signed by Cato, two entire pages are occupied by the first half of a Cato text about liberty, and a full page and a half of the following issue of the *Journal* was occupied by that text's second half. Cato letters made frequent appearances in Zenger's paper, which focused and defined the paper's (and thus its readership's) energies on the topic of British liberties. Vincent Buranelli's study of James Alexander's papers indicates that it was often he who selected *Cato's Letters* for republication. Among the letters he approved were: "The right and capacity of the people to judge of government," "Of reverence true and false," "Of freedom of speech: that the same is inseparable from public liberty," "Reflections upon libeling," and "Cautions against the natural encroachments of power" (179).

The presence of such essays in the *Journal* points most directly to the vital importance of the liberty of the press for the paper's contributors and readers. But while most critics have conceived of the *Journal*'s struggle for the freedom of the press as an end unto itself, this article envisions it as representative of the numerous tensions, fears, and frustrations that were increasing with each new move of the Cosby administration. As Gordon and Trenchard themselves wrote: "No Nation Antient or Modern ever lost the Liberty of freely Speaking, Writing, or Publishing their Sentiments, but forthwith lost their Liberty in general and became Slaves. LIBEERTY [sic] and SLAVERY! How amiable is one! How odious and abominable the other!" ("Liberty of the Press"). The texts of the *New-York Weekly Journal* suggest that provincial New Yorkers felt that their rights and stations as Britons were under threat. Mark Noonan articulates agreement with Peter A. Davis that such reprinted essays "served to 'define

New York colonists for the first time as a distinct people worth of the same political rights' as their counterparts in England" (Noonan 78–79).

Another significant feature of the *Journal*'s second issue is the quote of Tacitus directly beneath the note to Zenger: "Mira temporum felicitas ubi sentiri que velis, & que sentias dicere licit" ("the wonderful happiness of times, when you may say what you please, and express what you think"; my translation). Tacitus's *Histories* is a chronicle of Roman history during the reign of various emperors, and the lines preceding this one feature important cogitations on republicanism, leadership, tyranny, and civic engagement. Tacitus says that after the battle of Actium, at which Octavian defeated Mark Antony, ending the triumvirate of shared power in the Roman Republic, "it became essential to peace, that all power should be centered in one man . . . ." Tacitus explains that, after this event, "the truthfulness of history was impaired in many ways; at first, through men's ignorance of public affairs," and "then through their passion for flattery, or, on the other hand, their hatred for their masters" (Tacitus, *Histories* 1.1, 18). Mourning the loss of historical truth and the virtuous participation of citizens in civic affairs, Tacitus identifies the consolidation of power in one individual as key in this degeneration of republicanism.

The *Journal*'s quotation from Tacitus presents an intertextuality founded upon the grievances of writer-citizens frustrated with monarchical power's restricting choke on the public sphere. The specific passage appearing in the *Journal* calls attention to the oppressive control of the Cosby administration, to the one-sided view of history propagated by the government-controlled *New York Gazette*, and to the necessity of free speech and press for the sake of protecting the liberties and "happiness" of the general public. Likewise, the closing lines of the Cato letter in the third issue of the *Journal* quotes Book 4, Chapter 30, of Tacitus' *Annals*: "socordiam eorum inridere libet qui praesenti potentia credunt extingui posse etiam sequentis aevi memoriam. nam contra punitis ingeniis gliscit auctoritas, neque aliud externi reges aut qui eadem saevitia usi sunt nisi dedecus sibi atque illis gloriam peperere" ("And so one is all the more inclined to laugh at the stupidity of men who suppose that the despotism of the present can actually efface the remembrances of the next generation. On the contrary, the persecution of genius fosters its influence; foreign tyrants, and all who have imitated their oppression, have merely procured infamy for themselves and glory for their victims"; my translation) (*Annals* 4.35, 129). This passage makes an even stronger claim that Cosby is a dissenter-persecuting tyrant.

The *Journal* frequently features similar epigraphs extracted from the texts of republican figures from the ancient, medieval, early modern, and eighteenth-century worlds: "The tyrant King himself holds the full power of the Republic" ("Tyrannus"; my translation); "A greater inheritance comes to each of us from our rights and laws than from our parents" ("Major"; trans. from *New Dictionary* 267); "The wellbeing of

the people should be the highest law" ("Salus"; my translation); "Happy are they who learn caution from the danger of others" ("Faelix"; my translation); "----'Tis the Shrine we venerate, / And not the Beast that bears it on his Back" (Herbert 10); "The greater the sinner's rank, the more conspicuous the guilt of the sin" ("Omne"; my translation); "With native Freedom brave, / The meanest Briton scorns the highest Slave" ("With native Freedom"; for the lines' original context, see Addison, *The Campaign* 15); "For what but prayer remains?" ("Quid"; my translation; for original context, see Ovid, *Tristia* 1.2.1).

The majority of the *Journal*'s epigraphs and poetry come from the classical world or from English poets of the century preceding the Cosby Affair, and the epigraphs are far too numerous to list inclusively. Most of the Roman and Greek passages are written in Latin, and on at least one occasion, readers had some degree of difficulty translating the lines. An unsigned letter to the editor begins: "Hearing several of your Readers ask the Meaning of some Words in your last Paper, viz. *Timeo Danaos et done ferentes*. I thought proper to send you the *English* of them, as I find it in a later Translation of *Virgil*" ("Finding"; original emphasis). He then provides the translation of the lines and additionally includes the surrounding lines, which come from the *Aeneid*. Reflecting a distrust of a foreign presence within one's own city, the included passage discusses the infamous Trojan horse, the duplicitous gift that leads to the ultimate conquering of Troy. The fear of "conceal'd" lies and secret "inspection" and surveillance aligned with the eighteenth-century provincial Briton's protective attitude toward personal liberties. Likening the British imperial government to the Greeks, it sets up an oppositional framework in which to think about the relationship between the imperial government and the provinces in North America. Furthermore, it suggests (to both colonial and potential British audiences) that the British imperial government's dealings with colonial affairs are ingenuine.

Perhaps the most revealing aspect of this letter to the editor, however, is the author's mention that he "heard" readers discussing the text. Citing high literacy rates and the wide circulation of newspapers, Lawrence Leder has asserted that newspapers provide scholarship an invaluable textual "source for evaluating what the 'average colonist' thought about the issues of the day" (1). This letter demonstrates how the realm of the newspaper extends beyond the textual and into the oral. The oral aspects of the public sphere and of ephemeral literature itself must not be overlooked in consideration of these episodes.

A more prominent classical text appears in the June 21, 1736, issue of the *Journal*. Occupying the entire front page and a portion of the second page, a long extract from the Roman poet Lucan's epic poem *Pharsalia* reinforces the same ideals of liberty and republican virtue. The poem tells of the "Pious, Wise, and Just" Cato who is sent to an oracle to "meet and talk with Jove" and to "Inquire betimes what various Chance

shall come / To impious Caesar, and they native Rome; / Try to avers [sic] at least thy Country's Doom" (Lucan 14–22). In the context of the *Journal* and the Cosby Affair, the poem acquires an allegorical value. At the time of this issue's publication, Lewis Morris was in England to meet and talk with the king and to discuss Cosby. Like the poem that opened this article, this poem suggests that Morris's "Country" is specifically in the North American provinces. The same allegory continues as the speaker declares Cato "His Country's Father" and promises that "If e'er thou break thy lordly Master's Chain, / If Liberty be e'er restor'd again," he would "rank with thy Gods." The emphasis on liberty is again clear when the speaker describes Cato's task of discovering whether "Freedom shall [be] restore[d]" or "if Laws and Right shall be no more." The publication of this poem in the *New-York Weekly Journal* carries as much meaning as the prosaic texts that have been analyzed by scholars for decades, but it has been completely overlooked. It identifies Morris as a hero of republican virtue, comparable to the great Roman Cato. It turns our attention away from the narrow focus on the liberty of the press and affirms the significant role that the "impious" and tyrannical administration had in relation to all "liberty" and "laws and right" of provincial Britons. It is important that Cato's relationship to the imperious Caesar is characterized in terms of a "lordly Master's Chain," reflecting British anxieties about oppression and "slavery."

Morris's trip to England provoked numerous poetic responses. In addition to the extract of *Pharsalia* and the original poem with which this article opens, the *Journal* published another original poem in February 1735. It was reportedly composed in Cape May, New Jersey, by "a rural Muse upon Coll. Morris's Voyage to LONDON" ("No More"). The speaker invokes Jove to make Morris's voyage safe and smooth, describes Morris as "the generous Patriot," and explains that, "Fraught with the Wrongs his bleeding Country bears / To fair Brittania's happy Isle he steers" (13–14). Like the other poems, this poem frames Morris as a republican hero – a patriot of British virtue. It is significant that the speaker specifically identifies "happy Albion's Chalky Cliffs" as the factor that will "all his Thoughts of Liberty renew . . . ." In other words, it is Albion – "fair Britannia's happy Isle" – that inspires "Thoughts of Liberty," a point that supports London-centric notions of the British Empire. The poem celebrates British virtues and expresses provincial pride in the Empire, but it also reflects tensions that many in New York felt regarding their frustrating experience as Britons in North America compared to the perceived experience of Britons living on "Britannia's happy Isle" – at the heart of the Empire and the fount of British liberties. If Morris had to visit Britain to have his "Thoughts of Liberty renew[ed]," the implication is that New Yorkers were not privy to the same liberties as Britons living in, say, London. This poem indicates a conscious consideration of the differences between a provincial, degraded experience of Britishness and an idealized experience of Britishness found

at the center of the Empire. This contrast – emphasized by the events of the Cosby Affair and the poetry of the *New-York Weekly Journal*, like the celebration of the "Indian main" – led to the formation of new, uniquely "New Yorkish" conceptions of self and nation, ephemeral as they may have been.

A poem written by Zenger himself further disrupts the hierarchy of the British Empire. While imprisoned and awaiting trial, Zenger wrote a four-line poem and a letter to his readers, both of which were published on December 20, 1734 ("From my Prison"). It reads: "Oh cruelty unknown before, / To any barbarous savage shore, / Much more when Men so much profess, / Humanity and Godliness." The short piece attests to the perceived hypocrisy of the British Empire. While the British "profess" "humanity and godliness" and liberty, Zenger recognizes – and reminds his readers – that these virtues are corrupted in Britain's provincial New York. In fact, he suggests that there is more virtue to be found in "any barbarous savage shore" that the British would scorn as uncivilized. Thus, Zenger's brief poem reveals what is lost in the overwhelming archive of the *Journal*'s philosophical tracts and letters: that the Cosby Affair provoked questions of belonging and stirred radical conceptions of identity in New Yorkers during the 1730s.

Zenger also printed part of Psalm 59 in the *Journal*, foregrounded by a note from the submitter and post-scripted with a note from Zenger himself ("I Think"). Both notes tell the reader that the Psalm should be considered in the context of a response to an "unheard of Piece of villany" that was "Printed in Bradfords last Gazette." The violence and extreme rhetoric of the Psalm is especially significant here, and while it may be a hyperbolic response to the Cosby administration and its publications in the *Gazette*, it is nonetheless revealing of the radicalized culture of the moment. The Psalm asks God to "Preserve me from a wicked Race, / who make a Trade of Ill," and it identifies that race as "remorseless Men" with "Heathen Rage." They are characterized as "growling Dogs" that "ransack ev'ry Street" in the city. The Cosbyites boastfully question who "dares / reprove our lawless words." While the depiction of the administration and its supporters is extreme, it also demonstrates that the opposition party utilized religious allegory to proclaim its cause just and divinely sanctioned – and to simultaneously proclaim the Cosbyites as unjust, unchristian, and altogether antithetical to British notions of virtue.

The *Journal* used a variety of rhetorical and poetic techniques to criticize the Cosby administration, but this article's concern extends beyond the Cosby administration to the provincial consciousness of an imperial problem spanning the empire. The Cosby Affair was about more than just Cosby, and the emphasis on the freedom of the press was about more than 'just' the freedom of the press. The episode resulted from the confluence of years of colonial economic, social, and political frustrations suddenly crystallizing in the events and texts surrounding Morris and the *New-York*

Weekly Journal. Thus, the Cosby Affair was not a proto-revolution for independence from Britain; rather, it served as a boiling up of frustration and desire to be recognized as *more* British.

One important piece of the *New-York Weekly Journal*'s history is the republication and responses its issues provoked elsewhere. The paper's distribution outside of New York added new voices, new perspectives, and new momentum behind the issues at hand. The Zenger trial and surrounding events were followed closely around the provinces. Alison Olson has pointed out that "'[r]emarks on the trial' were collected first in Barbados, London, and Philadelphia, then 'plentifully dispersed throughout the colonies,' prompting at least a three-way debate in the presses of New York, Philadelphia, and Barbados" (238). This debate has received a small degree of critical attention, and it is not this article's intention to dissect its finer points but rather to consider it from a removed, broader vantage point that allows scholarship to comprehend the significance of a provincial debate about liberty and identity occurring across more than two thousand miles of empire.

The end of Zenger's trial in 1735 did not end the circum-Atlantic interest in the provincial crisis it reflected, and nearly two years later, on July 20, 1737, a writer under the pseudonym "Anglo-Americanus" (Jonathan Blenman) wrote a lengthy response to the trial's verdict in the *Barbados Gazette* (Finkelman 134–35). The piece was soon reprinted in the *New York Gazette* and *American Weekly Mercury* in Philadelphia. The article demonstrates two essential points. First, the trial and its surrounding tensions were important enough for provincial Britons that they were still discussing it in both the mid-Atlantic colonies and the geographically distant Barbados long after the event concluded. The second point is made by Blenman's pseudonym. In a debate about what it means to be British, who counts as British, and who gets to enjoy the full privileges of British liberties, Blenman articulates his staunchly "loyalist" perspective by declaring himself "Anglo-Americanus," i.e., "English-American." Yet, even if the name was intended to affirm his British identity, it effectively undermines that goal by reminding the reader that he is not simply "Anglus"; he is part-English and part-American. Blenman's status in the marginalized fringes of the empire surfaces in his choice of a name.

Blenman's letter asserts his political ideology with force and precision: Zenger was guilty, saved only by a faulty jury. For him, the public haranguing of a government official to one's "neighbors" is not the legal or politically responsible strategy for redress. He insists on utilizing the government system already in place to rectify the situation.

He also states, "in the *Colonies*, that are from their creation subordinate to the Mother-Country, there is no Person who is not controulable by regular and well known Methods of proceeding" (Finkelman 135). That the colonies were subordinate

to Britain since their founding was not news, but in an era when "few Americans doubted that the colonial population and its trade were likely to grow faster than Britain's," the idea of subordination seems less sustainable for colonists than Blenman grants (Landsman 173). The text also inadvertently draws attention to the frustrating concept that different laws and liberties existed for those in the provinces: "I hope the Security which the *British* Constitution affords to every Mans Person, Property, and Reputation, as well as to the publick Tranquility, is not lessen'd by any Distance from the Fountain of Power and Justice." He continues, "but that a *Libel* is a *Libel*, and punishable as such in America as well as in Europe" (Finkelman 134–35; original emphasis). Blenman's mention of concerns like "Distance from the Fountain of Power and Justice," difference in legality in the provinces and Britain proper, and provincial subordination to Britain calls attention to these subjects and opens them up to interrogation. The text's role as a direct participant in a debate enhances the questionability of his claims. The same is true for publications in the *Journal*. But it is the very act of public debate using the medium of the newspaper that led to an increase in public consciousness. So, when Blenman states, "I think it the Bulwark of all other Liberty, and the surest Defence against Tyrany and Oppression" (140), he is not just agreeing with his opponents on the importance of liberty of the press. He is issuing forth an idea for his readers to evaluate for themselves, to talk amongst each other about, and to debate further on their own, whether in the public or private sphere. Superficially, Blenman's article portrays somebody who is proud to be British and who has full confidence in the British system of colonial administration. Yet the very act of his positing such arguments acknowledges the fact that there is, at least, another side to the story. Further, his wording indicates that there may be discrepancies between what it means to be a Briton living in Britain and what it means to be a Briton living in the provinces.

Conclusion

This idea, it seems, is also at the root of the momentum behind the oppositional movement in New York and is evident in Morris's February 24, 1735, letter to James Alexander:

> We have a Parliament and ministry, Some of whom, I am apt to believe, know that there are plantations and governors – but not quite so well as we do; Like the frogs in the fable, the mad pranks of a plantation-Governor is Sport for them, though death for us, and Seem less concerned in our contests than we are at those between Crows and Kingbirds. (qtd. in Katz, "A New York Mission" 451).

Morris's words encapsulate the provincial desire to acquire a more legitimized status within the British Empire, and to enjoy those same "Security" and liberties as all Britons. Close analysis of the Cosby Affair's primary sources demonstrates that the

Cosby Affair was *not* a move for independence, and only in some ways could it serve as a "prefiguration" of the American Revolution. More than anything else, the Cosby Affair was the manifestation of the frustrated liberties of Anglo-Americans and their desire to be more fully British, but in the rhetoric and creative literature of the *New-York Weekly Journal* one finds emerging consciousness of a North American provincial status – and identity – that is uniquely different from the British status and identity at the heart of the Empire. From the Van Dam case and Morris's dismissal, to the publication of the *New-York Weekly Journal* and Zenger's imprisonment, to Morris's expedition in London and the responses of writers (and speakers) such as Blenman in Barbados, the Cosby episode represents a flare-up in the self-consciousness of provincial Britons and an awareness of differences in liberties, status, and identity. Ultimately, Cosby's death mollified the fierceness of provincial grievances. The *Journal* continued to print, and the issues of the Affair remained important (evidenced by Blenman's publication a year and a half after Cosby's death and the subsequent republications of the *Brief Narrative*), but there was not the same exigency that pressed New Yorkers and other provincials to immediate questions of colonial liberties, status, and identity.

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Book Reviews edited by Joshua Parker

California: A Slave State. By Jean Pfaelzer. Yale UP, 2025, 520 pp.

The prologue of Jean Pfaelzer's new book on Californian history quickly makes clear that even the state possibly seen as the most liberal in all of the United States has a past closely entwined with highly problematic, violent, and inhumane practices. In late 1861, with regular Army troops leaving for the theaters of the Civil War further east, the remaining soldiers and volunteers were "to complete the massacres of the Indigenous California tribes who lived inland, capture the refugees, and sell them in a 'slave-raiding boom'" (5). Men called "traffickers" or "baby hunters" took women and children away from their homelands. Many would end up as part of a huge labor force supporting the rise of California's white ranching economy.

This is but one chapter of the region's slavery-related history. Pfaelzer describes how ranchers raised private armies to capture native people, enslaved African Americans were brought to California by their owners during the Gold Rush, and girls in China were kidnapped "for prostitution, shipped . . . seven thousand miles across the Pacific Ocean and sold" in San Francisco (22). She also takes a look at earlier Spanish practices of dealing with Indigenous populations: Father Junípero Serra who, in 1984 (200 years after his death), was named by two-thirds of Californians as "the most important person in the history of the state" (Thomas 186), is introduced as a central figure in Spain's eighteenth-century plan of "removing, regathering and converting Indians into obedient, enslaved members of the empire" (39). There can be no doubt that the Spanish mission system was a violent form of imperialist rule. Pfaelzer, however, oversimplifies its complex legal background. Corporal punishment for runaways, for example, followed the principles used by Spanish parents in regards to a child "going with bad companions or otherwise exposing himself to grave spiritual danger" (Guest 234). Violence or forced resettlement do not necessarily constitute *slavery* (even if people are living in slavery-like circumstances) but rather other forms of suppression based on political, religious, and/or patriarchal patterns of power.

As pointed out earlier by Robert H. Jackson and others, Spanish missions experienced enormous death rates. Over the course of about thirty years up to the 1790s, "six hundred Indian babies had been born in the compound [of Mission Dolores, San Francisco], but 2,400 Indians had died" (62). After a number of rebellions and pres-

sured by Great Britain, Spain (as well as the United States) officially ended their participation in the slave trade – but not slavery per se. Resistance against Spanish and, later on, Mexican rule continued in California, with the so-called Chumash Revolt of 1824 being one of the best-known examples.

Chapters three and four of Pfaelzer's book focus on North America's western coast including Alaska. In this vast region, the interests of Britain, Russia, Spain, and the United States collided with Indigenous traditions. Russian Tsar Paul subjected half of Alaska's male population to the rule of the Russian-American company, "leaving the women, children, and older people to fend for themselves" (91). Alaska Natives were regularly sent to California for otter hunting expeditions – the pelts were then traded across the Pacific to China. Pfaelzer continues by shedding light on the darker aspects of California's Gold Rush. In chapter five, the author makes clear that even a free state that did not record slave status accepted branding of persons as a proof of ownership. Also, "miners longed for female companionship, hungered for cooked meals . . . and craved sex, prompting some slaveholders to transport enslaved women to California and sell them" (131). Paradoxically, enslaved miners would strongly influence the referendum on a new Californian constitution in 1849: "white miners were fearful of competing with teams of unpaid and unfree miners" (134), thus leading to the overwhelming acceptance of a constitution outlawing slavery. However, the state's Fugitive Slave Act of 1852 stated that all enslaved persons brought to California before 1849 "were now 'fugitives from labor' and had to be returned to their owner" (147). In chapter seven, Pfaelzer also revisits the Indian Act that "embraced key elements of slavery" (172), such as the impossibility of terminating indenture contracts or missing requirements for wages, and deals with the mass bondage of Indigenous Californians as well as their mass killings – phenomena that can be explained with "the relatively low cost of *de facto* California Indian slaves" (Madley 640). In the Sierras, Europeans kidnapped girls from the Yuki and other ethnocultural groups who were then carried away – sometimes dozens at the same time – by ranchers. Eventually, the military of the United States "entered the slave trade in California. In the decade . . . leading up to the Civil War, it sold or simply released Indian captives . . . to slave brokers" (183).

Pfaelzer not only points out the victimization of Native Californians and other non-white groups but also the agency found in their histories in chapters nine and ten – sections of the book focusing on African American civil rights in the second half of the nineteenth century. She, for example, presents the legal case of Charlotte Brown, a free Black woman who, in 1863, successfully sued a tram company after being forcibly removed from one of its cars. On the other hand, chapter eleven (tellingly titled "The Importation of Females in Bulk") describes the fate of girls from China shipped to California; in 1860, "six hundred of the 681 Chinese women in San Francisco were

captives in the sex trade" (250). Facts like these were then used to justify legal actions against female Asian immigration and, with "fewer Chinese women, the price of sex with Chinese girls soared" (278), resulting in even more brutal methods of keeping the trafficked women from fleeing.

Chapters thirteen and fourteen deal with the development and functions of California's prison system, starting with the Spanish-era presidios before moving on to nineteenth-century prison ships, the opening of San Quentin Prison in 1854, and its character as a place of involuntary labor (where, in 1882, an industrial jute mill began to operate). Later, during the Interwar Period, "San Quentin was a site for pseudo-medical sexual and genetic research on convicts' bodies" (328). Pfaelzer also underlines the fact that the modern prison system is, in fact, an industry: By 2005, Federal Prison Industries (under the trade name UNICOR) "managed 106 factories at 73 prisons with almost twenty thousand prison laborers" (334). The two final chapters focus on the tragic history of Native American boarding schools as well as modern-era sex and labor trafficking. Pfaelzer describes the schools as sites of "the final battle against the Indians" (349) and notes that Californian legislature, in 2018, "explicitly defined modern human trafficking as a form of slavery" (379).

Pfaelzer definitely excels in telling the often-harrowing story of exploitation, subjugation, and violence in California's history. From a scholarly perspective, the lack of a theoretical approach to slavery can be seen as the book's main weakness. Nonetheless, it presents important aspects not only of Californian but also North American history and furthers a deeper understanding of complex realities that go beyond a dichotomy of "slave states" versus states prohibiting slavery, "freedom" versus "unfreedom," and "the past" versus "the present."

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The Weird South: Ecologies of Unknowing in Postplantation Literature. By Melanie Benson Taylor. U of Georgia P, 2025, 98 pp.

This slim, densely theoretical volume muses on recurrent heterotopias, liminal spaces, or "limbos" in the literary post-bellum US South, through close readings of Katherine Anne Porter, Charles Chesnutt, Richard Wright, and Jesmyn Ward. Melanie Benson Taylor lays out a plan to re-examine stereotypical sites of the Southern Gothic: the cemetery, the haunted house, and the plantation. Drawn from the 2022 Eugenia Dorothy Blount Lamar Memorial Lectures given at Mercer University, the book focuses on two themes in particular: the grave and the womb. Her project is deconstructionist, seeking to peel away oppositions between these seeming binary opposites, to render them cousins, exploring "the frail perforations between the living and the (un)dead" (69).

Taylor admits from the start that the book has no clear thesis. It instead offers "a poetics and a politics of witness" (xviii), opening with a beautiful unpacking of Porter's 1934 short story "The Grave," in which two Texan children play in their grandfather's empty grave, collecting a gold ring and a coffin nail, then shoot a pregnant rabbit, examine its unborn bunnies, pack them back inside the mother, and bury her, promising to tell no one of their "secret." Given that Porter's mother died in childbirth when she was very young, it would be easy to see the story's symbols as emblems of the choices faced by women in the 1930s: marriage and childbirth or death. Taylor offers a more sophisticated reading, moving between neo-Lacanian interpretation and stylistics, to explore "a stunning panorama of the suppressed but unrestful histories" of the South – and also of the greater United States, for which the South has historically been a foil and scapegoat for its acts of repression and racial and sexual violence. She extends this to cover "startling revelations about our shared collusion in so many of the systems we might think we can or should reject" (9). Her readings use an anthropological lens (she is a firm critic of new materialism) and focus on a post-humanist Anthropocene. She outlines dangers here: Proceeding this way, we risk fetishizing "the unseen, the unknown, the unthought" or risk romanticizing "the nonhuman and object world," as we "often try to rescue subjugated others from the clutches of imperialistic human functions" (3). Working mainly with texts from the early twentieth century, each section of her book is colored by current politics and ecological thinking. It draws influence from Timothy Morton's *Dark Ecology* (2016) to make connections between "agricultural exhaustion, animal extinctions, chattel slavery, even genocide" (13), or between chattel slavery, Indigenous removal, and white "modern southern anxieties about nativism and dispossession" (16), the latter evident in Por-

ter's story. Taylor suggests the impetus for the story came from Porter's time in Mexico, a transnational setting which allowed a loosening of the lock on its ghastly images.

The volume's second section, "The Trees," explores, through Chesnutt's story "The Dumb Witness" (written in 1897 but first published in a posthumous edition of *The Conjure Woman*), "what happens when the raw materials that compose our social lives – the earth, the trees, the organisms, the mechanisms – collapse into the structures and the bodies we inhabit" (32). "Weird southern texts," Taylor writes, depict trees as living creatures, as sites of lynchings, as the wooden furniture and homes we live inside, and also as "coffins for our secrets" (32). Exploring racial "color as a hypervisible signifier of an often utterly immaterial condition," she writes, "was Chesnutt's passion" as an African American author who easily might have (but refused to) pass as white, even at the risk of his career. "The Dumb Witness" is set on a former plantation in eastern North Carolina, where a white homeowner cannot find the deed to the house because its secret hiding place is known only to his former slave (and probable cousin), whom he beat, rendering her mute. The joke's on him: On his death, his cousin speaks up, revealing the spot to his inheritor. For years, while he dug up his fields searching for the deed, it was in a compartment in the seat of his chair. Digging in the earth, he tries to penetrate the secret of his Black, mute cousin, but both withhold it. Unhurriedly, Taylor shifts between unpacking Chesnutt's prose and elucidating the ontological risks of becoming "accidental allies of capitalism," and the importance of our holding ourselves accountable for our own human narcissisms (44). She proposes a "new materialism with a dark twist": "a critique of capitalist conversion with no romantic exits or alternative ways of being apart from its collapsed architecture" (44).

As a scholar of Native American literature, Taylor keeps historical issues of Indigenous people close in the background throughout her work, even when they are not treated directly. The mute woman is rumored to be part Native American. From this, Taylor suggests that white or Black identification with Indigenous groups and their struggles is often a way to escape hard realities and to feign being oneself in a heterotopia in which Indigenous causes are romanticized. One senses the depth of thought that's gone into the volume. Much is said, much left unsaid. The language, however, is often rough to follow: "What these weird southern ontologies encourage us to see simultaneously are the placebound ravages of ecomaterialist embeddedness within racial capitalist economies, alongside the invitations to conceptualize personhood by logics instilled in deep time rather than in Anthropocenic coordinates, and in modes beyond the technology of the pen or the computer or the strictly literary" (47) – all this followed by a long footnote.

The text examined next is Wright's *The Man Who Lived Underground*, completed in 1942 and published posthumously by Wright's daughter in 2021. Taylor notes Paula Rabinowitz's suggestion that US Depression-era literature's spaces "between industrial and residential zones, between men and women, between workers and their bosses, between races, between parents and their children – while sharply visible, still tangibly in effect, could no longer be counted on to signify as they once had" (Rabinowitz 33). Wright's protagonist, wrongly arrested by police and tortured in agonizing scenes of copious description, "receives his abuse in the liminal space between the white world above and the dark obscurity below, between waking and dreaming, incarceration and emancipation" (51). Taylor alludes to how this echoes what often happens to Black and Brown bodies in the United States today, suggesting this space is like that of Wright's illustrated *12 Million Black Voices* (1941), showing post-plantation Great Migration-era African Americans in a "harrowing space between the plantation and the city, slavery and freedom, the coin of opportunity and of social death" (51). Wright's protagonist is taken home to find his wife in labor, during which visit he evades arrest, sneaking through a manhole into an underground sewer system. Taylor suggests that Wright's pairing of the pregnant woman, with the child buried inside her ready to come to life, and burial is common to Porter's story with the grandfather's grave and the pregnant rabbit. Graves are cradles, cradles graves. The protagonist realizes that his situation is that of everyone on earth and that everyone on earth's situation is also his, a revelation causing him to forget his own name, affirming rather than releasing him from "the made world's logics and violence" (56). Post-plantation modernism and the Great Depression, Taylor writes, both "eradicate and ossify [racial] difference all at once and in turn" (57), in a world where "guilt is determined by identity rather than agency" (71).

The volume's last section, "The Forest," treats Ward's *Sing, Unburied, Sing* (2017). Here, a child protagonist is driven to pick up his father from prison and, on the ride back, takes home a ghost, which comes to live in the family's basement, singing "songs without words," a hymn beautiful "despite and perhaps because of its untranslatability" (60). One thing that plagues southern literature, Taylor suggests, is a pervasive impulse toward "precolonial, precapitalist and antimodern idylls or spiritual systems" (62). Yet identifying with such tropes borders on the ridiculous, as they have been "manufactured by the very systems we're trying to escape" (62). Taylor makes her point across issues of race and environment. Uncanny ruptures or haunted spaces cannot "simply be restored by sweeping myths of 'sustainability' or undifferentiated celebrations of posthuman assemblage" (63). Southern literature unflinchingly labors (one suspects the metaphor is intentional) to unveil uncanny horrors, whether of class, race, gender, or environment. Unlike much feminist, antiracist, and decolonial criticism, it is skeptical "of the reparative mode as a strategy for healing trauma or

confronting division," cautioning us "about indulging in fantasies of redemption via the appealing features of biotic solidarity, . . . romanticized reunions with natural and nonhuman otherworlds" (63). Stripping away "the prostheses of modernity," we find ourselves to be just things like any other things in our world, "parts capable of disassembly" (83). In a weird South, "the logics of propriation do not loosen their grip without struggle or causalities," as "the concept of relationality works only if the playing field is truly leveled" (74). The weird South asks us "to revisit and revise two of its most essential conceits: those of land and race, apart and intertwined" (74). "Weird southern texts present us with the ghostly hauntings of fixed locations" and also "radically exceed them" in terrifying unmoorings. Their authors ask us to be here, now, but also someplace and sometime else. Reality may not be legible, Taylor writes, but stories are our shared real.

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Faulkner's Hollywood Novels: Women between Page and Screen. By Ben Robbins. U of Virginia P, 2024, 295 pp.

In his 1975 "Magical Narratives: Romance as Genre," Fredric Jameson proposed that narrative genres contain imaginary resolutions to real social contradictions and conflicts. Following this claim, in her sociological analysis of one example of the romance genre, E. L. James's *Fifty Shades of Grey*, Eva Illouz concluded that the novel's central relationship "functions narratively as a resolution to the tensions inherent in modern heterosexuality" (66). While many contemporary readers are familiar with the *Fifty Shades* film series, and the discussions of its heroine's femininity and sexuality, today's audiences may be less familiar with Hollywood cinema from the 1930s, '40s and '50s, even though films from this period, being more numerous and diverse, can be analysed in similar, if more complex, ways in terms of gender and sexual politics in

their own socioeconomic contexts. Exactly such an analysis of women's representation on screen across different genres can be found in Ben Robbins's *Faulkner's Hollywood Novels: Women between Page and Screen*, which addresses not only novels but also screenplays, both produced and unproduced, with women at the centre. This thematic aspect, focusing on Hollywood's golden era itself, makes for the book's broadest appeal to anyone interested in the history of (Hollywood) cinema, and will certainly encourage its readers to seek out and (re)watch many a Hollywood classic. Even though Robbins's specific interest lies in only one literary figure's adventures in Hollywood, what emerges from it is a much wider picture of the industry and its changing mores, working conditions, products, and literary ramifications.

Robbins's monograph concentrates on William Faulkner and his intermittent commercial work as a screenwriter for Hollywood studios between 1932 and 1954 as well as on his fiction inspired and influenced by the Hollywood experience. Specifically, in the first academic study of this kind, through the lens of gender studies, the author examines Faulkner's representations of women in film and fiction, in the context of the abovementioned period's gender norms and ensuing conventions, as well as Hollywood studios' changing policies. For Faulkner, as Robbins emphasises, "to engage with Hollywood genre was also always to engage with gender" (3).

As we learn from the acknowledgements, the author's research on Faulkner took over a decade and involved investigations in multiple archives, including examination of unpublished and so far largely unexplored materials as well as the use of new tools from the digital humanities. The resultant in-depth quality of the study is visible throughout the book and reflected in its rich bibliography, including works by Roland Barthes, Walter Benjamin, Pierre Bourdieu, Barbara Creed, Richard Dyer, Betty Friedan, Jack Halberstam, bell hooks, Ann E. Kaplan, and Laura Mulvey.

The book's extensive Introduction outlines Faulkner's long-standing and creatively successful connection with Hollywood, albeit in the role of "an economic migrant" (2). From the very beginning, Robbins critically regards Faulkner's own dismissive attitude toward Tinseltown and puts it aside as a "reductive antagonism" as well as a kind of performance (3). At times, it involved sexist discourse, common for modernist thinkers, equating mass cultural forms such as "hack writing" with feminisation (8–9). This gender bias against popular culture was an expression of the perceived threat that women started to pose in male-dominated culture. The modernist writer's declared distaste for Hollywood, standing for all popular culture, was consistent with the pronouncements by two philosophers of the Frankfurt School of critical theory, Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, who also migrated to California. Yet, as Robbins sets out to demonstrate, in his own fiction writing from the 1930s onwards,

Faulkner "unabashedly borrowed from the techniques and genre conventions of commercial cinema" (6), thus productively blurring the mythical distinction between "high" and "low art."

The evidence for this practice is abundant in what Robbins defines as Faulkner's "displaced Hollywood novels," which have tended to be overlooked and critically marginalised in the Faulkner canon, due to their hybridity and less formal literary experimentation. Set in geographically distant locations, the novels are close to Hollywood in terms of conventions and themes, including the tension between money and artistic endeavour, and their interplay with female sexuality. These literary works of fiction are analysed side by side with Faulkner's produced and unproduced screenplays. Through this joint analytical exercise, the author shows the "transmedial exchanges between modernist fiction and cinema" (14) in Faulkner's works, the formal cross-pollination between them, and above all the dialogical relationship between Faulkner's screenwriting and fiction writing in his creation of female characters and their heterosexual relations to men. What Robbins also stresses in the Introduction and repeatedly later on is the role of Faulkner's complex relationships and collaborations with female screenwriters and script supervisors – both very numerous and sought after by the studios in the discussed period – as well as female actors, such as Joan Crawford and Lauren Bacall. In this sense, the monograph deconstructs the myth of the "high modernist": Rather than the masculinised figure of a "lone genius," Robbins presents Faulkner to us in a role culturally coded as feminine and therefore historically regarded as inferior, i.e. that of a participant in networked, industrial labour. For all the above reasons, Robbins's book belongs to "the recent dialogic turn in studies of Faulkner and film," stemming from "broader shifts in modernist studies," which have left hierarchical divisions behind to highlight the connections between modernist and popular culture (21).

In the book's six chapters, Robbins demonstrates how, at a time when women constituted the biggest audience for Hollywood productions, Faulkner participated in shaping representations of women in his screenplays, which helped to solidify "the status of woman as image in commercial cinema" (40). Yet "his Hollywood novels would go on to question such framings" (40), as the writer used revised gender stereotypes in his work by reconfiguring genre conventions, which presented ideological perspectives and value systems – or, to refer to Jameson again, contained imaginary resolutions to real social contradictions and conflicts.

Chapter one focuses on Faulkner's 1931 novel *Sanctuary* and the figure of the flapper, also known as the New Woman or the "bad girl," from the pre-Code era. The Hays Code, i.e. The Motion Picture Production Code implemented by the Production Code Administration in July 1934 and replaced by the current motion-picture rating system only in 1968 (Rosenfeld), functions as an important caesura in Hollywood history.

Even before the studios' self-imposed binary moral economy, or "accounting" requiring "compensation" for any perceived wrongdoing, came fully into force, the sexually transgressive "bad girl" was conventionally condemned. However, Faulkner rendered her more hybrid, both cautioning against and revelling in her excesses.

In the early post-Code period, the "bad girl's" sexuality became sublimated into collaborative labour, which reflected changed working conditions for women in the Depression era and the Second World War. Chapter two addresses this new type of heroine, the so-called "Hawksian woman." In Robbins's catalogue of Faulknerian women, this gender-bending archetype, described as feminine-masculine (100), androgynous (94), and a transvestite (88), whose relationships with men were based on equality as an ideal of heterosexual relations, is particularly fascinating.

Chapter three offers a sophisticated discussion of the gendered relationship between feminine-coded popular culture and masculine-coded high art in the context of the market, commerce and labour. This problem is represented by a gender role reversal in Faulkner's 1939 novel *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem* with yet another masculinised female protagonist at its centre.

Chapter four concentrates on Faulkner's wartime noir and Gothic screenplays, including a little-known mid-1940s script of a vampire horror film. Robbins demonstrates how their characteristically indecipherable or unreadable type of heroine influenced the post-war evolution of Caddy from the fallen Southern woman in *The Sound and the Fury* to femme fatale in the Compson "Appendix."

Chapter five is devoted to Faulkner's first major post-Nobel Prize work *Requiem for a Nun* (1951), an experimental prose-drama hybrid, and to Hollywood melodramas, their focus on maternal suffering and sacrifice, and their impact on Faulker's fiction in the context of the early Cold War era. Robbins's attention stays focused on the discussed period and the importance of the nuclear family in the face of a possible nuclear war in the mid-twentieth century. However, it is highly interesting to consider how this genre's "domestic containment ideology" (199), with warnings against "the perils that await women who fail to commit themselves fully to domestic cohesion" (198), at the historical moment of the post-Second World War crisis, later re-emerged in US culture. In the post-9/11 context, the threat to the state was again framed as a threat to the domestic sphere (Faludi) and has recently returned in the post-2008 financial crisis and post-pandemic figure of the Tradwife. Faulker's approach to this convention is shown, again, to be subversive.

Chapter six analyses Faulkner's penultimate novel, *The Mansion* (1959), and his most complex female character, according to critics. Robbins discusses Linda Snopes Kohl as "a medley of Hollywood archetypes" (247), which provides a useful summary of all the types of heroines analysed so far. In addition, it is proposed that, as a deaf character, Linda represents "the difficulties of speech and the communicative gap

between the textual and verbal" (245–46), and that through her Faulkner seems to "lament" all his fully-developed film characters who remained silent because they "never made it onto the screen" (247).

Robbins's book offers six reproductions of still photographs from selected films and a very detailed index. The absence of "camp" in today's understanding of the aesthetic is perhaps surprising, as this may have been an interesting additional category to include and apply to some of the film interpretations. Its omission, however, does not take away from Robbins's meticulous, engaging, and thought-provoking readings. *Faulkner's Hollywood Novels: Women between Page and Screen* will be highly relevant to all readers interested in film, Hollywood, US fiction, modernism, gender studies, feminism, and in particular historic representations of women in cinema and literature, and it is a must-read for scholars in the field of Faulkner studies.

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